

Ainsworth: We were just not good enough

WANDERERS

WYCOMBE WANDERERS lost their first league game since October as they were narrowly lost 3-2 to fellow high-flyers Exeter City.

Gareth Ainsworth made seven changes from the team that suffered a heartbreaking loss at Spurs in the FA Cup on Saturday and the Grecians took full advantage.

David Wheeler opened the scoring on 18 minutes after Jack Stacey broke clear down the right and provided a pinpoint cross which Wheeler steered home from close range.

The Chairboys responded well to that setback and they equalised on 37 minutes through Garry Thompson as he volleyed home Sam Saunders' fantastic corner from close range.

However, the introduction of star man Ollie Watkins proved the catalyst for Exeter as he assisted two goals within a minute, as well as scoring one in injury time.

Firstly, Troy Brown poked home from close range after a mazy run and dangerous cross from Watkins on 66 minutes as his cross evaded everyone.

Sixty seconds later, Joel Grant scored an almost identical goal as he slotted home at the back post after more superb play from the inspired playmaker.

However, debutant Alex Jakubiak, on loan from Watford, scored with a clinical finish on 90 minutes as he evaded his man to smash home past Christy Pym.

Sadly for the visitors, Watkins rounded Jamal Blackman and slammed into the net with seconds to go to round off a disappointing night for the Blues.

Exeter were in the ascendency for the majority of the game. Jor-

dan Moore-Taylor tested Blackman on 12 minutes from Craig Woodman's cross.

Wycombe's best chance other than the goals fell to Thompson at 1-1 but he was denied by an excellent save by Pym.

Ainsworth pulled no punches after the game. He said: "Exeter deserved to win. Hands up, we weren't good tonight.

"We didn't do anything that we have been doing in recent weeks and it was a horrible game and we got beat up a little bit by an Exeter team, who in recent times we have had a lot of success against.

"It was a total contrast to Saturday and we just simply weren't at it."

Ainsworth made seven changes from Saturday's heartbreaking defeat, including changing his defensive duo of Aaron Pierre and Anthony Stewart.

This gave an opportunity for Max Muller and Will De Havilland to play together in the league for the first time and he explained his thoughts behind the changes.

He added: "Aaron and Anthony have played game after game together. We had to rest Anthony for Mansfield as he has been struggling and Saturday took a lot out of both of them.

"We have to look after JJ (Joe Jacobson) too and Bayo and Paul Hayes were carrying knocks so I thought the changes were justified and I don't want to lose players through injury as we have had that before.

"I wanted to give a bit of freshness to the team and it didn't work how I hoped and we didn't create too much."

One positive for Wycombe was the debut goal for Jakubiak and Ainsworth commented: "He has quite a bit to learn still but he took his goal really well and that was a plus for us."



Alex Jakubiak's goal was one of the few positives on a poor night for Wycombe as he scored his first goal for the club. Photo: Sean Hinks

Striker confident side can rally back

FOOTBALL

WYCOMBE FORWARD Garry Thompson is convinced Wanderers can bounce back after Tuesday's disappointing defeat to Exeter.

After relinquishing their 12 match unbeaten run in the league, Thompson is confident that the Chairboys will be ready for Portsmouth tomorrow.

He said: "It is all about turning it around quickly. You can't be too down for long because it will catch up on you.

"Winning becomes a habit but so does losing and we need to get out of that and we will make sure we are ready to go again against Portsmouth."

The fixture list is becoming congested due to Wycombe's exploits in cup competitions and although Thompson admitted that playing three games a week for the next month will be tough, he says the squad will find a way through it.

He added: "It is tough but you have to make sure you rest up properly and re-hydrate and do everything properly.

"The gaffer has strengthened the squad so we have options and making sure we are right come match days."

Chairboys make twin signings

WYCOMBE

GARETH AINSWORTH made two more signings this week as he swooped for Paris Cowan-Hall on a free transfer and Watford striker Alex Jakubiak on loan.

Cowan-Hall completed his loan spell from Millwall on Tuesday but was allowed to leave the League One club on a free transfer, enabling him to join another team outside of the transfer window.

Ainsworth has moved to bring Cowan-Hall back to Wycombe for a fourth time and said: "It's no secret that I've wanted to keep Paris at Wycombe and I'm thrilled that we've been able to agree the right deal to do that."

Jakubiak made a goalscoring debut in Tuesday's defeat at Exeter and Ainsworth added: "Alex is a player I've seen a lot of at under-21 level and in senior football, and he's someone who I believe will suit the way we play.

"He's quick, he's got a good eye for goal and he's willing to work hard for the team.

"Bringing in Alex gives us another option up top and I am delighted."

