

SPORT

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GRAHAMReading
Women's
win chase
prolongedMORE FRUSTRATION FOR ROYALS
AFTER SUNDERLAND STALEMATE

READING FC Women's search for their first win in the Women's Super League (WSL) One continued on Sunday as they drew 1-1 with Sunderland Ladies.

The match at Adams Park was shaped by two penalties as Reading fought back through Helen Ward's spot-kick to secure a point with 16 minutes remaining. The incident also saw a Sunderland player sent off.

Reading made a poor start as the concession of an eighth-minute penalty gave Beth Mead the chance to open the scoring.

While her effort was superbly saved by Reading keeper Mary Earps, Mead turned home the rebound.

The point was well deserved for Reading but winger Emma Follis told the club's website: "We are disappointed again, we've come away wanting more and it's just not good enough."

"We need to take our chances especially if they have gone down to 10. We're just missing that little last thing which is so annoying."

They will look to pick up a first league win at Birmingham City Ladies on Thursday, May 19.

Chalfont
invincibleDOUBLE TROPHY DELIGHT FOR YOUNG
LITTLE CHALFONT SCHOOL TEAM

ARSENAL's invincibles have some competition after Little Chalfont Primary School's Year 5 football team enjoyed an undefeated season.

The 14-strong squad won two competitions across the course of the year to give their campaign an extra sheen in the form of silverware.

Having come together as a team in September Little Chalfont's road to glory began when they entered into the Primary Schools FA Under-10 Cup.

The six-month-long tournament saw them score 13 goals and concede just twice in a three-game mini-league.

This success allowed them to progress to the knockout stages of the tournament where two 1-0 wins were enough to take them to the final.

A talented Great Missenden side would provide the final hurdle for Little Chalfont, but again their work rate and skill would win out in another 1-0 win.

Their second success came in April as they took on 13 other schools in the Chiltern & South Bucks Primary School FA Under-10s six-a-side event.

Again Chalfont proved to be too strong for their opposition as they scored six times while conceding none to win the trophy for the first time in its 30-year history.

Siegrist praised after
'outstanding' debutAINSWORTH BELIEVES WANDERERS
HAVE UNEARTHED 'POTENTIAL GEM'

GOOD goalkeepers are a rare breed, but it appears Wycombe Wanderers have discovered another in the form of Benjamin Siegrist.

The Swiss stopper, who arrived on loan from Aston Villa in mid-March, made a long-awaited debut for the Chairboys during Saturday's 1-0 defeat to Accrington Stanley.

He was reliable throughout and made some smart saves to keep Wanderers in a game they rarely looked like winning.

Siegrist's surprise inclusion was, Gareth Ainsworth confirmed, a chance for the Wycombe boss to assess the qualities of a keeper he believes could have an extended future at Adams Park.

"I think he was outstanding today and we have got a potential gem in Benjamin Siegrist now," Ainsworth explained.

"It is all about this club and whether we can get players like that. I will be working hard in the summer [to do that]."

"Benji has been here for seven or eight weeks and hasn't played a game. The only time I can get a look at him is in a first-team game and that goes for every player here."

"Today was a chance to look at a keeper who I think is good enough to play in League Two and I was very impressed with what I saw."

Matt Ingram and Ryan Allsop have both filled the Wycombe goal with distinction during the season, while injury has denied Alex Lynch a run in the team.

While it would be premature to suggest Siegrist has all the qualities to thrive as a regular number one – Saturday was only his fifth career appearance – the initial signs were positive.

Both Allsop and Siegrist's loans



Benjamin Siegrist impressed on his Wycombe debut during their home defeat on Saturday.

Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

are set to end at the conclusion of the campaign, and there is a sense the 24-year-old could be the more likely to be retained if a deal can be agreed with Villa.

It is certainly an opportunity which would appeal to Siegrist.

"That was the plan [to stay beyond his initial loan] and the manager brought me in to look at me in training, so I am thankful for the opportunity," Siegrist explained in near word-perfect English after the

Accrington match at Adams Park.

"It is a good set-up here and I like training with Baz [Barry Richardson]. I see the enthusiasm the gaffer has which does transfer onto the players."

"As far as my career goes, I am definitely looking to improve and I need to play. Like I say Wycombe have given me the opportunity and I am really thankful for that."

While Siegrist would like to remain at Adams Park, his immediate

aim will be to hold onto his starting spot for the trip to Oxford.

He accepts Ainsworth and the coaching staff will decide whether he or Allsop starts, but says he is looking forward to it either way.

"It is a big game with it being a derby and everyone has been telling me about it," he said.

"If I don't play I will support Rocky [Ryan Allsop] like I have done before and like he was supporting me today."

Boss: Blues vulnerable to big offers

WYCOMBE Wanderers' ongoing struggle with debt means they will always be susceptible to losing their players to big money offers, Blues boss Gareth Ainsworth accepts.

