

Wycombe could lose Cousins for two months

BLUES will discover today whether they lose tough defender Jason Cousins for up to eight weeks.

Cousins, probably Wycombe's most consistent player this season, is in Hillingdon Hospital having tests for appendicitis. He ate yesterday for the first time since Sunday, having missed Tuesday's trip to Yeovil.

A spokesperson from the hospital said: "It seems to have settled down. Tomorrow we'll know a bit more."

Cousins played at Telford last Saturday only to develop stomach pains on Sunday night before going into hospital. Manager Martin O'Neill said: "It's a big blow to us. He could be out for eight weeks if it's appendicitis. It's come at a bad time for us: we were down to our bare 13 players on Tuesday night."

Wycombe lost the services of striker Keith Scott for the first ten games of this season after he had an appendix operation.

Twenty-one-year-old Cousins had missed only one game for Blues before Tuesday since joining from Brentford in the summer.

Wanderers were also without Kim Casey (cup tied), Gary Smith (ankle) and Matt Crossley (groin) on Tuesday, with Dave Carroll (groin) and Gavin Covington (knee) still sidelined. Simon

Hutchinson (deadleg) only played as a substitute.

The catalogue of struggling players has not helped Wycombe's title cause in the week they fell 11 points behind Colchester. The Conference leaders beat Boston 1-0 on Tuesday night. But O'Neill remains confident a good run-in, starting at Northwich tomorrow (ko 3pm), will see Blues pip Colchester.

"We've got 17 games left," said O'Neill. "If we win 13 of them, we'll go up. You're looking at about 90 points to win it."

"The strange thing about it is it still could be in our hands."

Of tomorrow's trip to The Drill Field, O'Neill said: "It's important we don't get beaten — it's more important we win, and get back on the trail."

"We've lost a bit of bite and passion. It's habit-forming, losing — like winning is, except losing is a lot easier."

The Wycombe manager saw Colchester come back to draw 2-2 at Kidderminster last Friday. "They're definitely fitter than all the other Vauxhall Conference sides. That's the basic difference. Any side full time in a part-time league should win it."

O'Neill is now willing to buy big to strengthen his squad. "Going into the market, I might have to pay over the odds. But I'm not wildly bothered if players prove their worth to the football club."

O'Neill has Geoff Cooper on loan from Barnet for a month and was last night looking at trialists Peter Johnson and Paul Rumble, also left backs, in the reserves' game with Aldershot.



Jason Cousins