

Matt finish for true Blue

Back injury ends Crossley's football career

MATT CROSSLEY will quit the game on medical advice at the end of the season.

Wanderers' longest serving player has been troubled by a back injury for two years and has been advised by a specialist to give up.

Crossley slipped a disc in the gym while preparing for a match against Wrexham in September 1995.

Although he had an operation, and has been playing regularly in the reserves and first team since, it is taking him longer and longer to recover from matches.

He said: "I haven't trained properly for six weeks. I have no problems playing matches but it takes me about three days to recover afterwards.

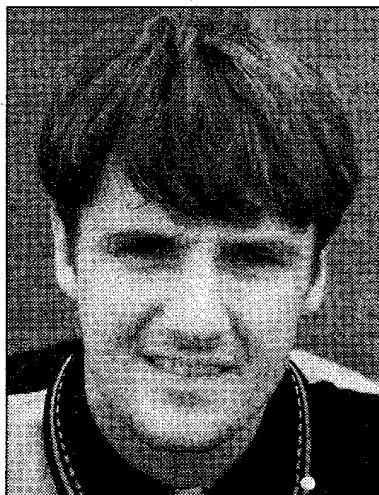
"On the hard ground I haven't been able to train at all. I'm as stiff as a board in the mornings. I can't even join my niece and nephew for a kickabout in the garden, play golf or do things like that."

Crossley, 29, who has been at Wycombe for nine years, is now hoping to find a Conference club and run coaching courses in Basingstoke.

He said: "I could still play part-time in the Conference because you don't get all the training."

He added: "I don't know how I'll feel when I wave to the crowd at half-time during the Bristol City match. It's going to be a big wrench leaving and there might be some tears."

But Crossley, who is hoping to



Matt Crossley: Forced to quit

have a testimonial, will take many happy memories into retirement including three Wembley appearances.

Blues boss John Gregory said: "It's very disappointing. The most important thing for Matt is his long term health. If he ends up having to walk with a stick in five years' time that's no good for him."

● Keith Ryan, injured in pre-season against QPR, made his long awaited return with a 30 minute run-out for the reserves in their 6-3 win over Stevenage.

Rhino, who was out for almost the entire previous season with a similar cruciate knee ligament injury on his other leg, made an immediate impact hitting the crossbar.

He said: "It was great to play again. I came through without

any problems but it's going to take me a while to get my fitness back.

"I've kept my spirits up when I've been out and I think the fact that I've been through it before helped me because I knew what to expect.

"I've wasted two seasons and I want to make up for that. I'm sure the ability is still there. I'm not going to change my style because that would be taking half my game away."

● The reserves are still in with a chance of winning the Capital League after two wins in a week. They beat Orient 3-1 and then beat Stevenage 6-3 two days later with two apiece for Paul Read, Dave Farrell and Anthony Clark. Wanderers are second, two points behind Peterborough with one to play.

● Jason Cousins was the most relieved man in town when Wanderers thumped Burnley 5-0. Cousins, suspended for the trip to Notts County, was sent to Stockport instead by John Gregory to compile a report on visitors Burnley.

But Cousins, not realising the match kicked off at 1pm, arrived at 2.45pm and missed the whole thing.

● Steve Brown's goal after just 46 seconds against Notts was number four in Sky Television's Nationwide goal-of-the-week chart.

● Wanderers' final game, at home to Bristol City next Saturday, is all-ticket.

Preston's travelling fans can help Blues

SHREWSBURY dropped into the bottom four for the first time last week and along with Peterborough, who cannot catch Wycombe, are favourites to join Rotherham and Notts in the third division.

Their fate could be sealed tomorrow if they fail to beat Preston at home and York beat already-relegated Rotherham.

Shrews fans have been calling for manager Fred Davies's head and the atmosphere worsened this week when news leaked out that Shrewsbury have secretly agreed to sell top scorer Ian Stevens to Carlisle at the end of the season.

They are without Dean Spink and David Walton tomorrow.

Wanderers will be cheered by

the fact that 2,500 travelling Preston fans will almost turn the match into a home game for them.

York boss Alan Little has counted Wycombe out of it.

York have lost their last three 4-0, 0-3 and 2-1 and to make matters worse for the strugglers four players are ruled out for the last two games.