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WANDERERS

New boy will have his part to play for Wanderers

GARETH AINSWORTH pointed to the example of Alfie Mawson when talking about the potential impact which new signing Ryan Sellers could make for Wanderers.

When the defender arrived on loan he, like Sellers, was an unknown quantity and had yet to make his professional debut.

A season later and Wycombe supporters had taken Mawson to their hearts following consistently superb displays which earned him the Fans' Player of the Year award.

Sellers, who signed a one-year deal after leaving Bolton, has had spells in non-league, like Mawson, and Ainsworth says he will make

his Football League debut at some stage this season.

"There was a player who hadn't made his professional debut when he joined us last year - Alfie Mawson - and we saw what he went on to do," said the Wycombe boss.

"I'm not saying in any way that Ryan will replicate that but he's a

player that I believe is good enough to play, if called upon, in the first team."

"He's done his development; we don't have a reserve side or an under-21s side and because we can only bring so few players in, everyone who comes in has to be ready to play league football."

Blues boss admits to 'slow' progress on new signings

by GREG STYLES

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WANDERERS boss Gareth Ainsworth admits the club's progress in the transfer market has been "slow" so far but insists he and chairman Andrew Howard are working tirelessly to bring in new recruits.

The arrivals last week of Garry Thompson and Ryan Sellers were Wycombe's first of the summer and boosted the number of players at Ainsworth's disposal to 13 - a figure which will rise by one if Hogan Ephraim, who is in ongoing talks with the club, signs on the dotted line.

Financial restraints are once again Ainsworth's biggest enemy as he looks to assemble a competitive squad for the upcoming League Two season with the Blues manager admitting that the riches on offer elsewhere have lured a number of his targets away from Adams Park.

He said: "Every player that I'm interested in five or six clubs are also interested in, and four or five of those are probably able to pay more than us. It then comes down to the player and whether he wants a challenge at Wycombe Wanderers or the bigger money that other clubs can afford to offer."

"That's what we're up against. One day hopefully we can start out-bidding other teams. It's been a great learning experience for myself, Andrew Howard has been absolutely key again in summer recruitment and I think I've spoken to him more than my missus this summer."

"Richard Dobson and Barry Richardson have been incredible as



Gareth Ainsworth says he faces competition from five or six clubs every time he moves for one of his transfer targets.

well. We've been in a lot more than you would expect over the summer months to work hard on getting players in, but we know our limitations, we know we have to work hard on that side of it and I'm not complaining about that one bit."

Aaron Pierre is currently the Chairboys' only recognised centre-back following the end of Alfie Mawson's loan deal, leaving Ainsworth to fill the sizeable void left by the club's Player of the Season.

Fellow League Two sides such as Portsmouth and Oxford are busily compiling squads filled with a number of players for every position - a luxury which isn't likely to be seen

anytime soon at Adams Park.

"It's [centre-back] definitely high on my priority list and there are a few names that we're talking to," said Ainsworth.

"Once again we've had a few that we were talking to, very preliminary talks, but they were just taken by bigger and better things. Some teams will have 30 professionals on their books in League Two, which I think is crazy."

"That means that at least 19 players won't have a game on a Saturday, won't be anywhere near the squad on a Saturday and that's hard to take as a professional."

"I'm going to stick to my low numbers, which I have to because

of budget but there's always a route to the first team at Wycombe and you're always within touching distance of the first team."

"That alone brings players in and we'll be working really hard. We can't just go out and buy someone else if someone's not doing it, we have to make sure we train them the right way, develop them the right way and if there are mistakes we rectify them with the players."

Ainsworth, who will be undertaking his third full season in charge of the club, said it would be "great" if Ephraim decides his future lies with Blues but that the club have other targets lined up should the midfielder decline.

The 42-year-old declined to put a number on the amount of new arrivals he wants to bring in, instead stating that the club will be bringing more players in permanently and on loan - an area of recruitment which was "crucial" last season.

He said: "The days of having three subs on the bench I don't think have gone for Wycombe yet. We probably will have to field less than seven subs in many games."

"I can only put three (substitutes) on and as long as the three I've got are good enough to go on and do a job then that's fine for me."

