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WANDERERS: Pierre reflects after 'extra special' win Wycombe come out top in hostile match

PIERRE PRAISES HIS TEAMMATES' BATTLING QUALITIES AT MORECAMBE

GOALSCORER Aaron Pierre had the last laugh as the Blues' match at Morecambe ended in a mass brawl.

He took double pride in scoring the winning goal because as well as maintaining Wanderers' 100 per cent start to the league campaign it silenced the home side's wind-up merchants who had been trying to rile him and his teammates.

The game was never far from boiling over, particularly in the second half, and it did so at full-time with players from both sides squaring up to each other and having to be pulled apart as tempers flared.

Video footage revealed two Morecambe players pulling Wycombe midfielder Marcus Bean's hair and his teammates reacted angrily to that goading.

The ugly scenes continued until Blues players were eventually ushered away into the corner to take the applause of their fans while the Morecambe players were led down the tunnel.

And Pierre says the flashpoints made victory even sweeter.

He said: "It was extra special to score here and to win here because of particular players in the Morecambe team. I don't want to say any names but if you watch the highlights you will see. It's not the nicest part of the game but sometimes people's passion and feelings get the better of them. But as long as we get the three points it doesn't bother me at all. We got the three points, so I don't care."

It was not a vintage performance by any means but the injury-hit



The angry scenes were sparked by Marcus Bean's hair being pulled. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

Blues showed all their resilience and togetherness to claim their second away win in the space of four days.

Pierre said: "You can't have the nice technical game where you are dominating the opposition all the time, sometimes you just have to pull up your sleeves and battle and tonight was one of those games. It was old school, win tackles, win headers and graft your way through. We had to do the not-so-nice side and we did it well against a big and strong team and proved that we are no pushovers."

Wanderers' win came despite Pierre being the club's only fit centre-half with Anthony Stewart injured and Danny Rowe also laid up while Joe Jacobson played still sporting a bandage protecting the stitches he had in a head wound following Saturday's bruiser at Barnet.

Pierre said: "We are true warriors, the gaffer wants passionate players and that's what he's got. We are a dressing room full of desire and of people who are determined to be the best they can be even though we have fewer players than

the other clubs."

Those 'warriors' became club record breakers at the final whistle, with their three straight wins representing the club's best ever start to a Football League season.

Pierre said: "It's always good to break records because it is there for a lifetime that we were the first to do it. We're at the top of the table, but we are still underdogs. We will take it step by step and see what happens."

Both teams will have to wait to see if the end-of-match fracas is included in the referee's report.

Wanderers pledge to give new home pitch 'the results it deserves'



Defender Joe Jacobson

AFTER two successive away days Wanderers return to their new pitch tomorrow – and unlike last season the team and manager can't wait to get back on their own patch of grass at Adams Park.

Captain Paul Hayes said: "Last year it was very patchy and the bounce was unpredictable but the new pitch is up there with the best I have played on."

Long-serving midfielder Matt Bloomfield added: "The new pitch is only going to help us," while defender Joe Jacobson said: "The pitch is awesome and we have to give it what it deserves which is good football and good results."

Last season Wycombe had the best away record of any team in the Football League while their record at home was mid-table, but now with their new surface they are hoping to be as competitive on their own patch.

Irvine: 'This is a great club in terms of its potential'

DAMIAN Irvine, Wanderers' new head of commercial activities, has described the club as a potential gold mine.

The Australian, who used to be employed by fellow League Two side Notts County, said: "This is a great club in terms of its potential. The ceiling room in this club to improve things is massive. It's a gold mine and now is the time to be forward thinking."

"We might go a little left field on some things to try and make a little bit of money. We need major sponsorships next year."

Irvine added: "The Frank Adams stand as a functions base is A1 but it's not a business yet."

Boss prefers dug-out to sitting in the stand

WANDERERS boss Gareth Ainsworth has no plans to change his dug-out vantage point at matches in favour of a seat in the stand.

He said "I like being part of the pitch where I can get messages to my players. When you are high up in the stand you see so much space and time on the pitch but when you are on the pitch it's not like that. Being pitch-side gives you the players' perspective and I prefer that."

Defender Joe Jacobson added: "We feed off the manager's energy when he's in the dug-out."

