

OUT OF THE BLUES

DEAN JONES reports on Wycombe Wanderers' league campaign

HOPELESS from start to finish.

Wycombe Wanderers' promotion bandwagon came off the rails at Mansfield Town on Saturday to the dismay of manager Martin O'Neill.

Having spent £60,000 in bolstering the Blues' championship challenge over the past month, O'Neill saw his side produce the most abject display since he took over as manager.

Mid-table Mansfield completely played promotion favourites Wycombe off the park. In O'Neill's words, they murdered them.

It was not that Wycombe were an inferior footballing side; they just did not have the heart or the will to win.

O'Neill told the clubcall line that he always felt that whatever side he sent out in the blue of Wycombe, they would never lack the heart to win a game like they did on Saturday.

"They were hopeless from start to finish," O'Neill said. "We never got into it. No desire, no heart, no anything."

"It was the most disappointing performance I have ever been involved with at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club."

O'Neill would be the last to make excuses for a poor performance. But this undoubtedly tired display came five days after the euphoria of reaching the regional final of the Autoglass Trophy.

Wycombe moved to within one step of Wembley in dramatic style after they beat Fulham at Craven Cottage on a penalty shoot-out.

O'Neill rightly says that Wycombe should be professional enough to pick themselves up for the next game.

But the loss of skipper Terry Evans, injured in the 2-2 draw at Craven Cottage last week, may have a more profound affect on the team's fortunes.

Evans has been a Captain Marvel since he joined Wycombe from Brentford for £20,000 earlier in the season. He is one reason why Wycombe have risen to second place in the Endsleigh Division 3. And his presence was obviously missed at Mansfield.

Wycombe fans will remember only too well that they lost Glyn Creaser, then skipper, at a critical time in last season's glorious campaign.

Then they moved swiftly into the transfer market to sign former player Anton Vircavs and they went on to complete the non-league double.

History has a funny habit of repeating itself and should Evans's knee injury turn out to be serious, O'Neill may find him plunging into the transfer market to shore up the Wycombe defence. Just like last season.