

COUSINS IS IN DISGRACE

Player's Blues future hangs in the balance

By **CLAIRE NASH**

JASON Cousins' future with Wycombe Wanderers was hanging by a thread on Saturday after he was sent off for the second time in a week.

The 22-year-old defender was immediately stripped of his captaincy after his club's lion-hearted 1-0 victory over Doncaster at Adams Park on Saturday.

Now he is set to be fined one week's wages and suspended for seven days by manager Martin O'Neill, who was appalled by his former skipper's behaviour.

The manager has given Cousins an ultimatum. "If he does it again he will not play at this football club anymore," said O'Neill yesterday.

Glyn Creaser steps in to resume his former role as skipper in tonight's Autoglass Trophy first round match against Barnet at Adams Park (ko 7.45pm). The game represents his first team comeback from long-term injury.

O'Neill's punishment of Cousins is in addition to a possible four-game suspension which the Football Association can impose, pending the referee's report on Saturday's sending off.

"I thought that the decision when he was sent off against Colchester last week was harsh, but

his behaviour this week was a total disgrace," said O'Neill after the match.

He shouted furiously at Cousins when the defender walked off the pitch accompanied by home fans' cries of disgrace.

The defender was given his marching orders by referee Mike Pierce for an appalling two-footed lunge at Doncaster's David Moss just before half time.

It was his second bookable offence following a clumsy tackle on another player Mike Jeffrey.

O'Neill dismissed Cousins from the dressing room at half time, and the manager's raised voice could be heard by spectators beside the players' tunnel.

The defender incomprehensibly committed the second and worst challenge while still in his own half.

"He should have been sent off regardless of the yellow card beforehand. It was a terrible challenge," was O'Neill's damning verdict.

The Blues boss has confirmed how he will punish Cousins. "At the moment he will be suspended for a week and fined a week's wages.

"It has not wrecked his career at Wycombe. I think everybody is entitled to a second chance.

"But what he did is something we won't stand for," he said.

"It was not in the spirit of this football club. It was incomprehensible especially after last week, and that is the whole point.

"He is not only a player with honour to uphold, he was the captain with an example to show to people," O'Neill added.

Cousins is already suspended for next Saturday's Division Three fixture at Chesterfield, after a deliberate handball infringement in last week's 5-2 hammering by Colchester.

The player would not make any comment to Midweek about the incident. He left the ground after the match with his sister and, was said to have shut himself away at a friend's house.

O'Neill now faces yet another defensive re-jig, to add to changes forced upon him by players' injuries.

● **WANDERERS'** accounts and balance sheets for last season have been sent out to shareholders.

This will also give notice of the club's annual general meeting, which will be held on Monday, October 18.