

SPORT

Former Hornet nets for Chairboys

EX-WATFORD MAN STEPHEN MCGINN FEATURES FOR WANDERERS

ONE of the trialists who featured for Wanderers against Wealdstone on Tuesday night was former Watford midfielder Stephen McGinn.

The 26-year-old gave an accomplished performance after coming on at half-time and got himself on the scoresheet when he tapped home Joe Jacobson's cross.

The Scottish-born player began his career at St Mirren, making 84 appearances for the club before Malky Mackay took him to Vicarage Road in January 2010.

McGinn appeared 42 times for the Golden Boys, scoring twice, before a permanent move to Sheffield United in July 2013 came via a loan spell at Shrewsbury.

Most recently, the Scot had been plying his trade for Scottish Premiership side Dundee, where he played 14 times and scored once last season after signing permanently in February.

Scottish newspaper The Courier reported in June that McGinn had been offered a deal to stay at The Dark Blues, but with no deal arising, Gareth Ainsworth is casting his eye over the midfielder.

The Blues fail French challenge

THE CHAIRBOYS LOST THEIR PRE-SEASON OPENER VS US AVRANCHES

A WANDERERS team featuring three trialists suffered a 2-1 defeat to US Avranches in their first pre-season friendly at the Stade Paul Maudrill on Thursday, July 16.

One of those trialists, striker Sean Maguire, equalised for Blues in the final 20 minutes of the match when he tapped home a Jason Banton cross.

The Chairboys had fallen behind midway through the first half after the hosts converted from the spot when Aaron Pierre was penalised in the box.

The French side, who play in the third tier, scored a winner late on to condemn Wycombe to defeat.

Better news for manager Gareth Ainsworth came in the form of Sido Jombati, who played 45 minutes on his return from the ankle injury which sidelined him for the final part of last season.

There was no sign of Matt Ingram, however, with Alex Lynch and Barry Richardson taking the first and second halves respectively.

The goalkeeper missed the Blues' play-off campaign at the end of last term with a knee injury and Ainsworth said earlier this month that he may not be risked in their early pre-season matches.

Wanderers' summer signings Anthony Stewart, Ryan Sellers, Garry Thompson, Danny Rowe, Michael Harriman and Banton all played a part in the match.

New-look Wanderers ease past The Stones

GREG STYLES REPORTS ON BLUES' PRE-SEASON GAME AT THE VALE

WYCOMBE eased to their first win of pre-season after seeing off Wealdstone 3-1 at The Vale on Tuesday evening.

The visitors fell behind in the first half to a splendid 30-yard volley from Elliot Godfrey as Blues struggled to find their attacking rhythm early on.

An equaliser arrived in the form of trialist Luke O'Nien minutes after they fell behind as he turned home Aaron Pierre's header to the back post.

A seven-minute double salvo in the second half via another trialist, Stephen McGinn, and Garry Thompson put the game to bed as Wanderers completed a good run out against the National League South side.

After taking three trialists with them across the channel on their pre-season tour to France, Blues pitched up for their first friendly back in the UK with the same number but two new faces.

Former Watford midfielder O'Nien travelled with the squad and was rewarded with a start while Sean Maguire and Luke Woodland, who went to France, weren't with Gareth Ainsworth's squad.

Matt Ingram was in attendance but only in a spectating capacity and he was on the bench looking on as Michael Corcoran fired a warning shot just over the bar with nine minutes played.

After a combative opening spell, Wanderers began to stamp their mark on the match and were only denied the opening goal by two fantastic blocks from Oliver Duffy.

After the right-back had turned Michael Harriman's dangerous cross behind, he then got in the way of Anthony Stewart's effort from



Trialist Luke O'Nien celebrates after scoring the equaliser against Wealdstone on Tuesday night. Image courtesy of Prime Media Images.

the resulting corner and then threw himself in the way of Pierre's goal-bound follow up.

A match short on action sprang to life after 32 minutes when Stones midfielder Godfrey latched onto Pierre's headed clearance and sent a volley spearing into the top corner from 30 yards.

Wanderers response was less spectacular but equally as effective as O'Nien tapped home Pierre's header to the back post from Joe Jacobson's corner just three minutes after they'd fallen behind.

Three changes at the break brought about a reshuffle for Wan-

derers and they were perhaps still coming to terms with that as Dale Binns went clean through three minutes after the restart.

The winger beat the offside trap, bore down on goal and settled himself before passing the ball wide of the far post with only Lynch to beat.

Once again Blues issued a swift response, taking the lead for the first time on 52 minutes when McGinn, who was introduced at half-time, tucked the ball home at the back post after Tim Brown flapped at Jacobson's cross.

