

More cup heartbreak as Wycombe lose to Sky Blues

by Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE OLD BOY Stuart Beavon came back to haunt Wanderers as they were edged out 2-1 by Coventry City in their Checkatrade Trophy semi-final clash at the Ricoh Arena.

Beavon opened the scoring in front of a raucous crowd on 11 minutes when he turned from 10 yards out and scored with a shot that was arguably going wide before deflecting in off Will De Havilland.

George Thomas doubled the home side's advantage eight minutes later when he rifled past Jamal Blackman after a brilliant cross from Kyel Reid.

Gareth Ainsworth sent on Adebayo Akinfenwa on at half-time and the change paid immediate dividends when he slammed the ball home on 55 minutes after City failed to clear their lines.

However, the Sky Blues held firm after Wycombe put them under real pressure in the second half with Akinfenwa in particular sending panic through the Coventry rearguard.

Wycombe had their first effort on 10 minutes when Joe Jacobson's free kick wasn't properly cleared and Myles Weston hit a volley which was comfortably saved by Reice Charles-Cook.

However, a minute later disaster struck for Wanderers when Beavon had a slice of luck and saw his shot creep home.

City delivered another sucker punch on 19 minutes when Thomas lashed home.

Weston then had a golden opportunity to pull one back on 43 minutes but he blazed over from six yards after Sam Saunders broke clear down the left and put in a great ball.

Akinfenwa came on for Wycombe at half-time to provide more oomph in attack and he was in the thick of the action straight away, immediately pinning Coventry back.

That man Akinfenwa gave Wanderers hope and Wanderers then went really direct and constant crosses into the Sky Blues area were just



More action from the Ricoh Arena as Gareth Ainsworth's men failed to equalise in the second half when well on top against their illustrious League One opponents at the Ricoh Arena. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall



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Gaffer full of pride despite loss



Ainsworth was upbeat after the Coventry game

GARETH AINSWORTH said he was 'proud of the boys' in their achievement in getting to the Checkatrade Trophy semi-finals, as they narrowly lost 2-1 to Coventry City at the Ricoh Arena.

He said: "It wasn't to be. To get to the last four out of 60 odd teams is a great achievement for a club our size.

"Bayo did really well when he came on but there just wasn't enough around him or quality going forward.

"We let in two sloppy goals which wasn't really us and we gave ourselves a mountain to climb but we gave it a right go in the second half.

"I said to them win the second half and they did but they didn't win it by enough."

Akinfenwa was a constant thorn in the City backline when he came on at half-time and Ainsworth explained his reasons why he didn't start.

He commented: "If you look at Millwall, Blackpool and Mansfield we have left him on the bench and he has come on and had a real impact.

"If you start him and he gets an injury and you lose him for the league campaign you will be kicking yourself.

"It is great having a degree in hindsight sometimes and Bayo himself would say he needs managing but we had plenty of opportunities and just couldn't stick it in the net."

With their adventures in the cup now over for another season, Ainsworth reflected: "We were awesome at Spurs and we gave a good account of ourselves against Coventry so it has been great."

O'Nien determined to kick on in League 2

WYCOMBE



AN EMOTIONAL Luke O'Nien is convinced the heartbreaking defeat against Coventry in the Checkatrade Trophy semi-finals will galvanise the squad to put in a real challenge for promotion.

The Wycombe midfielder played superbly in the 2-1 loss at the Ricoh Arena on Tuesday evening but was gutted not to be able to get the chance to play at Wembley in early April.

However, at just 22, O'Nien has plenty of time on his side to get a chance to play at the national stadium, but for now he is fully focused on helping Wanderers try and finish as high as they possibly can.

He said: "I believe a defeat like this can kick us on. Things like this hurt and you remember them and because of days like this, the team will strengthen.

"Seeing the fans run on (Coventry invaded the pitch at the end) makes us all want that and seeing what could have been.

"It has certainly made me want to do even more well and I think that's the same for everyone. We are all gutted to lose but we have some strong characters.

"We have had a good run but we are out of all the cups now so we can focus on the league. The fixture run is Saturday, Tuesday, Saturday, Tuesday for the next few weeks and I cannot wait."

After the game, Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for O'Nien's performance, expressing his views that he has a big future in the game and the midfielder wants to repay Ainsworth for giving him this opportunity.

He added: "The gaffer have me my chance in the league, as did Wycombe, and I will give my everything for the club.

"I am very appreciative of his kind words but we have a lot of work to do now. It is back to the training ground for us and let's hope we can achieve our goal."

O'Nien also explained that the team were going to make sure there would be no hangover after this loss.

He commented: "We are going to look to put in good performances and if we do that generally results come with it."

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GRAHAMGaffer's
positive
outlook

GARETH AINSWORTH hailed the January transfer window as the 'best in his time at the club' as they secured some vital signings before the deadline.

Dominic Gape signed permanently from Southampton, Jamal Blackman extended his loan from Chelsea until the end of the season, Sam Saunders signed from Brentford and Alex Jakubiak joined on loan from Watford.

