

Demons chase Blues at home

WYCOMBE Wanderers begin their Christmas campaign of matches tomorrow knowing they must break the curse of poor home performances and bad luck if they hope to be serious promotion challengers in the New Year.

But the odds are already stacked heavily against Blues with both Steve Brown and Jason Cousins suspended from tomorrow's game against Shrewsbury Town.

Cousins begins a four-match ban, which puts him out of the running over the Christmas period, when Blues badly need him.

Brown is serving the final game of his three-match suspension and will be back in contention for Tuesday's clash against Swindon Town. But Wanderers have a mountain to climb before then.

Shrewsbury will arrive at Adams Park tomorrow with a 12-match unbeaten run behind them. They have not lost in their last seven games and their away form has been better than at home.

Blues captain Terry Evans is only too aware that the side must lift themselves and put an end to the demons that seem to be chasing them around Adams Park.

Wanderers manager Alan Smith has already said that if the side's problem at home is a psychological one, it shouldn't be.

Evans, however, believes that the problem could be a simple one – that the team are just trying too hard and luck is running against them.

"We are struggling at home, there is no doubt about that, but I don't really know why.

"We are lacking confidence and seem to be under more pressure at home," said Evans.

The defender, however, doesn't believe the crowds are to blame, insisting that none of the players really get much 'stick'.

A simple change of luck will solve matters, he believes, after Blues were pegged back in a 1-1 draw against Joe Jordan's Bristol City last weekend.

"Luck hasn't been with us. On Saturday their goal was just unbelievable, a 35-yard chip. Just a while after that Garner had a chance which he didn't finish. Usually you'd put your house on him finishing a shot like that," he added.

Smith agrees with his captain's view,

insisting that the players are working trying hard.

He said: "A lot of the criticism that is fired at us is misguided. We just don't seem to have had the run of things this year.

"You only have to look at the Bristol match. We had the run of the game and a goal disallowed. It's not that we are not working hard.

"The number of injuries and suspensions sum up our problems, but we've only lost once at home and we just have to keep going at it."

Smith believes that tomorrow's will be a tough test, insisting that Shrewsbury's unbeaten record is quite amazing.

"It just underlines what a difficult division it is to play in," he added. "But if we can get a win on Saturday, Swindon's game will not seem so hard."

Smith admitted that more noise from the crowd could also help to lift the side, adding that Bristol's fans were more vocal than Wycombe's last week.

■ No more offers have been made for Blues' unsettled goalkeeper Paul Hyde, boss Alan Smith admitted.

Conference side Slough Town have been the only club to show interest in 32-year-old.

■ Wycombe youth team striker Damien Markman ended up with a black eye by the end of last Saturday's 1-0 win over Wimbledon. The victory, thanks to Markman's goal, put Neil Smillie's side second in the South East Counties League Division Two.

Blues' reserves beat Sutton 5-0 in a rearranged Capital League fixture at Adams Park on Monday.

■ Wycombe Wanderers Independent Supporters Club are running coaches to Swindon on Boxing Day. Prices are £5 for adults and £4 for children. Further details on (01494) 523843.

Wycombe Wanderers will also be running coaches at £10 for adults and £6 for juniors. To book, contact Rena Perrin on (01494) 882916.

■ Blues fans with access to the Internet can now look up news on their team thanks to supporter Paul Lewis.

Chairboys On The Net is now in operation. Fans can e-mail the Chairboys at 100746.232@compuserve.com.

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