

Blues' loan curse hits Bristol boy Lavin

GERARD Lavin has been struck down by Wanderers' on-loan curse and is out of tomorrow's cup cliffhanger.

The right back borrowed from Bristol City is the third loanee to get injured within weeks of arriving at Adams Park following in the footsteps of Steve Jones and fourth round cup hero Sam Parkin.

Lavin has injured his medial ligament and is expected to spend the remaining two weeks of his loan in rehabilitation back at Ashton Gate.

Sanchez said: "I don't know what it is with us and loans. Lavin is now injured. He definitely won't be fit for this weekend and I don't think he will play for the rest of the time he's got here."

Lavin picked up the injury on his Wanderers debut in the LDV Vans Trophy defeat at Swindon.

He tried to play through it and turned out against Brentford and Cambridge United but finally broke down in training on the eve of last Saturday's match at Oxford.

His absence has handed the right back jersey back to Canadian international Mark Rogers and the out-of-position centre back made the most of his second chance by stopping to head Blues equaliser in the 2-1 win at Oxford.

Rogers said: "I was a little bit hurt at being dropped but I understood it because Lavin is a right back. I accepted the gaffer's decision to bring him in because I'm not a natural right back. It's not my position but I've been doing it to the best of my ability.

"I'm a defensive player and he's been trying to improve my offensive game.

"On occasion I stay behind after training to work on my crossing and the gaffer has taken me aside and worked on it.

"I know there's lots of things in my game I need to improve and if the gaffer has got the patience then I will."

Fate has now handed Rogers a starting place against first division Wimbledon.

He said: "My family and friends back in Canada are having to pinch themselves that I'm in the last 16 of the FA Cup. Everyone back home knows all about the FA Cup and they're really excited for me.

"I've only been in the first team for a year. I'm still getting started and it has all been a great experience. Talking to some of the older players who have been here for ten years this is the furthest they have ever got in the cup and just the look on their faces tells me I should be excited about it."

And Rogers believes Wanderers can go even further.

He said: "It's all a bonus now but we believe we can cause another upset. You never go into a game thinking you're going to lose. We'll respect them, they're top quality opposition but we think we can cause another upset because it's just 11 men against another 11 men."

Parkhead puts Blues in mood

WANDERERS' old guard prepared themselves for the special atmosphere of an FA Cup fifth round tie by taking in last Sunday's Celtic/Rangers game.

Blues veterans Dave Carroll, Jason Cousins and Keith Ryan joined physio Terry Evans and press officer Alan Hutchinson at a heaving Parkhead for the Old Firm clash as guests of Celtic boss Martin O'Neill.

Ryan said: "It was incredible. I've never known an atmosphere like it. There were 59,000 nutcases in there all screaming their heads off. After experiencing that we'll be ready for anything on Saturday."

Students prepare to give old tutor Sanchez a lesson

THREE of the players who were in the Wimbledon reserve side that Lawrie Sanchez led to the Combination title when he was their coach are out to show him

how much they have learned tomorrow.

Neal Ardley, Jason Euell and Peter Hawkins are determined to show their tutor how good an instructor he was by

dumping him out of the cup.

A fourth player from that Combination winning team - Damien Francis - would have played but he was stretchered off in their replay win against

Middlesbrough.

The Dons will also be without Marcus Gayle and Dean Blackwell but defender Alan Kimble could return after a back injury.