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BLUES hero says it was his fault they were losing Relieved defender makes amends right at the death

By Dave Peters

AARON Pierre scored Blues' last-gasp leveller deep into stoppage time against ten-men Dagenham and then said he owed his team-mates that.

The defender blamed himself for not winning a header in the build-up to Daggers' seventh minute opener scored by Wycombe old boy Matt McClure and Pierre had to wait 88 minutes to make amends for his mistake.

He said: "It was a real relief because I blame myself for their goal. I shouldn't have gone for that header. I read it a bit too late and McClure got in and made sure he took his chance. I was so disappointed because it was my bad decision-making that gave them that goal. If I hadn't gone for that ball, I would have been in a position to mark McClure."

Wanderers were well below their best but it speaks volumes for their attitude that they hauled themselves off the canvas to maintain their unbeaten league record just when it looked like the Daggers, who had been down to ten since McClure was sent off for a second booking on 76 minutes, would hold on.

Pierre said: "We have this never-say-die attitude. We're fighters, we don't stop until we, at least, get a point. I always thought we'd get one more chance and luckily it fell to me and I was able to put it away."

It was the ultimate banana skin fixture and Wycombe very nearly slipped up on it. Blues went into it having had their best start to a league season with three straight wins and were joint top while Dagenham were bottom and pointless.

Pierre said after the 1-1 draw: "We didn't play at our best, there were a few tired legs and maybe a bit of



Aaron Pierre celebrates his equaliser with teammates Michael Harriman and Ryan Sellers and ball boy Taylor Hunt, a youngster who plays for the club's elite centre. Picture by Anita Ross Marshall.

complacency as well because we had won three out of three before; we thought we'd push them over but they were hard to break down and very direct."

But Wycombe, with their fifth defensive change of the season and having switched shapes back to a 4-4-2, were out of sorts. They lacked their normal tempo and with Aston Villa loanee Janoi Donacien making his debut at centre back, the defence lacked its usual telepathic under-

standing. McClure took advantage and became the first player to score a league goal against Wycombe this season, exploiting the gaping hole which Pierre left.

It might have been worse for Blues as the Daggers fumed at having a second 'goal' ruled out before half time when Ayo Obileye was controversially denied by the linesman's flag after the referee signalled for a goal. Obileye did not look offside and from the look of his protestations,

McClure might have been the man accused of straying.

Blues introduced subs Jason Banton, Aaron Amadi-Holloway and Ryan Sellers but they still could not make the breakthrough. That was until the fifth minute of injury time when for the second time in a week Pierre, who headed the winner at Morecambe, strained his neck muscles to meet Michael Harriman's cross to head home the latest of late equalisers.

Pair are banned for hair pulling

BEAN PRAISES FA FOR QUICK RESPONSE

MIDFIELDER Marcus Bean has praised the FA for clamping down on the Morecambe duo who pulled his hair after Wanderers' win at Morecambe ten days ago.

Kevin Ellison and Ryan Edwards have both been banned for three games following the flashpoint which marred Wanderers' mid-week win on the Lancashire coast.

The incident provoked a mass brawl at the final whistle after Bean reacted angrily to twice having his dreadlocks tugged.

The FA dealt swiftly with it and dished out the bans last Friday. No punishment came Blues' way.

Bean said: "I was pleased with the speed the FA clamped down on them and hopefully they will have learned their lessons. It was a childish petty thing to do and it sets a bad example. I wouldn't let my little cousins pull anyone's hair so I don't know why professional footballers should."

"We didn't have to make a complaint, the FA saw the video and dealt with it."

"I saw red when it happened but luckily my teammates held me back otherwise it could've been me in the dock as well. Ryan Sellers pulled me back."

Burnett blasts officials

DAGENHAM BOSS SAYS THAT POOR REFEREEING COST HIS TEAM A WIN

DAGENHAM boss Wayne Burnett blamed the officials for his side not leaving Adams Park with all three points on Saturday.

