

SPORT

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GRAHAMOld boys
return to
sting the
ChairboysFAMILIAR FACES STRIKE EARLY TO
SEND BLUES TO FRIENDLY DEFEAT

THERE is always an added incentive for players to impress against their former clubs as Wycombe Wanderers discovered to their detriment on Tuesday night.

The Blues were stung twice inside the opening nine minutes as old boys Scott Rendell and Matt McClure pounced to give the Shots a 2-0 lead.

New signing Will De Havilland turned home to mark his first official start for the club with a goal, but it was a mere consolation.

Pre-season is largely about fitness and bedding in new players but the manner in which National League Aldershot cut through Wycombe early on was alarming.

It took Wanderers until the hour mark to really get going when a host of substitutions led to a more fluid performance and they began to create chances.

Nick Freeman went close with a scuffed volley bouncing off the bar and Wycombe built up a head of steam going into the final ten minutes.

Eventually the pressure told when Joe Jacobson's free-kick broke to De Havilland, who dispatched a simple finish from close range.

Gareth Ainsworth's men tried in vain to find a leveller, and the Wycombe boss would have been boosted by his side's late revival if not their opening 45 minutes.

Wanderers' first-half performance at the EBB Stadium was in stark contrast to their consummate display in their 0-0 draw with QPR last Friday.

The Adams Park club matched their Championship opposition for the full 90 minutes and looked comfortable.

They could even have won the match when Sam Wood's rasping drive from the edge of the box stung the palms of Matt Ingram in the QPR goal.

The draw came at a cost though, as Aaron Pierre and Paris Cowan-Hall both limped off with injuries.

The pair join Paul Hayes on the treatment table, but Ainsworth is confident all three will be fit for the season opener against Crawley Town next Saturday.

Wanderers have been drawn against West Ham United, Coventry City and Northampton Town in the group stages of the EFL Trophy.

Each team will play each other once with Wanderers kicking off their assault on the trophy at Northampton on the week commencing August 29.

Wanderers' fans hoping for a trip to the Olympic Stadium will be disappointed, however, with United confirming all their matches will be played away from home.

They play Slaven Bilic's side West Ham at Adams Park on the week commencing October 10 before finishing the group at home to Coventry on the week commencing November 7.

Emotional return for
goalkeeper IngramRETURNING KEEPER ADMITS IT WAS
'WEIRD' TO FACE OLD TEAMMATES

MATT Ingram says returning to Adams Park as part of a rival team was a surreal experience after playing for Queens Park Rangers in their 0-0 draw with Wycombe Wanderers.

The 22-year-old played 140 times for Gareth Ainsworth's side before making the move to Loftus Road in January.

Friday's match was the first Ingram has played at Adams Park since the switch and provided him with a strange mix of emotions.

"It was very strange walking into the away dressing room," he explained.

"It was nice coming back. The fans gave me a great reception, both sets of fans, and it was nice to keep a clean sheet as well.

"It was weird playing against ex-teammates and I knew basically the whole team. It was nice and at the same time good for me that they didn't score otherwise I would never hear the end of it."

Ingram was largely untroubled throughout the match, but did give Wanderers fans a reminder of his class with a superb stop to deny Sam Wood in the second half.

One area where Ingram has been impressed by Wanderers' recruitment is in attack and he feels Adebayo Akinfenwa's arrival is a big plus.

He says the acquisition of the striker will have a positive impact and insists the club is set to enjoy a prosperous 2016/17 campaign.

"I think Akinfenwa is a great transaction. The way Wycombe have been playing the last few years when I have been there has been fairly direct," Ingram explained.

"Having someone like Akinfenwa up top who can bring the ball down



It's good to be back: Matt Ingram returned to Adams Park on Friday to play for the first time since moving to Queens Park Rangers.
Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

and bring other players into the game will definitely help.

"I think they will be right up there because that style of football works in League Two.

"They have proven that in the last couple of seasons."

Ingram, who joined Wanderers as a 12-year-old, will spend much of next season competing with Alex Smithies for the right to be Rangers' first choice.

His first six months with the

Championship side have brought four appearances and he is aware of the need to continue improving.

Of course, life in English football's second tier comes with fresh challenges, but Ingram feels his time at Wycombe suitably prepared him for the step up.

"It is very different. I have been working a lot on using my feet because it is becoming more of the goalkeeper's game now," Ingram said.

While Friday's game was Ingram's first time back at Adams Park in a playing capacity, he has returned as a fan since his departure.

