

Dying Shots will not be replaced

IT'S win or bust — only the Conference champions will be promoted to the Football League this year despite Aldershot's final collapse.

The Fourth Division club, wound up in the high court last week, were finally put out of their misery when no rescue package arrived by Wednesday evening, the League's final deadline.

But I understand that no extra promotion place will be provided to replace Aldershot, who are the first League club to fold during a season since Accrington Stanley 30 years ago.

The Fourth Division will continue to operate with 23 clubs next season, and Wycombe Wanderers will have to win the Conference title to be among them. This will be rubber stamped by the Football League later in the season.

Martin O'Neill reacted by saying: "It's not good news but we never expected anything else.

It's always been certain one club would go up and we want to be it. We've always thought we could do it."

The new Premier Division will be reduced from 22 to 20 clubs in season 1994/95, leaving the Football League to absorb the two relegated clubs. The collapse of one more club in the meantime would leave the League with their required complement of 72 clubs.

All Aldershot's records for this season have been expunged and the Fourth Division table rejigged accordingly. Former Blues keeper John Granville and his team-mates were yesterday left with a frantic 24 hours trying to find new clubs before the transfer deadline passed.

● THE only way the team finishing second in the Conference will be promoted is if the champions' ground does not meet Football League requirements.

Johnson meets old Posh mates

THERE will be a Posh reunion tomorrow as several of Peterborough United's giant-killing squad meet at Adams Park when Wycombe Wanderers face third-place Kettering Town.

Peter Johnson, who has settled in well at left back since joining Blues earlier this month, played in the Peterborough side that humbled Liverpool in this season's Rumbelows Cup Fourth Round.

Following the recent changes at Kettering, Johnson could face up to four old colleagues should midfielder Garry Butterworth follow striker Pat Gavin and defender Lee Howarth to the Rockingham Road club. Hamish Curtis has also figured in the Kettering side.

With former Aldershot supremo Brian Talbot now chairman at Rockingham Road, Poppies' manager Peter Morris was yesterday on the verge of bringing in three more newcomers, all with League experience.

Wanderers are seeking their ninth successive home league win, and Steve Thompson is likely to step straight back into the team following his outing for the RAF on Tuesday night.

Blues' superb run of league results has left them 15

points clear of Kettering and Farnborough, who have identical records. Kettering earn third place on fewer games lost, and have won four of their last five games.

Transfer deadline day looked like passing quietly for Wycombe yesterday, Martin O'Neill happy with a first-team squad of over 20 players. Paul Hyde expects to be fit to play tomorrow despite needing an x-ray on his nose following a late collision in Tuesday night's match.

Kettering beat Macclesfield 2-0 this week to keep tucked in behind the two title favourites and O'Neill said: "They have kept their outside chances alive. There's a fair little gap but victory against us would give them hope."

"We have loads of work to do, but we're on a decent run. There were signs of tiredness on Tuesday, and the pitch, with loads of sand on it, is demanding."

Recent matches between the old rivals have not been lacking in entertainment — Wycombe won 5-1 at Adams Park last year and completed the league double, but after a scintillating 1-1 draw at Rockingham Road last November, the Poppies won the FA Cup first round replay 2-0.