

Emblen out of action as Blues face Wigan in Cup

FOOTBALL
By Dave Peters

WANDERERS striker Paul Emblen will miss tonight's FA Cup replay at Wigan and the next three months of the season after breaking his ankle during Saturday's 2-0 win over Brentford.

He snapped his bone in his first challenge after coming on as substitute. He tried to play on before eventually hobbling off after a brief three-minute appearance.

It is a massive blow for the injury-hit Blues who travel to the JJB Stadium tonight (ko 7.45pm) to take on the unbeaten league leaders for the right to entertain Wolves in the third round.

They are already without long-term casualties, defenders Paul McCarthy and Mark Rogers while fellow defensive stalwarts Jamie Bates (groin) and Matt Lawrence (achilles) have been playing on despite their injuries.

Losing Emblen is a major setback to Blues who will miss his energy and versatility and, if Blues get through this evening, it will mean Emblen misses the clash against brother Neil's Wolves.

Boss Lawrie Sanchez said: "Emblen gives us a lot of options and it's a blow for us and for him."

But Sanchez remains upbeat about tonight's task after seeing Blues end their eight-game wait for a league win on Saturday.

He said: "We've played Wigan twice now and there's hardly been anything between us. They're on a tremendous run but someone has got to end it and there's no reason why we can't. We've scored three goals against them already and the confidence is high after beating Brentford."

Steve Brown, who missed Saturday's game because his new-born son was undergoing an operation, returns to the squad as a straight swap for Emblen.

And there is good news on striker Andy Baird who successfully came through his first hour of first team action for four weeks.

Meanwhile, Sanchez has admitted he's looking at the loan market for cover with six players one booking away from a ban and Bates and McSporrán due to start theirs over the next two Saturdays.

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