

Skipper hopes Wycombe

Exclusive by Nicholas Tunney



Bloomfield was interviewed by Bucks Free Press reporter Nicholas Tunney regarding his hopes for the rest of the season



Bloomfield was part of the team that stayed up on the last day of the 2013/2014 season by beating Torquay United 3-0

MATT BLOOMFIELD has been there, done it and got the t-shirt.

He is now in his 14th year at the club since being signed by Tony Adams in 2003 after being released by Ipswich Town.

Bloomfield has now made over 400 appearances for the Chairboys and it is fair to say he is in a better position than most to cast his eye over their current quest for promotion.

The club captain was a key part of the sides that were promoted to League One twice in 2008/09 and then 2010/11 but also those sides were relegated the next season after.

He was also a vital cog in staying up on the final day in 2014 at Torquay before the heartbreaking defeat a year later in the League Two playoff final at Wembley against Southend.

Now, Wycombe have seven games to go to have another run at the playoffs and Bloomfield feels the team are well positioned to do that, despite losing to Notts County last weekend.

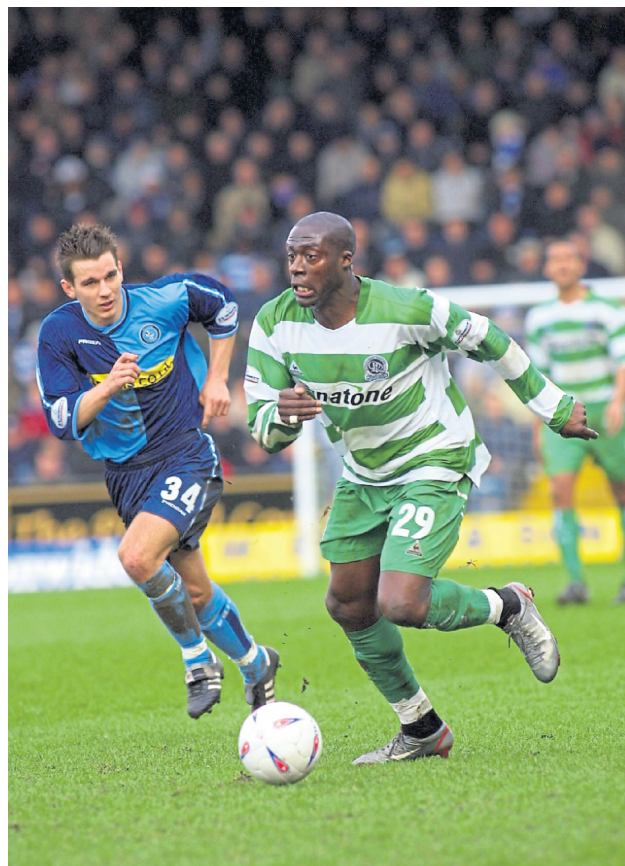
He said: "We came in on Monday morning after that defeat and we were all disappointed with the result but we are paid to pick ourselves up and get on with our job which is what we have done.

"Training has been really good this week. Tuesday we did a really tough session and everyone was looking sharp and buzzing around.

"The sun has been out which always helps and lifts everyone's mood a little bit. Everyone has been fine. We thought we built a little bit of momentum and then we got beat last Saturday but they have a good team now under Kevin Nolan.

"We wanted the three points but it wasn't to be and we want to put that right against Leyton Orient."

After last week's game, Gareth Ainsworth described the performance as "nervy" and Bloomfield



believes that this could have been the case.

He added: "Being on the bench, it looked a bit nervy sitting and watching it. It looked like we lacked that cutting edge that we have had at times this season.

"We are at our best when we perform with our energy, the

high press and putting the ball into those dangerous areas.

"It is an important time for us, and some of the lads have seen it all and for some of the lads this is new for them so it is vital we help those guys through.

"Their youthful enthusiasm has helped us throughout the season and we have some very good players in that dressing room as we want to fulfil our ambition

Midfielder expects difficult match against Orient

NEXT up for Wycombe Wanderers is a trip to bottom side Leyton Orient tomorrow, with their opponents currently going through extremely tough times on and off the pitch.

With Orient staring into the abyss of non-league, Matt Bloomfield warned against complacency against a side who's form has severely dipped since the turn of the year.

He said: "The worst thing we can do is assume we are going to go there, turn up and put on a show thinking we can win.

"I think we have to guard against that, especially after what has gone on there this week with the manager leaving.