It is a trend which he hopes to continue next year should a hectic playing schedule allow him to do so.

Ingram said: "If I get a free weekend and Wycombe are playing I will definitely be down.

"This is where it all started for me when I was 12, so it is a club which is very close to my heart."

Wood's back and raring to crack on

A LOT has changed in the three months Sam Wood has spent recovering from a knee injury he picked up at the tail end of last season.

Most pertinently, the make-up of the Wycombe Wanderers squad which now boasts a number of new names while familiar faces have been released.

For Wood the changing environment at Adams Park matters little, and he is just pleased to be back on the pitch after returning in the 0-0 draw with Queens Park Rangers on Friday.

"It is good to get some minutes. I think it has been about three months since I last played. I took a little knock the other week and that is why I didn't play in France,"

Wood explained.

"It is never nice watching because all you want to do is help the team out. Obviously I was unable to do that last season, but that is done now and I am looking forward.

"Hopefully I will stay injury free and I can crack on with the new season."

Wood's absence was felt last term as the club were left with a dearth of natural options on the wings, especially the left, which Wood has made his own in recent years.

He will face a stern test to do the same this year with the arrivals of Paris Cowan-Hall and in particular Myles Weston giving Gareth Ainsworth more options.

But the 29-year-old is unfazed by

the extra competition for his starting berth and insists the new faces can only be good for the club.

"It is definitely not worrying me. It is good for the team, it is good for the gaffer and we push each other," Wood said.

"You do want to play, so I am going to give 100 per cent like I have done since I have been here. I can only do my best and hopefully that's enough to start some games.

"Either way I am going to back Westy (Weston) or whoever plays in my position. I will always be behind my teammates no matter what."

Such is the turnover of players at Wanderers, Wood will go into the upcoming campaign as one of the club's longest serving current

squad members.

The 2016/17 campaign will be his fifth with Wycombe and he therefore feels he has a role to play in helping to implement the club's culture and style of play.

He said: "I have been with the gaffer since day one, since he has come in, so I know how he wants to play. I will always talk to the younger lads and the new boys when they come in.

"I am one of the experienced lads now, so I look forward to it and I just want to help the boys."

■ Tickets for the Chairboys' opening day trip to Crawley Town on Saturday, August 6 went on sale on Monday, with an initial allocation of 400 tickets.

SPORT

MATT'S BACK

Blues fans' favourite Ingram reflects on Wanderers return following friendly draw



WANDERERS: Boss not expecting to make further additions Ainsworth happy to end on magnificent seven



Blues' latest acquisitions

GARETH Ainsworth says he does not expect to make anymore signings between now and the end of the transfer window.

The Blues boss added defender William De Havilland and goalkeeper Scott Brown to his ranks on Tuesday night to take his summer recruitment process to seven new players.

He is content with the state of his squad and says budgetary constraints make it unlikely Wanderers will move for reinforcements between now and September.

"It will probably be the end of my summer signings. I can't see too many more coming in. Finances will dictate that," Ainsworth said.

"The best players cost money and I think we have assembled a squad which will be competitive in League Two and that leaves little money to strengthen."

Ainsworth's comments seemed to contradict those he made the previous week when he suggested he may be able to bring players in on loan near the end of August.

It is a belief the Wanderers boss

still holds, but he now says the club will only act on any interest in players should a squad crisis at Adams Park arrive.

Ainsworth said: "We will be looking for favours from other clubs now. We will assess the squad and hopefully there will be no emergency signings needed."

"If there is [an emergency] we have good relationships with clubs where we can probably get players in."

"We will see where we are in January and make a decision on what we

are going to do next."

Ainsworth's confidence stems from his belief in a small playing squad to thrive throughout a grueling campaign.

In the wake of the signings of De Havilland and Brown, Ainsworth revealed his delight at the make-up of his squad on Wycombe's Twitter account.

The Blues manager said: "The squad is in great shape – possibly the best I've known in my time here. I'm excited about what they can deliver."

BLUES: Keeper has 300 league games to name Brown to add crucial experience to squad

A SUCCESSION of young goalkeepers have filled the number one spot at Adams Park in recent years, but the trend has been bucked by Wycombe Wanderers' latest signing.

Scott Brown arrives in Buckinghamshire on a two-year deal with a wealth of experience, including more than 300 league games, to his name.

It is a departure from the loan signings of Ryan Allsop and Benjamin Siegrist who came to Wycombe last season with a handful of matches on their CVs.

The former Aberdeen and Cheltenham Town man believes this greater knowledge will help him bolster an already impressive Wycombe defensive unit.

