

Born-again Bell rings in changes

REPORT
By Claire Nash

ALAN Smith believes Mickey Bell is a shining example of the determined attitude which is beginning to reap reward with Wycombe Wanderers' recent upturn in form.

The Blues boss even rates the 24-year-old former Northampton player as one of the best left backs in Division Two after an impressive renaissance.

Bell is one of Wycombe's most consistent performers after coming back into the side as a utility left back after losing his favoured midfield role on the left wing.

He was displaced from the first team and spent a month in the wilderness after David Farrell was signed in a £100,000 deal from Aston Villa last September.

But Bell came back into the side when Paul Hardyman, who started the season at left back, was injured in October.

"Bell has done absolutely brilliantly," said Smith this week. "He applied himself and is a sensible lad and I'm really pleased for him.

"I said to him when I signed David Farrell that he is a good left winger, but he is not exceptional. He went away and worked hard in training and has shown a lot of grit and is a good example to other players."

Smith has been encouraged by Wycombe's recent performances – a 2-1 win over a Queens Park Rangers XI last Saturday, a draw at Division Two leaders Swindon, and victory over play-off place rivals Shrewsbury – and is confident of such form continuing in tough fixtures against Notts County tomorrow, followed by a trip to highflying Crewe.

"I'm glad we had the game against Queens Park Rangers. I was pleased with the way we played. We were passing the ball the way I wanted us to. I have stood back in training and not tried to put too much pressure on them.

"I think things are settling down with injured players having returned to the side. But I still look ahead to the day when we have got everyone fit, and not missing from suspension."

Smith knows, though, that one key area where Blues are lacking is in the goalscoring department. "What we have got to put to rights is scoring more goals," he said.



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The onus, therefore, lies with Miquel Desouza, Simon Garner, Steve McGavin, and John Williams to get the ball in the back of the net. Smith believes having four to choose from is vital with half of the league programme still to go. "We have got so many games coming up that we will need as many players as possible."

Jason Cousins will miss tomorrow's match through the third game of a four-match suspension. Smith is looking forward to the defender rejoining the Blues fold. Whether he plays in the back four or midfield remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, Keith Ryan is set to make his comeback in next Monday's Berks and Bucks Senior Cup match against Aylesbury at Adams Park after being out with injury for almost a year. The central midfielder suffered a crippling knee injury in the same competition at the same stage last year.

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New dates for matches

DIVISION Two fixtures against Brentford (away) and Rotherham (home) have been rearranged after both were postponed.

Blues travel to Brentford on Tuesday, January 30, while Rotherham visit Adams Park on Tuesday, February 6 (ko 7.45pm). All existing tickets bought prior to the home game remain valid.