

DOUBLE BLOW

Wanderers lose at home to lowly Macclesfield ■ Wasps crash at Falcons



BEATEN BLUES: The players trudge off after losing 2-1 at home

WANDERERS boss Gary Waddock slatted his side following their 2-1 defeat at home to Macclesfield.

He branded their performance as 'shocking' after seeing them tamely surrender their unbeaten record against opponents who were second from bottom at the start of play.

His promotion favourites were booed off by their own fans and Waddock says the crowd – Blues' lowest on a Saturday for 14 years – had every right to vent their anger.

Strikes from Colin Daniel and Tyrone Barnett inside the first 13 minutes condemned Blues and it could have been much worse.

They could have been four or five down at half time and although Scott Rendell halved the deficit with a second half penalty, Wanderers didn't get out of jail and didn't deserve to.

Waddock put the performance alongside last season's 6-0 shocker at Huddersfield in his chamber of horrors

and says promotion will be out of the question if the players don't learn to battle in this division.

He said: "It was shocking. You have to earn the right to play.

"Did we do that today? No.

"We didn't compete. This league is all about competing. You have to be able to stand up to that and then stamp your own authority on the game.

"The two goals they scored were fantastic strikes but if you give people time and space to do that good players will do that."

Wycombe haven't won since beating Morecambe on the opening day and Waddock admitted that the doubters have every right to be questioning whether his team are the real deal.

He said: "On the evidence of that [Saturday's game] I would agree with them.

"The early part of the season hasn't been anything near what we were looking for." **Continued on page 45.**



TRIPPED UP: Steve Kefu is grounded at Newcastle

WASPS director of rugby Tony Hanks has questioned his players' skill levels after they fumbled a 17-3 lead at Newcastle on Friday evening.

That 14-point advantage was comprehensively wiped out as the Falcons powered past them to win 29-17 and leave the black and golds second from bottom of the Aviva Premiership.

Inexplicable handling errors handed the initiative to Newcastle and when Wasps finally threatened a comeback late in the match they were beset by more unforced errors.

Hanks said: "Every time we got into a position to do something we didn't look after the ball and dropped it. If you drop a ball that's skill level, it's not effort or desire."

A staggering 25 turnovers left Wasps with virtually nowhere to go, and with last season's top points getter Jimmy Gopperth scoring all 19 points on offer from the tee, there was only ever going to be one winner.

Hanks said: "Our potential is obvious, but we've got to bring it together. We've talked about consistency, but talking about it doesn't mean it's just going to happen."

Friday's loss means Wasps are miles from their target of three wins from their first three games. The Newcastle collapse follows their draw with Harlequins, and it doesn't get any easier with Leicester at Adams Park next.

Wasps won that fixture last season but for a club eager to learn from last season's mistakes – when defeats to bottom half teams cost them a play-off spot – the early signs are discouraging.

Hanks said: "It's not about reacting to these two games. There are still 20 games to go and your top four are going to lose a lot of matches.

"We're disappointed, but we are a team that set ourselves very high standards and we will be more critical of our performance than anyone else can be." **Continued on page 43.**