

ABOUT OUR VISITORS

THE battle against relegation is no new experience for Birmingham City. Four times in the past five seasons they had a narrow escape, surviving on three of those occasions by winning the last match. They were at home each time and this season their final fixture is also at St. Andrews, though by then they naturally hope to be clear of trouble.

City's three new signings this season were inside-forwards Geoff Vowden and Ron Fenton — from Nottingham Forest and West Bromwich Albion respectively — and Cammie Fraser from Aston Villa. Fraser, normally a full-back, made his debut for Birmingham at outside-right and played inside-right in his next game.

Withers' place in goal has been taken by long-serving John Schofield, a native of Atherstone, who joined Birmingham from Nuneaton in March 1950. Schofield has had bad luck with injuries over the years, his most serious injury being a fractured skull, but his courage is undaunted.

Right-back Stan Lynn is one of the few current players who have been in the game throughout the post-war period. He started with Accrington Stanley, joined Aston Villa in 1950, and seven years later was in their Cup-winning side against Manchester United. He was transferred to Birmingham in October, 1961. For a full-back he has the remarkable career record of 60 first-team goals, mostly from penalties.

Colin Green joined Birmingham from Everton in December 1962, and is a former Welsh Under-23 international.

Terry Hennessey, also born at Wrexham, played in the same boys' team as Green.

He signed as a professional at St. Andrew's in 1959, and has appeared for Wales in 14 internationals.

One of the reasons Trevor Smith was allowed to join Walsall was the fine form of Winston Foster, who took over at centre-half after the fourth match. Foster, a local product who joined the professional staff in November 1958, made his debut in April 1961.

Left-half Malcolm Beard, a former England Youth international, spent two years on the St. Andrew's ground staff before turning professional in May, 1959. A "local" from Cannock, he is ever-present this season.

Signed last summer from West Bromwich Albion, Alec Jackson has played in every position in Birmingham's front line except centre-forward. Born at Tipton, he joined Albion's professional staff in 1954.

Ron Fenton, a native of South Shields, began his professional career with Burnley, and transferred to West Bromwich Albion in November 1962. Made his name as a useful utility forward at the Hawthorns, and has continued to show his versatility since joining Birmingham in January, his first six games for them being at centre-forward, outside-right and inside-right.

Dundee - born inside - forward Bobby Thomson played amateur for Albion Rovers and Airdrieonians before entering professional football with Wolves in 1954. He moved on to Aston Villa and in September 1963 Birmingham became his third Midlands club.

Geoff Vowden played in every forward position in his five years with Nottingham Forest. He made 90 League appearances for Forest, scoring 40 goals, prior to his transfer to Birmingham last October.

The transfer of Bertie Auld in January has left Denis Thwaites without serious challenge for the left wing position. A native of Stockton-on-Tees and a former England Schoolboy and Youth international, he signed as a professional in 1961.

"Cammie" Fraser, who comes from Blackford in Perthshire, made his name with Dunfermline, with whom he won Scottish Under-23 honours, before being transferred to Villa in October, 1963. He made eleven senior appearances for Villa last winter, and signed for Birmingham in February.