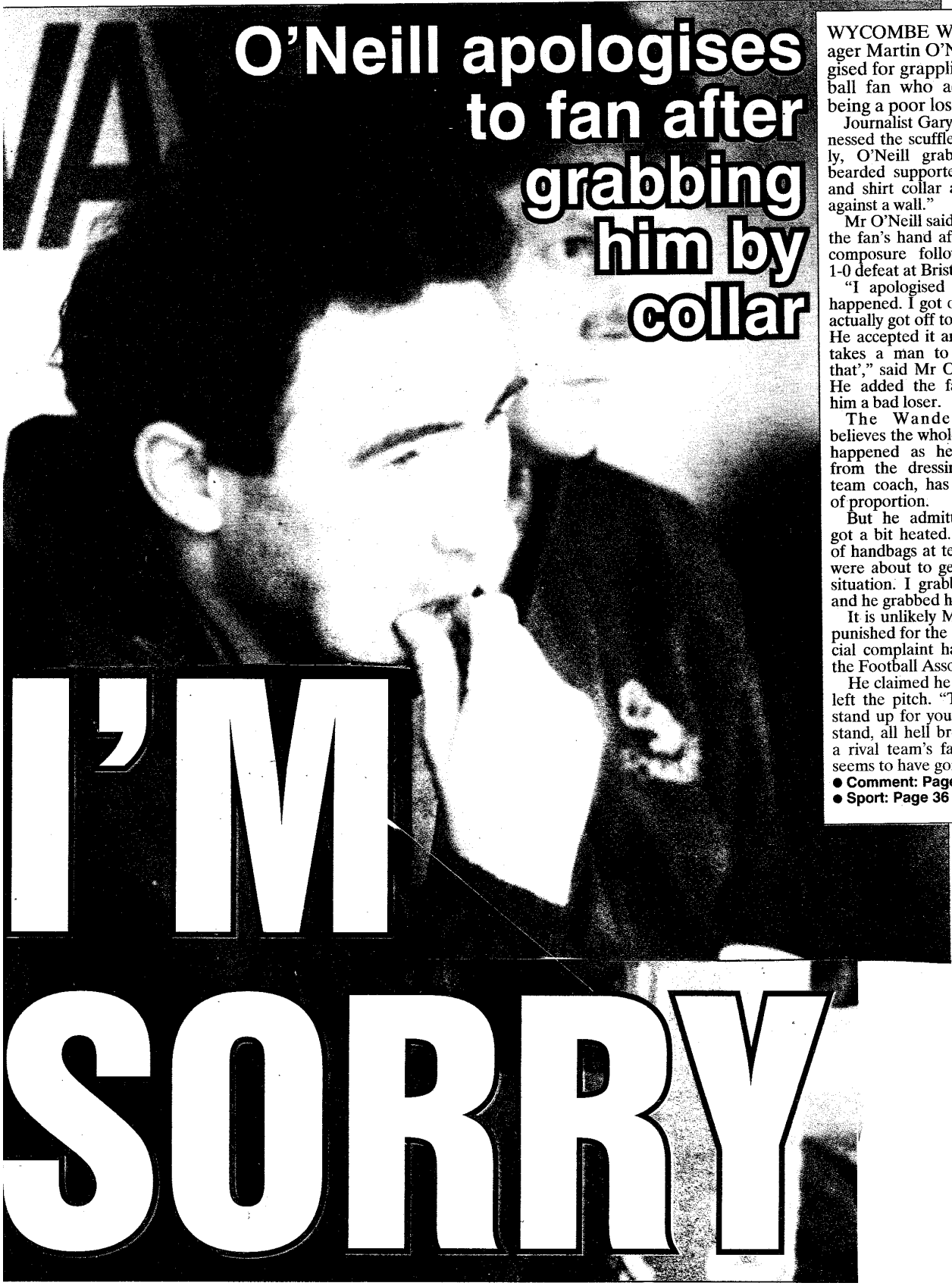




O'Neill apologises to fan after grabbing him by collar

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Martin O'Neill has apologised for grappling with a football fan who accused him of being a poor loser.

Journalist Gary Baker, who witnessed the scuffle, said: "Suddenly, O'Neill grabbed the burly, bearded supporter by the throat and shirt collar and pushed him against a wall."

Mr O'Neill said sorry and shook the fan's hand after regaining his composure following Saturday's 1-0 defeat at Bristol Rovers.

"I apologised to him after it happened. I got on the coach and actually got off to apologise again. He accepted it and said to me 'It takes a man to be able to say that'," said Mr O'Neill yesterday. He added the fan had branded him a bad loser.

The Wanderers manager believes the whole incident, which happened as he made his way from the dressing room to the team coach, has been blown out of proportion.

But he admitted: "Everything got a bit heated. There was a bit of handbags at ten paces, as if we were about to get embroiled in a situation. I grabbed hold of him and he grabbed hold of me."

It is unlikely Mr O'Neill will be punished for the scuffle as no official complaint has been made to the Football Association.

He claimed he was spat at as he left the pitch. "The moment you stand up for yourself and make a stand, all hell breaks loose, while a rival team's fan spitting at me seems to have gone unnoticed."

● **Comment:** Page 2

● **Sport:** Page 36

I'M SORRY