

Blues players' futures still in melting pot

O'Neill chews over contracts

Report by CLAIRE NASH

THE mystery of who's going full time at Wycombe Wanderers and who's going full stop, deepened on Wednesday when Martin O'Neill flew to Rhodes for a week-long holiday with his squad.

As many as ten to 12 players could go full time, with five to six remaining on part-time terms, revealed Wycombe chairman Ivor Beeks this week.

But he added: "That could change."

The players' seven-day trip gives manager O'Neill an opportunity to continue discussions with them. Some, such as Keith Scott, have part-time contracts up for renewal.

"While Martin is away I believe he will be talking to a number of players. He will use the time usefully," said Beeks.

The chairman added that O'Neill now knows what his budget is. He added that players' contracts should be finalised within a fortnight of the squad's return from the Greek island.

"Martin is happy with his budget. He says it is as much as he feels is necessary to work with."

Midfielder Steve Thompson's commitments to the RAF leave him as one candidate who is unlikely to sign a full-time contract.

O'Neill, who joined Wycombe's tour the day after discussions with Beeks, has confirmed he wants Thompson to remain at the club on a part-time basis.

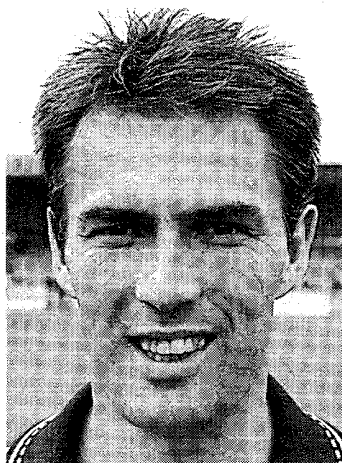
O'Neill added that he wants anyone who goes full time to sign a two-year agreement.

"I would like to keep players for at least two years. But some of the players such as Steve Thompson cannot go full time. He will be accommodated," he said.

Midfielder Hakan Hayrettin and left back Geoff Cooper can now be snapped up if O'Neill wants them.

The on-loan Barnet pair have been culled from Bees boss Ed Stein's squad.

Both Hayrettin and Cooper have said they would prefer to stay with Wycombe rather than return to their Second Division club.



Steve Thompson

The duo played vital stop-gap roles in Wanderers' Wembley success and the late season run-in to promotion to Division Three.

One man who is keen to pick up the pieces if some present Wycombe players' contracts are not renewed, is Slough manager David Kemp who spoke to O'Neill this week.

"I am not interested in anyone in particular. But I spoke to Martin just to see who was available. But at the time Martin said he was not in the position to say," said Kemp, who wants to strengthen his squad for a tilt at joining Wycombe in Division Three.

"If there is anyone who is not staying, then coming to Slough would be an option for them," he added.

● MESSAGES of congratulation are still besieging Adams Park in response to Martin O'Neill's decision to stay at Wycombe Wanderers.

One man apparently turned up at the ground wanting to kiss the Blues manager's feet, said Wanderers director Alan Parry this week.

● WYCOMBE Wanderers Youth Team play Hungerford in the Allied Counties League Championship final play-off on Monday at Wokingham Football Club, Finchampstead Road, (ko 7.30pm). But they may be without Alec Norman who has glandular fever.