

## Early Easter for Blues

WANDERERS striker Jermaine Easter is ahead of schedule as he battles to recover from a torn thigh muscle.

The injury is a recurrence of one which kept him out for seven weeks as a Stockport County player last year, but Wanderers are confident this time it's not so bad.

They originally forecast that he would be out for at least a month but that could now turn into three weeks.

The nine-goal hitman is already running and Blues are confident he won't be too long.

But the news is not so good on Sergio Torres. The Argentinian midfielder's knee is taking longer than expected to recover and he had to slow down his rehabilitation this week.

Manager Paul Lambert said: "It's taking a bit longer than we thought. The tendon in the hamstring is giving him a little bit of a problem but we aren't overly concerned at this stage."

## Carry on cheering

MANAGER Paul Lambert praised the 400 travelling Blues fans who made the away game at Accrington seem like a home game and has asked them to carry on cheering.

He said: "They were terrific up there like they were terrific at home against Swindon the week before."

## Preparing to swoop

PAUL Lambert says Blues will be ready to swoop when the transfer window reopens in January. He and his staff have been busy watching matches this week with games involving Watford and West Ham reserves and the Conference clash between Grays and Exeter coming under his scouts' microscopes.

## COCA COLA LEAGUE TWO

| TEAM           | P  | W | D | L  | F  | A  | W | L | F | A  | Pts |
|----------------|----|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|-----|
| Walsall        | 12 | 6 | 0 | 16 | 0  | 2  | 3 | 1 | 8 | 7  | 27  |
| Swindon        | 12 | 4 | 1 | 1  | 8  | 4  | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8  | 5   |
| Wycombe        | 12 | 3 | 2 | 1  | 8  | 5  | 4 | 0 | 2 | 9  | 5   |
| Lincoln City   | 12 | 2 | 2 | 2  | 10 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 6   |
| MK Dons        | 12 | 4 | 1 | 1  | 11 | 7  | 3 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 10  |
| Notts County   | 12 | 3 | 3 | 0  | 7  | 4  | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8  | 6   |
| Hartlepool     | 12 | 3 | 1 | 2  | 8  | 6  | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 9   |
| Peterborough   | 12 | 2 | 1 | 3  | 12 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3  | 5   |
| Shrewsbury     | 11 | 1 | 3 | 1  | 10 | 6  | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 4   |
| Torquay        | 12 | 2 | 2 | 2  | 5  | 5  | 2 | 3 | 1 | 9  | 8   |
| Darlington     | 12 | 2 | 3 | 1  | 10 | 6  | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8  | 9   |
| Accrington     | 12 | 4 | 1 | 1  | 12 | 6  | 0 | 3 | 3 | 8  | 13  |
| Hereford       | 12 | 4 | 0 | 2  | 9  | 5  | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5  | 11  |
| Chester        | 12 | 2 | 1 | 3  | 5  | 6  | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8  | 8   |
| Wrexham        | 11 | 3 | 2 | 1  | 8  | 4  | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5  | 15  |
| Rochdale       | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3  | 3  | 6  | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6  | 4   |
| Mansfield      | 12 | 3 | 2 | 1  | 12 | 9  | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3  | 11  |
| Barnet         | 12 | 1 | 3 | 2  | 12 | 11 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 9  | 10  |
| Bristol Rovers | 12 | 3 | 1 | 2  | 6  | 5  | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3  | 11  |
| Grimsby        | 12 | 2 | 2 | 2  | 8  | 10 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4  | 10  |
| Bury           | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3  | 9  | 10 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4  | 7   |
| Stockport      | 12 | 2 | 1 | 3  | 8  | 10 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3  | 11  |
| Boston Utd     | 12 | 3 | 0 | 3  | 7  | 7  | 0 | 2 | 4 | 8  | 11  |
| Macclesfield   | 12 | 0 | 3 | 3  | 7  | 11 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3  | 13  |

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# Expect extra late show against dozy Devonians

## Early leavers could miss the main event

ANYONE who leaves before the end of tonight's match at home to Torquay United is likely to miss the main event.

Torquay have lost an amazing eight points already this season in time added on by the ref.

They Devonians have a habit of dozing off in the final stages of games this term and have conceded six goals in injury time in just 12 league games this season.

