

SPORT

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GRAHAMRangers
keep in
the hunt

RISBOROUGH RANGERS won 2-1 after a battling performance at home against a rejuvenated Brimsdown side last Saturday.

Brimdown had the better start when within eight minutes they were awarded a penalty. However Rangers' goalie Jack Brooker was up to the challenge and pulled off a fantastic save, for his second penalty stop in two games.

This spurred Rangers on and Jamie Shrimpton put Risborough into the lead in the 12th minute when Jason Costello hit a ferocious free kick from 25 yards which cannoned off the woodwork and into the path of an incoming Shrimpton who fired it in.

Rangers doubled their lead when Lamar Mason-Williams slid the ball past the visitors keeper in the 23rd minute after some good build up play.

Just before half-time Risborough had a further chance to extend their lead when a ball hit long to Mason-Williams was brought down superbly, then played out wide to David Newton who crossed to Vinnie Iannone who acrobatically volleyed just wide.

The second half had only just begun when Brimsdown reduced the deficit after a poor goal kick fell into the path of a Brimsdown striker who kicked it straight back, over the head of Brooker and into the net.

Both teams had some good chances in the second half with Risborough going closest but they held on for an ultimately excellent victory.

Going into the business end of the season Risborough are still sitting in a good position, being sixth in the South Midlands League Division One after this result, closing the gap on the above team to only one point with same number of games played.

Tomorrow, Rangers travel to play Hadley Wood and Wingate in a bid to keep in the promotion shake-up (kick off 3pm).

Berry nets
for Rams

SYCOB brought their four-game losing streak to a halt with a hard-fought point away at playoff chasing Potters Bar Town.

Both defences were coping with whatever threat was presented until the 24th minute when a mix up between Brendan Hazlett and Callum Mapley saw the latter slice the ball into his own net.

The second period saw Beaconsfield's passing game click into place and they enjoyed some decent passages of play.

On 56 minutes they got a reward when Charlie Losasso chased down a seemingly lost ball, sent in a cross that Laurencin looked to have covered but then inexplicably dropped at the feet of a grateful Aaron Berry who tapped home.

'We are in excellent
shape for challenge'

Anthony Stewart could be back before the end of the season

GARETH AINSWORTH is confident his side won't replicate their final eight games from last season as the crunch games begin to come thick and fast.

Wycombe were in a similar position last year with eight games to go but they failed to win a single match as injuries severely took their toll.

This time around though, Ainsworth believes that stronger squad quality and bigger squad numbers, allied to the fact that key players are returning, will be crucial for their promotion push.

He said: "I have a bigger squad with 25 this year as opposed to 21 last season.

"We have at least two or three more to choose from and we had some serious injuries towards the end of last season.

"The likes of Bloomfield had a broken arm and Paris had a long-term injury. Then we had a couple of people who had to have operations who were definitely out for the season.

"This time we have no-one out for the season, with the possible exception of Anthony Stewart who could be back in time.

"The other players who are injured should all be back with a couple of weeks and that fills me with

confidence that we will have enough in these last eight games.

"We have done different things around the place as well. We have learnt from the last two seasons where we have fallen away at the end as well and we hope that all our work will be put in place.

"I have got a bigger and better squad and a bigger budget than I have for the last two years and all these things should come into play in these last few games.

"I want to turn the key a little bit and say to the boys to ramp it up for the rest of the season and that is how it should be.

"We have given ourselves a really good opportunity and the platform to achieve something this year."

The 44-year-old also pinpointed momentum as absolutely vital for their playoff push. With the team in the midst of a five-match unbeaten run, Ainsworth feels that they currently have this.

He added: "Momentum is unbelievable. Last season AFC Wimbledon were the form team going into the playoffs and they won it.

"We are going to go for it and I believe we can win enough games to challenge for that playoff spot."



Pierre is likely to play a key role in the run-in



Akinfenwa is likely to feature against Notts County tomorrow

Defender's weapon to unleash Bayo

JOE JACOBSON is expecting a tough game from struggling Notts County tomorrow but is confident that Wycombe can keep their unbeaten run going.

Kevin Nolan has turned around County's form since becoming manager and he has achieved some excellent wins along the way, including at promotion-chasing Plymouth Argyle a few weeks ago.

With Wanderers on a great run

themselves, Jacobson is hopeful that will continue tomorrow but the Chairboys will have to be up to the challenge.

He said: "Whenever a new manager there is always an upturn in form and players are fighting for their places so it will be a tough game against Notts County.

"We can't think it is going to be a walk on the park because of where they are in the league. Everyone is

going to have to be right on it.

"If we can use the same intensity as we did against Hartlepool and remain as solid as we did then we have a good chance of winning the game."

This season, Jacobson has provided seven assists for Adebayo Akinfenwa and he lauded 'The Beast' for his lethal play in front of goal, which has seen him notch 17 goals so far.

He joked: "He is making me look good this season.

"We spoke about when he first came on and I remember the first pre-season game in France I crossed it to the back post and he headed it in and he told me that was exactly what he needs.

"It is a weapon we use as a team because if you have someone like him who is as accurate as he is with his head, then why not use it."

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CHAIRBOYS: 'Professional' performance delights gaffer Manager hails superb win over Hartlepool

WYCOMBE WANDERERS

ADEBAYO Akinfenwa and substitute Paris Cowan-Hall gave Wycombe Wanderers a crucial victory as they comfortably beat Hartlepool United 2-0 at Victoria Park on Saturday.

The first goal came on 24 minutes after some devastating link-up play between Akinfenwa, Myles Weston and Dayle Southwell allowed the big man to bulldoze his way into the area and place the ball past Joe Fryer.

