

Crisis as Blues are down to bare bones

WANDERERS are down to just 18 fit professionals after skipper Jason Cousins tore his cartilage 36 minutes into the 5-0 defeat against Aston Villa.

He was stretched off and will be out for eight weeks.

His absence leaves Blues with the smallest squad in the division and leaves John Gregory looking for a new right back and captain, two weeks before the season starts.

Gregory released Terry Evans, expecting to get Keith Walker instead, but that collapsed, and he has not replaced Mickey Bell either. Four of his 18 are first years.

Gregory said: "Jason's our number one right back and we're going to miss him. We have people within the club who can play there but I'm always looking to add to the squad. One of the avenues we could explore might be a loan signing."

Gregory, up against Villa, the club he coached, added: "The score was an embarrassment to me on a personal level. It gave our lads a reminder of how good you have to be at the top level."

Villa's £40 million squad, including Stan Collymore, were too good. Playing up front with Dwight Yorke and Savo Milosevic, Collymore and co proved a handful for Wanderers' defence, including Steve Brown at left wingback. Collymore had a hand in two goals and scored, but Yorke's hat-trick stole the show.

Three goals came from rebounds after Martin Taylor did well to make the initial save. Yorke's opener came on 13 minutes after Collymore and Milosevic had been denied. Three minutes later he got a similar second and his third came after the half hour.

Carroll went to wingback and Michael Simpson came into midfield after Cousins' injury but they could not stop Collymore and Andy Townsend adding second half goals.

Wycombe: Taylor, Cousins, Brown, Kavanagh, McCarthy, Forsyth (Beeton 63), Carroll (Ryan 63), Scott (Stallard 63), Read (Harkin 72), McGavin, Cornforth.

Aston Villa: Oakes (Bosnich 45), Charles (Nelson 45), Staunton, Southgate, Taylor (Hughes 74), Draper (Grayson 45), Milosevic, Yorke, Collymore, Wright, Scimeca (Townsend 45).

Attendance: 6,975.



SHORT LIVED: Keith Ryan suffered a reaction to the cruciate knee ligament injury, which sidelined him all last year, when he played the last 27 minutes against Villa and has not trained since. Rhino should be training again next week, if not the Blues are down to their last 17 fit men