CHAIRBOYS: Manager's injury worries easing Ainsworth confident of turnaround

GARETH AINSWORTH is confident his Wycombe side can get back on track tomorrow after their defeat in midweek as they face Portsmouth at Adams Park in a mouthwatering League Two clash.

After suffering their first league defeat since October with a 4-2 reverse against Exeter on Tuesday at St James' Park, Ainsworth is hopeful that his side can get that blip out of their system.

He said: "We will hopefully be able to bring back one or two players who missed out in midweek such as Paul Hayes, and we hope Scott Kashket will be fit too.

"I am really looking forward to the Portsmouth game. They have always been cracking games between the sides and I am sure Saturday will be no different.

"Portsmouth are an absolutely huge club for League Two and sooner or later they will get out of this division.

"I am sure there will be a big crowd and it will be a fantastic occasion, as well as a very tough game for us so we will need to be on it."

So far this season, Wycombe have played Portsmouth twice, losing 4-2 in the league but beating them 2-1 in the FA Cup first round, with both

games at Fratton Park.

Ainsworth added: "In the league it was a tough defeat for us but in the cup match we were a lot more competitive, as we played a very strong side and produced a great win. Hopefully we can replicate the cup game tomorrow."

Tuesday's loss saw Wycombe lose their first league game in 12 and Ainsworth urged his men to get back on the winning trail.

"You just want to keep winning games all the time," explained the Wycombe manager.

"We will be introducing a fresh approach to this game. After such

a humongous game last Saturday, tiredness should now not come into it and we will be very positive."

Ainsworth also added a small tribute regarding Monty Seymour, the much-loved club president who sadly was laid to rest yesterday.

He commented: "He was such a fantastic guy and I was privileged to have known him.

"I hope he is looking down on us with immense pride at what we are doing. We have lost one of the best people to have been associated with the club.

"He will never be forgotten for what he has done here."

SPORT

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Spurs gaffer praises Blues

FA CUP

TOTTENHAM MANAGER Mauricio Pochettino lauded Wycombe Wanderers for their performance in an amazing FA Cup encounter at White Hart Lane.

Unfortunately, the Chairboys lost 4-3 in the 96th minute but this didn't stop the Argentine from being magnanimous in victory.

He said: "Full credit to Wycombe, especially in the first half where they were better than us.

"From the first moment, they played well, they were quick and they found a way to create chances and it was difficult.

"In the second half we increased our level and there were a lot of positives, as we played with 10 men for the last 20 minutes.

"Wycombe made life very hard for us and all credit to them for doing that.

"It was really the magic of the FA Cup."

After the final whistle, Pochettino shared a few words with Gareth Ainsworth to offer his sympathy after such a hammer blow.

He added: "I said well done and well played and you need a little bit of luck to win like we did.

"I congratulated him because his players played very well"

Garry's proud header

GARRY THOMPSON described it as a 'dream' feeling to score at White Hart Lane, despite his side losing in the dying embers.

Thompson scored with a brilliant header from Myles Weston's fantastic cross with just seven minutes to go to give Wycombe the lead once again at 3-2.

Although they couldn't hang on for a famous victory, Thompson said: "Ultimately when you look back at this game, we got beaten and it was disappointing that we couldn't come away with a replay.

"Personally, I was delighted to be on the pitch and over the moon to get a goal. It was at White Hart Lane, in front of a full house.

"Not many people from Kendal, where I am from, can say they have done that so I am proud and it was a great achievement for myself and a proud moment."

WYCOMBE: Heartbreak for wonderful Wanderers Ainsworth: It was a truly awesome experience for us

by Nicholas Tunney

Continued from page 76

The away supporters were sent into delirium once again on 35 minutes when Hayes coolly converted a penalty after Sam Wood had been fouled by Cameron Carter-Vickers.

Mauricio Pochettino's side fought their way back into the game in the second half. Son scored after 59 minutes when he beat Jamal Blackman at his near post.

Five minutes later, Vincent Janssen scored from the penalty spot after he was impeded inside the box by Aaron Pierre before the drama of the last 10 minutes.

The visitors had a great chance to take the lead after just a minute when Hayes hit the bar from six yards after a brilliant header back across by Adebayo Akinfenwa.

Hayes then scored a once-in-a-lifetime volley to give the League Two side the lead at one of the iconic stadiums in world football.

The Wycombe skipper was at it again 12 minutes later when he stroked home to give the Chairboys a thoroughly deserved lead at the break.

Wycombe were looking pretty comfortable at the start of the second half but Son got his first goal just before the hour mark as the Wanderers defence were breached.

Mauricio Pochettino then brought on star midfielders Alli and Moussa Dembele on the hour mark to provide fresh impetus.