He accused them of wrongly disallowing Ayo Obileye's header which would have doubled his side's lead and blasted them for adding on six minutes of injury time, during which time Wanderers scored to make the result 1-1.

Burnett said: "These decisions change games and can cost people their jobs and they don't understand that."

"It was a very flippant decision that the linesman made. He has got it wrong and it was pathetic. It wasn't good enough and it's cost us three points."

AINSWORTH reflects on Saturday's fighting point

Boss looks inwards as he hails his battlers



Manager Gareth Ainsworth

BOSS Gareth Ainsworth praised his team's never say-die attitude as they rescued a point at home to Dagenham on Saturday, but he also shouldered some of the blame for them being there in the first place.

He changed his side, formation and tactics, bringing in on-loan Aston Villa defender Janoi Donacien for his debut, and it nearly went pear-shaped as Wycombe needed a 95th-minute equaliser from defender Aaron Pierre to salvage a 1-1 draw against the bottom-placed team.

Ainsworth said: "I think we were maybe a little bit complacent and there was a little communication breakdown. I brought in Janoi Donacien, who's new to the team and that could have added something to it, and I take that on the chin."

"But all-round we didn't start well. The energy levels were quite down from what I'm used to and that's going to happen. It was hot and we had a mammoth game on Tuesday."

"In the first half we were poor and Dagenham were the better side. They

went very direct with two big forwards and we didn't start until the second half. I had to give the team a rocket at half time. I told them to get their foot on the ball and take that extra pass."

And Ainsworth always thought they would pull it out of the fire even as the clock ticked into stoppage time.

He said: "We do get last minute goals. We have this never-say-die attitude. Two or three years ago we'd have seen hordes of fans leaving before the end but with this spirit we have got they know not to leave."



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Ainsworth dismisses transfer rumours

TRANSFER WINDOW

CHAIRBOYS chief Gareth Ainsworth says transfer rumours linking Aaron Pierre with a move away are just that – rumours.

He dismissed a national media story linking Pierre with a move to Sheffield United, Reading or Wigan as just paper talk.

He said: "Until my phone rings it is just speculation and water off a duck's back, you are always going to get speculation. Until there's some solid approach for Aaron Pierre I will not be worrying about it."

"I had all this speculation about Matt Ingram for a year so I've got no worries about this. The rumour mill comes and goes and whoever is in form attracts attention on the rumour mill."

"I have to dismiss rumours and deal in facts and at the moment there are no facts about any of my players apart from the fact that they are Wycombe players."

"I don't worry that Aaron's head might be turned. I will speak to the boy if I see anything in his character that changes but honestly at the moment I'm not worried at all."

Avoiding window frenzy

LOAN MARKET

AS THE REST of the football world gets all in a lather about the transfer window closing, Blues chief Gareth Ainsworth says he's far more bothered about the loan market.

The transfer window shuts on September 1 for permanent deals.

Ainsworth told the Bucks Free Press: "The transfer window is what it is. Some managers like it, some don't. It can be good for the players because clubs panic and will overpay towards the end of the window but the close of the permanent transfer window doesn't really bother me, the loan window is the one for me. I concentrate more on the loan transfer window than the permanent one and that's the way it is at Wycombe."

"The loan window will be huge for us like it was last season because I've only got very small sums of money left over, purposefully saved to go into the loan market."

And he added: "I would be very doubtful about getting someone in on loan this week but you never know, there are always lists and I can't say 100 per cent yes or no. There are players I would like to bring in on loan but whether they can happen you don't know."

Ball boy's celebration makes him a 'net star

THREE MILLION WATCH TAYLOR'S REACTION TO LAST-GASP EQUALISER

BALL BOY Taylor Hunt has become an internet sensation after gate-crashing Aaron Pierre's goal celebration last Saturday.

More than three million people have logged on to the internet to see him take part in what is being dubbed as one of the best goal celebrations ever.