Cowan-Hall then sealed the win with a cool finish past the Hartlepool custodian, when he raced onto Dominic Gape's excellent pass and rounded off a superb victory for Gareth Ainsworth's men.

However, deep into second half injury-time, the winger was given a second booking by referee David Webb after a melee involving both sets of players.

Fryer was by far the busier of the two keepers, producing a series of excellent saves in the second half to deny Weston, Gape and Southwell.

Gareth Ainsworth was delighted with his side's win and said the game plan was executed perfectly. He explained: "That is exactly how we wanted to go about our business.

"We wanted to press Hartlepool in their own half and if you let them pass the ball about there are some decent players in their side.

"We tried to starve the service



Gareth Ainsworth praised his side's professional performance over struggling Hartlepool United on Saturday. Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

into Lewis Alessandra and Nathan Thomas and we forced them to hit it long."

"Hartlepool have beaten good teams recently for a reason so we wanted to avoid a slip-up and I thought we played some great football.

"The first goal was one of the best footballing wise we have scored this season and Paris took the second

goal really well."

"A result like this adds to the confidence of the boys because we went 1-0 up, had a wobble, although all teams do, but then we saw the game out really strongly."

Unfortunately for Ainsworth, Cowan-Hall was given his marching orders right at the end after a melee.

Webb had already booked the winger for what looked like a harsh

handball and the Chairboys gaffer defended his player.

He explained: "I honestly think Paris was the victim there. I know he can be a bit in your face at times but it was 10 yards away from me and Paris was being held to the floor.

"I am pretty confident that there is no blame attached to Paris at all. He said to my face that he didn't do anything and I believe him."

However, the win came at a cost as both Akinfenwa and Aaron Pierre left the field with injuries, on top of Cowan-Hall's suspension for Saturday's game with Notts County.

Ainsworth added: "We lost two through injury and we have one suspended and we need the cavalry to come back from the treatment room, although we hope to have a few back next week.

"We have a good chance now to put some points on the board. I have told the boys now no pressure all season, but now let's turn the key a little bit."

On Saturday, the game against County will be £5 for season ticket holder's guests and Ainsworth urged fans to come and support the team in their droves.

He commented: "Get yourselves down to Adams Park because we need you. We want to give you something to shout about right until that last kick.

"We have a squad built for these moments and I am excited."



In the Chair

COLUMN: Cian's medical musings



O'Doherty with Fraser Dawson of BMI and Gareth Ainsworth

THE business end of the season is in full swing and with only eight games left in the league, the pressure is well and truly on. The revolving door of the medical room is in constant rotation to keep our small squad going but there is plenty of positivity in the air.

As I come to the end of my third season in charge of the medical department, I can begin to reflect on yet another challenging season.

I have seen fresh faces as well as familiar ones come into the squad, all bringing their own unique challenges for me to keep them fit.

Some are more challenging than others, such as Scott Kashket, who can turn a one-word answer into an hour-long story, and still not provide an answer to the question at the end of it.

And then there's Bayo, a larger than life character who – in order to keep up with – you need to be a full-time subscriber to his Snapchat and Instagram.

Behind the scenes and away from the glitz and glamour of game day, we have been working hard on continually improving the standard of medical care provided to the players.

We have created important partnerships with local healthcare organisations. Fraser Dawson and his team at the BMI Chiltern Hospital have become an integral part of the medical department and are always eager to assist, no matter how short the notice is.

We have also formed the first healthcare charity for the club with the Chiltern MS Centre. This has seen the players use the Hyperbaric Oxygen Chamber to speed up the healing process following an injury.

There have also been many unsung heroes including the fans and Trust who have sponsored vital medical equipment as well as those who have supported the medical department without ever looking for public acknowledgement.

Their help and support has been vital in providing a high level of care for the players.

Defender Wills his team on after crucial away victory

WILL DE HAVILLAND was pleased that Wycombe avoided a potential banana skin at Hartlepool as they extended their unbeaten run to five matches.

De Havilland was outstanding at the heart of the Blues defence, which restricted Hartlepool to just one shot on target on Saturday afternoon.

The centre-half expressed his delight at the result. He said: "It was a very good win and it was nice to keep a clean sheet.

"They had hit a bit of form lately so we knew it would be a tough game but it was good to go there and set out our plan of what we wanted to do and come away with the three points.

"It was very nice to get that second goal to give us a bit of comfort and give us an important three points."

With Wanderers slowly getting their act back together after a tough February, De Havilland believes that stringing wins together at this stage of the season is vital.



De Havilland produced a dominant performance at the back for Wycombe last weekend. Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

He added: "These next few games are big because we are playing teams at the bottom so if we can pick up points there we should be thereabouts.

"However, these games will all be tough as those sides down the bot-

tom will be fighting hard against relegation but we just have to keep going."

De Havilland started the game at Hartlepool alongside Aaron Pierre but he was replaced early on by Max Muller.

Both Muller and De Havilland had struck up a decent partnership during Wycombe's Checkatrade Trophy run and the ex-Sheffield Wednesday defender was pleased to continue that at Victoria Park.

He commented: "We played most of our games together in the Checkatrade Trophy and it's been good to play with Max when he was coming back from injury.

"I have played with all three of them now (Anthony Stewart too) and it has been great to keep learning from them."

The 22-year-old also praised the work the midfield, particularly the likes of Dominic Gape, do in front of the defence.

"Dom does that position really well. He shields the back four and he is always ratting about, stopping the opposition from getting on the ball.

"Luke just rats everyone, he has so much energy. You know he is going to win the ball back for you and nick those second balls."

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Chess

Young starlet picked to represent England
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Gareth gunning for playoffs

see pages 66-67

The highs and lows

Leese: Why I left Chesham

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