

GM CONFERENCE / Four-goal Wycombe miss out

Colchester stand tall

By Peter Ernest

AMID the throng celebrating Colchester's return to the League at Layer Road on Saturday, American Mike Masters stood taller and prouder than anyone — and with ample justification.

The 6ft 4in Masters had just scored his first professional hat-trick to help Colchester clinch the GM Vauxhall Conference championship ahead of Wycombe, who beat Witton 4-0, on goal difference.

Clutching the match ball and his winners' medal after the 5-0 win over relegated Barrow, Masters, 25, said: "It still hasn't really sunk in what we have achieved, but it's sure been worth waiting for."

Masters received international clearance to play in January but did not command a regular first-team place until last month, when Ian Stewart, the former Northern Ireland international striker, injured a hamstring. Since then he has proved to be the perfect foil for player-manager Roy McDonough, the club's top scorer.

Barrow went like lambs to the slaughter as Masters struck in the seventh,

15th and 77th minutes. The visitors' cause suffered a further setback when Power was sent off for a foul after 17 minutes.

Smith hit his 10th goal of the season and McDonough took his season's tally to 29 in front of a 7,193 gate, the best in the Conference this season.

Colchester, whose winning total of 94 points was also a record, can complete a non-League double when they meet Witton in the Vauxhall FA Trophy final at Wembley on Sunday.

Despite their crushing defeat of Witton, there were few smiles at Wycombe, where the future of ambitious manager Martin O'Neill is in doubt.

Mr O'Neill, who turned down an approach from Bristol Rovers last summer, said: "At the moment I have to say I probably couldn't face another season in the Vauxhall Conference. I want to manage in the First Division and I think I could do it."

Casey, Stapleton, Scott and Greene scored in front of 6,035 fans, Wycombe's largest crowd of the season, who repeatedly chanted for Mr O'Neill to stay at the club.

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colchester	42	28	10	4	99	40	94
Wycombe	42	30	4	8	84	35	94
Kettering	42	20	13	9	72	50	73
Wentworth	42	18	14	10	59	56	68
Farnborough	42	18	12	12	68	53	66
Telford	42	19	7	16	62	66	64
Redbridge	42	18	9	15	68	57	63
Boston U	42	18	9	15	71	66	63
Barn	42	16	12	14	64	61	60
Witton	42	16	10	16	63	60	58
Northwich	42	16	6	20	63	58	54
Welling U	42	14	12	16	59	79	54
Macclesfield	42	13	13	16	50	50	52
Runcorn	42	12	12	18	50	62	48
Gateshead	42	12	11	19	48	57	47
Yeovil	42	11	14	17	40	49	47
Stafford	42	10	16	16	42	58	46
Altrincham	42	11	12	19	61	82	45
Kidderminster	42	12	9	21	58	77	45
Slough	42	13	8	23	56	82	45
Cheltenham	42	10	13	19	56	82	43
Barrow	42	8	14	20	52	72	38

BEAZER HOMES—Premier

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bromsgrove	42	27	9	6	78	34	90
Dover	42	23	15	4	66	30	84
V.S. Rugby	42	23	11	8	70	44	80
Bashley	42	22	8	12	70	44	74
Cambridge	42	18	14	10	71	53	68
Dartford	42	17	15	10	62	45	66
Trowbridge	42	17	10	15	69	51	61
Halesowen	42	15	15	12	61	49	60
Moor Green	42	15	11	16	61	59	56
Burton	42	15	10	17	59	61	55
Dorchester	42	14	13	15	66	73	55
Gloucester	42	15	9	18	67	70	54
Atherstone	42	15	8	19	64	66	53
Corby	42	13	12	17	66	81	51
Waterlooville	42	13	11	18	43	56	50
Worcester	42	12	13	17	56	59	49
Crawley	42	12	12	18	62	67	48
Chelmsford	42	12	12	18	49	56	48
Waldstone	42	13	7	22	52	69	46
Poole	42	10	13	19	46	77	43
Fisher	42	9	11	22	53	89	38
Gravesend	42	8	9	25	39	87	33

DIADORA LGE—Premier

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Woking	42	30	7	5	96	25	97
Enfield	42	24	7	11	59	45	79
Surton	42	19	13	10	88	51	70
Chesham	42	20	10	12	67	48	70
Wokingham	42	19	10	13	73	58	67
Marlow	42	20	7	15	56	50	67
Aylesbury	42	16	17	9	69	46	65
Cashton	42	18	8	16	64	67	62
Dagenham	42	15	16	11	70	59	61
Kingstonian	42	17	8	17	71	65	59
Windsor & E.	42	15	11	16	56	56	56
Bromley	42	14	12	16	51	57	54
St Albans	42	14	11	17	66	70	53
Basingstoke	42	14	11	17	56	53	53
Greys	42	14	11	17	53	68	53
Wivenhoe	42	16	4	22	56	81	52
Handon	42	13	9	20	59	73	48
Harrow	42	11	13	18	58	78	46
Hayes	42	10	14	18	52	63	44
Staines	42	11	10	21	43	73	43
Bognor	42	9	11	22	51	89	38
8 Stortford	42	7	12	23	41	68	33

DIADORA—Premier, champions: Woking (promoted to GM Vauxhall Conference). **Relegated:** Bishop's Cleeve, Div 1, champions: Stevenage Boro. Also promoted: Yeading & Dulwich Hamlet. **Relegated:** None.

Div 2, champions: Purfleet. Also promoted: Leves, Billericay T. **Relegated:** None. (Southwick resigned from league).

Div 3, champions: Edgware T. Also promoted: Chertsey, Tilbury. (Diadora receive no relegated Conference side and lose Dagenham through merger with Redbridge).

BEAZER HOMES—Premier champions: Bromsgrove Rovers (promoted to GM Vauxhall Conference). **Relegated:** Wealdstone, Poole T, Fisher Ath, Gravesend & Northfleet.

Midland Div, champions: Solihull Boro. Also promoted: Hednesford T. **Relegated:** Dudley T, Alvechurch.

Southern Div, champions: Hastings T. Also promoted: Weymouth. **Relegated:** Canterbury City, Gosport Boro.

HFS LOANS—Premier champions: Stalybridge Celtic (promoted to GM Vauxhall Conference). **Runners-up:** Marine. **Relegated:** Shepshed (to Div 1). (Resigned to join League of Wales): Bangor City.

Div 1 champions: Colwyn Bay. **Runners-up:** Winsford Utd. **Resigned:** Newtown (to join League of Wales), Irlam Town (to join Bass NW Counties, Div 2).

WYCOMBE Wanderers hope to gain promotion to the Football League after all. The Buckinghamshire club, which finished second to Colchester United on goal difference in the GM Vauxhall Conference, is seeking the place vacated by Aldershot.

The demise of Aldershot, who folded in March, means that the new League will start with 71 clubs instead of 72. The new third division would kick off with an odd number and, every weekend, one club would be without a fixture.

Wycombe, who are managed by Martin O'Neill, the former Nottingham Forest and Northern Ireland player, have a ground, Adams Park, that meets the League criteria on safety. The club is finan-

cially stable and the team attracts good crowds. "There is no doubt that we would be good news for the Football League," O'Neill said.

No final decision has been taken but the League has indicated strongly that Aldershot will not be replaced.

Ian Beeks, the Wycombe chairman, has different ideas. "We are determined to change the League's mind," he said yesterday. Alan Parry, the television commentator and Wycombe director, said: "We are going to lobby the League really hard. We believe we have a case."

If Wycombe go up, it could mean a stay of execution for Cheltenham Town, who were relegated from the Conference with Barrow.