

Kelman defends his tired troops

BLUES boss Jim Kelman jumped to the defence of his team following Saturday's 3-0 Conference drubbing at Sutton United.

"It was a real Paxo job....a right stuffing," he quipped, adding "But a result like this was possibly due. It has been a long season. We looked a like a team that had strived for the championship for three quarters of the season only to have nothing to play for at the end.

"I cannot really find fault with the players after the efforts they've put in this season. We were always chasing the league until the Newport saga. That, and our defeat against Kettering after we had played so well, took its toll.

"The players knew beforehand in their hearts that the title race was over and couldn't lift themselves. We only played for one half and then inexplicably collapsed. We've only done that once before this season and that was against Northwich back in August."

The Wycombe chief also defended his decision to make a double substitution with the sides locked at 0-0.

"Those substitutions had to be made," he said. "Andy Kerr was really feeling the pace after coming back in and so was Keith Barrett. Unfortunately Sean Norman looked just as tired when he came on.

"It was Barrie Williams' sub that turned the game around. He livened things up front for them and caught out Steve Abley who looked very jaded. I would never try and stop Steve from coming out with the ball because over the season we have won a great many more games than we've lost through his runs.

"We made very uncharacteristic mistakes throughout and were punished. We also created some brilliant chances which we failed to put away"

"I absolutely hate losing particularly as we did at Sutton. We had a heart to heart and got everything off our chest afterwards which was good," he said.

"We've got three games left and we must try and do the best we can to finish third."

Kelman added that both teams struggled to play football on the bumpy Gander Green Lane surface.

"It was on a par with Cheltenham's pitch - full of little potholes and bumps," he said. "Barrie Williams agreed with me that it wasn't really up to Conference standard.

"I don't want to take anything away from Sutton. They played a surprising amount of football and were far more positive than they were at Loakes Park."

● Wanderers are no further forward in their pursuit of a mystery striker said Kelman on Sunday.

"We are still waiting to hear from the player and I hope to have a decision one way or the other by the end of this week," said the Blues manager who refuses to name the Conference forward for fear of alerting other clubs.