Seconds later Pierre brought down substitute Janssen to give Spurs a lifeline in a game they had been second best in until that point.

Wycombe were working tirelessly to keep Spurs at bay with some real



Gareth Ainsworth and Mauricio Pochettino have a cheerful exchange before Saturday's game which Spurs went onto win 4-3 with an injury time winner and cruelly deny Wycombe a place in the FA Cup fifth round

resolve being shown by Ainsworth's warriors and the Blues were jumping for joy again when veteran striker Thompson netted with a beauty after some wizardry from Weston.

However, Spurs were not to be denied and Alli's late equaliser meant that Wycombe were on for a deserved replay at Adams Park.

Heartbreakingly, Son won it at the death but Ainsworth's men had won the hearts of the crowd after a quite breathtaking match of football

which won't be forgotten for a long time.

Ainsworth said: "They have done me proud, they have done themselves proud and they have done the whole town proud.

"I was gutted at the end but the overriding emotion now is what we have achieved and how far we have come as a club."

After the game, Ainsworth and Pochettino shared a warm embrace on the touchline and the Wycombe gaffer explained what his opposite number said to him.

He added: "Mauricio said to me 'that's football and you were unlucky, be proud of your boys'."

"He doesn't have to tell me to proud. I am immensely proud and he is right, that is football. It can be like that but what a brilliant game and for Wycombe Wanderers to come here and do that is fantastic.

"I am not down at all and these guys will never get me down."

WYCOMBE: Midfielder eulogises the club's effort O'Nien: Our display was down to everyone



Luke O'Nien was full of praise for everyone associated with the club

LUKE O'NIEN credited the team's magnificent performance against Spurs to everyone involved with the football club as they gave Tottenham a mighty scare at White Hart Lane.

The Wycombe midfielder covered every blade of grass, proving to be more than a match for England international Eric Dier and Harry Winks in the centre of the park.

O'Nien admitted to disappointment at the end result but said everyone should be proud at running the Premier League giants so close.

He said: "We want to win and the

way we lost was kind of heartbreaking. You saw the reaction of the players when the fourth goal went in. Everyone was on the floor.

"It was credit, not just to the players, but the fans and everyone who is part of Wycombe. We gave it everything to the final whistle but it wasn't meant to be."

O'Nien spoke to a couple of the Tottenham players after the titanic duel and he commented: "They said we were the hardest team we had come up against this season.

"The way we played and the way we

set up, they struggled and you could see we caused the problems.

"It was a great experience for us and we can learn from this."

From the first minute, Wycombe took the game to their more illustrious counterparts and O'Nien explained that their long unbeaten run had a lot to do with it.

He added: "We went into the game with a lot of confidence as we were 16 games unbeaten in league and cup and we took the game to them.

"That has come to an end but we need to go on another run now."

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PICTURE SPECIAL: Wycombe fans enjoy their big away day at Spurs

by Nicholas Tunney

OVER 4,000 Wycombe fans descended on White Hart Lane on Saturday to see their team give a thrilling display against Premier League giants Spurs.

Throughout the game, the Wanderers supporters were in full voice, getting behind their heroes from the very first minute until the last when they stayed behind to applaud the side's performance against a side 70 places above them in the league ladder.

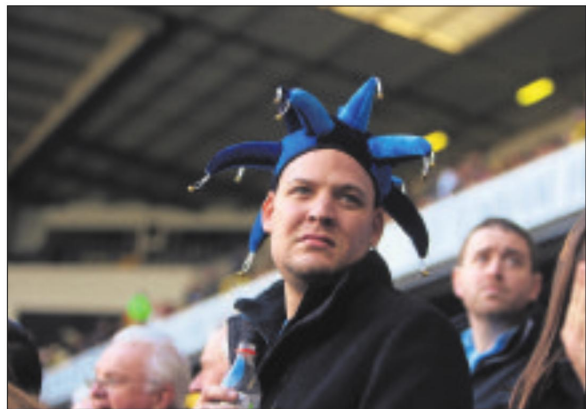
During the match, they would have experienced every emotion, from delight to despair and pride and passion.

Wycombe went 2-0 up in the first half, thanks to skipper Paul Hayes, to send the travelling fans into meltdown and delirium.

Unfortunately a heart-breaking defeat ensued but this game will definitely be remembered in Wycombe folklore.



4,000 Wanderers fans travelled to north London to inspire their team's quite amazing performance in a cruel 4-3 loss. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall



Fan gets into the fun of the day at White Hart Lane



Female fans sings her heart out



Father and son backing their boys



The despair kicks in



PICTURE SPECIAL: All the action as Wycombe frighten the mighty Spurs

by Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE WANDERERS produced one of the most stunning displays in their history as they scared the life out of Tottenham Hotspur in the FA Cup last Saturday.

