

is ace in the pack

Cambridge boss rejects dogma to boost fortunes



Potent force: Steve Claridge is the man Blues have to contain tomorrow

CAMBRIDGE United have ridden a rollercoaster of fortunes in recent years.

But manager Gary Johnson is out to ensure the Second Division side continues a rich vein of form in the FA Cup.

Under John Beck, now firmly entrenched at Preston North End, they reached the quarter finals in 1990 and 1991, stamping on sides such as Millwall, Wolves, Middlesbrough and Sheffield Wednesday (in no particular order) on the way.

They are presently in transition under Johnson's guiding eye after plummeting to the depths of Division One last season following a rapid rise from the Football League basement.

Cambridge were on the fringes of the Premiership two years ago, but Leicester City prevented their becoming the first team to be promoted from Division Three to the top flight in consecutive seasons.

Johnson's young side have yet to find a consistency, have suffered from widespread injuries to mainstay players and are presently entrenched in Division Two's mid-table.

Their deserved 2-1 victory at Reading in last week's first-round replay, following a 0-0 draw at the Abbey Stadium, is regarded as their finest result this season.

But defeats by Bristol Rovers and Port Vale followed.

Such unpredictability, however, could be in their favour tomorrow.

"I do not know how we are going to perform either. I know Martin saw us play Reading and Port Vale, so I would hope he doesn't have any idea either," jokes Johnson.

But he swiftly adds: "We do not play off-the-cuff. We have a strategy and game plan. Youngsters can be inconsistent. But they are in the team on merit and we are quite

By **CLAIRE NASH**

happy with the way things are going at the moment."

One youngster who has come to the fore is Kofi Nyamah, who scored the first goal against Reading.

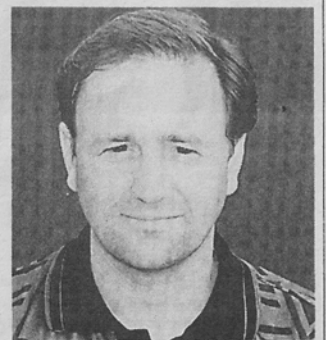
The 18-year-old buzzed up and down the left touchline during the game. He interlinked nicely with United's leading scorer Steve Claridge, a formidable force who re-joined the Us after a stint at Luton, and has been eyed-up by Charlton in recent weeks.

Cambridge still suffer from a negative reputation garnered during Beck's reign when tactics rigidly adhered to his long-ball doctrine.

Johnson was a victim of the strategy, which was highly successful before turning sour, when he was demoted by Beck from assistant manager to youth team boss.

"He thought I had lost interest," recalls Johnson, who adds: "If the crash, bang, wallop style works for one year, fine. But three years down the lane, it gets monotonous." monotonous."

So Wycombe are warned: don't bank on expecting the unexpected.



Nurturing talent: Manager **Gary Johnson**