

Record breakers set to topple the leaders

WYCOMBE WANDERERS will go top of the GM Vauxhall Conference tomorrow if they add to their current haul of 75 points — the highest tally Blues have ever reached.

Wycombe will earn themselves pole position to win promotion to the Football League if they repeat their achievement of one of last season's most euphoric triumphs.

It was on a blue wave of euphoria a year ago on Monday that Wycombe needed to avoid defeat at Altrincham in the FA Trophy semi-final second leg to reach Wembley.

Manager Martin O'Neill recalled that day when he told the Bucks Free Press this week: "It was as good a day as any. It was absolutely phenomenal — the players went out there at only five past two to be met by a sea of blue: sensational."

Blues, 2-1 up from the first leg, proceeded to win 2-0 to make the final.

O'Neill added: "It was the same feeling at Farnborough when our supporters outnumbered the home fans. It's lovely to see the support there, and there is a tendency for our away support to be more vocal than at home."

As halcyon memories return of blue skies, blue balloons and goals from Mark West and Keith Scott, a similar result will take Wanderers two points clear of Colchester, who are themselves poised to clinch a place in this year's Trophy final.

Colchester, current leaders in the pursuit of non-league's biggest prize, still have their eyes set on the double as they aim to protect a 3-0 lead when they visit Macclesfield in tonight's Trophy second leg. Blues, who play at Macclesfield next Tuesday, will take in the semi final on their way up to Altrincham.

Colchester's cup commitments enable Blues to play the last of their games in hand at Moss Lane tomorrow. The top two teams will then enter the final seven league games of the season set to surpass the number of points any club has reached to win a place in the Football League.

Scarborough entered the Fourth Division by winning the Conference title in 1987 with 91 points. Runcorn's Conference record of 93 points, totalled in 1982, was set before the non-league champions automatically won a place in the Football League.

Wanderers' previous points record of 74 was established last season, when they finished fifth. Victory at Farnborough last Saturday, their sixth consecutive league win, saw Blues overtake that tally. Now O'Neill is eager his team should maintain this momentum.

"We have got the game in hand, and it would be nice to have a wee gap. We've got to keep winning because one of these



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days we're going to get a draw and be ecstatic to hang onto a point."

Looking towards the end of the season, O'Neill said: "It is looking like it's going to take a record number of points to get up. It would be a crying shame to break the previous record and not get promoted."

The Wycombe manager, tongue partially in cheek, added: "The very thought of having to go through all this again, to get this close and have to do it all again next season, drives me insane. I'd commit suicide."

Altrincham, whose own title hopes were crowded out by fixture congestion this time 12 months ago, are currently hurtling down towards a relegation dogfight. They have lost 11 consecutive games in all competitions, from which recently cost manager Stan Allan his job.

"I'm surprised they've dropped so deeply, but I'm not surprised they're not challenging this season," said O'Neill. "The minute John King went (their former manager left for Barrow last summer), and Showler followed, the spirit soon disappeared."

O'Neill added on Wednesday: "I'd settle for the start we had against Farnborough, but Altrincham won't be easy. Gateshead went and beat Witton Albion 3-0 last night — nothing can surprise me in this game."



Up for the cup: Wanderers boss Martin O'Neill displays Trophy

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