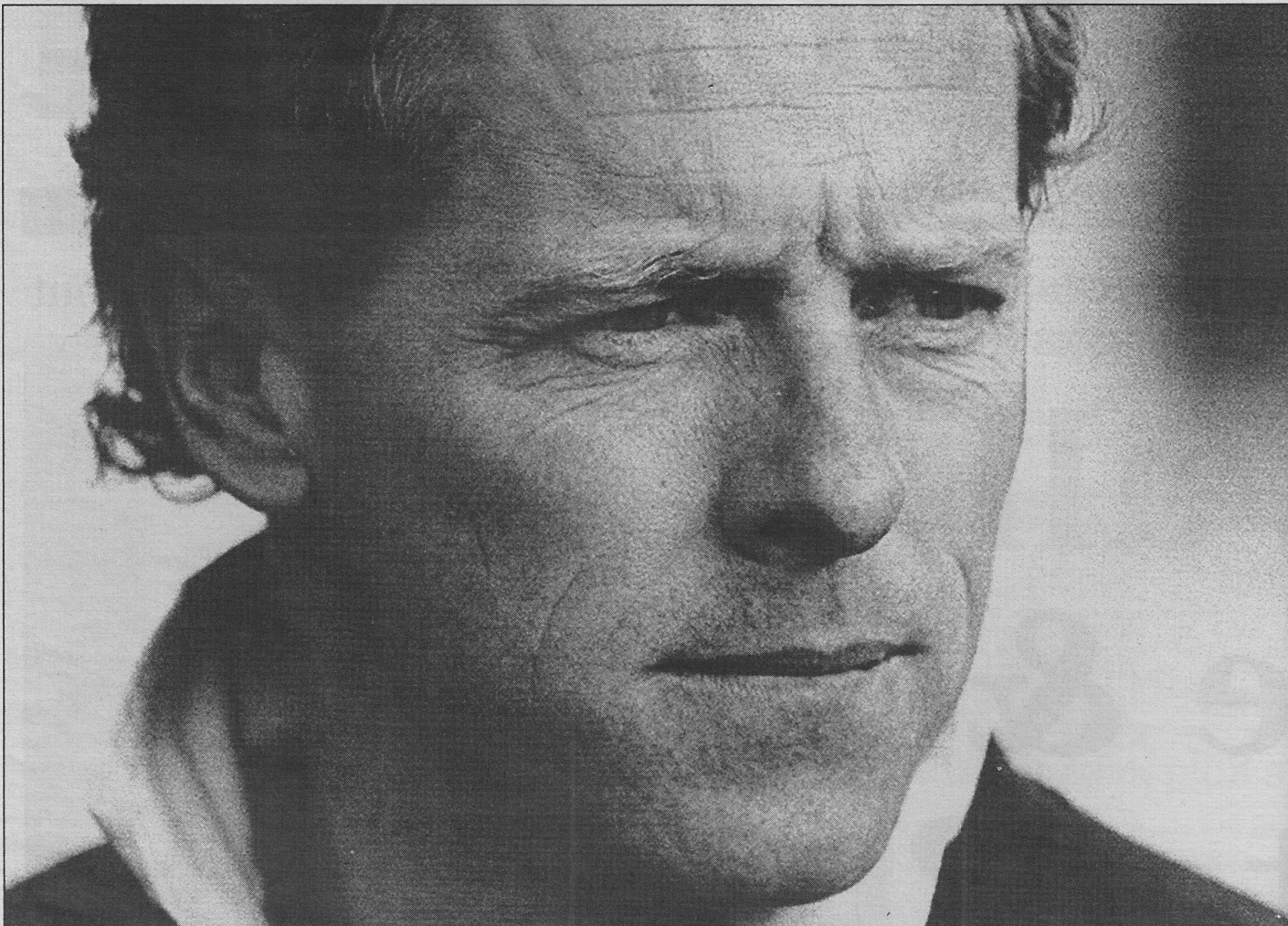


As others seek interviews for that job, Smillie is building an impressive cv



Ambition: Caretaker boss Neil Smillie wants the manager's job this time after missing out last time

Picture by MARK SAMMONS Ref: 98-610A

NEIL Smillie wasted no time boosting his chances of getting the Blues job, guiding Wanderers to a 1-0 victory over form-side Gillingham in his first game back in temporary charge.

Smillie, who took over when Alan Smith was sacked 17 months ago, was handed the keys to the manager's office again after John Gregory broke the landspeed record joining Aston Villa.

And he is determined to do more than keep the seat warm this time. He wants the job and has immediately set about improving his cv.

He inherited a stunned squad reeling from Gregory's shock departure and picked them up to notch a notable win against a side unbeaten for nine games.

Smillie, who only a week earlier had been

reprimanded by a steward who didn't recognise him, for bringing a soft drink can into the ground, shot Gillingham down with a little bit of help from his friends.

He appointed 27-year-old defender Keith Ryan as captain in place of the injured Paul McCarthy and told Rhino that, unlike in the Gregory era, he could go forward at set pieces.

And Ryan rewarded him by heading in Dave Carroll's free kick for a 29th minute winner and his first league goal of the season.

Ryan said: "Under Gregory I wasn't allowed to go forward for corners or free kicks - he liked my pace at the back."

Smillie said: "It was fantastic to get off to a winning start after a difficult week. They needed

geeing up because the events had taken their minds off what they were meant to be doing. They needed to be re-focused. They are professionals and have to accept that people move, players move on and managers move on.

"There's a large contingent of boys in our side who were brought in by John and it's human nature that they will be unsettled initially. But they have responded really well. Their attitude was spot on, they gave me just what I asked."

Smillie left the shape the same, but made an enforced change with Jason Cousins at centre back for McCarthy.

And he singled out Keith Ryan for praise.

He said: "I picked him as captain and he played like a captain."