

☛ **CONFERENCE** attendances are set to reach their highest ever level with this season's figures showing a 12% increase. The aggregate number of spectators reached 553,234 over the weekend to pass the total for the 1988/89 Conference campaign. The rise represents the fourth in successive years.

With 85 matches remaining, the average Conference crowd now stands at 1,467 with no fewer than 14 clubs experiencing a rise. The most notable increases are at Farnborough Town (62%), Darlington (46%) and Barrow (26%).

Since the introduction of automatic promotion to the Football League in 1986/87, Vauxhall Conference crowds have risen by 89%. The record aggregate of 576,839, set two seasons ago, is expected to be passed by the Easter weekend.

☛ **DARLINGTON** are odds-on favourites to win the championship following Saturday's 2-0 victory at leaders Barnet. Bookmakers William Hill now quote the North-East side at 2-9 for an immediate return to the Football League.

Odds for the Vauxhall Conference title are as follows: 2-9 Darlington, 100-30 Barnet, 20-1 Macclesfield Town, 80-1 Welling United, 125-1 Runcorn.

☛ **LEADERS** Barnet set a seasonal attendance record for the Conference on Saturday when 5,880 watched the 2-0 defeat by second placed Darlington. The gate, which was higher than 20 in the Football league, is the third largest for a Conference game.

Saturday's attendance, which produced gate receipts of over £20,000, raises Barnet's average crowd to 2,960. The number of spectators to pass through the Underhill turnstiles this season totals 56,244 - 22% more than the 1988/89 figure.

☛ **THE** number of players registered in the Conference prior to last Thursday's transfer deadline totalled 23 - the second highest in the history of the competition. The figure fell 12 short of the record set during season 1986/87.

☛ **FORMER** Northern Ireland and Nottingham Forest midfielder Martin O'Neill has won The Mail on Sunday Manager of the Month Award for March. The 37-year-old, who took charge at Wycombe Wanderers only last month, steered his side to a 2-0 win at Kidderminster on Saturday to secure the award. He receives £250 in prize-money from the national newspaper.

O'Neill, who completed the period with an average of 2.29 points, guided Wanderers to four wins during March. He held a narrow advantage over Merthyr Tydfil and Wales manager Lyn Jones. Merthyr's 4-3 win over Stafford Rangers earned Mr Jones second place raising his average to 2.25. Peter Morris of Kettering and Macclesfield Town's Peter Wragg shared third place on 2.20.