They even managed to turn a 1-0 win into a 2-1 defeat when they conceded twice in overtime.

Blues boss Paul Lambert said: "The Torquay lads will probably have that statistic in their brain especially if people keep mentioning it and they might be a bit nervous as the game gets closer to the end."

Lambert's own team have experienced the upsides and the downsides of injury time in their last two matches.

Against Swindon they rescued a point with Tommy Mooney's equaliser four and a half minutes into stoppage time.

But the boot was on the other foot on Saturday as they crashed 2-1 to Accrington Stanley with the Lancastrians' winner coming two minutes into stoppage time from teenage supersub Andy Mangan.

Lambert said: "I was not happy to lose the game the way we did at Accrington. We were so far ahead in that game and ended up losing it by conceding a bad goal in injury time. We don't want to experience that feeling again."

"The game lasts until that final whistle actually goes and until that then you've got to keep playing."

"We drew with Swindon in extra

time and then got beat in stoppage time last Saturday. It is great when you do it to someone but horrible when it happens to you."

Wanderers are again without nine-goal leading scorer Jermaine Easter for tonight's match as they

They were unbeaten in seven matches but, like Wycombe, they too have only taken one point from the last nine.

Lambert said: "It is going to be tough, like every game in this division is tough."

He said: "It's encouraging to have them back."

Midfielder Kevin Betsy looks set to be preferred to striker Jonny Dixon in attack.

Betsy missed an excellent chance at Accrington but Lambert won't let that bother him.

He said: "At least he is in there to miss them. If he misses a chance he doesn't let it affect him. He won't go hiding and the great thing about Kevin is that something is always likely to happen. He can take people on with a bit of brilliance or he will create something for someone else."

And Lambert insists his decision to pick Betsy over Dixon last week is not a snub to Dixon.

He said: "Jonny is young. I went for the experience at Accrington because I knew it would be tough like Torquay will be."

Wanderers do have one change forced upon them though with Ricardo Batista away with the Portugal U21 for their double header with Russia so James Young plays instead.

Torquay took four points off Wycombe last season but they arrive in the middle of a takeover bid with owner Mike Bateson looking certain to sell after 16 years at the helm.

They look set to welcome back poacher-turned gamekeeper Lee Thorpe after suspension. They signed him as a striker from Swansea but converted him to a defender.

But they have problems in attack. Veteran Mickey Evans is sidelined with a calf injury so on loan giant Leo Fortune West will continue to deputise.



look to get back on track after taking just one point out of the last nine following their previous run of six successive league victories.

Ian Atkins' Gulls arrive at Adams Park in a similar position.

But the gaffer is boosted by the return of sweeper Sam Stockley and playmaker Stefan Oakes. Both trained this week and came through unscathed following their respective calf and ankle injuries.

# Playing on could increase the risk of dementia for Griff

CHARLIE Griffin has been told he could have an increased risk of developing dementia if he carries on playing football.

The Wanderers striker, who is on loan at Forest Green Rovers, has suffered two serious head injuries in the past two years and doctors are concerned for his safety.

He was sent for tests last week after being knocked unconscious in Forest's game against Tamworth and will need to pass more tests in a fortnight's time before he is cleared to play.

But even if he passes those reflex tests, Griffin has warned he could be putting himself at risk of developing dementia if he continues.

But the 27-year-old striker is determined to play on.

"They have talked about what could happen when I am older. They think I am a bit more at risk of developing these problems than other people. But I am just bothered

about now. I just want to get back to playing because it is all I know."

"I was very scared before I saw the doctors because I thought they might tell me that I couldn't play again but they haven't. They have told me that they won't stop me playing."

"They have just done their job and pointed out the risks like they would do with jockeys or boxers."

Griffin was hospitalised after his latest head injury.

He said: "I didn't really know where I was or what had happened until the following morning."

Griffin already plays with a metal plate in his skull following a horrific head injury he suffered playing for Wanderers in a pre-season friendly at Oxford City last season.

Then, after battling his way back to fitness, he collapsed in the dressing room after another Blues game with sinusitis - which medics later diagnosed as a side effect of the previous operation.



Better times ahead: Charlie Griffin is keen to return