Having been in exceptional form in the league and cup lately, no-one would have envisaged the performance that Wycombe put in at White Hart Lane.

Ranked three divisions below Mauricio Pochettino's superstars, anyone who didn't know anything about football would have guessed that these two teams played their trade in the same league.

Individually, there were some standout performances. Paul Hayes for his brace and leadership, Luke O'Nien for his energy and heart, Joe Jacobson

for nullifying the threat of Moussa Sissoko to name but a few.

The game itself would be described as an absolute classic. It would have been easy for Gareth Ainsworth to follow Derek Adams' lead and play for a draw to force a replay, much like Adams' Plymouth Argyle did to Liverpool.

However, Ainsworth doesn't believe in parking the bus and this carefree attitude almost conjured up one of the greatest FA Cup shocks for a long time, as well as producing a quite breathtaking game of football.

Anyone who witnessed this match will be grateful that they were there.

From Jamal Blackman to the inspirational Adebayo Akinfenwa up front, Wycombe played full part in a match that will live long in the memory.



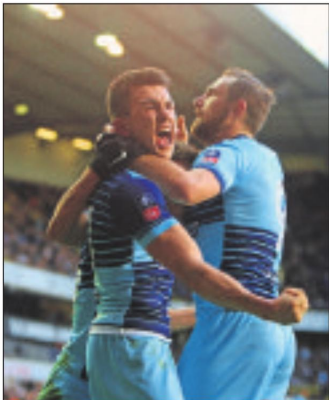
Wycombe players show their brilliant team spirit as they huddle before the match. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall



The players celebrate Paul Hayes' stunning opener



Hayes scores from the spot



O'Nien mobs Hayes after his penalty



Anthony Stewart shows his gratitude



Wanderers make the town proud



Scott Kashket and Paul Hayes in celebration after seeing Wycombe go into a deserved two goal lead



Joe Jacobson and referee Roger East have a difference of opinion during last Saturday's game



Garry Thompson and Luke O'Nien celebrating in front of the Wycombe faithful



Gareth Ainsworth deep in thought before the game



Adebayo Akinfenwa and Joe Jacobson join in the rowdy celebrations after Paul Hayes' magnificent double puts the Chairboys into a memorable position. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall



Hayes in dreamland after putting the Chairboys 2-0 up with his brace



Wanderers win another challenge against Spurs



Akinfenwa tussles with Eric Dier and Cameron Carter-Vickers



SPORT

Rugby

Wycombe men destroy
Milton Keynes
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Manager sets eyes on Wembley prize – days after Spurs heartbreak

SECOND CHANCE

by Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE WANDERERS are in the midst of some of their biggest games in their recent history.

Spurs away last weekend was a momentous occasion for everyone associated with the club, and they agonisingly lost in the last minute after running Mauricio Pochettino's side so close.

The Chairboys entertain fellow promotion hopefuls Portsmouth tomorrow but one game in particular has got Gareth Ainsworth's attention.

Tuesday's Checkatrade Trophy semi-final against Coventry City at the Ricoh Arena is live on TV and presents a chance for Wanderers to get to Wembley for only the fifth time in their history.

Ainsworth sees this as a wonderful opportunity for the club to win a trophy and classed this as the biggest match in this mini-run, potentially overshadowing their Tottenham exploits.

He said: "We are only two games away from the opportunity of winning some silverware and it doesn't get any bigger than that.

"In football, you want to win trophies and you want to achieve things and this represents a massive chance for us."

Earlier on in the competition, Wycombe lost 4-2 to Coventry with Ainsworth himself named as one of the substitutes but he expects that game to have no bearing on what happens on Tuesday.

He added: "Both teams are now very different. Coventry have changed manager since then and since the earlier rounds, we have got a lot more serious about this competition.

"Tuesday's game will be absolutely huge

and we are really looking forward to it."

Last Saturday, Wanderers were left heartbroken as their incredible display at White Hart Lane ended in vain as Spurs came back from 2-0 down to score in the 96th minute to win 4-3 after a truly riveting FA Cup fourth round clash.

Heung-Min Son was the villain at White Hart Lane as he steered home past Jamal Blackman in the sixth minute of stoppage time to beat an amazing Wanderers side, ranked 70 places below them in the league ladder.

Substitute Garry Thompson thought he had snatched the winner with seven minutes to go as he thumped home a superb header from fellow sub Myles Weston's brilliant cross to send the 4,000 Wanderers fans into meltdown.

However, Dele Alli came off the bench to slot home with two minutes to go to give a relieved Spurs a lifeline before Son's intervention.

Ainsworth's men took the game to Spurs and Paul Hayes scored a sensational volley on 23 minutes.

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