Ainsworth's unusual way to aid his players' recovery

CASH-STRAPPED Wanderers used up one of their 'limited' overnight hotel stops to rest after Tuesday's 1-0 win at Morecambe rather than the night before.

The Blues made the unusual decision to travel up on the matchday and have their sleepover after the game rather than the night before after taking a scientific judgement.

Boss Gareth Ainsworth, who trained to become a physio during his younger days, consulted with his medical staff and decided it was more important to get the players' recovery right.

He said: "We play with total energy and we thought this was the best way to aid their recovery."

Ainsworth and his staff felt this would be a much better way of getting the lactic acid out of their legs



Paul Hayes takes a breather.

and dealing with the micro tears rather than a five-hour coach journey deep into the night.

Jombati is willing to play where he is told

SIDO Jombati says he's happy to continue deputising as a centre-half but he does not want the job on a permanent basis.

The Portuguese right-back gave a faultless display in that new role in Tuesday's win at Morecambe when neither Anthony Stewart nor Danny Rowe were fit enough to play the game.

Afterwards Jombati said: "Right-back is definitely my favourite position and that's where I want to play. I don't really want to play at centre back but if that's what the manager tells me to do that's what I've got to do."

"It worked well today and if the manager asks me to play there against Dagenham, then that's

what I will do. If I am asked to play in goal, that is what I would have to do, that's the way football is."

"I had a few games playing in that position when I was in the youth team but that is different, and I had to play there a few times last season and I had to do it at Morecambe last season as well."

Jombati cruised through Tuesday's game and was delighted to finish it with another three points in the bag.

He said: "It was a great win. If you work hard in life you get your rewards. It was a tough game because Morecambe are very aggressive, they fight for all the second balls."

"It's a very hard league, we have got to keep our feet on the floor."



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Blues face defender shortage

WYCOMBE MAY AGAIN BE SHORT OF FIT CENTRE-BACKS FOR DAGGERS

BLUES emerged from their midweek win at Morecambe without any fresh injury concerns but, just like they were on Tuesday, they could again be without two of their three centre-halves tomorrow.

Gareth Ainsworth admitted Anthony Stewart is unlikely to make it as he continues to battle a knee injury while fellow central defender Danny Rowe will not be risked if his groin injury hasn't fully cleared up.

But the Blues boss, who has so far been unable to pick the same side two matches running, says he would have no qualms continuing with right-back Sido Jombati as an emergency centre-back after the Portuguese ace produced a five-star performance in that role at Morecambe.

A dip into the loan market is not ruled out either.

Ainsworth said at the previous week's fans forum: "Premier League clubs are reluctant to loan their players to League Two clubs but we have a couple of clubs that possibly could."

Money is not key to promotion

PLAYERS BELIEVE BIG SPENDING IS NOT GUARANTEE TO BRING SUCCESS

BLUES duo Matt Bloomfield and Joe Jacobson reckon spending money may not be the key to League Two success this season.

Wanderers have had to look on with envy as the likes of Luton, Portsmouth, Cambridge and Oxford have invested heavily in their squads this summer in a bid to climb out of the division, while Wycombe have the smallest squad in the league.

But speaking at last Thursday night's fans' forum, the two players argued that spending big might not be the best policy and the early league table with Leyton Orient, Wycombe and Hartlepool sharing top spot, suggests they may have a point.

Jacobson said: "There are teams in this league that are desperate to go up this season and who have really been throwing money at it to have a quick fix and I'm not sure that's the best way to do it."

Bloomfield added: "These teams that have spent a lot of money will have all the expectation and pressure on their shoulders while we are the underdogs."

Meanwhile, and sticking with the theme of spending money, Jacobson revealed that he is studying on a finance course in his spare time.

He told the audience: "I'm studying on a finance course. I did an A level in finance and am doing some work experience next week."

Ainsworth hails team after breaking record

WANDERERS 'OOZING PRIDE' AFTER RECORD-BREAKING VICTORY

BLUES chief Gareth Ainsworth hailed his heroes after they set a new club record for the best start to a Football League season with Tuesday's 1-0 win at Morecambe.

His side overcame a defensive injury crisis to make it three straight wins with no goals conceded thanks to a second-half headed winner from centre half Aaron Pierre.

