
Two player setbacks and a crucial decision facing boss

Injury blow hits Blues

WANDERERS go into the hectic Easter programme, which begins with this afternoon's home game against Grimsby and moves on to Oldham on Monday, without the services of two key players.

Defensive rock Paul McCarthy has suffered a training ground setback in his recovery from a hernia operation and has had his long-awaited comeback put on hold.

Steve McGavin is also ruled out of boss Neil Smillie's Easter plans. He tried to make his comeback from the fallen arch in his foot but broke down again in training. He

REPORT By Dave Peters

does not expect to train again until the middle of next week.

Their absence is a body blow to Smillie, who after just one point from the last three matches, says his side are not safe from relegation.

Smillie said of the double injury blow: "It's not the best news in the world but we have just got to get on with it. We need to get winning again because we are not safe yet."

Smillie has been without

McCarthy ever since he took over as manager from John Gregory.

He said: "It's frustrating for me and frustrating for him. It has taken longer than we thought with Macca. We got him back training with the boys again but he was feeling uncomfortable after the sessions."

Meanwhile, McGavin has been restricted to working in the gym with his foot injury.

McGavin said: "It's better than it was, when I first got the injury it felt like I was running on glass. But I still can't run. It's very frustrating because I hate missing games."

As well as cramming in two

make-or-break matches Smillie also faces a big Easter decision.

He must decide with chairman Ivor Beeks whether to pull the club's reserves out of the Capital League and accept an invitation to join the higher-class Avon Combination instead.

Monday is the deadline for a decision and Smillie must decide whether his reserves are ready to step up in class and join the likes of Spurs, Arsenal and Charlton in the Combination or stay in the company of Conference reserve sides in a Capital League which has been weakened by the resignation of several league clubs.