

Howard signs as illness rocks club

O'Neill sees off Division One competition to secure defender's services

MARTIN O'Neill is relieved to welcome versatile defender Terry Howard to Wycombe Wanderers today, with illness set to decimate his squad for tomorrow's match against Rotherham.

Suspension and injury have already reduced the Blues boss's options as fifth-placed Wanderers try to hold firm in pursuit of promotion.



Dave Carroll misses second game

Mainstay midfielder Dave Carroll is expected to miss his second game in succession tomorrow with a knee injury and left back Steve Brown completes a two-match ban.

Steve Thompson has been joined on the sick list by Jason Cousins, while Terry Evans has had treatment on a nagging shoulder injury this week.

Wycombe had the latter two to thank for providing the backbone for a hard-fought point at Shrewsbury last Saturday.

Howard, therefore, will provide invaluable back-up against tomorrow's opponents, managed by O'Neill's former Nottingham Forest team-mates Archie Gemmill and John McGovern.

He joins on a free transfer, with an 18-month contract, after being drafted in on a

By Claire Nash

non-contract basis for the 2-2 draw at Shrewsbury. The 28-year-old defender's debut appearance was enough to impress O'Neill who made a competitive offer.

Howard had talks with Division One clubs Sheffield United and Reading earlier this week.

"I want him over here to do a job for us. We need an extra body," said the Wycombe manager.

O'Neill has taken over Howard's contract, ended by Orient at half time in a League game last week, which means the player will continue on the same wages for the rest of this season, but will take a pay cut next term.

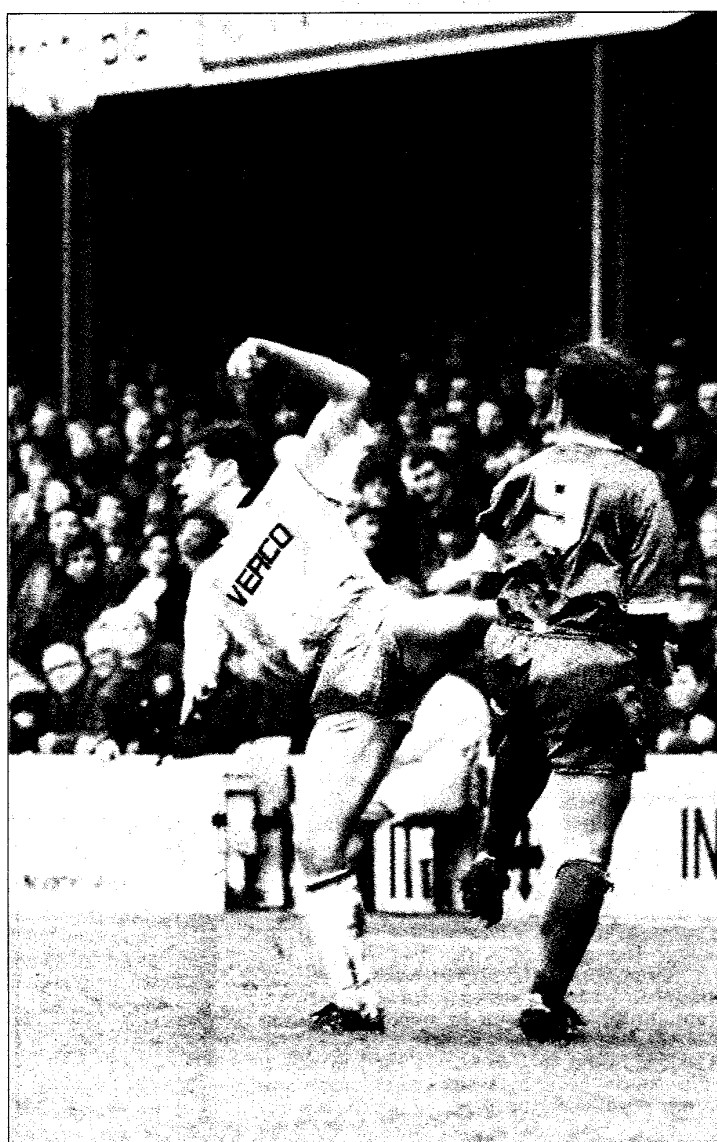
"He is taking less money for the extra year. It's less money, but it gives him more stability," explained O'Neill.

The manager is hopeful that Carroll recovers from a knee injury, suffered in a clash with Lee Turnbull in training, in time for next Tuesday's match at Cardiff, the first game in a Welsh double-header.

Blues visit Swansea the following Saturday.

"Davie's getting better every day. It may well be too soon for Saturday, but I'm hopeful he will be in contention the following week," O'Neill explained.

Where tomorrow's opponents are concerned, Rotherham have only won one away game this season, while Wycombe have not won at Adams Park this year.



Getting stuck in: Terry Howard is expected to sign for Blues today