

Wanderers beat young Villains in secret friendly

WANDERERS beat an Aston Villa Under-21 side 3-1 in a hastily arranged behind-closed-doors friendly at Villa's training ground on Monday.

John Gregory fixed up the game to give fringe and suspended players some match sharpness before the Christmas programme.

Nicky Mohan, who has missed the last three matches through suspension, played along with regular substitutes Paul Read, Jason Cousins and Michael Simpson.

Simpson scored twice with Ben Hodson grabbing the other Blues' goal.

Gregory said: "It was a good exercise for us some of the boys haven't had a match for a fortnight."

● Goalkeeper Martin Taylor went back to the New Den last Saturday

sparkling memories of a previous frightening visit with Derby. He was involved in the infamous play-off game when Millwall thugs tried to get the match against Derby abandoned because they were losing.

Derby players were attacked as they left the pitch and Millwall fans gave Taylor a hostile welcome back on Saturday.

Taylor said: "I've been back a couple of times since then. Their supporters seem to remember me but it doesn't bother me."

● The Derby contingent of Blues players have been digging into their own pockets to pay for hotel accommodation on the eve of matchdays.

They have decided to stay overnight in Wycombe on Friday nights rather than spend Saturday morning's getting stiff in their cars sitting in traffic jams.

● Blues boss John Gregory will take advantage of a fixture-free Saturday on January 3rd to watch Blackburn play Wigan in the FA Cup. Wigan are the visitors to Adams Park the following week.

● Fans of last Saturday's opponents Millwall could be waking up to an unusual present in their Christmas stocking tomorrow morning. The South London side's club shop sells plastic Millwall toilet seats complete with club crest for £24.99.

● Wanderers refused to blame the broken dressing room bell for their disastrous start to the second half against Millwall.

The bell did not ring in their changing room and referee Gurnham Singh had to knock on the door to get them to come out and face Millwall who were already out on the pitch waiting to play.

The Blues were caught cold. They had two players booked and conceded a goal in the first three minutes after the restart.

But manager John Gregory said: "We can't use the bell as an excuse."

● Fans can buy tickets for Blues' all-ticket Boxing Day derby against Watford (ko 1.30pm) up until 5pm today. Concession tickets for Sunday's match away at Southend (ko 12 noon) are available from Adams Park today and before the Watford match on Boxing Day. There are no sales of concession tickets on the day at Southend.

● Wanderers players will have an early start before the Boxing Day derby with Watford. They will report at 9am, have a training session and then breakfast together before the match.