

Phelan suffers stage fright as juniors bow out of the cup

YOUTH team star Leeyon Phelan blew his immediate chance of making the first team squad for tomorrow's trip to Swindon after a below-par performance in Blues' FA Youth Cup defeat against Brighton on Tuesday – but Wanderers are convinced Phelan's time will come.

Manager Lawrie Sanchez sent his assistant Terry Gibson to watch the prolific young striker in action but Phelan and the ten other players in the team caught stage fright as Wanderers were outclassed by an impressive Brighton, who were excellent value for their 2-0 victory.

Afterwards disappointed youth team coach Gary Goodchild said: "You wouldn't put Leeyon in on the strength of that performance. This was the ideal chance for him to put something on his cv and get involved with the first team on Saturday. He needs to learn to grasp opportunities like that and that's an opportunity that he's let go.

"It's a shame because in my opinion he's worth a role on the bench. I think he's worth a cameo role as a substitute but he didn't show it tonight.

"You couldn't put one of those kids in on the strength of that performance. Gibbo was here watching, it was a good opportunity for the boys but no-one took it."

The whole team underachieved against a Brighton team who are second in the South East Conference and look well-equipped for a good FA Youth Cup run as well.

Goodchild said: "In my two years at the club that was probably one of our worst performances. We didn't manage to string three passes together.

"I still think there are three or four players in that team who



Star in the making: Leeyon Phelan and his colleagues had an off night against Brighton in the FA Youth Cup

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will go on and become very good players but they certainly didn't do themselves justice tonight. It was a night when our big hitters did not perform."

After holding Brighton to a draw on the South Coast, the young Blues choked on the

occasion in front of 241 expectant home fans under the lights at Adams Park.

Goodchild said: "I think they wanted it so badly that it restricted them."

Brighton took a deserved lead through the game's best player,

Chris McPhee, on 73 minutes.

Ironically the goal came just as Wanderers were enjoying their best patch. Phelan was denied what looked like a clear-cut penalty and Johnny Dixon crashed a shot against the bar.

Keeper Steve Williams, who

had been instrumental in keeping the visitors score down, then handed them a late second goal on a plate with an unfortunate act of petulance.

After conceding a free kick for handball just outside his area he threw the ball down in a tantrum

and was in no position to defend his net when Rupert Sansom punished him with a quickly-taken free kick.

Brighton play Brentford in round two of a competition Blues reached round four of last time.