And on a night when the Blues were down to their last fit central defender it was fitting that he should come up trumps with the 70th-minute winner.

Ainsworth said: "What a start to the season! Records like that are great. I didn't tell the boys before the game because I didn't want to put any pressure on them but when I said after the game 'you've just become record breakers as the first Wycombe team to win three in a row at the start of the season' you could see the pride oozing out of them."

They did it despite enduring a five-hour plus coach journey on the day, despite again not having enough players to fill the bench and having to change their defence for the fourth match running because two of their three centre backs were injured.

But Sido Jombati performed like a thoroughbred as he was brought in from his usual right-back berth to play as a central defender and you will be hard pressed to see a better performance in that position from anyone in League Two all season.

He read the game like a continental sweeper and was calmness per-



Sido Jombati performed like a thoroughbred despite being played out of position. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

sonified in the heat of a battle.

Ainsworth said: "Sido can play anywhere along that backline. He's as cultured on the ball as you would expect from the Portuguese, he reads the game really well and is improving all the time. To get him from Cheltenham a year ago was an absolute snip and to extend his contract by three more years is good business for Wycombe Wanderers."

While Jombati strolled through the most difficult of tests with ease, it was his central defensive partner Pierre who headed the winning

goal from Joe Jacobson's free-kick.

Ainsworth said: "That's what he's got in his locker. He's solid at the back and he's always got a goal in him and it won't be long before he starts turning some heads as well."

Similar to their win at Barnet on Saturday, Wanderers had to soak up an awful lot of pressure, with both Michael Harriman and the bandaged Joe Jacobson both having to clear off their own line and the Blues having to defend numerous corners, but their confidence in these difficult situations was

summed up by an outrageous free kick from 30 yards which Paul Hayes scooped up for Jacobson, who was standing next to him, to thud a volley just wide.

Ainsworth said: "It wasn't a game for the purists but sometimes you have to grind out results. It was a game of two halves and I told the guys that the onslaught they took in the first half they had to give back to Morecambe in the second half."

"There's a lot of football still to be played yet but it's great to be unbeaten for the first three."

WANDERERS: Thompson's goal for Holloway Aiming to help out young striker

GARRY Thompson opened his Wycombe account with a double in Saturday's win at Barnet – but says nothing would give him greater satisfaction than seeing young striker Aaron Amadi-Holloway beat him to 15 goals this season.

Thirty-four-year-old Thompson scored 12 times for Notts County in the league above last season and has set his sights on topping that but he is also carrying another ambition.

He said: "My target is to better my goal return from last year but the manager has given me extra responsibility to help the young lads as well and if I could help Aaron Amadi-Holloway to 15 goals I'd see no greater achievement because he can be a very special player."

It is another indication – as if any

were needed after his performances in Wanderers' opening matches – that Thompson has fully embraced the club's one-for-all attitude.

Thompson said: "I love it here. They're a great set of lads and when we went to France in pre-season that really bonded us and helped us new lads settle in. Everyone wants to work hard and you can't beat that type of atmosphere."

He is working towards his coaching badges and was delighted when boss Gareth Ainsworth asked him to take Amadi-Holloway under his wing.

Amadi-Holloway would have learned a lot from watching Tommo's masterclass at Barnet. His first goal was out of the very top drawer when he received the ball with his



A thoughtful Garry Thompson. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

back to goal, before creating a yard of space and bending a fierce left-foot shot into the back of the Bees net; his second was a coolly-con-

verted injury time penalty when he waited for the keeper to commit and slotted the ball the other side as he completed lesson one.



Allen tips Blues to contend

WANDERERS: Bees boss backs Wycombe to be in mix again

By Dave Peters

NOBODY at Adams Park will say it but Barnet manager Martin Allen did – proclaiming ‘Wycombe Wanderers will be promotion candidates again this season.’

While everyone in the Wycombe camp sticks steadfastly to the club script that 61 points is their target, Allen was much more forthright in his assessment of Wanderers after they came into his team's back yard and stole the points.

It was meant to be his team's big day. Their first ever Football League match at The Hive but Wanderers spoil the party with a 2-0 victory and Allen accepted that his team had been beaten by one of the league's top sides.

