

A GIANT STEP

THE next few weeks will be vital to our success or failure in the League.

I don't want to start sounding any alarm bells but through all the excitement of today's match a serious task lies ahead.

It's going to be an historic day for the club. All the players have been looking forward to it for some years now.

But when you're ambitious there's no room for any slip-ups. We want to survive and when you see us out of the pitch we'll be more than business-like.

The bookies' crazy odds have added a lot of pressure on us and I fear that if we get a tonking in our first few games, the outlook could change dramatically. We could find our confidence knocked black and blue.

That's why this early period is so vital. If we can handle the new opposition the way I think we can, then there is no reason why we can't look like a championship side again.

I'm not going to start saying we'll do a "Barnet" and go straight up

first time out because we are really venturing into unknown territory.

But I believe I have the right men at my disposal to do something special this season and it's really a case of "suck it and see".

We have to be tested against Third Division sides to have an idea of

Interview by **MATT DRISCOLL**

how we'll cope. We might be pleasantly surprised because we have some quality players here. Yet we have to be walking into a baptism of fire.

We have a lot of away fixtures in our first couple of months and to pick up points from these matches would be

a dream start. The transition can take time but I'm optimistic that we'll remain safe.

That's why we'll all be very apprehensive when we walk out for today's game while at the same time feeling very excited, knowing the opportunities that rest in our hands.

I have only bought one player so far in the

summer, Barnet's Duncan Horton, but I hope to be signing more.

Most of the players are now on full-time contracts so they have been training long and hard. We've also had more time to work on ball skills and set-pieces.

I hope you'll see the difference and I hope they help us achieve the right result today.

by **MARTIN O'NEILL**