"People are probably thinking that Orient are in disarray and Wycombe will turn up and get the



three points.

"We know that doesn't up. We have been there ourselves at the bottom of the league and you are fighting and scrapping for everything you can and sometimes

results come out of nowhere that you are not expecting.

"We are coming off the back of a poor result ourselves and we have to concentrate on our own performance and if we can do that then

hopefully the result will follow.

"The most important thing is to put in a better performance because if you do that, more often than not, results will follow.

"If you play well, then the quality will shine through and that is what we have to do. We have to go out there and play with energy and if we do that then we will be fine."

It has been an immensely frustrating time for Bloomfield with injuries since coming off in the FA Cup third round win over Stourbridge on January 7.

However, the 33-year-old is really pleased with his fitness now and feels his injury issues are now behind him for the rest of the season.

He added: "Touch wood, I feel great. Until the Stourbridge game

I hadn't missed a day's training this season.

"Then one injury strikes and I get myself back to fitness and then get a kick in training and I miss a couple more games so it has been really frustrating since January.

"I have missed Tottenham away, Coventry and a really important part of the season but I have been lucky the last few seasons with injuries.

"I haven't really suffered any so it is what is it. It's the game and I am doing everything I can to guard against that.

"I feel good and personally I want to finish the season on a high as I had probably four or five of the best months of football I have had for many years at the start of the season and now I just want to get back out there and play."

Bloom in time for Spring



The Wycombe stalwart was relaxed ahead of the crucial game against Leyton Orient on Saturday. Wanderers sit four points off the playoffs with seven games to go. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall



Blooms was part of the time that sadly lost the League Two playoff final in 2015 to Southend United



The club captain celebrates Luke O'Nien's goal against Morecambe earlier this season, the start of their brilliant winning run

between now and the end of the season."

Having played with some wonderful players over the years at Adams Park, Bloomfield feels that the current squad is very good compared to some others he has been part since 2003.

The 33-year-old commented: "This squad is extremely good and we have some excellent players in the changing room and some good characters."

"The squad is right up there. We have suffered with injuries at crucial times this season and it has hampered us and if we can get lads back out on the pitch, I have full confidence in them to produce the goods."

One player added to Ainsworth's squad last summer was Adebayo Akinfenwa and Bloomfield says the impact he has had around the club has been huge.

"I can't speak highly enough of Bayo," explained Blooms.

"He has been superb on the pitch with his (17) goals. That is more than we and the gaffer probably expected as he is more of a team player."

"I think he raises everyone else's game around him and for me he has been a breath of fresh air as I am an energetic midfielder and he holds the ball up and flicks it on."

"He has been an absolute dream

team-mate so in that respect I couldn't speak more highly of him."

"Off the pitch, he is very inclusive. He wants the squad to be as one and he is a larger-than-life character who is at the centre of everything."

"He is a genuine guy and he has been absolutely amazing and a shrewd signing by the gaffer. He has been a credit to the club and a credit to himself with the way he has carried himself at times."

This season, Wycombe had an extremely slow start before a magnificent 16-game unbeaten run until the defeat at Spurs.

Then followed a five-match losing streak before another mini unbeaten run. Bloomfield admitted he can't put his finger on his side's curious form.

He said: "There is no real reason to it. It is just the beauty of football and there is no rhyme or reason to it at times."

"We had a tough start then we got everyone back out onto the pitch and we found a formula that worked for us so well."

"Then results went against us and we had to search for another formula. I have not experienced anything like this for a few years now."

"Now, it is up to us to finish the season in as high a position as we can and if we can produce our best form and work hard then our ambition



Bloomfield celebrates with his team-mates after the great escape at Torquay in May 2014, a defining moment in the history of Wycombe Wanderers

could be fulfilled."

With 21 points to play for, four of the games Wycombe have left are at Adams Park. The 33-year-old feels that it is important the team take advantage of that fact.

He added: "You expect to pick up most of your points at home and after Orient, we can then look to

Cheltenham and then we have some mouthwatering home games coming up against teams round us."

Bloomfield was keen to not look further ahead than the next game when asked about the possibility of promotion. He commented: "We need to concentrate on Saturday's result."

"If we can get a result Saturday and other results go for us then we may find ourselves in a completely different position come 4.50pm on Saturday afternoon."

"That is the most important thing for us and we are obviously still optimistic. We don't want to settle for not achieving."

