

Wanderers confident O'Neill will lead team back into Conference action

WYCOMBE Wanderers board members are optimistic Martin O'Neill will want to remain as their manager after Blues received confirmation they will not be playing in the Football League next season.

O'Neill returns from holiday ready for talks with chairman Ivor Beeks who is confident a new deal can be agreed.

The manager, who works without a formal contract, agreed terms lasting a year last summer.

O'Neill flies back home knowing Wycombe will be competing in the GM Vauxhall Conference next season.

Colchester United's place in the Football League was booked last Friday when they proved to League officials they could afford to upgrade their Layer Road ground.

A League spokesperson said: "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."

But while this will disappoint O'Neill, the absence of top-class managerial openings so far this summer mean he can get on with planning for Wycombe's

renewed title drive.

Norwich City completed a full circle when they finally appointed former Colchester boss Mike Walker as their new manager this week.

After overtures to bring ex-Bolton Wanderers manager Phil Neal to Carrow Road went flat, the man first named favourite for the vacancy a month ago snuggled into the hot seat.

Walker will be assisted by former Canaries player John Deehan, which finally means O'Neill will not be leaving Wycombe to join Norwich this summer.

Beeks admitted Blues would not be

able to compete if O'Neill received an offer from a top club. But he said: "I don't anticipate any problems and I'm sure we'll be striking some sort of agreement."

Director Alan Parry said: "He's said all along he's not applied for any job, and he's not been offered any job."

Parry said all the players and directors were behind the current manager, and added: "I think he'll stay. When he gets over the disappointment, he'll sink his teeth into the job and get on with it in his own unique way."

He 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 missed out. This is a key season for us, next season."

●FORMER Boston boss Dave Cusack has swapped jobs with Peter Morris to take over at Kettering as Wycombe's potential title rivals undergo some major heart surgery. Kettering chairman Brian Talbot has also left.

Morris, who resigned from his Rockingham Road job last week, took up office at Boston this week.

Blues day for the Wanderers

IT was a case of accepting the inevitable at Wycombe Wanderers this week as it was confirmed once and for all that the club will be kicking off the new season still in the GM Vauxhall Conference league.

That was made clear by a short and to-the-point statement issued by the Football League on Friday, saying Conference winners Colchester had fully met all the criteria needed to play in the Football League.

Discussing the decision, Blues secretary John Goldsworthy said: "It's not one of disappointment. Our disappointment was that the Football League chose not to reverse their decision about not replacing Aldershot."

"The rules are that the winners of the league should be promoted and therefore Colchester are entitled to be playing there. Good luck to them."

He said Wycombe had planned for another Conference season, to start on August 22, after the League's Shadow Board decision, but always had the Colchester situation at the back of their minds.

Blues fans face seat soaraway

WYCOMBE Wanderers fans will have to pay more to watch the likes of Runcorn and Northwich Victoria in the new season.

The price of standing on the terraces will be £4.50, an increase of 50p, and sitting in the stands will now set fans back to the tune of £6, a 20 per cent mark-up.

The increase comes even though Wycombe will be playing in the GM Vauxhall Conference again next season, after Colchester's ground was given Football League approval on Friday.

Wanderers fans will also be paying more than their opposite numbers at Kettering, where it will cost fans £3.50 for terrace admission once again this season and £5 to sit in the stands. The Northants club finished one place below Wycombe in the league.

Telford, another of the Conference's front-runners, have yet to decide prices for the

new season, but last year charged £3.50 to stand on the terraces and £4.50 to sit down.

Discussing the increase, Blues secretary John Goldsworthy told The Star: "There are two reasons."

"One is increased police charges and the other is the club absorbed the last VAT increase without increasing the price for tickets."

Sergeant Steve Sherbourne, at High Wycombe Police Station, said: "The club has to pay for officers inside the ground and there are other officers dealing with the parking situation on matchdays."

"The club's attendances have risen in the last season because of its success, which we welcome, but it does mean more officers being deployed there."