

Adam VIRGO

BT SPORT PUNDIT GIVES HIS EXPERT OPINION

AT THE start of every season, I always say to myself that the next campaign can't be as odd in terms of results and expectancy. This year, however, is the most topsy-turvy season I have known in the six years I have been covering National League football.

If you'd have told me at the start of the season there would be the likes of Bromley, Halifax, Yeovil, Woking and Dagenham at the top of the table after 15 games and AFC Fylde, Wrexham and Chesterfield at the bottom, I'd have laughed at you! It's been a crazy start.

Momentum is the key in football as we know and there's no club in the top flight with more right now than Yeovil.

When the BT Sport cameras watched them play Barrow earlier in the season they lacked cohesion or organisation both on and off the pitch.

Thankfully now, with their takeover complete, momentum has swung massively in their favour and the club have started enjoying its football again. At the time of writing this, the Glovers have just pulled off seven wins on the spin under Darren Sarll and look imperious right now.

Philosophy

Similarly, Bromley. They were seen as a potential surprise package at the start of the season but they are certainly more than that now.

I've got a lot of time for manager Neil Smith, he's a very good manager who understands the philosophy of the club from top to bottom.

Very quietly, he's gone out and strengthened each individual position and suddenly you look at a Bromley side not packed with superstars, but with seasoned National League players who fully understand the level they are playing at.

I remember at Bristol Rovers under Paul Buckle, I had signed from Yeovil in League One and joined a number of players who were hand-picked as 'the best players' from rival sides. We had the likes of Scott McGleish, Mustapha Carayol, Stuart Beavon and Chris Zebroski. But despite the high-profile nature of the squad we had we just couldn't gel as a team.

Neil hasn't done that but has worked on improving the balance of his team with National League performers and suddenly they have gone from play-off contenders

MOMENTUM IS SO DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME



HIGH-FLIERS: Yeovil Town and the likes of insets, top to bottom, Bromley, Woking and Dagenham, are on a roll

PICTURE: PINNACLE

to **THE** team to beat in this league. I think they can last the distance.

Sadly, though, almost the reverse has happened at AFC Fylde after a difficult start to the season.

Something isn't quite right at Mill Farm this term and it's that word 'balance' again which I fear has knocked Dave Challinor's men off course in this opening third of the season.

I always wondered what

would happen to Fylde if Danny Rowe stopped scoring – now I think we are beginning to see.

Sorely missed

It was a similar philosophy to what we had at Brighton with Bobby Zamora. As defenders, we knew if we could keep clean sheets at one end then Bobby would do the rest at the other. In two seasons, he scored 31 and 33 goals as we won the League Two and

League One title.

Yes, the goals have dried up at one end but it's at the other where Challinor's men have struggled. The likes of Jay Lynch (pictured right), Zaine Francis-Angol and Jordan Tunnicliffe were excellent for the Coasters last year but are now being sorely missed.

Bringing in the likes of Matty



Kosylo and Mark Yeates has undoubtedly strengthened them in attacking areas but they haven't got it quite right as yet.

Eventually, it will click for Fylde and they've got the quality to go on the kind of run that could yet propel them into the play-offs. But they need to find their feet quickly, they are running out of time.

DRAGONS' DECISION ON THEIR NEW NO. 1 IS HUGE!

MAKE no bones about it, this next managerial appointment for Wrexham is massive.

I have to say I feel sorry for the Dragons. They've given opportunities for three young managers to launch their careers with two, Dean Keates and Sam Ricketts moving on to land Football League jobs almost exactly 12 months apart.

Initially, it appeared that Bryan Hughes would enjoy similar success and Wrexham were well backed to be among the pacesetters this year.

When Bryan took the job, Wrexham were solid at the back but not clinical enough up front. Now, they're scoring goals okay but they're shipping too many at the back.

Many will feel they pulled the trigger on Bryan too early but he will tell you that it's a result business and Wrexham are far too big a club to be languishing where they are in the table.

It's a situation similar to my old mate Nathan Jones at Stoke City – got a great winning momentum going at Luton but can't win a game for love nor money at Stoke and finds himself under huge pressure.

I'd be surprised, however, if Wrexham went down the same route of hiring a young, inexperienced manager or first-timer this time round. That would be very brave. They need an immediate turnaround because the longer they take to find some kind of momentum the harder it will be to get themselves out of it.

Someone like Daryl McMahon or John Askey would have been perfect for them but they are unlikely to be tempted out of the Football League.

In which case, how about someone like Gary Waddock – a wise head who knows the league like the back of his hand!