

MARTIN O'Neill has signalled the start of major rejigging with his squad as Wycombe Wanderers count down to their historic Football League debut against Carlisle on Saturday.

He revealed after Mark West's testimonial against Portsmouth on Saturday that he will have some painful decisions to make in regard to players' futures at the club.

The manager has already told intermittently-inspired winger Ty Gooden that he is no longer needed at Wycombe.

"I will be making a lot of decisions this week, some will be more painful than others. But that is a fact of life for a football manager and for the players. You cannot shy away from it," said O'Neill after Blues' 3-0 defeat by Pompey.

"I am hoping the decisions will be for the overall good of the club," he added.

By CLAIRE NASH

O'Neill would not reveal who was likely to be on the receiving end of his painful decisions.

He said last night's match between squad members at Adams Park would give players without contracts a final opportunity to impress him, and discussions may take place with some after the game.

West, who has not yet signed the part-time contract offered to him at the end of last season, confirmed that he would see O'Neill last night.

The long-serving striker, like Gooden, has only been a fringe member of Wycombe's first team during the last two seasons, with a regular spot proving elusive.

He was substituted by Tim Langford in the 74th minute of his testimonial.

But West said he had enjoyed the day, which was attended by a crowd of 2,712. "It was good. The Wycombe fans were great," he said.

The striker, presented with a crystal decanter by Wanderers chairman Ivor Beeks before kick-off, was warmly applauded

by Wanderers' supporters.

But he said before the game that he believed his future with Blues hung in the balance.

O'Neill's decision regarding Gooden, who was given a second chance during Blues' pre-season programme to earn a full-time contract, is a clear indication that the manager wants to trim his 25-strong squad to suit both the requirements of professional football and the confines of his budget.

There had been no summer departures by regular squad members from last season until Gooden left Adams Park.

There have been substantial comings and goings at other Third Division clubs in the close-season.

Wanderers old boy Kenny Swain has sold or released 13 players and bought seven at Wigan.

In Gooden's case O'Neill said: "It was a hard decision to make. But over a two-year period he had not really done it here. While he hoped I would offer him a full-time contract, I thought he would do better elsewhere."

Gooden made a blazing debut against West Ham in a pre-season friendly two seasons ago, and glimpses of his skills delighted fans.

O'Neill was locked in contract discussions with Steve Guppy and Andy Kerr after Saturday's game and was hopeful of completing agreements with them, although Kerr maintained he had not finalised anything with his manager.

O'Neill has still not spent any money on new players, with his only summer signing so far being versatile midfielder/defender and former Barnet captain Duncan Horton.

Geoff Cooper, who had a month-by-month full-time deal with Wanderers up to Christmas, has followed striker Tony Lynch back to Barnet, which puts some money back in the manager's kitty.

Trialist defenders Ian Wilmott (Clevedon) and Denny Mundee (Bournemouth), and midfielder/defender David Titterton (Hereford) will find out this week whether they are in O'Neill's plans and on the players' coach to Carlisle this Friday morning.

