

# Blues' talks with Razor

## Former Liverpool defender Ruddock may replace Bates

DAVE PETERS

FOOTBALL

FORMER England and Liverpool hardman Neil 'Razor' Ruddock could be on his way to Adams Park as a replacement for Jamie Bates.

The 33-year-old centre back held talks with manager Lawrie Sanchez last week and both have gone away to think about it.

But the deal could fall down because Ruddock wants a two-year deal while Wanderers are only interested in offering him one.

Sanchez turned to Razor after failing with a late bid to coax Bates out of retirement.

The boss said: "I thought I might be able to persuade Jamie to change his mind but I couldn't so I have started to look elsewhere and Ruddock is one of the players I'm looking at.

"He hasn't got a club at the moment, he's keen to continue playing and he showed when he came over here with Crystal Palace for a friendly last season that he has still got the ability."

But Ruddock's experience, built up over a career with Tottenham, Liverpool, West Ham, Southampton,

Millwall and Crystal Palace, won't come cheap and Wanderers would have to dig deep into their wage budget to land him.

Sanchez said: "Ruddock is an option but an expensive one. He says he's keen, he's an alternative and I'm looking at my options."

Sanchez already has Paul McCarthy, Jason Cousins, Mark Rogers and the emerging talent of youth team graduate Roger Johnson in his collection of centrebacks but he is desperate to sign another before the big kick-off on August 11.

He said: "We need another centre half. I'm not going to go into the season without any cover. The season is not just about your starting 11, it is about your finishing 11 as well."

A spokesperson for Ruddock said: "I can't make any comment at the moment."

Ruddock has a reputation as a hell raiser and was fined by Crystal Palace last season for starting a match with the name Razor emblazoned across his back instead of his surname.