

LETTERS

Blues supporters need to calm down

I FEEL I must write in response to some of the hysterical letters published in last week's letters page about Wycombe Wanderers' season and their manager Alan Smith.

I should say that I have never been a big fan of Alan Smith's. I didn't share the wave of optimism that seemed to result after his appointment last year. But when a manager is given a job he should be backed and then judged on his results.

I am alarmed at the way so many Blues fans have turned on him and the club this season.

Wycombe's season has not been so bad. Blues fans seem to expect that as Martin O'Neill almost took us to the play-offs last season then Alan Smith should have got us promotion. In their eyes anything less was failure. You have to question supporters with such arrogant expectations.

My own view is that most Blues fans do not realise how fortunate they were to have O'Neill as a boss. I think he'll prove to be one of the country's very best managers.

Any manager coming in after Martin O'Neill was going to have a tough act to follow. Any negative comparisons between Alan Smith and Martin O'Neill should be seen in this context. A bit of humility on Mr Smith's part here wouldn't go amiss too.

Wycombe fans complained a lot about the quality of football this season, but some of our performances have been excellent. I think the 4-1 demolition of Stockport County was the best Wycombe performance I've ever seen.

Wycombe's record home and

away wins were both this season. In fact if you list Wycombe's biggest wins, by a margin of three or more, since joining the league, more than half of them have come this season.

And there's more positive things if you care to look. Wycombe had their best unbeaten run this season, 14 league games. Miquel Desouza's 21 league and cup goals is also a league record for the Blues.

Surely the problem this season has merely been one of inconsistency. Unfortunately the big wins have been matched with some dismal performances too. But what do Blues fans expect with a new manager coming in? Far too much obviously.

Another achievement Alan Smith accomplished this season was to extend Wycombe Wanderers' incredible run to eight successive seasons of finishing in the top half of their table. Only one club in the league can better that, Liverpool.

A run like this is bound to result in fans who are spoiled with success. They consider only finishing in the top half a failure and then call for the manager to be sacked.

In terms of team selection, I admit I have my criticisms of Alan Smith too. He has made some decisions regarding the team which baffle me.

Buying and selecting Rowbotham in place of Cousins and the Paul Hyde business, to name but two. But even here it has not been as bad as the boo-boys make out.

The way the Wycombe fans welcomed John Williams to the club in his first few games was nothing short of disgraceful.

If these fans open their eyes and watch with an open mind they'll see he's actually a very good player. I remember Steve Brown got the same special Wycombe welcome when he arrived. Dave Farrell has

also shown a lot of promise and Micky Bell's been a revelation the way he's fought back into the side.

So let's not get carried away. The season wasn't that bad. If the lynch mob got their way who do they think the next man would be anyway? And the hoo-ha over the new kit? Incredible. At least the club gave us a choice.

The club and supporters should be pulling together now. The club are showing their commitment by spending £2 million on a new stand that will make Adams Park the envy of many in our division and the one above.

Blues fans should appreciate how far Wycombe Wanderers have come and not behave like spoilt children when the club's progress takes a temporary setback.

Algis Kuliukas
Penn

Look at where we are ten years on

It was April 30, 1986. I left Loakes Park along with the other 543 supporters knowing that for the first time in their history Wycombe Wanderers were facing relegation. An own-goal just minutes from time had meant defeat against FA Trophy finalists Altrincham. How we envied them.

I began walking home wondering what the future held for us. A mist suddenly appeared and from it emerged an old man. "Let me help you with your concerns," he said.

I took a deep breath. "Okay," I said, "will we have made it back to the Gola League in say ten years' time?"

The old man smiled: "In ten years' time the club will finish in 12th position in what is now the

Football League Division Three," he said.

"And don't tell me," I replied laughing, "still people will be moaning."

"That's correct," he replied. "During the next ten years the club will go through a transformation. In February 1990 a new manager will take control. His achievements will be exemplary. He will lead your team to two successive promotions as well as two FA Trophy victories in front of record crowds at Wembley."

"He will lead you to the brink of what is currently the Second Division. In his five-and-a-half years as manager the results will be remarkably consistent. Never during this period will the club lose more than two successive competitive matches. Of the five occasions when two games are lost consecutively, two will include defeats against Premier League opposition."

"Premier League?" I inquired. "That's what you currently call Division One, but with extra television coverage and prettier shirts for the players. In fact the design of Wycombe's shirts will cause quite a stir in ten years' time."

"For financial reasons the club will be looking to change its strip. Their traditional colours of Oxford and Cambridge Blue will already have been replaced with less palatable shades but the real cause for concern will be the proposal to move away from quartered shirts."

"You must have the wrong team mate," I exclaimed, "I've been watching Wycombe for 15 years and I've never seen them wear quartered shirts."

"The quartered shirts will be introduced in four years' time," said the man. "It will mark the occasion of moving to a new ground in Sands. The golden years that follow this

will cause attendances to quickly increase by more than 400 per cent."

"Well I know we're planning to move grounds, will it be up to standard," I said.

"No, it will be designed as a good non-league ground with the expectation of average crowds not exceeding two thousand. Despite their limitations, the club and many supporters will claim that it is a good facility. They will, of course, be kidding themselves and the inconvenience of attending matches will greatly reduce the attendances once the successful years have passed."

"As a supporter you know only too well that to fully appreciate the good times it is necessary to endure the bad. During the next decade there will be many thousands of new supporters, as well as club officials, who will jump on the band wagon."

"In 1996 the situation will be that 75 per cent of the supporters will know nothing apart from glory. To keep these supporters in any way happy will be very difficult. There will even be those who will question the abilities of the manager that steered the club through their most successful period ever."

"Tonight you feel disappointed at what has happened. In ten years' time you will not even be able to recognise that team as yours. It will belong to the corporate sponsors, the shirt manufacturers and anyone else who wants to make money. At least tonight, even in relegation, you can still feel the club is something to be proud of."

The old man then vanished, leaving me to walk home anticipating life in the Isthmian League, dreaming of the day when we'd be back in the big league with the likes of Altrincham, Kettering and Telford.

Chris Tranter,
Mount Close,
High Wycombe