

Ducks' prestige friendly with Wycombe is off

SOCCER

By Alistair Watkins

AYLESBURY United's pre-season plans have been thrown into turmoil by rivals Wycombe Wanderers' decision to pull out of today's (Wednesday's) prestigious friendly.

Ducks manager Alan Taylor viewed the match as the most important warm-up game for the new season, which is now only 10 days away, and was looking forward to seeing his best side in action against the Nationwide Division 2 giants.

A large crowd, possibly more than 1,000 fans, was expected at Buckingham Road to see the local derby.

Ducks chairman Bill Carroll had been hoping to unveil the club's new kit, signings and sponsors, Aylesbury Second Metals, to the Ducks fans.

But, these plans were scuppered when Wycombe manager Lawrie Sanchez, one-

time member of Wimbledon's Crazy Gang, pulled the plug on the fixture late on Monday afternoon.

Taylor has been trying desperately to find another game, and even approached Premierships giants Chelsea and Wimbledon, but to no avail.

"Wycombe have pulled out because they say they can't get a side up due to injuries and it's too late to get another game arranged," said Taylor.

"I'm very disappointed by this. It's a key part of our preparation and we have built our training around this match.

"This won't do Wycombe much good locally that's for sure - it isn't very good PR."

Club secretary Tony Graham said: "It's a big blow for us because we were going to use the match to introduce our new sponsors and get various photographs done in the new kit for our programme.

"We haven't done so well with our pre-season friendlies this year and a friendly like this is an important part of our fund-

ing."

He added that hundreds of fans would be disappointed as they will not get another chance to see Taylor's new signings in action before the Ryman Premier season starts on August 14 at home to Walton and Hersham.

Wycombe's withdrawal is certainly ironic after they complained when Nottingham Forest sent a weak side to Adams Park for a friendly last week.

The south Bucks side, whose Nationwide Division 2 campaign starts against Burnley on Saturday, have at least offered to play the Ducks next Tuesday or Wednesday, but only after Graham told them how let down the club felt.

Alan Hutchinson, press officer for Wycombe Wanderers, confirmed they cancelled because of injuries.

"We didn't want to send a weakened side to Aylesbury, so rather than risk any players for Burnley on Saturday, it's been rearranged.

"It's all very regrettable and we are very

sorry - that's why we've rescheduled the game.

"But our main priorities as a football club are making sure we are ready for the game against Burnley."

However, Wycombe play Wolves in the Worthington Cup on Tuesday and may send a weakened side on Wednesday.

But there was some doubt late yesterday (Tuesday) whether the re-scheduled match would take place.

The Ducks won both their away friendlies last week, overcoming Abingdon Town 5-0 on Thursday with goals from Corey Browne (2), Lee Cook, Phil Mason and Ian King (penalty), Oxford City 1-0 on Saturday, thanks to Gary Crawshaw's first half strike.

Taylor is still hoping to sign former Barnet midfielder Udo Onwere and is also looking at former Farnborough defender Jon Underwood and ex-Luton star Julian James, who both played on Saturday.

United travel to Cambridge City on Saturday for a friendly.



Ducks boss Alan Taylor