Ainsworth has repeatedly stated the financial strain the club is under and has stressed their battle in both signing and keeping players.

With the summer transfer window fast approaching, and a number of Wycombe players impressing during the campaign, Ainsworth accepts that money could talk.

"You would have to ask the chairman that one but we will make decisions which are in the best interests of the club," Ainsworth said when asked if the club is in a position where they would have to accept a

big money offer.

"If someone offered me £1million for one of my players they are out of here. Trust me, it is the same for most teams in League Two."

The Wycombe boss addressed the club's financial constraints in the national media in the past week, describing the situation as stable but adding that the debt ensures they are still in choppy waters.

It is a debt which he insists he will have to help manage for the foreseeable future and claims he is happy to take on the challenge of doing so.

"We have to do things in a certain way and the debt is going to be there for a while unless we get a big Thai investor come in and buy us like all these other clubs seem to," he said.

"I don't have the choice [of spending big]. It would be great to be able to go out and take my pick of the best players in the world, but I have never shirked a challenge."

"You do what you can with what you have and I do what I can to keep Wycombe in the best position possible."

Part of doing the best he can for the club involves a summer spent dealing with agents and Ainsworth says the transfer window will be extremely busy for him.

He said: "The busiest time for a manager is probably the close season because we are on the phone all the time, and we get called up by agents 10 times a day to say they have the perfect player."

"I won't be sat on the beach for two months and I think I have about 10 or 12 days with the family all in all. I am a lucky man, I am a loyal man and will give my all for the club."

■ Blues will play Championship side Brentford in their first pre-season friendly of the summer.

The match will take place at Adams Park on Tuesday, July 19 and will kick-off at 7.45pm.

The clubs have enjoyed a fruitful relationship in the past with Sam Saunders, Nico Yennaris and Alfie Mawson spending productive loan spells at Wycombe last season.

Current Chairboys defender Aaron Pierre was also in the Brentford youth squad set-up before joining Wanderers in 2014.

Blues boss keeping cards close to chest

Ainsworth feels loss of Cowan-Hall was major blow

By Harry Gray

GARETH Ainsworth has refused to be drawn on the future of his misfiring Wycombe Wanderers strikers.

The Chairboys boss has rotated his attacking options throughout the season but has failed to settle on a combination which can provide a regular supply of goals.

With a number of the Blues' forwards out of contract in the summer, it remains to be seen if they will stay at Adams Park, and Ainsworth refused to offer any reassurances on whether their stays will be extended.

"Garry Thompson is under contract for next season. [Paul] Hayes, Rowan Liburd and Max [Kretschmar] all have their contracts up, so we will address that," Ainsworth said.

"Their contracts will all be discussed over the next couple of weeks, but I keep that very private.



Still under contract: Garry Thompson

You will be the first to know if we do sign these strikers or let them go."

It would be harsh to suggest Wycombe's profligacy in front of goal has been solely down to their strikers, but there has been a dearth in finishing quality at the point of their attack this season.

Just two goals from recognised forwards in Wanderers' last ten games has underlined a slump which led to the demise of their play-off hopes.

In fairness to Ainsworth, he has attempted to remedy the issue on multiple occasions with his use of the loan market, but has had little reward from his new arrivals.

Paris Cowan-Hall looked the most likely of any of the loanees to spark a goalscoring upturn, and the Wycombe boss feels his season-ending injury was a big blow for the club.

He said: "I think Paris was going to be the legs and the action up front and I think we won three of the four games he played in. I thought he would be the catalyst up front.

"We lost him [to injury], didn't get any help from anyone and still had to pay for him. That is very harsh for a League Two club, but that is football.

"The gamble didn't pay off and if Paris had stayed fit I firmly believe we would be higher up the table than we are now. Whether or not that would have been in the play-offs I don't know."

Ainsworth has previously stated he will look to bring in some fresh faces in the summer and much of his focus will surely centre on finding attacking reinforcements.

Budget constraints of course remain an issue at a club which always operates with one eye on the finances, and Ainsworth's best route to transfer success may once again be in the loan market.

The scrapping of emergency loans means he will have to do his business



Gareth Ainsworth is keeping tight-lipped about the future of his out-of-contract forwards. Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

swiftly and without the safety net of the short-term fixes which have bolstered his squad throughout this campaign.

It is an issue Ainsworth is aware of, and one he is confident the club will be able to work around as the Blues pursue targets to bridge the slender gap to the upper echelons of the league.

"Next season I am sure there will be new faces to go with a couple of

the old faces. It is a knife edge and it is not like we have finished 22nd or 21st in the league this year," Ainsworth said.

"We just need a little tweaking and not a massive clear-out like we had three years ago. We are building something special here.