"Hopefully I can add a bit of experience back there. Last year I believe it was one of the best defensive records in the league, so hopefully we can do that again," the 31-year-old said.

"I love football, I come in every day, try and work hard and try and improve. It is the same with all the lads in there."

Brown, who joined at the same time as defender Will De Havilland, produced a couple of good saves on his first appearance, which came in Tuesday's 2-1 defeat at Aldershot just hours after his arrival was confirmed.

Gareth Ainsworth echoed Brown's view that his experience

By Harry Gray

will be a valuable asset for Wanderers, after a career which has seen him play in a Scottish Cup semi-final and the Europa League.

"Scott has played at a good level in the Scottish Premier League and in Europe for the last couple of seasons," Ainsworth said.

"He spent nine years at Cheltenham in the league, played in play-offs and play-off finals and is a very experienced keeper."

"The keepers we have had have been tough to replace but a mature one coming in will add something to us."

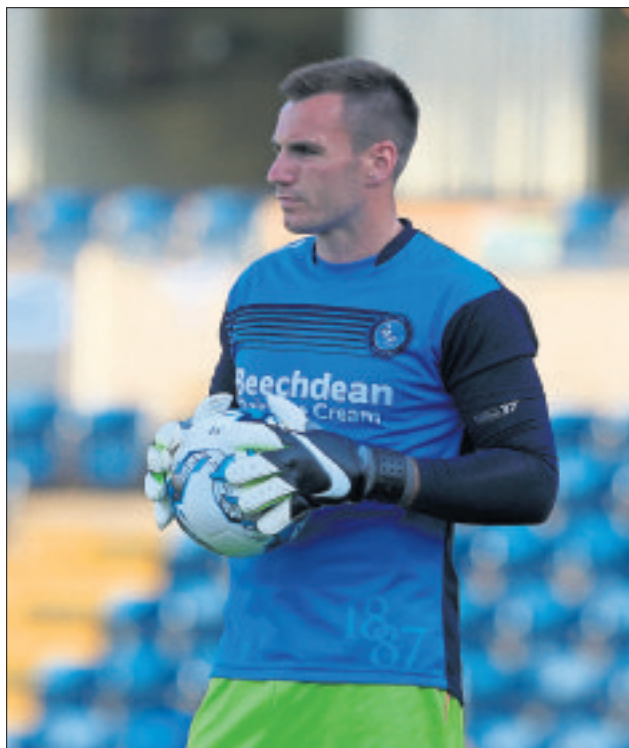
Barry Richardson, 46, looks set to work as both coach and understudy to Brown next year after Ainsworth said he is unlikely to go back into the transfer market.

Brown has no issue with the apparent lack of competition for his starting berth and says he is relishing the thought of continuing to work with Richardson.

He views the veteran of more than 400 professional matches in a similar light to Jim Leighton, who he worked under in Scotland.

"Working with someone like Jim was fantastic. It is the same with Baz and if you can't learn from people like Baz and Jim you are not going to learn off anyone," he said.

"Everyone wants to improve and I know working with someone like Baz can help me do that."



Quickly into the action after signing: Scott Brown played in Tuesday night's defeat at Aldershot
Picture: ANITA ROSS MARSHALL

Hatton off to modest first round

MARLOW GOLFER GETS HIS USPGA
CHALLENGE UNDER WAY

TYRRELL Hatton made a modest start to his opening round at the USPGA in Baltusrol yesterday.

At the time of going to press the Marlow golfer was one-over-par having played 15 holes and was tied for 40th in what is his second appearance at the USPGA.

The Harleyford Golf Club member made a steady start to his round before a bogey on the 10th saw him move to one-over.

He immediately recovered his composure to birdie the 11th before scoring a further bogey later in his round.

The 24-year-old is looking to continue the form which saw him tie for fifth at The Open just under a fortnight ago.

That result came a week after he sank a nerveless putt on the final hole of the Scottish Open to claim second place. His recent form has taken him to 53rd in the world rankings to make him the eighth highest ranked Englishman.

He will be hoping to improve on his previous showing at the US Open which saw him finish 25th at Whistling Straits last year.

Hatton starts his second round alongside American pair Harris English and Matt Dobyns at 12.45pm local time today.

English enjoyed a strong first 15 holes in two-under-par to tie for sixth on a day where one of his fellow American's prospered.

Jimmy Walker led the way after 14 holes with a score of five-under in a round including five birdies to narrowly lead Emiliano Grillo, who was second on four-under.