The 12-year-old could not contain himself when Pierre headed an injury time equaliser in the 1-1 draw against Dagenham at Adams Park and he raced to join in the celebrations.

Taylor, who was making his ball boy debut, told the BFP: "I just had to get involved. I was so excited. It was the last minute of the game and I couldn't stop myself running to join in."

TV pictures show him being scooped up by Pierre and surrounded by a melee of excited players.

Taylor said: "He picked me up with one arm. I thought I might get squashed but the other players told me to stay in the middle. I was in the middle shouting. I don't know what I was shouting but it was pure excitement over the goal."

But that was just the start of it. It was shown on television and the web and quickly went global.

Taylor said: "I can't believe what's happened. It's gone viral and I've become 'That Wycombe ball boy'. 'It's been weird and crazy at the same time. I'm getting things on my phone all the time, people are saying 'oh my God is this you?' and 'you're famous now'. It's been unbelievable."

"I couldn't give my day as a ball boy a mark out of ten because ten is not enough. It's worth a hundred."

Dad Wayne, who was in the ground was not quite so chuffed though



Stars reunited: Taylor Hunt re-lives his big moment with Aaron Pierre at Wycombe Wanderers Training Ground. Picture by Ann Priest

when he saw his son take centre stage. He didn't know that manager Gareth Ainsworth had told the ball boys they could get involved if there was a goal to celebrate.

Wayne said: "I was at the match and I thought 'what are you doing.' I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I was going to tell him off. I thought you can't do that but then after the game he told me the manager had said it was fine to get involved."

Mum Janine said: "It's been seen in Australia, America and Africa, in the papers and online, it's crazy. We've been completely overwhelmed by it. To think three

million people have seen my son is bizarre."

"He's had the best week of his life. He lives and breathes football and this is something he's never going to forget. When he walked into the house after the match he was ecstatic. He was full of it. He was saying 'Oh my God mum, you won't believe what's happened. When I saw it on the telly it was overwhelming.'"

Meanwhile goalscorer Pierre is happy to be playing second fiddle to Adams Park's newest star.

He joked: "I thought I was going to be the hero but I've been upstaged by the ball boy. It's brilliant though."

Me and the little man need to embrace it as much as we can. It was a great day for both of us. We both got caught up in the moment, he jumped on me and I caught him."

"It is a moment we will remember for the rest of our lives - a moment where a player and a fan came together in a moment's excitement and it showed how united we are."

And he says he will always be grateful to the ball boy. "Without Taylor my goal would only have been seen by a few thousand people, now it has been seen all the world, it's like he's promoting me. I should maybe get him as my agent."

WANDERERS manager thrilled by honour Boss to have a bus named after him

GARETH Ainsworth is among five legends of the town to be honoured by having a new fleet of buses named after them.

The Wanderers manager takes his place alongside former Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, past mayors and community figures for the Arriva Buses honour.

He said: "I am so honoured and humbled to receive that because you talk about people like Disraeli who have done amazing things in the world and for me, a football manager, to have that alongside him is a really amazing thing."

Arriva Buses launched a region-

al campaign to find inspirational names suitable for their new fleet of buses in the town and after many votes were cast the five legends were named as Frances Alexander, Peter Cartwright, Benjamin Disraeli, Ricki Akhter Hussein and Ainsworth.

Arriva Buses said Ainsworth was selected for his work in guiding Wanderers to Wembley for the play-off final last season.

Ainsworth said: "It came out of the blue."

There will now be an unveiling event for the buses at Adams Park on September 11.



Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth at Wembley last season



FOOTBALL: Club hope to attract country's best young talent for years

Wanderers hope their Life Academy is a home banker

LIFE ACADEMY LEADS THE WAY

WANDERERS believe their pioneering Life Academy will help them steal a march on their rivals and attract the best young players in the country for years to come.

