

Blues fail to secure return of former Adams Park favourite

O'NEILL LOSES OUT ON SCOTT

By **CLAIRE NASH**

MARTIN O'Neill has lost out in a bid to bring former Wycombe Wanderers favourite Keith Scott back to Adams Park.

In a move that promotion-chasing Blues' legion of fans have longed for, almost since the striker's departure more than a year ago, the Wycombe boss made Swindon Town a six-figure offer for the 27-year-old centre forward on Thursday night. But it was not enough.

Stoke City boss Lou Macari upped the stakes on Friday with a £300,000 bid which was accepted by Swindon's player/manager Steve McMahon.

Scott was happy to hear his old club was interested in him.

"I would like to think that one day that I could be in a position to go back to Wycombe. But I cannot really let my heart rule my head and go back purely for an emotional reason. Hopefully it will be the right think to do at the right time," he said.

O'Neill, frustrated his offer had not secured Scott's return, believed it would have been an ideal boost for his side.

Wycombe take on West Ham in the FA Cup this Saturday before embarking on a gruelling second half to the season to stay in the running for a play-off place. They are currently fourth in Division Two.

"It is frustrating. The amount we offered was obviously a lot more than we've ever offered for anyone else here," he said.

HOW THEY STAND

Top of Division Two

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Birmingham	24	7	4	1	29	8	7	4	1	18	7	50
Huddersfield	24	9	2	1	23	11	4	5	3	22	19	46
Oxford Utd	24	8	2	2	18	11	6	2	4	23	17	46
Wycombe	23	7	4	1	18	9	6	2	3	17	16	45
Brentford	24	8	0	4	24	9	6	2	4	22	14	44
Hull	24	8	1	3	24	11	4	4	4	16	19	41
Crewe	24	8	1	3	26	18	4	3	5	20	26	40

The manager did not reveal his figure, but he has more than £200,000 to spend.

Speculation has been rife since the tailend of last season that Scott would return to Wycombe. The striker joined his former team-mates at their post play-off celebrations at Wembley in May and is a frequent visitor to Wycombe's training sessions.

"Our offer came out of the blue. I don't think Keith would have even known about it. We made an offer on Thursday night. It was not enough, and Stoke City made an offer the next day," said O'Neill.

One factor behind Swindon's selling Scott, scorer of 12 goals this season, was to help boost funds to buy on-loan central defender Ian Culverhouse from Norwich City.

Swindon sold Scott for exactly the same figure they initially paid Wycombe. Blues received £75,000 more after Scott had made 25 appearances. Wycombe would have been entitled to a percentage of Stoke's fee if it had been above £300,000. The striker almost scored on his debut for his new club, but was robbed by a goal-line clearance by one of his own team-mates.