"After last year, I want people to get behind us and remember the buzz of coming to the games and not look at the points total so much and just remember the spirit, the work ethic, the togetherness we had and bring that down to Adams Park this year."

"There's no reason why we can't give a good account of ourselves this season."

Change at the top

THE Wycombe Wanderers Trust board and football club board met last night (Thursday) to discuss who will replace the departed David Robertson and Don Woodward.

Robertson resigned his position on both boards last Friday, leaving one vacancy on the football club board and two on the Trust board following Woodward's resignation in May.

The mandate for the Trust board is to have 11 members but presently just nine are in place - Dale Jenkins, James Sumner, Mark Burrell, John Derben, David Cook, Alan Cecil, Colin Treacher, Garry Heath and Trevor Stroud.

As well as discussing who will fill the aforementioned pair's positions, the meeting was used to discuss changes to the structure of both boards as well as that of the Frank Adams Legacy Limited, on which Cecil is the only current board member.

Presently, chairman Andrew Howard and Cook make up the football club board.

Chairman of the Trust Trevor Stroud stated that while Trust members would usually vote to elect prospective candidates onto the board, because the resignations were tendered before the end of their terms the Trust are free to co-opt two members of their choosing onto the board.

As soon as the Trust have made the relevant changes and appointments, Stroud will then call a members meeting, which is likely to take place in early July, to formally announce the new board members and structures.

Whoever is appointed to the boards will then have to put themselves up for election at the Trust AGM, which will take place later this year in November.

Stroud indicated that those candidates appointed to the respective boards will have specific parts of the club to deal with such as stadium management, finance, commercial and marketing, and health and safety governance.

"The other thing we're trying to do, from a Trust and a football club point of view, is to make sure these appointments are based around roles and what these people will actually be contributing," he said.

"That will be another point of difference. Where, historically, someone might have gone from the Trust board onto the football club board with an undefined role, going forward Andrew is very much someone who likes people to take responsibility for supporting particular parts of the business."

Pre-season

WANDERERS will play no pre-season fixtures at Adams Park and all their games will be away to non-league opposition.

A game against fourth tier French side US Avranches kicks off their schedule on July 16 before games against Wealdstone (July 21), Basingstoke (July 28) and Aldershot (August 1) round off pre-season ahead of their first League Two match on August 8.

Credit Craig for his service to Blues, says Ainsworth



Steven Craig's last goal for Blues came in the play-offs.

FANTASTIC was the word Gareth Ainsworth used to describe Steven Craig's contribution during his time at Adams Park, following the striker's release last week.

It was announced last Wednesday (June 17) that the Scot had parted ways with Blues by "mutual consent" after a two-year spell at the club.

The striker, who joined from Partick Thistle, racked up 69 appearances in the light and blue quarters but often struggled to find the net, scoring just eight goals.

He did however bag his 100th career goal in the play-off semi-final first leg victory against Plymouth, and Ainsworth feels he deserves recognition for his contribution to the club's cause.

"Steven's been a real credit to the character building at the club," he said.

"Taking the football out of it, his attitude to work, his discipline and respect were things we pride ourselves on at Wycombe. Stevie's done fantastically in the two years that he's been here."

"More goals would have been nice for Stevie and for us, but I've

not got a bad word to say about Stevie Craig. I think he'll definitely turn up somewhere and score goals again."

"His contribution in the play-offs as well was fabulous. He'd been out of the team for so long, came straight back in, performed really well and unfortunately just missed out on starting the final due to a hamstring injury."

"I wish Stevie all the best and hopefully he'll go on and produce somewhere because he's had great moments in his career and his 100th career goal at Plymouth was a great parting shot to have."



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Heath striker's journey to international debut

Gavin James delights at winning his first two caps for St Vincent

by **GREG STYLES**

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AS Gavin James walked into the overwhelming heat at Arnos Vale Stadium in St Vincent and the Grenadines he did so with the famous FIFA anthem ringing in his ears.

The 26-year-old is more accustomed to plundering goals past helpless opposition at Wilks Park for his club side Flackwell Heath rather than preparing himself to make his international debut in a World Cup qualifier against Guyana.

