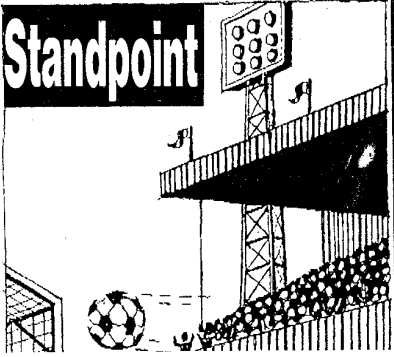


Standpoint



BEING voted Player of the Month by Wycombe Wanderers' fans is undoubtedly a big confidence boost for any of the players.

For Nicky Evans, receiving the October award before last Saturday's game, marked a happier first month back in competitive football than he could have dared hope for.

For the 32-year-old who has known non-league success throughout his career, the first nine months of this year must have been sickening, as he was out with the sort of knee injury which finishes careers.

So to come straight back into first team football and play seven games in a month is nothing short of remarkable. But to win that Trowbridge FA Cup tie in his first start, score seven goals in the same period and play a major part in Blues' surge up the table and through the FA Cup rounds, smacks of heroism.

Example

What an example Evans makes for all sportsmen. Having missed the Kettering game myself, I watched the video this week, and even before the goals started going in, Evans had a smile and a friendly word to give. There is no absence of aggression, but if every player competed with such a spirit, the game could only improve.

Blues' boss Martin O'Neill was quick to praise his centre forward after Evans had received the accolade of Player Of The Month. "The goals said it all. The game when he came back against Trowbridge was ten minutes long, and I expected him to last ten — he played it all and scored both the goals.

"It spoke volumes for the lad. He's done very well. He's come from injury, and straight into the side," added O'Neill.

Bravery

That Evans has not missed a game since returning reflects his bravery, since fitness after injury is not automatic. As O'Neill said: "When a player first returns, freshness can keep him going. He might think himself he's not as fit as he'd like to be after seven or eight games, and he's still building.

"Nicky felt the pressure more than myself. I'd heard a lot of good things about him, and it was frustrating for him not to be able to prove what he could do. But he was in on a lot of our team talks, so it was not as if it was a new set up for him."

Now Evans is back, and forming a deadly combination with Mark West which has seen the duo plunder 17 goals in their ten games in tandem. The waiting has paid off, so well done Nicky Evans on this award.