

ABOUT OUR VISITORS

FOR the second successive Christmas we meet Blackpool twice and, naturally, we hope to repeat the "double" gained at their expense a year ago. In the intervening twelve months the Blackpool team has changed considerably, and this season there have been several departures, including centre-half Roy Gratrix to Manchester City, left-back Barrie Martin to Oldham Athletic, wing-half Billy Cranston to Preston and winger Stephen Hill to Tranmere Rovers.

Blackpool manager Ron Suart has progressively reduced the average age of the side over the past year or so, and most of the young players who have been introduced have fully justified his confidence.

Last line of defence is in the capable hands of England's goalkeeper Tony Waiters. A native of Southport, he has given Blackpool excellent service in recent seasons, and played his 150th League game in September.

Another player whose name is synonymous with consistency is right-back and skipper Jimmy Armfield. Capped by England in 41 full internationals, Manchester-born Armfield had figured in 326 League games at the beginning of this season.

Successor to Barrie Martin is Tommy Thompson, a north-easterner from Stockton-on-Tees, who, like Tony Waiters, is also a former England amateur international. He joined Blackpool from Stockton in 1961.

Graham Rowe is another Southport man making his name with Blackpool. Now in his second season as a professional, he had his first senior outing in February this

year, and has played occasionally at centre-half.

The progress of centre-half Glyn James this season has been marked both by his first Welsh Under-23 cap and selection as reserve for the full Welsh side. Born at Llangollen, he signed professional in 1960, and made his League debut in October that year.

Johnny Green was transferred from Tranmere in March 1959. Green was then an inside-forward, and it was not until he was switched to the half-back line that he won a regular first-team place last winter.

A product of the club's ground staff is right-winger Leslie Lea, who slipped through the scouting net of the two League clubs in his native Manchester.

Red-haired Alan Ball has switched the opposite way to Lea, for he played his first League game at outside-right, in the opening fixture of the 1962-63 season. He gained a regular place last winter, and has since developed into a player of exceptional ability. A native of Farnworth (Lancashire) Ball won his first England Under-23 cap against Wales last month. He misses the Christmas matches because of a 14-day F.A. suspension which started on Monday.

Lancaster-born Ray Charnley joined Blackpool in 1957 from Morecambe, the Lancashire Combination club, and has been a consistent scorer ever since, topping the club's list of marksmen in five of the past six seasons.

John McPhee joined Blackpool from Motherwell in the summer of 1962, and has proved a clever utility player. He has occupied both wing-half positions, the two inside-forward berths, and has also played at centre-forward and outside right.

Left-winger Graham Oates was an amateur with Scunthorpe United before signing as a Blackpool professional in 1961.

Apart from Green, South African winger Desmond Horne is the only member of Blackpool's staff for whom a fee was paid to another Football League club. He had four years with Wolves before moving to Bloomfield Road in March 1961.

Commentaries on all first team matches are relayed to local hospitals by members of Chelsea TOC H.