

Ryan the reliable will be missed

MARTIN O'Neill has thrown down the gauntlet to his midfield players to bridge the gap left by Keith Ryan's absence after a cruciate knee ligament injury ruled the stalwart out for the remainder of this term.

The Wycombe boss intends to scour the transfer market for a new link man after Ryan's season was brought to a cruel premature end during last week's Berks and Bucks clash against Chalfont St Peter.

"I do not feel at this minute that we have his type at the club. I think, in the way we play, Keith has been irreplaceable. He does so much work in front of the back four. He was one of the best midfielders in Division Two before his injury," said O'Neill.

Looking at his other available midfield options, he said: "Simon Stapleton is not the player he was two to three years ago. A Stapleton of old is what we need. It's up to him to take up the mantle. Steve Thompson and Gary Patterson are both a different style of player to Ryan."

O'Neill was philosophical about Ryan being injured in a low-key match.

"If we had played on the Saturday before against Wrexham, Keith would not have played. He could have done the same injury in training, but it's still a bit of a sickener."

Team captain Terry Evans said: "We are going to get promotion for Keithy. We will miss him greatly because of all the work he gets through. But we have a good team and should be able to pull together."



Crushing blow: Ryan is helped off after rupturing his right knee in last week's Berks and Bucks Cup match

Evans and Cousins pledge allegiance to club

BLUES skipper Terry Evans and full back Jason Cousins are set to renew their contracts with Wycombe Wanderers.

The former Brentford pair are keen to pledge their loyalty to the club which gave both the opportunity to

breathe new life into their respective careers. Cousins, who produced one of his best performances for some time at Chester under the watchful eye of Wales manager Mike Smith, was set to extend his career with Blues by signing a new two-and-a-half year contract yesterday.

Evans is also set to sign for a further two years, revealed Martin O'Neill this week. "This shows their commitment to the football club. Their signing up is excellent," said the Blues boss.

Evans said: "I would be happy to stay here for the rest of my career."