SPORT

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GRAHAMSides plan
for next
season

BEACONSFIELD SYCOB'S poor end of season form continued with their fifth defeat in their last six games, as they succumbed 2-1 to Ashford Town at home.

A truly awful first half from both sides saw chances at a premium with neither keeper forced into any action of note.

The second half saw Ashford up the tempo and on 49 minutes Mark Bitmead forced a save out of Rams custodian Brendon Hazlett. Ten minutes later the Tangerines top scorer left his marker for dead and fired past Hazlett to put his side a goal to the good.

Bitmead further tested Hazlett on 63 minutes as SYCOB struggled to get any foothold in the game. On 71 minutes, however, they were given a way back in when Jack Lyons was tripped in the Ashford area and Charlie Losasso made no mistake from the spot.

Even this failed to ignite the Rams as time and again the wrong decision was made with the final pass and Ashford keeper Tyler Tobin was rarely called into action.

Referee Edward Taylor was however very much involved and on 82 minutes he decided Aaron Jewell had either said something / kicked someone and sent off the SYCOB centre half. The ten men looked like holding out for a point until, well into added time, when they failed to clear their lines and Bitmead was on hand to poke home from close range.

SYCOB travel to play Arlesey Town tomorrow (kick off 3pm).

Chalfont St Peter are already looking ahead to next season as they comfortably lost 2-0 to Uxbridge last Saturday.

With four players from the Under-18s on the field at the end, Saints signalled a possible glimpse into what might be expected next season.

Hero Ward
hits brace

RISBOROUGH RANGERS kept up their promotion push by comfortably beating Hadley Wood 3-0 last Saturday.

The match came alive after the break as Rangers took the game to their opponents, with substitute Sam Ward the hero as he scored two fine goals on 50 and 55 minutes.

The visitors continued to press throughout and were eventually rewarded with a third goal from David Newton with a bullet header in the 80th minute.

After this result, Rangers still sit in sixth possession in the South Midlands League Division One but with games in hand on teams around them.

Tomorrow, Risborough face at Harpenden Town at home at 3pm.

Management duo off
to chastening start

Meakes and Talbot suffered a poor start. Photos: Trevor Hyde

CHESHAM UNITED are now without a win in five games after losing 3-1 at home to league leaders Chippenham Town under the new management team of Jon Meakes and Danny Talbot.

After conceding a soft goal in the second minute, Chesham never looked like getting anything from the game as their season fizzles out.

Joint manager Talbot began his fourth spell as a player in place of Brett Longden, with Benji Crilley at right back and Adam Martin in the centre of defence.

Against a team that have not lost in 20 league games, Chesham could ill-afford to concede in the second minute, but a Matt Jones corner on the visitors' right was touched on by Dave Pratt and the ball squeezed past Richard Hayward into the net at the near post.

Chippenham made it 2-0 11 minutes later when another Jones corner was headed in by the unmarked Will Richards.

Two minutes later, the Generals pulled a goal back when a Benji Crilley throw was headed out, the ball came to Ryan Blake on the edge of the area and his shot squirmed under the dive of keeper Darren Chitty and into the net.

However, on 23 minutes, Chippenham restored their two-goal lead, when Richards fell under an innocuous-looking challenge on the edge of the area and Jake Andrews put away the resulting penalty.

Longden replaced Taylor at the interval, with Crilley switching to the centre of defence and Martin moving forward into midfield.

In the second minute of the second half, Hayward dived to parry a shot from Jake Andrews, but after that the game entered a quiet spell.

Three minutes later Talbot broke forward and set up Blake, whose shot beat Chitty but flew just wide of the far post.

Hayward then made a good save to keep out a long-range shot from Andrews, but Chesham then produced the best move of the match which ended with Chitty anticipating well to save Blake's header.

As the game drew to a close Pratt missed another great chance when sent clear, but lobbed the ball tamelessly wide.

After that Chippenham were content to waste time until the final whistle, although for a long time the result had not been in doubt.

Chesham travel to Basingstoke Town tomorrow (kick off 3pm).



Chippenham were too strong for Chesham Utd



Ryan Blake scored an excellent goal to give the Generals a lifeline in the game

Gaffer's heart goes to Orient fans

WYCOMBE WANDERERS boss Gareth Ainsworth feels sympathy with the Leyton Orient fans over their side's current plight as the Chairboys prepare to face them tomorrow.

Orient currently sit bottom of the league, well adrift from safety and yesterday Danny Webb resigned with immediate effect.

