

Not so 'Crazy' after all

LAWRIE Sanchez continued where he left off with the Crazy Gang as his new-look Blues stunned Kevin Keegan's Fulham on Saturday.

Sanchez, who specialised in shocks as a player, scoring the goals that won Wimbledon the FA Cup and promotion to the top flight – was at it again just 24 hours into his Wycombe management career.

He took over the hotseat on Friday and celebrated his arrival by having the better of Saturday's 1-1 draw against the £10 million table-toppers.

In just 24 hours he transformed Wycombe from a side without a point in 1999 to one that bridged the £9.5 million difference in value and erased the memory of Fulham's 9-0 victory in a reserve match three days earlier.

Sanchez's debut as Blues boss earned praise from Keegan.

He said: "Wycombe battled for their new manager. They made it very hard for us and I'm not disappointed with the point after the game they gave us.

"I wish Lawrie all the success in the world, he's a smashing lad and he's learned his trade at Wimbledon. His team will have character and they showed a lot of that today.

"It's a great start for him, he's played one and is unbeaten. He's got really dark black hair at the moment and I told him it won't stay like that for long."

Sanchez was not worried by the hair jibe, saying that he had always fancied the Richard Gere look, but he was disappointed not to have won a match, that saw Wycombe create the best chances.

The former Crazy Gang

member might not have burned his players clothes, or let their tyres down in the car park, but he instilled the Wimbledon fighting spirit into them.

With Sanchez pacing the touchline, Wanderers played as though they were stuck on fast forward as they hassled and harried with an energy they never found for ex-boss Neil Smillie.

Andy Baird, who opened the scoring in the 25th minute, looked the prospect we've been told he is, as he gave Fulham's international back line of Chris Coleman, Kit Symons and Phillipe Albert a torrid time.

His goal was cancelled out by Kit Symons header eight minutes later but Blues continued to hold the upper hand. And, instead of settling for a point which would have been beyond their dreams last week, Sanchez went for the win replacing Jason Kavanagh with Mark Stallard as he put three up front.

Afterwards, the boss admitted he was disappointed not to win.

He said: "We restricted them to only three real efforts. The lads ran themselves into the ground.

"It's a start and no more. That's the bench mark from now until the end of the season. If they'd performed like that every week they wouldn't be bottom. I went for the win because as good as a point is, three's a lot better. Their back three were no better than ours and our frontmen caused more problems than theirs."

Wycombe: Taylor, Lawrence, Vinnicombe, Ryan, Mohan, Cousins, Kavanagh (Stallard 71), Simpson, Baird, Scott, Cornforth (Emblen 84). Sub not used: Wright.

Fulham: Taylor, Finnan, Brevett, Albert (Collins 87), Coleman, Symons, Hayward, Bracewell, Horsfield, Peschisolido (Hayles 67), Trollope. Sub not used: Lehmann.

Attendance: 7,538



Praise: Kevin Keegan was full of admiration for Wycombe's new boss after Saturday's draw

Picture by SALLY SWIFT Ref: 99-385EF7

Rejuvenated Blues go North

PAUL Read's hat-trick in the reserves 3-0 win at Barnet on Wednesday has earned him a place in Lawrie Sanchez's squad for tomorrow's trip to second place Preston.

Alan Beeton's performance for the second string at Underhill has earned him a promotion to the travelling party which also adds Mark Westhead and Gary Wraight to the 13 that performed with flying colours against Fulham last week.

The 11 that started last week, and performed so well, could well start again as Steve Brown and Paul McCarthy are both serving the last games of their respective suspensions and Dave Carroll is still ruled out through illness.

Sanchez used Wednesday's reserve game to look at the professionals he did not use in last Saturday's Nationwide Division Two match at home to leaders Fulham.

And Read seized the opportunity

with his second hat-trick of the year. He also went home with the match ball after Wanderers' 3-0 success against Chalfont St Peter in the Berks and Bucks Cup at Adams Park.

As Blues travel with confidence at an all time high this season after last week's turbo-charged display Sanchez believes Preston, without any FA Cup distractions on their mind, will be an even tougher nut to crack.

But they are not invincible on their Deepdale pitch where, remarkably, they have only won two of their last six. But they have got away with it because they are better than anyone in the division on their travels.

On-loan Southampton striker Steve Basham could be promoted to start for the North Enders after his impressive display as substitute last week alongside 16-goal top-scorer Kurt Nogan. Full-back Gary Parkinson could also return after his injury.