

Our cup final? Who are you trying to kid?

VIEW FROM THE STAND
By Ron Barnett

AFTER three wins on the spin, scoring seven goals and conceding just one, our best run of results of the season came to an end at Reading. Until then we were in the dizzy heights of sixth place in the Division Two form guide, based on the last six matches.

Whilst we didn't perform as well as when we comfortably beat Notts County on Good Friday, we still should have got a share of the points. Especially as Reading were down to ten men for most of the match.

Jocky McSparran was certainly up for the game and was constantly upsetting both the Reading defenders and their fans. Unfortunately, he also upset Sean Devine more than once by wasting good goalscoring opportunities after he had done so well to make the space for a shot or cross. The Big Chief still has a lot of work to do before Jocky is the finished article but his speed and ability certainly terrorise most Division Two defences.

Maybe Jocky had spotted Gerry Francis in the stands and fancied his chances of a move to Queens Park Rangers.

I think Alan Pardew, the Reading manager, must be getting delusions of grandeur now that his side have finally escaped from the relegation zone.

In his programme notes he very patronisingly wrote: "Today's game with Wycombe is their manager's and his team's cup final, so it's crucial we approach it in the same way."

He's obviously forgotten we beat them 5-3 at Adams Park and are still above them in the table. Reading may have a magnificent stadium but they don't have a team worthy of their surroundings.

What's more, Wycombe have balanced their books this year whilst the Royals are reported to be losing up to £50,000 a week.

Season tickets are now on sale for next season with price reductions if paid before May 6. By buying early it will help the club plan how much cash they can give the Big Chief to bring in new blood.

In the latest issue of The Quarterman, Lawrie says he would ideally like to sign four new players over the summer.

These would include his elusive big striker and presumably a right wing back, and hopefully midfield playmaker. That no doubt means one or two of the existing squad will be moving out to make way for the new signings.

The guessing game is who and, hopefully, for how much.

● Read Wanderers midfielder Steve Brown's exclusive Park Life column in next week's BFP.

HOW THEY STAND

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Preston	44	14	4	4	34	21	12	7	3	35	14	89
Wigan	44	15	3	4	37	13	7	13	2	33	22	82
Burnley	44	15	3	4	40	23	8	10	4	25	23	82
Gillingham	43	14	3	4	40	20	9	7	6	33	26	79
Millwall	44	13	7	2	40	18	9	6	7	33	29	79
Bristol R	44	13	6	3	32	17	10	4	8	35	25	79
Stoke	43	11	7	3	32	17	10	6	6	31	23	76
Notts Co	44	9	5	8	30	25	9	5	8	28	26	64
Bristol C	44	7	14	1	31	16	7	5	10	24	36	61
Wycombe	44	11	4	7	32	23	4	9	9	22	28	58
Oldham	44	8	4	10	26	27	8	6	8	22	26	58
Reading	44	9	9	4	27	18	6	4	12	28	44	58
Luton	44	10	6	6	40	34	6	3	13	19	30	57
Wrexham	44	8	6	8	22	24	7	5	10	28	37	56
Bury	43	8	9	5	37	32	5	7	9	21	26	55
Bour'm'th	43	11	4	6	34	16	5	2	15	20	41	54
Brentford	44	8	5	9	27	31	5	7	10	20	28	51
Colchester	44	9	4	9	33	36	5	5	12	23	42	51
Cambs Utd	44	8	6	8	37	31	4	6	12	26	30	48
Oxford	44	5	5	12	22	38	6	4	12	19	34	42
Cardiff	43	4	10	8	22	34	4	7	10	20	27	41
Blackpool	44	4	9	9	24	35	4	6	12	22	39	39
Scunthorpe	44	4	6	12	15	32	5	6	11	24	38	39
Chesterfield	43	4	7	11	15	24	2	6	13	14	35	31

Simpson returns from suspension to tackle Luton

MIDFIELDER Michael Simpson returns from suspension for Blues' final home game of the season against Luton tomorrow (ko 3pm).

Assistant boss Terry Gibson said: "Simmo has unfairly been the target of a few boo-boys this season but I think they'll agree we missed him at Reading on Monday."

Youth team pocket dynamo Martyn Lee is expected to join him in midfield after a

competent first performance of the season at Reading. Matt Brady and Dannie Bulman could complete the middle quartet with Steve Brown, Keith Ryan and Dave Carroll expected to miss it and next week's finale at Cambridge.

Andy Baird could make a surprise return to the bench though after resuming training today and keeper Martin Taylor and defender Mark Rogers are both expected to play. Taylor

got a boot in the midriff at Reading and Rogers ripped a toenail. Jamie Bates is waiting to see whether his Reading rollicking will mean his first ever dropping from Sanchez's side.

Gibson said: "Bates has been an excellent signing but sometimes he's a little bit too laid back. 99.9 per cent of his games have been brilliant but sometimes little lapses in concentration let him down."