He said: “Wycombe were top of the league for eight-and-a-half months last season and should have won the play-off final and they will be there or thereabouts again this season. They have got good players, they do very well in the loan market and they will be a force to be reckoned with again.”

Wanderers won it thanks to Garry Thompson's stunning second-half strike and his injury-time penalty.

Last season Wanderers had the best away record out of the 72 Football League clubs and they served notice that they are in no mood to surrender that record easily.

And they had to show both sides of their game to do it, mixing the ugly hard work with quality when it was needed and owing a debt of gratitude to Matt Ingram for a fine one-handed save when it was 1-0.

The goalkeeper, who manager Ga-



Garry Thompson tries to get away from Gavin Hoyte during Wycombe's 2-0 victory at Barnet on Saturday. Picture: LEN KERSWILL

reth Ainsworth hailed as the best in League Two afterwards, produced an incredible stop to keep out Michael Gash's overhead kick from almost point-blank range as Barnet chucked the kitchen sink at them.

For the third game running Ainsworth had to change his central defensive partnership. This time it was Anthony Stewart who failed to make it through injury so Danny Rowe, despite not being 100 per cent

fit, retained his place alongside the returning Aaron Pierre. Whatever the combination it was business as usual as Wanderers kept their second successive league clean sheet.

Last season Wanderers came to Barnet and won in the FA Cup. That day they fell behind early on and it should have been advantage Barnet early on again this time. John Akinde found himself in the clear but with just Ingram to beat the former

Wycombe man stabbed wide to the relief of the noisy 902-strong Wanderers contingent behind the goal.

Wycombe looked to get the ball forward quickly and it was from one of these swift counters that Michael Harriman should have given them the lead but he blazed high and wide.

It was frantic and frenetic with the ball spending plenty of time in the air. Barnet's Luke Gambin came closest to breaking the deadlock

with a rising drive which smacked the bar minutes before half time and the opening period ended as it began with Akinde again finding himself clear and sticking an excellent chance wide.

Wycombe began the second half with greater intent. Paul Hayes, Thompson and Harriman combined superbly but Barnet got back en masse to block Hayes' shot.

Shortly after, Thompson found himself with a clear run on the Barnet goal but his 34-year-old legs were no match for Bira Dembele, who produced a perfectly timed tackle to rob him in the box.

Thompson wasn't to be denied though, and opened the scoring in style. There was nothing on when he received the ball with his back to goal. But after creating a yard of space he bent a fierce left-foot shot into the back of the net.

It was a goal worthy of winning any game but Wanderers still had plenty of work to do because Allen sides don't lie down.

The Bees chucked everything at Wycombe and were denied an 84th-minute equaliser by a spectacular save from Ingram which was as good as you will see. Gash threw himself into a bicycle kick which Ingram could not have seen until the last minute but the Wycombe stopper dived to his left before flicking out a glove to keep the ball out.

But it was Wycombe who made the most of those additional minutes, extending their lead from the penalty spot. Thompson was felled by Dembele and the striker dusted himself down to send Stack the wrong way and double the Blues' lead.

Showstopper save moments after injury fright

GOALKEEPER Matt Ingram produced an early Save of The Season candidate just ten minutes after he feared his campaign might have been over.

The shot stopper collapsed in a heap under a heavy duty challenge from Ben Tomlinson during the second half of Saturday's 2-0 win at Barnet which sent Wanderers to the top of the early League Two table.

Ingram, who suffered a serious knee injury at the end of last season which robbed him of the chance to play at Wembley and take any part in the play-offs, lay stricken on the turf for a couple of minutes.

He said: “I had a little panic to start with because I felt my knee open up again but it seems to be perfectly fine. The physio had a little look at it but everything seems to be ok.”

“Hopefully, mentally that is just what I needed to prove to myself that my knee is perfectly fine because I had been having little doubts.

“In training I had eased myself back in and the knee was always running through my mind. Maybe I wasn't giving everything because I was still a little bit wary about the knee but slowly, slowly I have been fully at it and coming through this will do me the world of good mentally.

“When I went down it did go through my mind ‘oh no, here we go again’. I panicked and was in a bit of shock because it was the same knee.

“My mind was racing, but the moment passed and I calmed myself down.”

