

Claire Nash describes an eventful press conference at Adams Park

Spotlight falls on Wanderers

THE drama's major players trooped onto the television light-lit stage.

Wanderers director Alan Parry looked chuffed, chairman Ivor Beeks exuded a serene air, while Martin O'Neill wore the look of a man about to undergo a tortuous ordeal.

The assembled press hoard at Adams Park's sumptuous Keen Lounge closed in for the interrogation. Microphones were thrust O'Neill-wards after Parry performed the introductory formalities.

Wanderers' employees mingled with the media in the 12-row makeshift pressroom, seemingly bemused, but rapt by their popular manager's affirmation of his loyalty to the club. Players Keith Scott and Dennis Greene poked their heads round the door.

They heard: "I have accepted the offer of a two-year contract to stay at Wycombe Wanderers."

The scribbling audience digested O'Neill's opening declaration, which was followed by the reasons why he reached his decision.

O'Neill was asked if he had been offered the Forest job. He confirmed he had.

He was asked if he would have accepted the job under any circumstances. O'Neill



Ivor Beeks: Serene

praised Wycombe's supporters, told of Beeks' pleas not to knock Wanderers out of the frame and said he deliberated at length before making his decision.

O'Neill was asked if he had any regrets. He conceded he may live to regret his decision, but added: "That's the way it goes."

He told the inquisitors that he firmly believed he could do a Barnet and ultimately a Wimbledon.

Then the media got down to the nitty-gritty, asking Beeks if he could still afford his manager. "If I could not afford him I would not be here. We have sat down and agreed his terms and are quite happy," he replied.

Beeks was asked whether he slept well the previous night. He said: "Last night's sleep was the best I have had for a fortnight."

O'Neill denied Forest chairman Fred Reacher was surprised when told his job offer had been refused.

Beeks was asked if he was surprised. He replied: "I think we have a special relationship at this club. In the three years Martin has spent here there has been a certain chemistry. Nottingham Forest is a big job but this is a big one, too."

Beeks declared Forest had lost out. And with that the conference was closed.



Alan Parry: Chuffed

Supporters boosted by O'Neill's news

BLUES' fans reacted to the news of Martin O'Neill's extended two-year stay at Wycombe with a combination of delight and disbelief.

The Wanderers manager said their support and reception for his non-League double-winning side played a major part in his decision.

Wycombe's fanzine The Adams Family issued a statement, saying: "He has given Wycombe more commitment than he has ever given before. It is a huge moral boost to the players and the fans and already people are looking forward to next season."

Chris Avery, a Wycombe fan for 41 years, said: "I am thrilled to bits. I quite honestly thought he would go."

"It will be superb for him to continue. It would have been unsettling for the players if he went at such a crucial time," said the 51-year-old, of Ford Way, Downley.

"I am quite sure his family and children also had something to do with it," he added. "In a year's time or two years' time if he has

made it in the Football League he can make it anywhere."

Robert Barbar, 18, of The Fairway, Flackwell Heath, said: "It is good he has signed a two-year contract. It is a superb gesture to the fans. I do not think that many people would have thought he would stay."

Stuart Hazelden, 18, of Friars Gardens, Hughenden, agreed. "I am slightly surprised but happy he is staying. I would not have blamed him for going on to a bigger club, but would have felt disappointed if he was not there to manage us in the Third Division. It rounds the whole season off perfectly for us," he said.

"I am deeply surprised," said John Turner, of Edmunds Gardens, High Wycombe.

"The mere fact he was going for an interview meant the job was his. He was offered the job. To turn it down for a two-year contract at Wycombe is nothing short of incredible. It's brilliant, really brilliant," added the 30-year-old.

Monument to the town centre

THERE was some discussion at High Wycombe's town centre forum, held on Tuesday night, about a statue or work of art for the town centre. One member joked it should perhaps be a bus! Maybe, bearing in mind Wycombe Wanderers' success, it should be a statue of Martin O'Neill. Do you have any other ideas? Drop me a line.