



Smillie's success: The Blues youth team

Blues youth love going Dutch

THE VELO tournament came about when we inquired to the Premier League at the end of last season about the possibility of playing opposition abroad.

After a number of weeks of negotiation and organisation we were finally booked onto a tournament which was to be held just outside Amsterdam.

The tournament, which included eight teams, seemed to be a great opportunity for us to pit our wits against foreign opposition and try a completely different way of approaching the game.

On our first morning, we carried out a light training session before travelling to the council offices to be greeted by the Major of Wateringen.

Our first game was that evening against Ibaragi of Japan. The one eye opener to me during the event was the all-round ability of the

TWO weeks ago, Wycombe Wanderers' youth team travelled to Holland for the four day VELO football tournament. Blues youth manager Neil Smillie talks about how they tackled foreign opposition.

two teams from Japan.

After a push from Ibaragi we managed to win 3-0 with goals from Richard Teal, Barry McCoy and Nicky Leach.

I was extremely pleased to get the first win of the tournament under our belt and encouraged by the way the team adapted itself to the hot weather.

We had three games in our qualifying rounds with the winner progressing to the semi-finals.

Day two, and the opponents were Quick of Holland who ended up being the poorest side we played, we

beat them 7-0 with Richard Teal claiming a hat-trick.

An hour-and-a-half after the final whistle we were off again playing another side from the host country.

DSO proved to be much more gifted than the previous Dutch side but goals from Smith and Powell proved to be enough and we were through to the semi-finals.

From my point of view, it was extremely interesting to play a side who approached and were taught the game in a totally different manner to what we encounter week-in week-out in the South East Counties.

DSO were always looking to pass the ball and very rarely was the ball pumped forward.

Day three, and we were ready for our semi-final against Urawa Minami.

We managed to win 3-0 but it did prove to be one of the hardest games of the tournament with the hot weather no help.

In the final we faced Racing Genk of Belgium. After an indifferent start from the team they impressed me no end with their composure.

We ended up beating Racing Genk 3-0 and winning the first tournament Wycombe Wanderers Youth Team have ever entered.

It proved to be a great experience for the boys as they were able to sample different styles of football in a tight schedule while playing in hot temperatures with little time to rest and prepare.

After the tournament we had a few pleasing comments made about the style of football we played.

Comments were made regarding the players discipline, quality of play and the fact we didn't play the perceived English way.

Thanks must go to the Morgan Angel Foundation for giving us the opportunity to broaden the boys' football education by providing funds.