

Blues boss slams gossip mongers

BLUES boss Alan Smith has told fans that forces at work within Wycombe Wanderers Football Club are threatening its future.

Mr Smith spoke frankly to a supporters' forum on Monday night about the problems faced during his first year in charge.

He said: "There is a lot of gossip going around this football club. If we don't sort it out very quickly we will not have a club. We seem to shoot each other in the foot here."

"In this club there seems to be a complete lack of communication."

His comments came only two days after director Alan Parry sharply criticised the team in the match programme.

Mr Parry wrote: "We must cling to the belief that the darkest hour comes just before dawn. The standard of some of our recent games has been unacceptable and I sympathise with the complaints of the paying customer."

"You have grown accustomed to success and exciting football in recent seasons and you haven't seen much of either commodity over the past nine months."

by Paul Ryan

Mr Parry does not mention Alan Smith by name in the article but dwells on the success of Sunderland manager Peter Reid. "He has no ego, no flash clothes or jewellery and he's played the game at the highest level," the article said.

But at Monday's meeting Mr Smith said he thought the programme notes were 'a bit unfair'.

He said: "According to them we've had our worst season ever in the football league."

The article surprised others too, including Bob Officer, chairman of Wycombe Wanderers Independent Supporter Club, which organised the meeting.

Mr Officer said: "It's very unusual for a club programme to put across such correspondence against the manager. The club are always telling fans to get behind the team yet there seems to be disunity within the club itself."

Club spokesman Alan Hutchinson said: "It is obviously Alan Smith's right to give his opinions but that is not a matter for me to comment on."

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr Smith had removed his jacket,

joking: "I'm not taking this off because I'm expecting problems."

More than 300 supporters packed into The Trades and Social Club, Queen's Road, High Wycombe.

Many grilled the manager on subjects ranging from the team's form to the controversial removal of keeper Paul Hyde from the team and Smith's own relationship with fans.

Mr Smith said: "I've appreciated the frustrations of fans this year."

But he compared the team's likely finishing position of about tenth with the situation six years ago when they finished in the same spot in the Vauxhall Conference.

Among problems identified by the manager was the general level of fitness of players he had found at the club which he said was not up to Division Two standards.

He set out some of the priorities for the coming season including looking for an extra player in both attack and defence, although he was happy with the current midfield.

And he urged everyone to look to the future. He said: "We're now at a crossroads at this club, we have tremendous resources here."

● **Supporters get shirty over new strip - see full story on page three.**