

STARS MISS CLASH

JAMIE Bates and Jermaine McSporran are out of tonight's FA Cup replay at home to second division leaders Millwall (ko 7.45pm).

Defender Bates pulled up with a hamstring strain during the second half of Saturday's 2-1 reversal at Wigan while paceman McSporran was withdrawn at half time with a knee injury.

Boss Lawrie Sanchez fears McSporran's injury could be long-term. A scan yesterday was expected to reveal knee ligament damage and a likely

FOOTBALL By Dave Peters

three-month lay-off.

Sanchez is also resigned to being without Bates for Christmas and says it could be a month before he is back in contention.

Jason Cousins will deputise for Bates in tonight's eagerly-awaited second round clash while fit-again Canadian international Niall Thompson will replace McSporran in attack.

Blues are also forced into another change with on-loan teenage striker Sam Parkin having to make way.

He opened his Wanderers' account at Wigan and showed signs of forming an exciting partnership with top scorer Andy Rammell. But that will have to be broken up tonight because Chelsea won't release him for cup matches.

Dave Carroll could claim a seat on the bench after just one week of training as Blues battle for the right to entertain Grimsby in the third round next year.

Sanchez said: "The game's finely balanced. Either team's capable of going through and both will have to be on their mettle."

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