

Sad stars attempt brave faces



Behind the winners' hugs, the disappointment of those who missed out: Mickey Nuttall (back right) sums up the frustration *Picture by MARKUS KINCH*

THE disappointment of missing out on a cup final place on Saturday proved devastating. The joy of each Wycombe player who appeared at Wembley was tinged with sympathy for his mates who did not get the chance.

While recent signing Josh Price did not expect to be involved, the let down for those on the verge of a place — however pleased for their colleagues — was almost too much to take.

Chuck Moussaddik, who must have known about John Granville's injury, was too choked to comment and soon left.

Andy Kerr recalled the feeling of when he missed out on Telford's FA Trophy Final appearance three years ago. "I was just in the squad for Telford, and that day I never thought I'd get the chance to come back," said Kerr.

"But every dog has his day. I feel so sorry for the young lads who haven't played today but they've got age on their side and they'll get their chance."

There was Steve Whitby, whose form in between recent ankle ligament troubles has been faultless. Left out at Altrincham when his first injury had recovered, he said: "You could safely say that's the worst season I've ever had. It's great to be at Wycombe, but the disappointments are the worst ever."

PETE LANSLEY reports

Gary Smith delivered perhaps his best performances of the season since returning from injury recently, but recovered from being left out to fire a mean water pistol on the coach journey back to Wycombe.

Steve Walford admitted: "I didn't even bring my hip flask."

Eight-goal Mickey Nuttall said: "I managed to enjoy the lads' performance, and I thought they deserved to win the game."

Martin Blackler, one of Wycombe's best players before injury struck in December, was as close as anyone to disrupting the team which won at Altrincham to earn the 13 places. "I'm delighted for the lads," said Blackler. "I felt all along the side wouldn't be much different, and it was the right side at the end of the day. It's hard to get involved, but inside I'm delighted for the boys."

"To be fair, every single one of them justified their place."

Injured hero



WYCOMBE Wanderers goalkeeper John Granville played the entire FA Trophy final with a broken thumb!

That was the sensational news revealed in the dressing room after Wycombe had beaten Kidderminster Harriers 2-1 to bring the Trophy back to Bucks.

Soccer's best kept secret had been under wraps for a fortnight ever since the 35-year-old Trinidad and Tobago international was injured.

"I broke the thumb of my left hand when I hit one of the posts in training," Granville said after Saturday's Wembley epic.

"I was given an injection last Thursday to numb the pain and then went through a training session to see how I reacted.

"Having come through that, I then had another injection 20 minutes before the Trophy final and felt confident things would be all right."

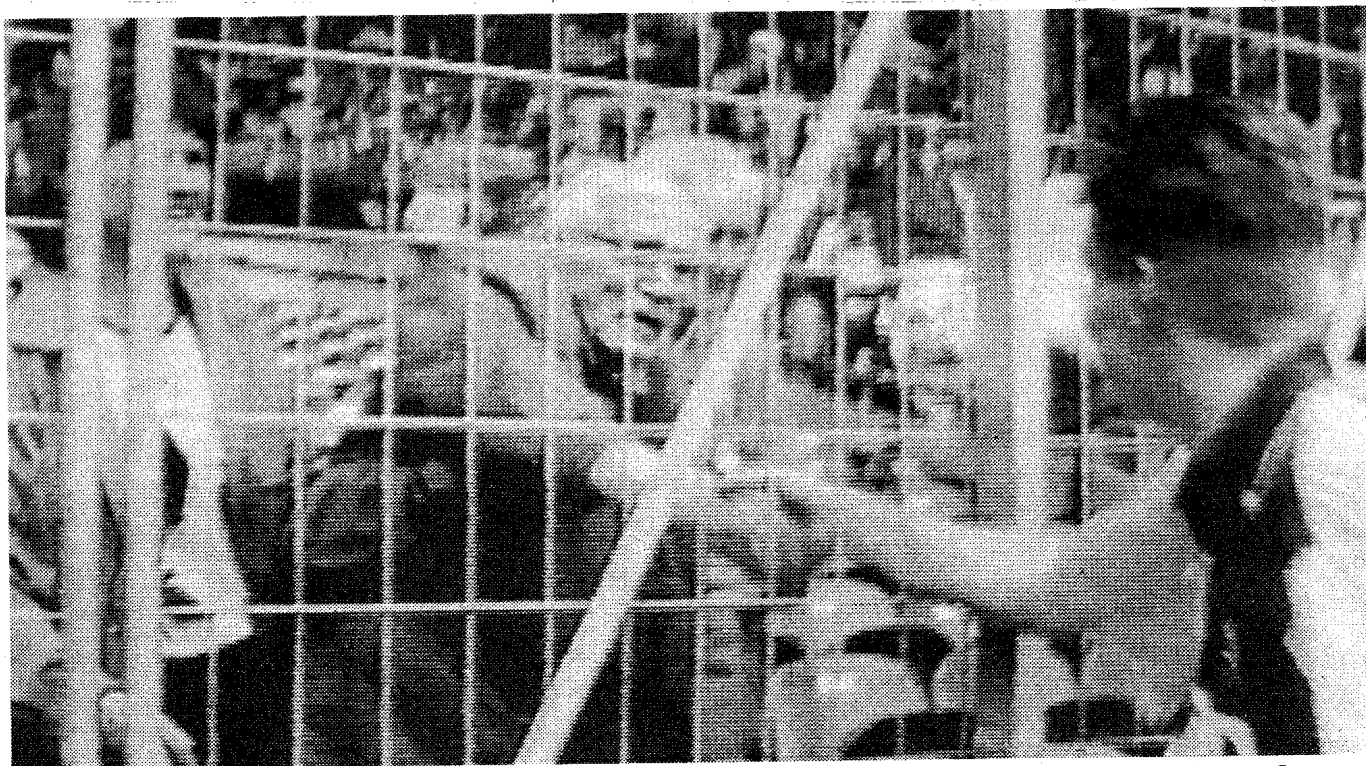
The news of Granville's injury will certainly temper what criticism there might be of the goalkeeper's part in Kidderminster's equalising goal, when he seemed to dive over the ball.