Add to that Paris Cowan-Hall signing on a free transfer after the deadline, no wonder the Wycombe manager was delighted to sign his targets.

He said: "We got everyone we wanted. Gape is a terrific player and to get Jamal for another six months was brilliant.

"Jakubiak is highly-rated, we know what Saunders brings to the table and to get Paris was a great coup for us.

"I am really pleased. It has probably gone a bit unnoticed and I think people will look at our squad and think 'they are not bad' and that is good and pleasing for me and I am very proud to have the squad I have got."

In terms of the future of the club, Ainsworth explained that both he and chairman, Andrew Howard, are delighted with everything on and off the pitch.

Ainsworth commented: "At the moment, we are in a position where we are overachieving but one day we might look at that and change the goalposts.

"We are so pleased with how we are doing. The big thing for us is that the infrastructure is there now for when we do achieve.

"Believe me, one day this group will achieve. The infrastructure hasn't been there for the last two seasons and this is probably the first season where behind the scenes we can say it is starting to come together now."

Southwell
joins Imps

WYCOMBE STRIKER Dayle Southwell has moved to National League leaders Lincoln City on a one-month loan deal to benefit from first-team football.

The forward arrived at Adams Park in the summer with a fantastic goal-scoring record at former club Boston United, but soon suffered a groin injury which has kept him sidelined since September.

Manager Gareth Ainsworth said: "Dayle is a player I rate highly and he was very unfortunate to suffer his injury just after he'd scored his first goal for us and begun to really settle into his place in the team.

"He needs to get minutes under his belt to get his sharpness back after injury and this looks like a perfect opportunity for him."

Great Scott seals win
with a gutsy display

Kashket scored the winner for Wycombe with his 15th of the season

GARETH AINSWORTH celebrated his 250th game as manager in style as he secured his 100th win in the managerial hotseat with a 1-0 win over Portsmouth on Saturday.

With 239 games in charge at Wycombe and 11 at QPR, Ainsworth was delighted to see his Wycombe side strengthen their chances of promotion with victory over their fellow promotion hopefuls.

He commented: "I didn't know that but it really is great. As a manager it is nice to have these milestones.

"As a manager, you wake up every day, feeling lucky and happy and I will give everything that day no matter what and my players do the same which is great to see."

Regarding the performance of his side last weekend, Ainsworth added: "The discipline was excellent from the boys. We set up a certain way and we executed it really well.

"We had to find a way of limiting what Portsmouth can do on the ball as they have some good players and we countered them.

"This is a big result for us and I am really proud of the boys with victory against a good side.

"Some of them are on empty again. I thought Dominic Gape was outstanding once again and the en-

ergies of the guys in front of the back four was really good."

Scott Kashket scored the only goal on 48 minutes when his shot from the edge of the area took a wicked deflection past David Forde in the Pompey goal.

The visitors made a blistering start to the game and should have gone ahead after 10 seconds when Gary Roberts slipped in Jamal Lowe but he shot wide with just Jamal Blackman to beat.

Kashket then made the breakthrough early in the second half before Christian Burgess then almost gifted Wycombe another goal two minutes later when he headed over Forde but the goalkeeper got back to scramble it off his line.

The visitors then had a golden opportunity on 73 minutes when hesitation from Blackman and the defence let in Carl Baker but he skied it over when it was easier to score in front of the Pompey faithful.

Blackman again stood up well for Wanderers when he denied Doyle from close range on 85 minutes.

Referee Graham Salisbury awarded eight minutes of injury time but the Chairboys held firm to record their first league win since they beat Newport County on January 2.



All the action from Wycombe Wanderers' very impressive 1-0 win over Portsmouth last Saturday at Adams Park. It was a battling display against the division's big spenders. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall

Wood focuses on league

SAM WOOD says Wycombe still have an awful lot to play for in the league, despite the disappointment of Tuesday's defeat to Coventry.

The Wanderers midfielder was on the bench at the Ricoh Arena but is confident the team can bounce back with a positive result tomorrow in their League Two clash against Stevenage.

Wood said: "From the start of the season we knew that the league was

our main focus and now we are out of the FA Cup and Checktrade Trophy we can set out to concentrate on the rest of the season.

"We are certainly looking forward to it and hope to get back to winning ways."

Due to their cup exploits, the Chairboys have a very congested fixture list coming up with long midweek trips away to the likes of Crewe Alexandra, Accrington Stan-

ley and Colchester.

However, Wood is relishing the games coming up thick and fast. He added: "It is great for everyone to get the opportunity to play minutes.

"It is good to play games as opposed to training and everyone is really looking forward to the run.

"We can rotate and keep players fresh and it is good for the whole squad to get together and help each other."



