

## Everton eye Walker

By CLAIRE NASH

UNCERTAINTY loomed for Wycombe's FA Cup third round opponents Norwich City yesterday when manager Mike Walker was reportedly on the verge of taking over at Everton.

Last night's match at Newcastle, the Canaries' last before facing Blues at Adams Park on Saturday (ko 3pm), was being foreseen as his final game.

He has moulded the Canaries into one of the most entertaining in the country.

But Norwich chairman Robert Chase issued a "hands-off warning" to the Merseysiders.

Everton were denied permission to talk to Walker following an official approach on Monday night. And Chase has threatened legal action to hold onto his most successful manager.

"The timing could not have been more insensitive," he said yesterday.

Norwich are endeavouring to improve on their seventh position in the Premiership and are obviously intent on FA Cup success after being knocked out of the UEFA Cup by Inter Milan.

● A PREVIEW of Wycombe's cup clash against Norwich will be shown on BBC Breakfast News tomorrow at 7.50am.

● BLUES' youth team hope to give their elders a lift for Saturday by upsetting Millwall in the FA Youth Cup third round tonight at the New Den (ko 7pm).



Mike Walker

# BLUES PULL BACK POINTS

By CLAIRE NASH

WYCOMBE secured vital points against Hereford United on Monday after Saturday's defeat at Walsall threatened to leave them adrift of Division Three's leading group.

Blues, now back in fourth place after dropping to sixth, scraped through 3-2 at Adams Park in a topsy-turvy match which secured their first Football League double.

"It would have been tantamount to suicide if we had dropped any points against Hereford. It was a vital win to keep us in contention," said manager Martin O'Neill after his side's victory gave Blues four points from a possible nine over the Christmas period.

The win, secured by goals from Steve Guppy, Dave Carroll and captain Terry Evans, followed Saturday's 4-2 defeat at the Bescot Stadium.

At Walsall, Blues included new on-loan striker Lee Hodges from Tottenham Hotspur and there were returns for Andy Kerr in central defence and Simon Stapleton in midfield after a four-month absence following surgery on ruptured ankle ligaments.

Monday's bonus was the scintillating form of Steve Thompson in midfield, his first start since aggravating a groin injury at Scunthorpe two months ago.

Thompson carved the opening for Wycombe's first goal and constantly terrorised Hereford with mazy runs forward. He was replaced on 75 minutes by Hakan Hayrettin after receiving a knock to his

leg, but is confident of shaking off the injury for Saturday's FA Cup match against Norwich.

"Thompson ran the show in the first half. To keep that up for 90 minutes would have been miraculous," said O'Neill.

Thompson said: "I was pleased. This has been my worst season ever for injuries."

But the news wasn't so bright for other Wycombe players. Kerr stormed from the players' dressing room when he was dropped for the Hereford match following a disappointing performance at Walsall in place of Matt Crossley.

"At this moment I don't think Andy has played to the best of his ability," O'Neill told Midweek.

Kerr was replaced by Jason Cousins, with Stapleton moving to right back. Tim Langford was on the bench and replaced by Hodges up front because of a loss in form, said O'Neill.

Striker Tony Hemmings, who scored twice at Walsall and had a lively first half against Hereford, was substituted by Langford on Monday because of a blow to his left knee. But he too is confident he will be firing on all cylinders for Saturday.

● WATFORD striker Roger Willis, a target of Wycombe interest, has moved to Birmingham City to join his former Barnet boss Barry Fry.

## HOW THEY STAND

|                | HOME      |          |          |          |              | AWAY     |          |          |           |              |     |
|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|-----|
|                | P         | W        | D        | L        | F A          | P        | W        | D        | L         | F A          | Pts |
| Crewe          | 22        | 10       | 1        | 0        | 28 11        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 20        | 19           | 47  |
| Shrewsbury     | 22        | 4        | 4        | 2        | 14 12        | 7        | 2        | 3        | 22        | 16           | 39  |
| Preston        | 21        | 7        | 3        | 2        | 29 17        | 4        | 2        | 3        | 20        | 19           | 38  |
| <b>Wycombe</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>20 13</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>20 38</b> |     |
| Walsall        | 22        | 5        | 3        | 4        | 20 15        | 6        | 2        | 2        | 9         | 9            | 38  |
| Chester        | 21        | 5        | 2        | 2        | 12 6         | 6        | 2        | 4        | 24        | 16           | 37  |
| Scunthorpe     | 23        | 6        | 4        | 1        | 25 8         | 3        | 4        | 5        | 10        | 12           | 35  |



Lively Steve Thompson unsettles Hereford Picture by CHRIS BERRY