

Robert Mendick's

Backchat



Defeated by the language barrier

IF only Martin O'Neill spoke Welsh. Then, maybe, Wycombe Wanderers could have avoided crashing to defeat 2-0 against Cardiff City last week.

All the Blues had to do was to turn to page 13 of the match programme and read the section entitled Talking Tactics. But, sadly for them, the piece was written in Welsh.

What special advice to his players could Blues manager Martin O'Neill have used?

Did "Basai wedi boyd yn dda i" translate as "Boot it up field and hope we can catch their goalie napping"?

Printed at the bottom of the page, thankfully in English, was the number for the Welsh Language Board.

Backchat dialled those digits in search of da answer.

Huw Owen, of the board, explained Cardiff's captain Mark Aizlewood has been learning Welsh for the past year.

Talking Tactics is his message to the fans, written in Welsh to help keep the language alive.

So, what about a message for the Wycombe fans?

"Pob lwc Wycombe am weddill y," said Huw. "It means best of luck to Wycombe for the rest of the season."



Martin O'Neill

In case Houston does not come up to scratch, Martin O'Neill and Mark McGhee have emerged as respectable managers with the perfect profiles to replace Graham. The young, fresh and so far untainted bosses of Wycombe Wanderers and Leicester City have the credentials this famous club require to rebuild their image after the worst period in their modern history.

In the past, Arsenal have preferred men with blood ties to Arsenal, which is why the names of Liam Brady and David O'Leary also topped many lists last night. But O'Neill,

who has turned down the prospect of moving from Wycombe to both Leicester, and Nottingham Forest in recent months, preferring to remain loyal to the Second Division club, would find the lure of Arsenal irresistible.

McGhee left Reading for Leicester two months ago, believing he could keep the Midlands club in the Premier League but conceded after the weeked FA Cup defeat to Wolves that the club are probably two defeats — which might come this week against Aston Villa and Coventry — from conceding the inevitability of relegation.

Arsenal's vice-chairman, David Dein, is known to be close to Manchester United's chairman Martin Edwards, and McGhee's credentials will have been underlined by United manager Alex Ferguson, his mentor at Aberdeen. At 37, he has gathered the reputation and knowledge and looks an Arsenal manager-to-be.