While other clubs, splashed out on quick-fix players this summer, Wanderers chairman Andrew Howard put his own cash into a house for the club's young players and loan stars to live in.

And he has put a chaperone into the property to ensure the club's young stars don't go off the rails in their boys' pad and that they are eating the right foods and living the right way.

Howard said: "Discipline and respect are key."

The occupants will be expected to keep the house clean and tidy and they will also be given gardening duties as well to ensure the house looks spick and span on the inside and out.

Much of Wanderers' success last season was built on their good contacts and ability to lure players from bigger clubs on loan and this new scheme has helped cement their position as a being a good place for the bigger clubs to loan rising stars to.

Premier League Aston Villa contacted Wanderers, rather than the other way, when it came to lending the Blues their centre half Janoi Donacien to the club for a month and other higher league clubs are also looking favourably on the scheme.

And it doesn't stop there. Howard revealed that the club's reputation is spreading further afield with the house almost helping them lure a player from Europe, a deal that will not happen in this transfer window, but could still happen further down the line.

Howard said: "We couldn't quite do that one but it is a sign of how we are regarded."

He added: "I see the house as a tool to attract players and it already has.



Wycombe Wanderers chairman Andrew Howard

It was Villa that came down and talked to us and it's not just them.

"We were brilliant in the loan market last year. Gareth Ainsworth has excellent relationships with clubs but we need an environment to bring the loan players in and this gives us that."

"It is opening doors for us. It doesn't mean we get the deals, and it might not get us the players we always want. For instance we were offered a fantastic lad, an U21s international but unfortunately he wasn't going to fit the squad from a position point of view because we have already got cover there."

And with Reading U21s and several of Europe's top U21 clubs booked into play at Adams Park this season the timing of getting the house for this season is crucial.

Howard said: "We are going to have some precious lads performing on our pitch and if we want these guys you have to have top facilities."

The house, or Life Academy, as it is known has communal areas as well as some private bedrooms for

the players and a shared bedroom to get the players used to the concept of rooming together on the long overnight away trips.

Howard explained: "The idea for the house came about when we signed Fred Onyedinma on loan from Millwall last season. I was sitting in the office at the training ground with the manager and Fred and I suddenly saw this massive vulnerability in Fred who was leaving home for the first time to come to us. I suddenly realised how much we put on young lads in football as he got into his taxi at the age of 17 to go to his digs on his own."

"I was driving home that evening and phoned Gareth and said 'this is daft we need some place where these lads can live'. It's common in the motorsport world, where my background is, and I had a chat with my wife Susie and we came up with the idea of getting a house and putting four or five lads in it. The idea is to have two or three permanent residents living in there and leave space to attract some players from other clubs."

The club have installed their assistant sports scientist Reece Clifford as a live in chaperone at the house and while it is not Big Brother he is expected to report back to the club if any problems arise.

Howard said: "There are no excuses. The players are expected to work together. They have to work as a team and show people respect because you have to do that when you live with people. We want to coach them in life skills a bit as well. They are going to have cooking lessons from the club chef and we will get someone in to show them the basics of laundry, ironing etc."

"We are mentoring them in a way that you would want your kids to be mentored. We don't make it easy. There are 'landlady type' rules for living in the house. There are curfews, there are rules. It's a starry world out there and when I left school at 16 I wouldn't have survived in this house. These people



Wanderers came up with the idea after signing Fred Onyedinma

are footballers, they got one chance to be a footballer and they have to give 100 per cent to being footballers.

"It's a funny old world that suddenly you are expected to be totally in control and what we are trying to do is try and teach them boundaries which will hopefully live with them while they go through their football careers and afterwards."

And Howard reckons it won't be too long before Wycombe start see-

ing the dividends as a club.

He said: "The youngsters we've got, if they are managed right, will either have massive value to us from a football point of view or they will have a massive resale value so we want an environment where we can develop them. We haven't got an academy so this could be a way where maybe we could bring lads in who are maybe a little bit older and we could stamp our mark and development on."