Seven minutes later another superb delivery from the left-foot

of Jacobson created Blues' third, Thompson getting on the end of a superb out-swinging cross and planting a header into the bottom corner.

Ainsworth used the rest of his bench, including another trialist, in the remainder of the match as Blues held out for a comfortable victory.

Wanderers: Lynch, Jombati, Jacobson (Bean), Stewart (Sellers), Pierre, Harriman (Rowe), Bloomfield (trialist), O'Nien (trialist), Wood (Kretzschmar), Hayes (Holloway), Thompson (Banton)

Subs not used: Richardson

BLUES Ainsworth content with friendly victory Boss ready to ramp up preparations

GARETH AINSWORTH was a satisfied onlooker after seeing his Wanderers side come from behind to beat Wealdstone.

The Blues boss used 19 players, including three trialists, at The Vale, with goalkeeper Matt Ingram not risked as he continues his recovery from a knee injury.

Ainsworth said: "The aim was minutes under belts, fitness and a small amount of tactics tonight – the way we want to play, the way we want to do things. You start introducing that but you don't want to give them too much too soon.

"You want it to be fresh for the first game of the season. The pleasing thing is no injuries, and obviously a win and some good individual performances from different

players in different positions.

"I'm really pleased overall. It's always a nice place to come to Wealdstone, well supported and I was pleased with the performance."

Luke O'Nien, a trialist, accompanied Blues to France and he was again given a chance to impress against The Stones on Tuesday evening. The 20-year-old, who was released by Watford earlier this summer, scored the first-half leveller and looked tidy in possession, although it's unclear whether he has done enough to earn a deal as Ainsworth intends to keep his cards close to his chest.

He said: "In my own head, I keep things very private with regards to contracts and who gets them and who doesn't, and that's the same



Gareth Ainsworth at The Vale. Image courtesy of Prime Media Images.

with the trialists.
"A couple of goals from a couple, so that turns your head. Every manager's different. They all see differ-

ent things on the pitch and if I've seen good things tonight then I'll be showing it with what I do in the future."

BLUES Bloomfield aiming to channel penalty pain Wembley heartache can spur us on to better things



Matt Bloomfield suffered the agony of missing a penalty in the play-off final shoot-out against Southend in May.

MATT BLOOMFIELD is adamant that Wanderers can use their Wembley penalty pain as inspiration to kick on in the upcoming League Two season.

Blues would have been preparing for life in the division above had Southend not grabbed a late equaliser before winning on spot-kicks in the May's play-off final to shatter their promotion dreams.

Wycombe's longest serving player, who is heading into his 13th season at the club, says it took a "few weeks" to get over their defeat but insists the memory of that match could serve as a springboard this time round.

"To get a record amount of points for Wycombe in a league season – 84 – was such an incredible feat in itself, considering where we finished the year before," he said.

"To turn it round in the manner we did was fantastic and credit has to go to the chairman, the manager, the players and the supporters for doing that.

"It was a great season, we'll take lots of positives from it and use those moving forward and use it as motivation that we can go on and do those things again.

"Equally, we can use the pain as motivation to move forward and try to improve and better ourselves."

Prior to last season, Gareth Ainsworth and chairman Andrew Howard set out a remit for the team to achieve a minimum points haul of 55 in order to ensure survival, having seen the club come perilously close to dropping out of the Football League in the 2013/14 campaign.

After hitting their points target in February, the team went onto finish fourth in the league – a feat which has got most bookmakers tipping

By Greg Styles

them to make the play-offs again.

Bloomfield said: "It's human nature for a good season to raise expectations and that's only natural.

"We need to remember where we came from the year before and realise quite what a season we managed to have last year.

"It's only natural that peoples' expectations will be raised, but at the same time we need to remember where the club came from and how we moved forward in such a big way last year, both on and off the pitch.

"We need to take stock of everything and then set our goals."

Since the play-off final, eight players have departed Adams Park and six new signings have arrived – a sizeable turnaround for a club that used the least players in League Two last season.

Re-creating a similar work ethic and team ethos with the new-look squad is one of the key challenges facing Ainsworth this summer, with Bloomfield championing the togetherness of last season's team.

"I wouldn't even like to put a number on the amount of points that our team spirit earned us last year," he said.

"The amount of late goals we scored, the way we saw out games and the way we battled together got us so many points last year.

"It's absolutely imperative that we have the same spirit this year."

"We've come back for pre-season, everyone's enthusiastic about the new season, the new signings have freshened things up a little bit and everyone's just looking forward to getting cracking again."

Manager Gareth Ainsworth coy on Ephraim future

MIDFIELDER'S FUTURE UP IN THE AIR AS CONTRACT TALKS CONTINUE

THE chances of Hogan Ephraim playing for Wanderers next season look slim after the man who bought him to the club remained cagey on the midfielder's future.

