

rewdly plots Runcorn's downfall



O'NEILL SET TO BE IN BIG DEMAND

WYCOMBE Wanderers' chairman Ivor Beeks is on standby for offers to flood in for Blues' boss Martin O'Neill's mercurial services following the manager's team selection master-stroke which clinched the non-League double.

O'Neill re-juggled his side to perfection from the unsettled line-up of recent months to beat Runcorn 4-1 in Sunday's FA Trophy Final at Wembley.

But with Football League fixtures, together with Wycombe's Trophy commitments, now completed, the speculation season regarding O'Neill's future now starts in earnest.

"I would not have expected any offers to come before the Trophy Final but now it is over, it might be different," said Beeks after Wanderers' double delight.

"We want to keep Martin here at Wycombe, but I have to be realistic. We can't hope to compete with a Premier League club but we will have to do our best."

O'Neill has denied he had already been interviewed for the Nottingham Forest job, as was alleged by one Sunday

By CLAIRE NASH and GARY LAWRENCE

newspaper.

But the Forest board are preparing to draw up their shortlist to find successors for Brian Clough and his former number two Ronnie Fenton, who resigned yesterday.

O'Neill ended his celebration dinner speech on Sunday evening by declaring that he would be talking to Beeks today about contracts, although he did not specify which ones he meant.

Earlier he was full of admiration for the way his Trophy Final side had raised their game in their 61st match of the season.

"We showed a lot of resilience today. The players are very tired, it's been a hard, hard season. For us to produce a performance like that today was something special," he said.

O'Neill kept the pundits guessing with his 1993 Wembley line-up.

He plumped for Steve Thompson in a more advanced role up front with Keith Scott, following the midfielder's bounce back to fitness from a knee injury.

O'Neill turned to Barnet boys Geoff Cooper (left back) and Hakan Hayrettin (midfield) to shore up his limited resources.

But a bitterly disappointed Mark West, Wycombe's local hero of 1991, believed his manager had been disloyal to his own players.

He said: "I think he has shown a lack of loyalty towards his own players. I feel that bad about it," after saying: "I thought I might have been on the bench but it wasn't to be."

Midfielder Simon Stapleton had his return to fitness for the Final agonisingly curtailed when he broke down in training on Friday.

Players who were experiencing Wembley's wonder for the first time — Paul Hyde, Jason Cousins, Thompson, Cooper and Hayrettin — took to the awe-inspiring stage to the manor born.

Cousins gave Blues lift off in the second minute when he scored with a 20-yard free kick, with Andy Kerr, Thompson, and Dave Carroll wrapping the result up.

There was also a happy moment for injured skipper Glyn Creaser, who afterwards collected the FA Trophy.