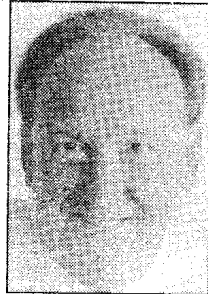


I hope Little experience rubs off

VIEW FROM THE STAND

By Ron Barnett



SO, the papal smoke finally rose from Adams Park on Tuesday afternoon to announce that Ivor and his Engine Room had selected their man. John Gregory, who did not figure in any of the recent rumours and reports, is to be our new spiritual leader.

The board are to be congratulated for the way they have conducted their search for a new manager and for having captured somebody with a Premier Division pedigree.

Although John Gregory has not managed a club since his unhappy spell at Portsmouth, he has had six years valuable experience as number two to one of the most respected managers in the game. His time with Brian Little at Leicester and Aston Villa will hopefully have been an ideal training ground for the Wycombe post.

After the immediate euphoria of two quick wins under Neil Smillie's leadership, it was hard to take the three defeats that followed.

However, the team have played far more attractive football during Smillie's short reign and, with the exception of Bristol, the matches have been entertaining. Let's hope Neil is retained at the club and can return to managing his very successful youth team.

I must admit I was shocked to hear John Gregory had been appointed.

Driving down the M40 on Tuesday morning, I switched to London News Radio to hear that Dave Merington was to be announced as the new boss of Wycombe Wanderers at a press conference that afternoon.

But the mis-information was quickly cleared up when I phoned the club.

Hopefully the board will make funds available for some new faces, and maybe Brian Little will help his old partner out with a couple of spare Villa players.

Dwight York and Sasa Curcic would do for starters.

New Blues book

FOOTBALL: "I CANNOT see Wycombe Wanderers ever becoming a professional club. We get far too much fun out of amateur soccer. We are convinced our supporters would not like to see a change because interest in first class amateur games is now deep rooted here."

That is a quote from former Blues' secretary Bill Hayter just 40 years ago and is one of the many interesting anecdotes in the brand new Wycombe Wanderers 1887-1996 Official History, which goes on sale at Adams Park and at Wanderers in Town tomorrow.

The well produced book by Dave Finch and Steve Peart charts the club's history, from the club's first ever game against the Wycombe Nose Club (whoever they were) with pictures, tables and text.

But while Wanderers only recently turned professional money has always played a part in the club. Back in 1890 they were persuaded to move into the Nags Head pub after the landlord offered the club one pound and free use of a room for changing and meetings.

It is the ideal coffee table book and at £16.95 a bible for Wanderers fans, but it does come complete with a problem. It is so jam-packed with snippets of information that you could well end up down the pub saying: "Did you know that because of a fixture pile-up Wanderers once played Kingstonian twice in one day at 3pm and then again at 6.30pm?"