



## WEEKEND WATCH

### Steve Tongue

# Wycombe have poor acts to follow in the big time

**T**HEY arrived in the Football League with stars in their eyes and the sky as their limit; then, having seen what Wimbledon achieved, revised those expectations upwards. But where are they now, the Scarboroughs, Barnets and Maidstones? Distinctly under the moon, and in the latter case under the ground.

Since Peterborough United prised open the tightest of closed shops in 1960, nine other clubs have followed them in entering the League for the first time: Oxford (1962), Cambridge (1970), Hereford (1972), Wimbledon (1977), Wigan (1978), Scarborough (1987), Maidstone (1989), Barnet (1991) and Wycombe (1993).

Maidstone went to the wall after three seasons;

the writing had been on it when 846 people turned up to watch them play Hereford. Wycombe are still enjoying a debut season full of Bucks' fizz, and Wimbledon remain an exception to the rule — every rule — by continuing to look down their pug noses at many elders and supposed betters. Yet both share a problem common to all the *arrivistes* — how to build up support and therefore financial muscle from a non-League base.

In home games over the past week, Barnet attracted a crowd of 1,604, Wigan 1,438 and Scarborough 1,571. Oxford, Cambridge and Hereford have always been among the worst-supported teams in their respective divisions.

The pattern is remarkably familiar. Newcomers storm into the League, quickly win promotion, then find their problems have just begun. Indeed, the very things that have sustained them, like a constantly successful team and in many cases an underdeveloped football location, become rods for their back. If, as with Barnet and Maidstone, the club is under-capitalised as well, their very existence is endangered.

The briefly fashionable theory that it is not such a bad thing to drop down into the Vauxhall Conference, returning leaner and fitter, does not survive examination either. Colchester, Lincoln and Darlington have tried that. All three are now at the wrong end of the Third Division and on Saturday were watched by a combined total of under 9,000.

Robin Fry, commercial manager of Hereford in their '70s salad days and now managing director, says: "What happens is that all the euphoria carries you through, but early success is very, very hard to follow and it's when you have a lean spell that the trouble starts." Wycombe — and Kidderminster Harriers, who are next in line — beware.

## WYCOMBE (0) 0 CHESTERFIELD (1) 1

**ATT: 5752**

► **GOALS** ▼ **CHESTERFIELD** Norris (39) penalty. Norris scored from the penalty spot after Wycombe's Matt Crosby was sent off for deliberate handball.

► **TEAMS** ▼ **WYCOMBE** Hyde 7, Cousins 7, Titterton 6, Crossley 5, \*Creaser 8, Ryan 5, Carroll 7, Brown 5 (sub 80 mins Reid), Cusack 5 (sub 72 mins Cunningham), Hemmings 5, Guppy 7. Sub not used: Moussiddik.

▼ **CHESTERFIELD** \*Leonard 8, Hewitt 7, Rodgers 7, Carr, C. 7, Carr, D. 7, Law 6, Curtis 6, Davies 5, Morris 5 (sub 31 mins Norris 7), Moss 6, Jules 5. Subs not used: Pearson, Thompson.

► **REFEREE** K. Leach (Wolves) 5.

► **BOOKINGS** Wycombe: Hemmings 30 mins (foul).

► **SENDING OFF** Wycombe: Crossley 39 mins (deliberate handball). Chesterfield: Jules 90 mins (professional foul).

► **ON TARGET** Wycombe 3, Chesterfield 2.

► **CORNERS FOR** Wycombe 14, Chesterfield 3.

► **MATCH RATING** ●●

The first-half penalty decision decided this hard-fought confrontation. Wycombe will rue points lost for their promotion loss.

**WYCOMBE (0) 0 CHESTERFIELD (1) 1**  
— 5,752 S Norris 40 (pen)

**WYCOMBE:** Hyde 6, Cousins 6, Titterton 6, Crossley 6, Creaser 5, Ryan 7, Carroll 7, Brown 6 (Reid 6), Cusack 6 (Cunningham 6), Hemmings 5, Guppy 8.

**CHESTERFIELD:** Leonard 6, Hewitt 7, Rogers 6, C Carr 6, D Carr 7, Law 6, Curtis 7, Davies 7, A Morris 6 (S Norris 8), Moss 6, Jules 7.