"The loan window rules are changing and it is going to be tough for clubs, but we can exploit [the loan market] as we have done before."

'We need to end season on a high'

WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Aaron Pierre says it is important the Chairboys reward their loyal fan base with a final day win over Oxford United tomorrow.

The Adams Park faithful have had little to cheer in recent weeks as their side have lurched from one fruitless match to another.

Pierre now feels it is vital Wycombe end the season on a high with a win against local rivals Oxford United, who go into the game in third place in the table and a point ahead of Bristol Rovers in the race for one of the two remaining automatic promotion places.

"It is very important [to end the season with a win]. The fans are there to support us and we haven't got the results, so as players we are all disappointed. We need to at least go out on a high for the last day of the season," Pierre said.

"It is our derby, so we don't exactly want them to go up. Our aim is just to get the three points regardless of who we play.

"It just so happens it is going to be our derby, so we are always going to be going there to win."

Pierre was speaking in the aftermath of Wycombe's 1-0 defeat to Accrington Stanley on Saturday and was wearing the look of a frustrated man as he did so.

The centre-back has been a rock at the back throughout the season and is a key cog in a defence which has kept 17 clean sheets in League Two.

Wycombe could not add an 18th to that total against Stanley and Pierre was clearly disheartened at the sloppy nature of the goal they conceded as well as their failure to find the net.

He said: "I think we were in the game and created a good amount of chances, but again we couldn't penetrate to actually score.

"It was an easy goal to let in really and we are all disappointed because we at least wanted to go out on a high for the last game at home, but it wasn't the case."

The 23-year-old's day was at least brightened a little after finding out he was voted Player of the Year by the Wycombe Wanderers Independent Supporters Club.

Little to worry promotion challengers

FOR all the talk of slowing Accrington Stanley's promotion charge in the build-up to Saturday, Wycombe Wanderers produced little to worry the visitors at Adams Park.

Yes Stanley were made to sweat, but there was a sense of inevitability about Mark Hughes' 78th-minute tap-in from six yards which consigned Wycombe to a 1-0 defeat.

Hughes's strike came as the defender reacted quickest after Josh Windass' free-kick had been expertly tipped on to the post by Benjamin Siegrist.

The goal left Gareth Ainsworth to

lament his side's defensive frailty.

"We didn't follow up. It is alright doing it in training but you need to do it in games," Ainsworth said.

"You have to be switched on mentally and physically for 90 minutes if you want to play at a higher level and even if you want to win games in League Two.

"I am a proud man and that wasn't good enough in that one moment for the free-kick. Otherwise we defended well and would have seen out a 0-0 draw."

Ainsworth's appraisal was fair and his side generally stood firm

against an Accrington side who are now just one win away from securing automatic promotion.

Defensive solidity counts for little though if you cannot create at the other end, and Wycombe were again toothless in attack as their winless run reached seven games.

They failed to register a shot on target throughout the 90 minutes despite having more of the ball and Ainsworth was once more forced to address the issue of his faltering forwards.

"It was not nice for the fans who have been supporting us all year and

it is a bit of a damp one at the end of the day," Ainsworth conceded.

"There were some positives and I thought we controlled the game in the second half and it is just again about sticking the ball in the back of the net.

"It is just that final chance and final ball which needs to be better."

Wanderers marked their last home game of the season with a customary lap of honour in front of an appreciative, if slowly depleting, Adams Park crowd.

Those fans' attention now turns to the short trip down the M40 to

Oxford where Ainsworth will hope Wanderers can rediscover their winning touch and end the season on a high tomorrow.

Wycombe Wanderers: Siegrist; McCarthy, Stewart, Pierre, Jombati, Rowe, Bean, Harriman (Kretschmar 87), Sellars (Sellers 87), Thompson (Ugwu 71), Hayes. Subs not used: Allsop; McGinn, Liburd.

Accrington Stanley: Etheridge; Pearson, Davies, Hughes, Buxton, Mingoia (McCartan 77), Halliday, Connelly, Fosu, Windass, Kee. Subs not used: Mooney; Winnard, Gornell, McConville, Brown, Boco.

SPORT

FINE DEBUT

Wanderers boss praises 'outstanding' Siegrist after impressive Stanley debut



WANDERERS: End of season event also sees O'Nien honoured McCarthy and Harriman pick up major prizes



Honoured: Jason McCarthy

JASON McCarthy and Michael Harriman took home the two big prizes from Wycombe Wanderers' end of season awards dinner at Adams Park on Sunday.

McCarthy was named Supporters' Player of the Year while Harriman picked up the Players' Player of the Year award.

There were also honours for Luke O'Nien (Young Player of the Year), Alex Lynch (Community Player of the Year) and Sido Jombati (Goal of the Season).

Southampton loanee McCarthy

has been a central figure in forming the tightest defence in League Two as has played in every game since arriving at Adams Park in October.