The club moved swiftly to appoint Omer Riza as their fifth manager

so far this season and Ainsworth admits that he feels sorry for the O's supporters with their club in so much turmoil.

He said: "For a club to have five managers in one season is crazy and the people I feel for are the fans, who are at the wrong end of the table."

"With Mr Webb resigning, we have to be very wary of the change of manager as you can see a reaction."

"I am surprised to see a club the size of Leyton Orient where they are and they have changed so much and you have to have stability and an ethos at the club."

"I feel for everyone associated with the club. Someone puts money in and expects dreams and there have been too many changes."

"However, we need to go there and put in a professional performance and get the three points and that is

what we will be aiming to do."

Ainsworth has been boosted by the news that Aaron Pierre and Scott Kashket could return to the squad for tomorrow's game.

He added: "Kashket is very close now, which I am sure the fans will be pleased to hear, and Aaron Pierre is back for Saturday too."

"Those two guys would walk into most teams in League Two and it is great they are back."

WANDERERS: Boss confident Wycombe will bounce back

Ainsworth: It was a bad day at the office

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE WANDERERS suffered a dent to their playoff hopes as they lost 1-0 to Notts County at a sun-kissed Adams Park.

Shola Ameobi scored the only goal of the game on 27 minutes when Jon Stead burst into the box and squared it for the former Newcastle striker to tap home via the post.

Wanderers had a couple of excellent chances to level but on the whole, they were nullified by their organised opponents.

Chairboys boss Gareth Ainsworth said it was "a bad day at the office" for his side and he added: "We started nervy and we didn't really give the fans anything to get behind us for early on and they seemed to have the momentum.

"We conceded a very sloppy goal and after that we didn't really recover or get back into the game.

"At half-time there was a funny atmosphere and second half we were a bit nervy still but definitely better."

In the second half, the Chairboys had a massive shout for a penalty waved away by referee Ross Joyce when Myles Weston appeared to be brought down by a combination of goalkeeper Adam Collin and defender Matt Tootle.

Ainsworth was convinced that a spot-kick should have been awarded which would have changed the whole complexion of the match.



Gareth Ainsworth saw his side suffer a disappointing loss to League Two strugglers Notts County on Saturday. Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

He added: "The penalty is a huge incident. You look at the replay and the Notts County player holds his hands up, he knows he has clipped him.

"Myles has got a tap-in but the referee doesn't give it. Let's not get it wrong, this defeat isn't down to that incident but those kind of things do change things. That's football sometimes."

After the loss on Saturday, Wycombe now sit four points off the playoffs with seven fixtures remaining.

Ainsworth said it wasn't time to hit the panic button just yet and remains quietly confident that the side can bounce back.

He commented: "There isn't a huge amount of worry from me. I would say to the fans to keep getting

behind us.

"At Hartlepool they really got behind us and effort-wise I can't fault the players and we will continue to strive and do our best to get points on the board.

"I want to give our fans something to cheer right to the end."

During the match, Wanderers had a few chances and their first opportunity came on nine minutes when Weston burst into the area and his fierce strike was parried away by Collin.

Three minutes later, the winger put in a delightful cross which County failed to clear. The ball fell to Luke O'Nien eight yards out but he blazed over.

However, the Magpies took the lead thanks to Ameobi's second goal in four games.

Adebayo Akinfenwa had an opportunity to equalise on the half-hour mark but he couldn't quite divert Sam Saunders' corner into the net.

Substitute Nick Freeman then had a golden chance to nick a goal with nine minutes remaining but his effort was deflected just wide with Collin beaten.

Joe Jacobson was so close to giving Wycombe a vital point in injury time when his terrific free-kick shaved the post but the Chairboys suffered their first loss in six games, which sees them now sit four points off the playoffs with seven games remaining. Crunch time beckons for Wanderers.



In the Chair

COLUMN: Stroud on fans ownership



Stroud explains how Wycombe operate as a fans-owned club

THERE is a certain romance about being a football club owned by the fans, but there is also a harsh reality of surviving as a team operating in League 2.

There are currently four clubs owned by their fans: AFC Wimbledon in League 1 and Newport County, Exeter City and Wycombe Wanderers in League 2, plus one, Portsmouth, where the Trust have a majority share but no overall ownership (although they are currently in discussions with an American businessman to sell the club).

All of these fan-owned clubs have struggled financially in recent years, with most of them relying on "football fortune" to survive (selling players, sell-on clauses for players such as Jordan Ibe, and cup runs).

