

Watford gap appears in communication

A COMMUNICATION breakdown meant Watford were set to bring only a reserve side for last night's friendly with Blues at Adams Park.

Wycombe boss Martin O'Neill was disappointed to learn on Tuesday that his and Watford's interpretation of the words 'a strong side' differed.

But Wycombe were due to put out a first team squad — which included Ty Gooden, who impressed against West Ham last Saturday.

After showcase games against Coventry and West Ham, O'Neill said: "We've set our standards here, and come to have expectations."

"Glen Roeder (Watford's reserve team manager but a first-team player) said they'd send a strong side down — and I'm sure their reserves will be strong. But we thought they'd be sending the likes of Nigel Callaghan."

Wanderers' response to the anticipated anti-climax was to halve admission prices, and O'Neill promised reimbursements for those with previously-purchased tickets.

Of Gooden's electric showing against West Ham, O'Neill said: "He performed very very well. He had nice touch, and looked like he could go past people."

"I can't prevent West Ham or Ipswich offering him trials if they're interested, but if he performs against Watford, I'd offer him a spot here."

PETE LANSLEY reports

Gooden was released by Arsenal, apparently too frail and has not trained since the end of last season. O'Neill added: "He's got a wee bit of talent, which, if properly nurtured, could become something. He might just get a better opportunity if he comes here."

Now Wycombe travel to Sutton United for a friendly tomorrow (ko 3pm) where Blues should get another look at the relegated club's sought-after midfielder Paul Rogers, the England semi-professional player.

Friendlies this week have not to date brought good results. The Capital League side drew 1-1 (Wycombe trialist Dale Anderson scored) at Hitchin Town, from whom Blues are set to complete the signing of talented left-back Gavin Covington.

"There weren't any left backs around last year," said O'Neill. "Now I've got them coming out of my ears."

And on Tuesday, Wycombe were trounced 4-2 by Trowbridge Town. Simon Stapleton and Andy Kerr scored for Blues.

David Coles, formerly Aldershot's first-team keeper for two years, played the second half, coming on for Chuck Moussaddik as O'Neill attempts to discover who will keep goal against Gateshead on August 17.

"If they're only called upon two or three times in a game, it's very difficult to judge a keeper," admitted O'Neill, who gave Kevin Shoemake a further 60 minutes against Hitchin.

"Kevin by his own admission has been injury-prone, but a couple of years ago he was a top-class keeper I'm told, so he's entitled to a decent chance," reasoned O'Neill.

"Paul (Hyde) is strong, wants to come to the football club and wants to better himself. But Hayes will start talking telephone numbers."

"A decision will have to be made pretty soon."

Defender Jason Cousins is likely to be offered terms as Blues prepare to decide on a squad for the season.

● The Bath Evening Chronicle ran an interesting lead on Wednesday after Blues visited the West Country.

O'Neill's tongue-in-cheek banter when confronting reporters brought the headline: 'Rejecting Rovers was daft': O'Neill.

"That's absolutely incredible," O'Neill exclaimed to the Bucks Free Press yesterday.

● William Hill's have confirmed Blues as 3-1 favourites for the Conference title.

● CHESHAM United are looking good. Mickey Banton scored the game's only goal against Barnet at The Meadow on Wednesday night.



Wycombe's Ty Gooden (left) peels away from George Parris. See inside for full match report. Picture by VIRG