

Blues might make promotion history

WYCOMBE Wanderers could be the last non-league club to be promoted into the Football League.

With Barnet now in deep financial trouble, Maidstone folding last year and the problems Scarborough faced when first promoted, many people in football feel the automatic promotion rule should be changed.

All three clubs entered the Football League for the first time after winning the Conference.

Southend manager Barry Fry, who was in charge of Barnet

until last season, is relieved Wycombe has achieved promotion before there is talk of changing the rules.

He told callers to Wycombe's clubcall line he thought it would be "absolutely criminal and a shame" if automatic promotion was dropped.

"The club going up now has got to be whiter than white and I feel Wycombe is the whiter than white club," he said. "There is a feeling among a lot of Football League people that non league clubs can't cope with the Football League."

By CLAIRE NASH

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Martin O'Neill has signalled changes in his dug-out team by inviting assistant coach Paul Franklin to join the club full-time.

Former Blues player Franklin will help O'Neill with day-to-day squad training. But the Wanderers boss has not ruled out the possibility of one of his high-profile contacts in the football world joining him in an assisting capacity at a later stage.

"Because we are going full time, we need someone to work with the players every day. I have struck up a good rapport with Paul and he has earned the right to expand his coaching role which he is very keen to do," said O'Neill this week.

He denied that former Arsenal and Coventry player Kenny Sansom was approached to join him at Wycombe, as was reported in the national press last week. But O'Neill said: "I could have looked further to my friends in the game. That might come at a later stage."

John Reardon will continue his current duties as part-time assistant manager.

Franklin, a former Watford player who joined Blues' coaching staff in 1990, is O'Neill's sole full-time appointment so far in the



Full-time position: Paul Franklin

close-season.

The manager continued discussions with his chairman Ivor Beeks about players' contracts this week.

O'Neill said he hoped to have terms with all players — he wants around 15 to go full time — finalised by the end of this month before looking at new signings.

He anticipates lengthier negotiations over terms with players who already have jobs.

Some, though he would not name them, face a possible pay cut to go professional.

"I don't envisage a great deal of problems. But some of them get well-paid for their other jobs. I understand their situation, money is important with such things as mortgages to consider."