He has looked at home since making his move from St Mary's and has highlighted his importance to Gareth Ainsworth's side with stints at both centre-back and right-back.

In a poll of almost 1,500 votes McCarthy came out on top – clearly a fans' favourite during his stay which has featured goals against AFC Wimbledon and Oxford United.

The success rounded off a memorabilia

personal weekend for McCarthy after he had received the Away Supporters' Player of the Year award before Saturday's defeat against Accrington Stanley.

Harriman has had an equally impressive season and his potent attacking play saw him acknowledged by his teammates as he picked up the Players' Player gong.

The winger arrived on loan from QPR in the summer before making his switch permanent in January and has scored eight goals.

Meanwhile, O'Nien took the ac-

colade for Young Player of the Year after impressing the club's coaching staff with his work rate.

Jombati beat stiff competition to claim the Goal of the Season award for his superb effort against Halifax.

Lynch's fine work with the Wycombe Wanderers Sports & Education Trust projects saw the goalkeeper pick up the Community Player of the Year shield.

There was also an Unsung Hero accolade for Grant Lofthouse-Smith – recognition for 16 years of service on non-matchdays at Adams Park.

AINSWORTH aiming to finish on a derby high 'To give all the fans a win would be great'

DERBY matches are fiery at the best of times, so throwing a potential promotion hopeful into the mix could make for a combustible atmosphere.

That is exactly the set of circumstances Wycombe Wanderers will have to deal with when they make the short trip to the Kassam Stadium to take on Oxford United tomorrow.

A Wanderers win could see Oxford fall out of the automatic promotion places and into the play-offs at the final hurdle.

Wycombe manager Gareth Ainsworth is therefore hoping his players can deal with the added pressure of spoiling the U's day.

"We won't approach it any differently to any other game, but we are human and we know what we can do if we win," Ainsworth said.

"It is a brilliant game and I expect the boys to keep their heads. We know what to expect.

"To give the fans something on the last day would be brilliant if we can, and I am sure a few Wycombe fans would love to spoil the party."

To do so Wycombe will have to end a run of seven games without a win against an Oxford side who have scored more goals than anyone else in League Two this season.

It is a run Ainsworth is eager to end and feels his, and his players', focus is centred more on taking three points than upsetting their neighbour's promotion hopes.

By Harry Gray

He said: "Personally I would just love to win a game of football and I want to give the fans a win in what is going to be a big game for us.

"We have not won for seven games so it is more about winning rather than beating Oxford."

A 2-1 win against Oxford in December provided one of the high points of the campaign for Wanderers as Jason McCarthy headed the winner at Adams Park.

It is perhaps for this reason that Oxford boss Michael Appleton is wary of a Wanderers side he believes will be giving their all.

Appleton said: "They're a good side and were so unlucky last season to lose in the Play-Off Final. They would've had aspirations to be in the play-offs again."

The hosts will sweat on the fitness of top scorer and League Two Player of the Year Kemar Roofs who was back in training yesterday after recovering from an ankle injury. His fitness will be assessed closer to kick-off.

Johnny Mullins (ankle) and Joe Skarz (groin) are also doubts, while Ryan Taylor (groin) and Jordan Evans (broken rib) are certain absentees.

Ainsworth will continue to be without a host of players as Luke O'Nien, Sam Wood, Joe Jacobson, Matt Bloomfield and Alex Lynch miss out.



Oxford may be without League Two Player of the Year Kemar Roofs when they face Wanderers tomorrow. Picture: ACTION IMAGES

'There is no extra pressure'

WANDERERS BOSS SALUTES FOXES' 'ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT' FEAT

LEICESTER City's Premier League-winning heroics should have no impact on expectations at other clubs according to Gareth Ainsworth.

The Wycombe Wanderers manager is right when he suggests a limited budget hinders his side as he copes with a small squad and limited funds in the transfer market.

However, the achievements of Claudio Ranieri's Foxes has raised the notion that smaller teams will be under pressure to replicate their success. It is an argument Ainsworth disagrees with.

He said: "I don't think it puts more pressure on anyone else or puts anymore focus on other team's budgets.

"It is the first time in Premier League history that a team from outside the top spenders has done it. Even Blackburn, my team, spent a fortune to win it.

"It is absolutely brilliant what Leicester have done and they have had a fantastic season. Claudio Ranieri said it himself, they won't do it again next year."

The Italian's squad cost just over £54 million to assemble, yet Leicester managed to beat Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester City, who spent a combined £831.8 million to build their teams, to the title.

It is a remarkable story and Ainsworth sees similarities in what Leicester are doing this season and his own club's achievements in reaching the play-off final last year.

He said: "For me, it is why I love football and football is about fairy tales. We had the fairy tale last season and this season it has been Leicester."