

Blues' plans to bring injured back thrown into turmoil

Ouch .. that really hurts

REPORT

By Dave Peters

PREMIERSHIP clubs Arsenal and Charlton have wrecked Wanderers' bid to rush their injured players back in time for the busy Christmas programme by postponing reserve games against the Blues.

Charlton called off last Wednesday's game because of a muddy pitch, while Arsenal claim they haven't got enough fit players to bring to Adams Park on December 22.

And to compound the problem, Wanderers were forced into postponing the reserve game against West Ham on December 16, because the first team are at Plymouth and the youth team at Birmingham the night before.

The triple-chop means Wanderers don't have any reserve games until January 6 in which to give the players, who are returning from injury, vital match fitness before the hectic Christmas programme.

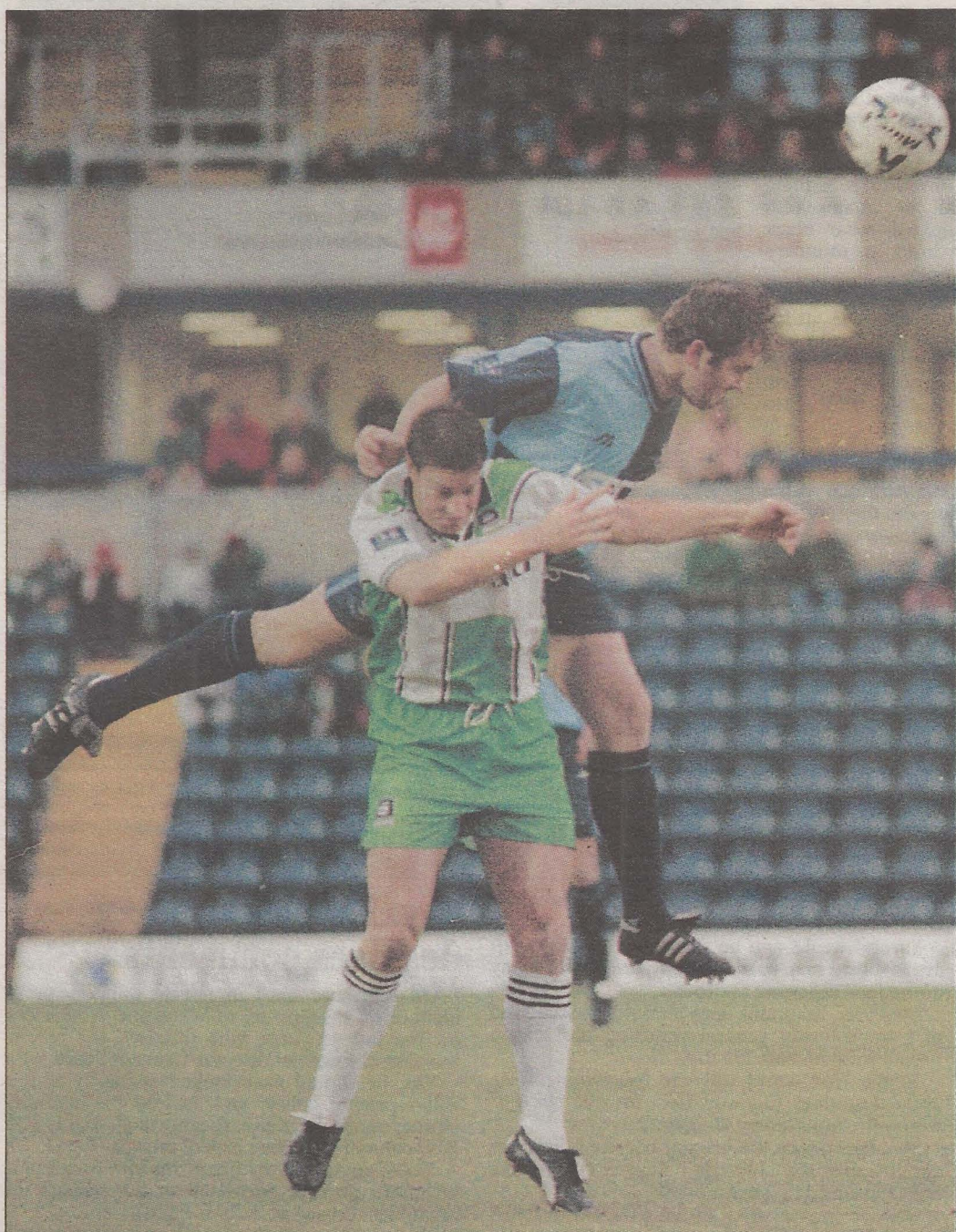
Blues boss Neil Smillie is now frantically trying to arrange reserve matches to give Jason Kavanagh, Keith Ryan, Steve McGavin, Michael Forsyth and John Cornforth match fitness as they recover from their injuries.

He said: "We are going to have to try and get one or two practice matches in. We are in the process of calling around clubs at the moment because it is very important that we get people back with match fitness."

Kavanagh, McGavin and Cornforth were all pencilled in to play at Charlton, while Ryan and Forsyth are thought to be just one week away from being ready for reserve action.

Kavanagh said: "It's very frustrating to have all these games called off. I'm raring to play. I need to get a few games under my belt. You can do as much training as you want but until you go into a proper tackle in a match situation you don't really know how it is."

It is particularly galling for the 27-year-old right back. He now faces a race against time to build up his fitness and win his first team place back in time for a possible glamour FA Cup reunion against his former side Derby County on January 2, assuming Wanderers overcome Plymouth Argyle in Tuesday night's replay in Devon.



WHAT A DOWNER: Paul McCarthy's own goal 14 minutes before the end of last Saturday's FA Cup clash with Plymouth means Wycombe have it all to do again in Tuesday's replay in Devon. Report: Page 114

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