

REPORT

By Claire Nash

DEFENDER Paul McCarthy became the third player in seven days to sign for Wycombe Wanderers yesterday.

With all being quiet on the transfer front thus far this close-season, Blues welcomed the 24-year-old Brighton skipper with open arms at the end of a hectic, but happy, week.

McCarthy's arrival followed hot on the heels of stalwart midfielder Keith Ryan signing a new two-year contract and Wycombe snapping up goalkeeper Brian Parkin on a free transfer from Bristol Rovers, with all three giving a welcome boost to the club's season ticket sales.

McCarthy, a former Republic of Ireland Under-21s international, has signed a three-year contract, but his fee will be set by a tribunal, which will at least give Wycombe a chance to save up some money. Blues' kitty is empty unless they can raise funds from the sales of Steve McGavin and Brian McGorry who remain on the transfer list. Otherwise Wycombe may have to dip into season ticket sale coffers early.

McCarthy, though, was delighted to join Blues. He didn't take much persuading by Wycombe boss Alan Smith, the central defender revealed.

"I jumped at the chance to join Wycombe. One of the reasons was Alan Smith. I was impressed when I met him. I was impressed generally with the club. They are very ambitious," he said.

McCarthy wants to put recent turbulent times with Brighton, who were relegated last year, behind him. His departure is a body blow to Brighton as they try to earn promotion back to Division Two as



Pleased to meet you: New Blues defender Paul McCarthy shakes on it with boss Alan Smith

soon as possible. Smith said: "I want players that other people want and I feel that I can include Paul McCarthy, Brian Parkin and Keith Ryan in that category."

The Wycombe manager's smooth-talking ways also did the trick with Ryan and Parkin (pictured below). Ryan turned down a chance to go to Premiership club Leicester City. Newly-promoted Preston had also approached the midfielder.

"I had a long meeting with him (Ryan) on Friday. I think I had treated him pretty well. I had given him a fair chance to see what was in the market for him," said Smith.

Parkin, 30, and Smith share a mutual respect from their days together at Crystal Palace. "He is an exceptional goalkeeper and a good signing," said the Blues boss.

Parkin, who has signed a two-year contract, said: "I'm very pleased to have signed. I'm just

looking forward to playing now."

■ Former Blues defender Terry Howard and striker Simon Garner signed for Conference club Woking this week.

Midfielder Simon Stapleton is to join Slough, while defender Shaun Stevens has gone to Stevenage.

■ Wanderers director Alan Parry has also made a splash in the transfer market this week after leaving ITV and signing for Sky Sports.