Indeed, by any standards, he played a major part in Wycombe's success with his two saves from Stephen Lilwall being particularly crucial.

Kidderminster manager Graham Allner was full of praise for Wycombe's performance.

"We were always second best and always at full stretch," Allner said after the game. "Wycombe's first goal was dubious. Indeed, I would like to see both the Wycombe goals on video to see if they were offside, but we have no complaints about the result."

● **Left, the pain is forgotten as goalkeeper Granville holds the Trophy aloft**



Touch of magic: Jack Francis sheds emotional tears as his favourite Wanderers player Steve Guppy breaks off from the team's Wembley lap of honour to shake his hand

Tears of joy for supporter Jack

WHEELCHAIR-bound Jack Francis wept with joy when his Wycombe Wanderers' heroes shared their trophy triumph with him.

The players stopped their Wembley lap of honour on Saturday when they spotted the 79-year-old Multiple Sclerosis sufferer, of Chichester Close, High Wycombe, among the celebrating crowd.

He cried as the players went over to him. Goalscorer Keith Scott even lifted the trophy over the fencing for him to touch.

Jack took his daughter, Sue, to Wembley back in 1957 when Wanderers lost 3-1 to Bishop Auckland, and the two travelled to matches home and away.

He said: "It was super, and very nice of them. I've followed Wycombe for years. It made my day."

Sue, 50, who took her father to the match, said: "It was wonderful to see my dad's face. For the players, in all their glory, to stop and do that is wonderful. He cried all the way home, and said he'd remember this for the rest of his life."

Wanderers' reserve team manager Jim Melvin said: "That old boy's tears summed up the day - the union between everyone. Cashy caught sight of him, and we all piled over."



Jack (right) with Steve and daughter Sue and the cherished trophy

Relief swamps the tired players

THE atmosphere in the North dressing room at Wembley was one of quiet satisfaction as the reality of Trophy victory began to dawn on the Wanderers players.

Slumped exhaustedly on a bench, still in his kit, Dave Carroll reflected on the last nerve-shredding minutes of the final.

"I was just so tired. I think most of us were. We were just trying to get the ball up their end.

"The Wembley pitch is the same size as ours but I think it must have been the occasion that got to us. It was really tiring in the last minutes."

Buzzing around the dressing room were Alan Parry and Ivor Beeks, hugging each player, sharing a joke and anticipating the celebrations that would later go on into the night.

"What a day. It has been marvellous. I really can't remember many days like this," said Parry.

The first question put to him by a Sunday newspaper journalist was not about the team but the Michael Jackson Controversy.

The national papers had followed up the Bucks Free Press exclusive story about the star's refusal to let the club release its own version of The Wanderer, with new lyrics writ-

Report by GARY LAWRENCE

ten by Parry.

The excited murmur in the dressing room grew louder with the reappearance of Keith Scott, who had been getting stitches in a head wound that left his blue shirt stained red.

His reply to the cat-calls and whistles was short, sharp and unprintable. "It's only blood, it doesn't hurt. I actually cut my head twice but I didn't notice the first one for a while," he explained.

Martin O'Neill slipped away to do a phone interview for television while assistant manager John Reardon persuaded his players to drag themselves into the showers.

By the time the jaunty Irishman returned, most of the players had thrown their kit into an untidy heap



Cheers: Dave Carroll (right) and Stuart Cash quench their thirst

for Rod Lavers to sort out and made for the showers.

O'Neill's first words were about a penalty claim. "It was a definite penalty," he said. Then, as if noticing it for the first time, he glanced at the trophy. "It doesn't matter, we won. I'm not going to be self-affacing. We deserved to win it."

An hour after the match the dressing room was almost empty. Remaining kit was packed and the players streamed away to the bar, ready to return on the coach for Adams Park.

Colleague Pete Lansley was left alone in the dressing room. Alone that is except for the FA Trophy.

"Should we take this as well?" he called out.