Tomlinson caught Ingram on the toe but the impact shot up his leg.

Ingram said: “I felt it open up and obviously that made me panic but it could have happened to anyone. Anyone would have felt the same after that. There's a little bit of soreness but nothing more than that.”

Ingram, a former John Hampden Grammar School boy, had been in the wars before that when the airborne keeper fell awkwardly after

being knocked off balance by an agricultural challenge from John Akinde.

He said: “I've got a bit of a dead leg from that one but it's nothing that a bit of ice can't cure.”

But the twin blows did not prevent Ingram from plucking out a save from the very top drawer.

Wanderers were clinging on to a slender 1-0 lead at the time and the Bees were launching assault after assault on their goal when Barnet striker Michael Gash threw himself backwards and launched himself into a spectacular overhead kick.

He could not have been more than eight yards from the goal when his boot connected sweetly with the ball.

But Ingram had seen it coming. He said: “I saw his intention before I saw the ball. I could see he was going to try the overhead kick so I backed off a little bit onto my line to give myself a little bit of time to react to it and luckily I positioned myself in the right area to get a

touch on it.

“He hit it quite firmly but I managed to get a big hand there and push it around the post.”

Neither manager, Gareth Ainsworth or Bees opposite number Martin Allen could believe it but Ingram was just delighted to keep the ball out and preserve a second successive clean sheet in the league as he bids to match last season's tally of 15 shut-outs.

He said: “We got 15 clean sheets last year and I would like to beat that this year. It's going to be a tough ask, but we've made a great start with two in two and I think with the defence in front of me we can repeat it again.”

It was the third match running that Ingram was behind a different defence with injuries forcing Ainsworth into shuffling his pack.

Ingram said: “The changes haven't affected us. I think all the defenders are as strong as each other. Swapping and changing hasn't affected us, whoever has come in has fitted in.”



Matt Ingram. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL



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Club record

Wycombe secure
best ever Football
League start



Boss warns players not to underestimate Daggers

'We have picked up where we left off'

By Dave Peters

GARETH Ainsworth says something special is stirring at Wycombe Wanderers this season but he won't let complacency slip in ahead of tomorrow's banana skin fixture at home to Dagenham and Redbridge.

The Chairboys chief has led his side to joint top of the League Two table with a club-record three straight wins at the start of the season, while the Daggers are rock bottom and point-less.

Ainsworth said: "I'm really proud. I feel something special happening around Wycombe Wanderers. We

have just continued on from last season when we got a club record 84 points, it's as though there has been no break. We have picked up where we left off and the fans are becoming a big part of this."

But he added: "It's early days," and, with the Daggers next up, he knows nothing can be taken for granted particularly as the visitors have the prolific Jamie Cureton and former Wanderer Matt McClure among their strikers.

Ainsworth knows Cureton from their QPR days together and said: "He pops up in the right place so often, has deceptive pace and has a strong knack for scoring. He will have to be watched."

Ainsworth also rates Wycombe old boy McClure as another potential danger. He said: "Matt was one of the most natural finishers at the club and for me it was a really difficult decision to let him go. He had an unlucky run of injuries with us and needed a fresh challenge."

Although Wanderers have yet to concede a goal in their flying start to the campaign, Ainsworth is not counting his chickens.

He said: "I'm putting out a big call against complacency because if you do relax and treat anyone differently in this league you will fall flat on your face. Dagenham will be as strong as a Leyton Orient or Portsmouth."



Gareth Ainsworth has warned against complacency when Wycombe take on Dagenham & Redbridge. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

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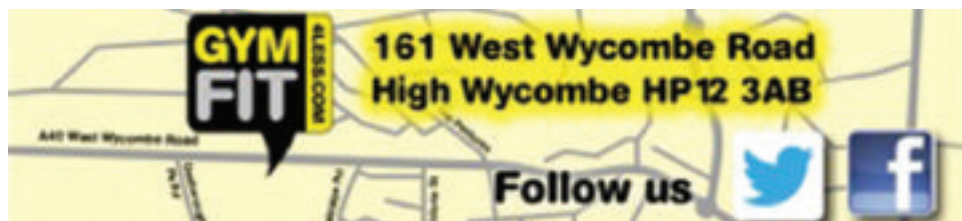
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