PHOTOS: Wycombe slide to loss



A dejected Joe Jacobson walks off the pitch at the end



Myles Weston challenges for the ball during a tough first half for Gareth Ainsworth's men



Substitute Scott Kashket lines up a shot as Wanderers put Coventry under sustained second half pressure



Akinfenwa and Sam Saunders eye a comeback



Akinfenwa celebrates his goal with Anthony Stewart after giving Wanderers a lifeline



Adebayo Akinfenwa in action during the second half against City



Michael Harriman challenges for the ball against Coventry



Saunders tries to shrug off a Coventry challenge



SPORT

Golf

World number 19 puts
in top Dubai display
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'PROMOTION IS THE AIM'



Ainsworth: The next five weeks are absolutely crucial

by Nicholas Tunney

IT HAS BEEN a dizzying few weeks on the pitch for Wycombe Wanderers.

They produced a monumental performance to almost upset the mighty Spurs in the FA Cup before bowing out in the dying embers of that game.

On Tuesday, Wycombe's bid to make only their fifth appearance at Wembley was cruelly thwarted by Coventry City.

Now for Gareth Ainsworth and his soldiers, there is only one thing left to try and accomplish for this season — promotion to League One.

One of the key areas to look at

with 18 games remaining is how to rotate the squad for the benefit of the team.

With fixtures piling up over the course of the next month, Ainsworth has certainly got his eye on how best to look after his squad in the next few weeks.

He explained: "It will be vitally important. Fitness-wise comes into it. The likes of Akinfenwa and Kashket who are carrying knocks have to be looked after.

"Someone like Bayo has been a real focal point for us and when he has been fit to play, we have looked as good as anyone in the division.

"We need to keep him fit and lasting as long as we can. If we keep playing him, we could eventually

break him and if we lose him, it will be a big, big loss.

"Kashket has been carrying a little niggle that we have to keep under control for now and the big aim is not to lose our guys long-term."

"It is tough as manager as I want to win every game. Last season, we didn't win any of our last eight games and we were putting out 'skeleton staff'. Kids who hadn't played games and with no league experience.

"I haven't forgotten that and I don't want that to happen again so if we are to secure a place in the top seven, we need to have our boys fit. That is the long-term strategy for us."

Along with some long away trips



Ainsworth says the next few games are vital for his side

still to come for the Chairboys, Wycombe do have to play the top three in the league, Doncaster, Plymouth and Carlisle, all at Adams Park still.

Ainsworth feels that they do have an advantage in this respect. He

added: "We have played everyone in top eight or nine, bar one, away from home.

"This is a great position to be in. The home form has been good so far this campaign and I believe this is a good thing and to be able to bring them back to Adams Park is a good advantage for us.

"That feeling of us being at home, with the fans behind us and having something to play for, it all works well and I am glad we have played them all away from home."

In terms of targets, Ainsworth refuses to set any for his side but he commented: "It is about picking up as many points as possible between now and the end of the season and seeing where we end up."

NEWS

Wanderers' cup hero Jack Tomlin, dies, 88

By John D Taylor

WYCOMBE Wanderers have lost another of their all-time heroes with the death of Jack Tomlin this week.

The former Blues' winger died in hospital on Wednesday after a brief illness at the age of 88.

A talented all-round sportsman, he played cricket for High Wycombe and Bucks and was a regular golfer at Winter Hill. But he was better known for his exploits at Loakes Park where he was a regular for a decade, making 226 appearances and scoring 71 goals.

A key player in the Sid Cann squad that won the Isthmian League title for the first time in 1956, he was also a regular the following season when they repeated that and reached the FA Amateur cup final.

There are now only five survivors left from that Wembley side that lost valiantly against Bishop Auckland – Dennis Syrett, Mike Wicks, Jim Truett, Len Worley and



Jack Tomlin, fourth from right, lines up at Wembley with Wycombe Wanderers' 1957 team

Cliff Trott. Wicks said: "Jack was a teammate for a decade and a friend for over 60 years.

"In all that time I never saw him lose his temper or fall out with anyone. I don't know anyone who didn't like him.

"Despite the very sad loss of his wife when his children were very young, he was a happy guy. He never pushed himself forward but always encouraged others."

When Wycombe formed their Ex-Players' Association

ten years ago, Jack was a unanimous and popular choice as president.

In November he was among the guests at the WWEPA dinner when footage of the Blues' 1956 match with Uganda was re-run.

He happily relived every kick of the 10-1 victory against bare-footed opposition.

Jack's family are planning a private cremation with memorial service to follow later.



The Devil joins High Wycombe Cycle Club ahead of the charity event

Cyclists invited to get in the saddle for fundraising

A NEW cycling challenge set along the rolling Chiltern Hills has been launched to help raise funds for a south Bucks charity.

Three routes of varying

difficulty will be on offer at the Samaritans Cycle event, supported by High Wycombe Cycle Club, due to take place on Saturday, July 1.

Cyclists can embark on

the 25-mile Dashwood Challenge, or the gruelling Hell-fire 50 and 80 mile routes from West Wycombe House.

For more details visit www.samaritanscycle.com.

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