The 27-year-old made only seven starts for Blues after signing on for the 2014/15 season in October, and he is yet to commit to a new deal at Adams Park despite being offered fresh terms in May.

"Contract talks were ongoing with Hogan and that's about where we'll stand on that one," said Gareth Ainsworth.

"I'm sure whatever shirt Hogan has on this season, he'll do well for. We'll see where that one goes."

One player who has signed on at Adams Park until January is Michael Harriman, the defender joining on loan from the R's earlier this month.

He said: "Michael will play a big part this season because of the size of the squad. He's multi-positional, and that's important for us. He can play right-back, right wing and centre-midfield.

"He's probably a week behind with what happened at QPR – they started a bit later and he didn't go on the tour with them, so he's just that little bit behind."

Bean backs Banton

BLUES MIDFIELDER IMPRESSED BY WANDERERS' NEW WING MAN

MARCUS BEAN believes summer signing Jason Banton has the skills to be an instant hit with the supporters at Adams Park.

The midfielder is glad to have linked up with the former Plymouth winger, who gave him a torrid time in the play-off semi-final first leg, when he was filling in at right-back, grabbing himself a goal in the process.

"Jason's got bags of ability and I'm even more impressed since I've been training with him," Bean said.

"He's obviously lost his way a little bit after becoming a bit of a child prodigy, so it's just good that he's come here.

"Hopefully he'll get his head down, he's got a lot of people that are willing to work with him and if he can fulfil his potential then he can go a long way in the game."

BLUES Matt will feature in pre-season, insists boss

'Do not worry about Ingram'

GARETH AINSWORTH has told Wycombe fans not to worry about the fact that goalkeeper Matt Ingram is yet to feature in pre-season.

The 21-year-old joined the squad for their friendly against Wealdstone on Tuesday night but played no part in the warm-up or match itself.

Ingram also watched from the sidelines in Blues' pre-season opener against US Avranches last Thursday, leading to questions about whether his knee injury, which was sustained against Northampton in May, may see him miss the start of the season.

"Yes he will," declared the Blues boss when asked whether Ingram will

feature in pre-season.

"Matt's going to be back very shortly, and it was a great opportunity for Alex Lynch to play and get 90 minutes because when Matt's back he's going to need games and fitness.

"It was the right thing to do to get Lynchy 90 minutes. He needs it and he got it. I thought he performed well, and he took everything he needed to take.

"His kicking was a little bit off for his own standards but he did really well in the one-on-one, so I was pleased with him. Matty Ingram will be back very soon and there's no need to worry for the Wycombe fans."



Matt Ingram hasn't featured since picking up an injury against Northampton in May.

SPORT

Friendly win

Trialists score as Wanderers see off Wealdstone P126



The Blues and the Bees will carry on in perfect harmony

Wycombe hope to keep Brentford link

By Greg Styles

WANDERERS will maintain their strong relationship with Brentford in the upcoming season, according to Gareth Ainsworth who also hinted that similar links with other Championship clubs are in place.

Four players arrived on loan from the Bees – Alfie Mawson, Sam Saunders, Nico Yennaris and Courtney Senior – over the course of the last campaign, three of whom played key roles in helping Blues reach the League Two play-off final.

The west Londoners have since parted company with manager Mark Warburton, replacing him with previously unknown Dutchman Marinus Dijkhuizen as part of

an internal restructuring.

Despite the changes, Ainsworth believes the two clubs will continue to enjoy a fruitful partnership.

"We might have a strong link with Rangers (Warburton's new club), you never know," he joked.

"We'll continue our links with Brentford. Andrew Howard has a good relationship with the CEO there, I know people, but you've got your QPRs, your Readings and we have some good relationships with some good clubs.

"I'm not going into details but it's always handy for lower league clubs because, believe me, it's getting tougher and tougher every year in League Two."

Michael Harriman is the club's only loan signing so far this sum-

mer, and Ainsworth expects progress on that front to be slow as players attempt to break into the first team at their parent clubs.

Saunders, who played 14 times for the Chairboys last term, is a player Wanderers fans would love to see return, but Ainsworth explained that he's not pinning his hopes on landing a select few players.

He said: "All managers will know that every player has a chance and they won't be loaning players out until right up until the first game, so I'm not expecting any loan deals until the first week of the season."

"Sam Saunders is a great player, but there's a lot of great players out there that will potentially come up for loan. We'll make sure we get the right ones in for Wycombe."



Gareth Ainsworth is confident Wanderers will maintain a strong relationship with Brentford. Image courtesy of Prime Media Images.

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