

# Wanderers can live with the best

VICTORY over flying Fourth-Division side and old adversaries Barnet provided a yardstick for Wycombe Wanderers' ambitions at Adams Park on Tuesday night.

Mark West converted the second-half penalty which divided FA Trophy holders Blues from the winners of last season's GM Vauxhall Conference in this annual Championship Shield.

But while the increasingly competitive nature of the game, and Wanderers' victory jigs with the shield afterwards, reflected the prestige of winning, no-one forgot the other reason for the match.

Both clubs and a record attendance for this occasion came to honour their late friend and player Kevin Durham, who died in the summer.

Seldom has the pre-kick off minute of silence been so respectfully observed. There was not even an idiot's murmur. As Wanderers' boss Martin O'Neill said: "The turnout shows the esteem he was held in by the football clubs and I don't think the football sides let him down either."

As soon as two full first teams ran out, it was clear this non-league equivalent of the Charity Shield would be for real. Barnet's former Blues star Nicky Evans was made captain for the night, but from the kick off, Wycombe set out to maintain their brilliant start to the Conference season.

Barnet came to Adams Park on another special occasion in April, when the Duke of Kent opened the ground, and had that game won within four minutes.

Gary Bull, scorer of that night's early brace, hardly touched the ball as Wycombe took the game to Barnet in the opening stages.

After just 20 seconds, Mark West's left-wing cross was met by Mickey Nuttall who glanced his header wide. Blues won five corners in the opening quarter of an hour, while both Dave Carroll, with a 20-yard side-footed volley, and Steve Guppy, with a right-footed shot after good work by Gary Smith, saw efforts saved by Steve Berryman in the Barnet goal.

Although the watching League managers must have been impressed with Blues' domination of most of the first half, as the game progressed it was Bull who looked increasingly dangerous.

On 19 minutes, he turned superbly to arrow a shot from 20 yards which Paul Hyde did well to push for a corner. Then eight minutes later, after West had lost possession in the middle of the field, Bull tore away goalwards, held off the pacy recovery of Andy Kerr and fired a low shot which again tested Hyde.

A remarkable proportion of Wycombe's openings came through Barnet's left-back spot and it was down that flank that Blues increased the tempo after the interval.

A superb move involving Carroll and Smith allowed

**Wanderers 1, Barnet 0**  
**Chief Soccer Writer**  
**PETE LANSLEY reports**  
**from Adams Park**

## Match Facts

**Blues:** Hyde 8, Cousins 8, Walford 7 (45 mins Gooden 6), Kerr 8, Creaser 7, Smith 7, Carroll 6 (71 mins Hutchinson), Ryan 6, West 7, Nuttall 7, Guppy 7  
**Goal:** West 56 (penalty)  
**Attempts on target:** 9  
**Corners:** 9

**Barnet:** Berryman, Blackford (45 mins Tomlinson), Naylor, Bodley, Nugent, Murphy (45 mins Hayrettin), Wilson, Evans, Bull, Lowe, Showler  
**Attempts on target:** 3  
**Corners:** 5  
**Booking:** Wilson 86 (foul)

**Referee:** Mr D. Gallagher 7  
**Attendance:** 3,461  
**Match rating:** 7

Nuttall to release West down the line, but his cross fell behind the in-rushing midfielders. Then Carroll found himself in space but couldn't dig up a decent cross.

After 56 minutes, Keith Ryan's persistence paid off as he won the ball down the right.

He fed West, whose early cross was played on by Carroll to Nuttall, back to goal.

The big striker was in the process of turning when Richard Nugent upended him for an undisputed penalty. West sent Berryman the wrong way for his fifth goal in a week.

The goal lifted the whole game as Barnet, with Evans reverting to a front role alongside Bull, provided Wycombe's defence with a stern test. Kerr and Jason Cousins were outstanding, while Hyde pulled off the save of the night on 62 minutes.

Bull created himself a few inches of space from Kerr and sent in a dipping left-foot curler from 20 yards.

Hyde flipped backwards to tip the ball over the bar.

But it was that item of the woodwork which kept Hyde's sheet clean a minute later. Substitute David Tomlinson swivelled on the edge of the area after Glyn Creaser had mistimed a header, and his shot smacked across the bar.

But Blues rode their luck — Mick Bodley's 75th-minute near-post header somehow eluding Hyde's far post — and created their share of chances.

"We're so good it's unbelievable," sang the Valley End choir — they were in form, Tuesday.

Berryman's save in the 69th minute defied belief. Nuttall managed to touch a header down, and Ryan

unleashed as powerful a volley as you will see all season. Berryman reacted to spectacularly deflect the ball wide. Substitute Simon Hutchinson, released down the right by West's hook on, saw another chance well saved with ten minutes left.

It may not have been Wembley, nor did Creaser hold up the Conference trophy after the match. But

a decent win over a team who will push hard for promotion to the Third Division next Spring is a result which confirms Blues' current position as the best non-league team around.

"After seven successive wins, the bubble will inevitably burst at some point," claimed O'Neill.

"But while the confidence is up, the lads can't wait for the next game."