

OUT OF THE BLUES

DEAN JONES reports on Wycombe Wanderers' league campaign

THINGS looked a lot rosier off the field than it did on it for Football League new boys Wycombe Wanderers this week.

On Saturday Blues' 3-2 defeat at home to Lincoln City not only undermined their promotion bid from Endsleigh Division 3 but left manager Martin O'Neill fuming about his team's performance.

Wycombe had taken an early lead with a goal from Dave Carroll. And then conceded the advantage badly to leave themselves 3-1 down at half time. According to the gospel of O'Neill, Wycombe made defensive mistakes that you would clip the ears of a schoolboy for making in a Sunday league game.

Keith Scott then missed a penalty against his former club in the second half. Which just about took the biscuit for O'Neill as Blues could only pull one goal back with a Steve Thompson effort before the final whistle.

"I believe you get out of the game what you actually deserve," O'Neill told Blues clubcall line.

Which is probably why Wanderers emerged pointless from the game and remain fourth in the table. The result does nothing for promotion hopes of a club that is both ambitious and forward-looking.

Chairman Ivor Beeks told the Blues line on Tuesday that Wycombe have the long-term ambition to win promotion into Division 1 or the FA Carling Premiership. Big words for a club who have just dipped their toes in the heady world of full-time professional football.

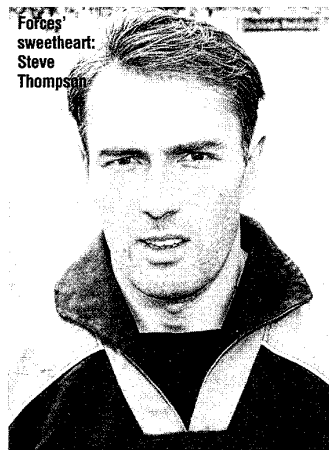
But it is equally true to say that Wycombe have more than hot air to support their ambitions. Blues reported on the clubcall line the "biggest financial gain" — or profit — in the club's history after its annual general meeting on Monday night.

This is highly welcome news for Wycombe when the vast majority of professional football clubs are on the headline, if not below it.

It will enable Wanderers to invest in the club's future and there is already talk of them improving their Adams Park ground. Mr Beeks must know that Blues' future is rosy if the play in the boardroom is as smart as the that of the team over the last year or so. As Mr Beeks rightly says, there is now no point in sitting back.

He said: "We have every aspiration of first or Premier League (football). We want to go as far as we possibly can. If that means we have to change the ground in order to suit that and providing the local authority takes it on board, I'm sure Wycombe will be a force in this Football League for many years to come."

What have England Rugby Union star, Rory Underwood, and Wycombe Wanderers' **STEVE THOMPSON** in common? The same taste in salad dressing perhaps, or a passion for fossil collecting? Actually, it's the RAF. 90 MINUTES goes along for the ride



Forces' sweetheart:
Steve Thompson

When he's not making goals for Wycombe, Steve Thompson is earning a living as an RAF PT instructor.

Thompson signed up for the RAF after playing for Bristol City and Torquay United and has since played semi-pro for Saltash United, Slough and now Wycombe Wanderers. He scored in last season's FA Trophy Final and was capped by the England semi-professional team.

"I hope that the RAF are taking notice of what I'm achieving," he says. "I don't think anybody has played at such a high level since National

Service days. It means a lot to me and I think it does the RAF's reputation good having sportsmen of such a high calibre. But so far, I haven't had the type of support that they've given to Rory Underwood."

So would he rather be at Adams Park full-time, than training his recruits each day?

"I would like to give it maybe two or three years and have a real crack at it but the RAF have put a lot of money into my training"

"I'd like to be there every day but I can't just give in my notice. At this stage of my career, I would like to give it maybe two or three years and have a real crack at it but the RAF have put a lot of money into my training.

"I think Wycombe have the spirit and ability to match any team in the Third Division. We've got to be able to compete in 46 Cup ties but we've got some very strong and determined players who want to win.

"We're aiming to get into the top three but if that isn't possible, a place in the top seven will give us a chance in the play-offs. We might have an advantage as we've played at Wembley before and I don't think the place holds any fear for the players."

NEIL FISSLER