James, who qualified to represent the Caribbean island through his grandparents, admits he could scarcely believe he was about to win his first international cap as he lined up for the national anthems alongside ten players who were mere strangers when he got the call up on May 29.

A plucky email sent to the St Vincent and the Grenadines Football Federation (SVGFF) set the ball rolling on the forward's journey into international football, culminating in his debut against Guyana in the first leg of a second round qualifier.

"They play the FIFA anthem as you walk out and it was one of those things that gives you goose bumps as you're walking out as there is this iconic music playing," said James.

"You all line-up, they play both national anthems, then you have a team photo and I kind of had to pinch myself and wonder if it was really happening."

When the original call from Dominique Stowe, a committee member of the SVGFF, came his way, James arranged time off from his job as a trainee teacher at Chesham Grammar School, packed his bags and jetted off on June 2.

On arrival in the Caribbean, James was welcomed into the training camp, which was based in a town named Brighton, and introduced to his teammates – a mix of players who came from afar afield as Finland and America to be part of the squad.



Gavin James (right) alongside fellow High Wycombe residents Brad Miguel (left) and JJ Lofthouse-Smith, who were also in the squad but weren't selected to feature in the game against Guyana.

After playing 45 minutes in a practice match on his first day, head coach Cornelius Huggins informed the striker that he had done enough, with James himself feeling "comfortable" in his new surroundings.

The Bucks New University graduate felt he was in with a good chance of playing against Guyana – suspicions which were confirmed when he was asked to head to the Nichols Building in Kingstown, home of the SVGFF, to meet the media.

"On the Friday (June 5) morning the manager said to me that there was going to be a press conference at the FIFA office so I need to be there. When I turned up it was me, the captain, the vice-captain, the coach, the president of FIFA over there and an ambassador.

"I kept thinking to myself 'considering who I'm here with I've got a good chance [of playing] here'. The day before the game we had a training session and he said the team I was in was maybe the one he would be starting with, but nothing was set in stone.

"I prepared myself as if I was going to start and then when I turned up in the changing room for the game he read the team out. I was the last name called and he said 'and a first international cap for...' and then he called my name and that was it, it was going to happen."

The Arnos Vale Stadium, which is more commonly used as a venue for Test match cricket, was a far cry from what James is used to and the searing heat made life hard for the lone striker.

Having trailed at half-time St Vincent equalised through Cornelius Stewart after 51 minutes. James was substituted soon after and watched his replacement, Tevin Slater, snatch an equaliser seven minutes from time after Guyana had retaken the lead.

"I was happy with my performance although I would have liked to get longer," explained James.

"I was playing as a lone striker and when you do that over here [England] it's ok but when you do it in that heat – he expects you to run, chase down and you just feel exhausted.

"There's been a few highlights put on YouTube and I'm in quite a few of them, so I was quite pleased with how I played. A few people said I played well but it was just

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'Signing Alf
would be deal
of the century'



Alfie Mawson.

GARETH AINSWORTH believes if Wycombe Wanderers sign Alfie Mawson it would be the "deal of the century", as speculation surrounding the defender's next move intensifies.

The 21-year-old reportedly turned down the offer of a new two-year deal at Brentford in order to pursue regular first team football after starring for Blues last season.

Fifty appearances, a plethora of awards at the club's end of season dinner and a nomination for League Two Player of the Season award saw Mawson's stock rise to the point where several clubs across League One and Two are chasing his signature.

Ainsworth admits Wanderers are still desperate to sign the defender but admits interest from clubs such as Millwall, Barnsley, Swindon and Bradford is difficult to compete with.

"The longer that Alfie doesn't sign for anyone else the better it is for us," said the Wycombe boss.

"In all honesty, keeping Alfie would be the deal of the century for me. We'll see what we can do and obviously we're trying our hardest to keep Alfie Mawson, but we're not only up against bigger wages, bigger money but definitely bigger clubs, bigger status and bigger leagues."

The player himself tweeted on Monday that after a trip to France he is now ready to decide his next move, stating "now home to see where I'm heading for next season".