McClure never knew that his return would be so tough



MATT McClure spent the best part of six years with Wycombe Wanderers and thought he knew them inside out. But nothing prepared him for last Saturday when he returned to the club for the first time as an opposition player with Dagenham and Redbridge.

The former Northern Ireland U21 international who scored in the game and was then sent off in the second half, said: "I thought I knew everything there was to know about

them but I didn't think they would be so horrible to play against, and I mean that in a nice way."

"They make the game so difficult for you, they don't let you settle at all. They stand strong they fight for everything. It is not nice playing against them. I never realised how nasty and bitty it is playing against them."

"They know what they are doing, they are so well-drilled, solid at the back and they are big, strong and

physical. They put us under pressure. They won a few free kicks which we weren't sure about, they got the ball forward into good areas and then backed it up and penned you in. They got a result against us and they keep getting results even when their backs are to the wall."

McClure admits it hurt when he was released by Wycombe boss Gareth Ainsworth in the summer after an injury-plagued campaign.

McClure said: "Me and the gaffer

had a chat last season. It hurt, of course, but I think we both knew that it needed to happen and that a fresh challenge would be best for both of us. I needed more game time and I didn't quite establish myself at Wycombe last year."

And it looked as though McClure would make them pay when he put the Daggers ahead after seven minutes to become the only player to score a league goal against Wanderers this season.

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Lessons in life

Blues provide a training ground for life skills page 111



Blues defender is ruled out until Christmas

Wycombe's small squad faces early test

By Dave Peters

WANDERERS defender Anthony Stewart has been ruled out until Christmas following the results of a scan on a knee injury sustained in the Capital One Cup clash with Fulham earlier this month.

The centre-back re-joined the club in the summer and scored in the 3-0 win over York on the opening day of the campaign, only to sustain medial ligament damage in the following game.

Boss Gareth Ainsworth said: "It's a big blow to the club and to the boy himself. He started the season really well and was absolutely flying. He is going to miss a good chunk of the

season and that's a big blow because we're such a small squad.

"We will be looking at the best way to keep solid at the back while he is out. There are all sorts of different ways we can do that. We've got players who can play in a variety of positions, and then there's the loan market. We have already got Janoi Donacien from Aston Villa who had a baptism of fire on Saturday with the bombardment of Dagenham.

"I don't think there will be any major permanent signings to replace Anthony because we just can't do that. We will have to make do.

"Anthony's going to be very hard to replace because he's come back to Wycombe a better and more complete player than when he left and it

is my job to replace him."

The good news for Wanderers is that fellow centre half Danny Rowe is back in training and closing in on a return to the team after his groin problem but tomorrow's match at Crawley could be too early for him.

Ainsworth said: "Groin's are difficult. They have to be strong before you come back and if it needs an extra week so be it. I won't risk rushing him back too early with a small squad like ours because, if I lost someone for a year, that would be horrendous, so we will make sure that Danny is a no-risk policy.

"We've got Danny coming back. We've got Janoi and we've got Sido Jombati who can all play centre half and it is up to me to pick the best combination."



Wanderers defender Anthony Stewart in action again Fulham, the match where he picked up the knee injury

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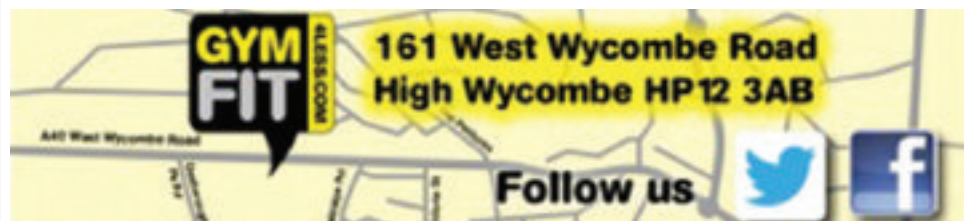
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