

West recalls glory of youth



Mark West: hopes to play in semi

STAR striker Mark West is hoping his current injury problems will bring the same sort of luck he enjoyed last time Wanderers were battling out FA Trophy semi finals with Altrincham.

West has missed Wycombe's last five games, during which time an operation on a troublesome knee has cleared him of any cartilage worries and set him on the road to recovery.

The 25-year-old forward, lacking match fitness but improving after last month's knee operation, slowly but surely has a chance of making tomorrow's starting line-up.

Not having completed 90 minutes since the Conference trip to Altrincham on March 2 means he would certainly be rusty but manager Martin O'Neill said, tongue in cheek: "It depends whether he can get his boots on."

Back in 1982, Altrincham were again Blues' opponents in Wycombe's best ever run in the competition. The previous spring, West sufficiently recovered from an achilles injury to play a match-winning role for the Wycombe and District Schools Under 15 side which won the English Schools Cup.

"There were about 7,000 for our final at Loakes Park, and I scored in a 1-0 win," recalls West, then a 15-year-old about to try his luck with West Ham United. "There was a long throw, the geezer nodded it on and I volleyed it in."

The young Wycombe side, which also included Kevin Keen (now West Ham), Keith Dublin (Watford) and Graham Bressington (Lincoln City), went on to win the cup, drawing 0-0 at Roker Park.

West would settle for similar scorelines this time round, and indicated how tight it promises to be when he said: "As long as we don't lose at home, it's then a one-off."

As for his own chances of playing, West added: "I won't be fully fit. It could be like Northwich and I'll be knackered after five minutes. But I'm much better than I was. My chances are...it's up to the boss. Let's hope we stuff them."

In his brief appearance at Northwich before being substituted, West set Blues on the way to victory by scoring the first goal.