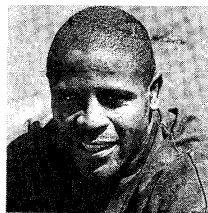


Blues get boost as inspirational defender agrees contract

COUSINS SIGNS UP FULL-TIME



Andy Kerr



Martin O'Neill

WYCOMBE Wanderers defensive linchpin Jason Cousins has signed on full-time for Blues, after having doubts about renewing a professional playing career.

The 22-year-old right back, who joined Wycombe two years ago from Brentford, was uncertain whether a full-time contract would be worth his while, with promotion in his job and buying a house in the offing.

But Cousins completed a two-year full-time contract deal with Blues boss Martin O'Neill last Thursday night after the team's training session.

By **CLAIRE NASH**

He is the eleventh player to sign professional terms with Blues.

O'Neill has previously stated that he hopes to have as many as 15 full-time players on his books as Wanderers embark on their first Division Three title campaign in the Football League.

"There were a lot of things to think about, and I will be honest, money was one of them. But I had a chat with Martin and he convinced me he could come up with a deal which was reasonable," said Cousins.

O'Neill last week admitted his surprise that Cousins, who will give up his present full-time job as a bailiff's driver, did not jump at the chance of going full-time.

The defender's indecision has illustrated the considerations many players have had to weigh up before plumping for professional football.

"There are risks involved," he said. "I could break my leg tomorrow as a part-time or full-time player. You just never know what may happen, but you need to give it a go."

Cousins hopes that a return to professional football will give him an extra half-yard of pace to improve his game.

"A sprinting coach is coming down to help us next week. Hopefully he can give us a few tips," he said.

Fellow defender Andy Kerr, a former Shrewsbury and Telford player, has still not completed terms with O'Neill, but said on Friday he is not unduly perturbed.



Handy deal: Jason Cousins has a full-time contract