Wycombe Wanderers have benefited from all of these factors over the last two years, which have put the club on a more stable financial footing.

This is due to shrewd management by the club chairman, Andrew Howard, the ability of the football manager, Gareth Ainsworth, to continuously deliver results on the field despite limited resources, huge amounts of money saved by volunteers covering paid positions and a little bit of luck, which always helps.

As welcome as this football fortune has been, it cannot be relied upon.

We therefore either have to find a way of attracting more people to Adams Park to either watch football, hold meetings or arrange functions to increase turnover, accept that there is a risk that our long-term future may lie outside the EFL, or look to find sympathetic investment from someone who wants to join us on our journey, and embraces the concept of fan ownership.

If you are one of the fans who supported us at Wembley, but have yet to visit Adams Park this season, why not come and cheer Wycombe to another possible visit to Wembley.

Hayes: We need to stick together for the last seven

PAUL HAYES gave an honest assessment of his Wycombe's 1-0 loss to Notts County, saying that he didn't think Wanderers did enough to win the game.

The striker came on as a second-half substitute last Saturday at Adams Park but unfortunately couldn't make his mark as County held firm in the dying embers.

Hayes admitted that the performance wasn't quite what they were looking for and they would aim to put it right in training this week.

He said: "The result was disappointing and we didn't do enough to turn it round. That is the biggest frustration for us as apart from the goal, Jamal made one great save but they didn't create anything else.

"They played the game and they slowed it down and we couldn't really get in the flow of the match.

"We had a 10 minute spell in the first half where I thought we did well and then last 10 minutes we tried to chase the game and get a goal but in between that it wasn't



Hayes said the Blues weren't good enough to get a result against the Magpies last weekend but is confident they can put it right tomorrow

good enough.

"The only way is to get back to the training ground to look at this, debrief it and see where we went wrong and make sure we have a good week before next Saturday.

"We all need to stick together. We

had been on a great run in the middle of the season and we just have to make sure we bounce back.

"We need a reaction and us older players need to help the young lads through this."

Although the results largely went

Wycombe's way last weekend, Hayes said that there should be no need to worry about what the other sides around them are doing.

He added: "We just need to worry about ourselves. We need to win the games and we need to pick up the points and perform and wherever we finish, that's where we finish so if other teams win between now and the end of the season, we won't get in the playoffs.

"As long as we perform well and get the results then we have a chance."

On a personal note, Hayes has been out of the side for two months with injury and his return to the pitch is certainly a timely boost to the club.

He commented: "It feels great to be back out there. It has been a long time and it has been extremely frustrating for myself.

"It has been hard for myself mentally and physically and being back out there and not feeling anything was fantastic for me."

SPORT

Golf

Hatton poised for week
to remember
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'WE CAN FULFIL OUR AMBITION'

**'MR WYCOMBE' MATT
BLOOMFIELD LOOKS
FORWARD TO PROMOTION
CHALLENGE
SEE PAGES 68-69**

Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

Wycombe Hockey Club nets title

WYCOMBE Men's Hockey first XI clinched the league title and promotion last weekend with a crushing 4-0 win over Aylesbury.

With news filtering through that Eastcote had beaten Maidenhead, Wycombe knew that a win would be enough to guarantee top spot in the league and with that promotion.

And the team duly got their reward as Kirushanthan Sivagnanam (two), Stephen Sloan and Paul Stock got the goals that started the celebrations.

Coach Ian Sloan couldn't hide his delight and praised his side's hard work throughout the season.

He said: "This young group of players showed tremendous resilience and determination in their pursuit of the league title. I am very proud and thankful for their efforts."

"The club hopes to use this as a springboard for further success and has already begun a major recruitment drive to strengthen the squad."

His brother, Stephen, who notched his 23rd goal of the season against Aylesbury, added: "This was truly a remarkable team achievement by such a young, talented group."

"Every single player played a significant part in this success and I



couldn't be more proud to be a member of this league-winning team."

The team, led expertly by William Budgell, were on a golden run for

the last few weeks and Budgell explained that they feared promotion would be beyond them this season.

He commented: "A few weeks ago winning the league seemed like it would be a step too far for us this year. But to everyone's credit we persevered, showed our mental strength and got the job done. I am delighted to have captained a young side who showed great maturity this year."

"Finally, thanks to Ian for his coaching and tactical acumen this year and to all the supporters who have attended our games."

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