

Martin is ready for Forest



**Report by
PETE LANSLEY**

AS NOTTINGHAM Forest fly in from Sweden next week, manager Brian Clough should know his way around town.

For when Clough was manager of the great Derby County side of the early seventies — Kevin Hector, Roy McFarland, Alan Hinton et al — a hurriedly-arranged friendly took place at Loakes Park between Clough's team and Brian Lee's Wanderers.

Derby won by a significant margin, but a crowd of around 1,500 — half the number of tickets already sold to see Clough's 1990 side — enjoyed a First Division showing.

Forest, Littlewoods Cup holders, are no less an attraction as Adams Park bustles behind the scenes in anticipation of the great encounter.

The Derby game was arranged thanks to Brian Lee's dual role as Wycombe boss and director at Bisham Abbey, where Derby were training.

Now it is Martin O'Neill's influence in the game, as a former Forest star, which has brought such illustrious first division opponents for the Adams Park game.

Recently, O'Neill reflected on the larger-than-life image of Brian Clough, perhaps the game's most controversial character of the last 20 years.

"I've seen him recently, when we were organising the match in the first place," said O'Neill.

"I get on better with him now than I ever did as a player. I don't think he fancied me," ruminated the Wanderers' boss in footballing parlance.

"I know he played me for years, but it's just my view; maybe I'm just a bit warped, but he didn't really. Maybe I was just jealous of the other boys being praised, but if I got a slap on the back, it would be once a season at most.

"He'll tell me I didn't deserve it," laughed O'Neill.

The former Northern Ireland captain, now he himself has embarked on a career in management, is also well aware of what he can learn from Clough.

"I think he was an excellent motivator. I also had a lot of time for Billy Bingham. He was down to the last detail," says O'Neill of Northern Ireland's manager, still at the helm.

"Clough was never that detailed, nor did he worry too much about the opposition. The lads would probably tell you I haven't really paid a great deal of time to the opposition simply because I didn't know them."

Forest are a team O'Neill, like all of us, knows very well.

As well as England stars Steve Hodge, Stuart Pearce and Des Walker — the latter two having enjoyed such excellent World Cups — Forest boast a team which is renowned for the quality of its play.

Clough's team has often hinged around his son Nigel, who plays in a withdrawn centre-forward role which is so difficult for defences to handle.

It was from this position that Clough junior scored twice in the first of the team's Littlewoods Cup triumphs in 1989, in a season when he topped 20 goals again.

So the scene is set for next Thursday's match, which kicks off at 7.30pm. Up to last Tuesday, 3,000 tickets had already been sold, including all stand tickets.