

BLUES FACE UP TO CONFERENCE TEST

WYCOMBE Wanderers have resigned themselves to facing another season in the GM Vauxhall Conference after Colchester United received the go-ahead last Friday to join the Football League.

Martin O'Neill will return from holiday able at last to attend to the business of establishing which players will stay at Adams Park.

Four weeks after the end of the season, Colchester finally submitted proof that they can afford to upgrade their Layer Road ground to meet Football League requirements.

A League spokesman confirmed on Friday: "Colchester United have met fully all the criteria for membership and will be accepted into the Football League at the Annual General Meeting in London on June 5."

Disappointment was offset by a relieved determination in the Blues camp. Director Alan Parry said: "At least we now know the picture. It's been a difficult few weeks — it's felt like a life time."

Parry does not regret the 'Promote Wycombe' campaign, which hinged on the logic of replacing defunct Aldershot with Wycombe. He said: "The decision about Aldershot was made by the Management Committee. Whether that reflects the rest of the clubs is another matter. However, the committee are appointed by the clubs."

"The Colchester thing was a back door — I never had great hope there."

With chances of a place in next season's Football League finally extinguished, Parry said: "We have got to knuckle down and say we're in the Conference — let's make sure we win it."

With potential title rivals Kettering in the throes of change, Parry is optimistic Blues can win the Conference. He said: "There's no team coming down, and we know the opposition. And look what's happened at Kettering." He added: "I wouldn't be surprised if the bookies made us odds-on favourites for the title."

By PETE LANSLEY

Hopes are high that Martin O'Neill will stay. The manager will meet chairman Ivor Beeks shortly to discuss new terms.

Parry said: "I think he'll stay. When he gets over the disappointment, he'll sink his teeth into it and get on with the job in his own unique way."

The director continued: "Even though we're in the Vauxhall Conference, we have a bigger status than many in the Football League. Now we've got to prove it, the way Barnet did after they had missed out. This is a key season for us, next season."

●BLUES fans can now apply for their season tickets. Terrace tickets are £77 adult (£43 juniors and OAPs), seats £102 (£90). There is a special offer until June 19, with terrace tickets priced £72 (£40) and seats at £96 (£84).

The Conference season starts on August 22. Wanderers will entertain teams from Spurs and Arsenal in their schedule of pre-season friendlies. Full details in this Friday's Bucks Free Press.