

Hyde counts cost of transfer request



Fans' favourite: Goalkeeper Paul Hyde says all he wants is to prolong his Wycombe career

CLAIRE NASH tries to decipher both sides of the argument between Blues boss Alan Smith and goalkeeper Paul Hyde

THE dispute between Alan Smith and Paul Hyde is one which both parties and Wycombe Wanderers' supporters would rather did not exist at all – and all three for different reasons.

It rankles with Smith, his decision to drop the transfer-listed goalkeeper and replace him with an on-loan player has generally been met with derision among Blues' fans.

The manager has tackled a problem which he believes was an unnecessary distraction to getting results on the pitch.

He sensed that Hyde was trying to force his hand, particularly when the goalkeeper publicly discussed the disagreement between them.

"Paul Hyde asked for a transfer. He did not need to ask for a transfer. I asked him twice to withdraw it. He has put me in a very unfortunate position. I am not going to be messed about by him or any of the players. I want the team to play as well as they can and I think they can play better than they are," said Smith this week.

Hyde, meanwhile, is upset because his request to go on the transfer list has been interpreted as a sign of a lack of commitment. His argument is that he felt it was the only recourse open to him. The 32-year-old Blues stalwart, who has served Wycombe well for four years and has continued to do so this season, believes an approach to his boss to discuss extending his two-year contract, which ends next June, was unceremoniously dismissed.

"I am 100 per cent committed to the club. I want to play. I wanted to extend my stay here. I want to get across to people that I do not want to leave the club. This whole thing started because I wanted to have a meeting to discuss my situation and that request was not entertained," said Hyde.

By bringing in Ben Roberts from Middlesbrough on a month's loan, Smith has put the onus back on Hyde. "He is having to rethink what he should do," said the Blues boss.

But he did not explain exactly what Hyde needs to do to get back in favour and undoubtedly will want to keep any developments to resolve the situation private, unless a club want to buy him.

Wycombe's supporters are looking on in dismay as one of their favourites kicks up his heels on the sidelines. The consensus is that if he is capable of playing in a Blues side currently suffering a mini slump, he should be. Without a win in six matches and after two consecutive league defeats, Wycombe are adrift of the



The boss: Alan Smith believes he was forced into a difficult position

chasing pack at the top of Division Two and there are no FA Cup treats in store.

A political battle of wills behind the scenes, and the prospect of the club shelling out to buy a new goalkeeper, is a scenario they do not want.

Smith has made it clear it is not Hyde's form that is at issue but the way the goalkeeper has conducted himself.

The manager's right to choose if, and when, he discusses contracts with his players and whether a situation warrants dropping a player is sacrosanct.

Hyde's bargaining power at Division Two level is limited.

Such matters are sometimes mirrored at the top too. Ian Woan was dropped by Nottingham Forest boss Frank Clark on Sunday night after the midfielder was quoted in that morning's papers – misguidedly stating that he is wrapping the club round his finger to improve the terms of a new contract, and adding that he didn't think they had a chance in the UEFA Cup.

Woan's Forest team-mate Steve Stone is in a stronger position to improve his new club contract, however, after scoring his second goal in two games for England this week.

The bottom line for Hyde is that he wants to know where he stands in order to provide security for his family.

With up to 12 other Wycombe players with contracts set to expire at the end of this season, though, it appears Hyde has jumped the gun.

If he backtracks by asking to come off the transfer list, he may still find he has irrevocably blotted his copybook. Hyde's dilemma, self-inflicted or not, underlines just how precarious a career in the lower League divisions can be.

The issue of who will keep goal for Blues for the remainder of this season is set to come to a head when Roberts' loan ends in three weeks. Wanderers' results during the same period will have a significant bearing on the fans' feelings about what Smith decides.