

SPORT

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CHESHAM UNITED'S losing streak continued as they went down 2-1 at home to Biggleswade Town last Saturday.

The loss condemned the Generals to their fifth successive defeat as Jon Meakes and Danny Talbot rung the changes.

Adam Martin returned to the team in the centre of defence, with Benji Crilley at right back and Brett Longden switching to left back in place of Toby Little.

The teams were tenth and ninth in the table going into the game, and with nothing to play for on either side the game lacked intensity.

Biggleswade had the better of the early exchanges, and in the 16th minute Craig Daniel tested Richard Hayward with a snap shot that the keeper dived to his right to parry.

Michael Richens then sent a curling effort over the bar, before Daniel crossed from the by-line on the right and Rhys Hoenes gave the visitors the lead with a header back across goal and inside the near post.

Chesham came close to equalising just after the half-hour mark when Dave Pearce pulled the ball back from the by-line, and Ryan Blake's shot came off a defender and looped just over.

At the other end Hoenes broke away down the left and cut inside only to shoot straight at Hayward, then Tony Burnett headed wide from a Hoenes corner.

However Chesham equalised shortly before half-time when Blake was tripped in the area and Pearce tucked away the resulting penalty.

However the visitors took the points with a goal nine minutes from time, when Richens' shot went past an unsighted Hayward.

This afternoon, Chesham travel to Weymouth before an Easter Monday home game against Slough Town.

Rangers
stunned

RISBOROUGH RANGERS came unstuck against league leaders Biggleswade FC last Saturday, going down 1-0 in Bedfordshire.

On a hard surface both teams played some good football in spells but both keepers had a relatively quiet afternoon.

The only goal of the game came on the 35 minute when Rangers defender Joel Read fell awkwardly in a divot which opened the defence up for the ball to fall to a Biggleswade striker who slotted home.

Rangers could have nicked a draw when Gary Rymer had a one on one effort which well saved.

Tomorrow, Rangers are on the road again as they make the short trip to Chesham United Reserves (kick off 3pm).

'The playoffs would be
a great achievement'

Ainsworth is excited at what lies ahead. Photos: Anita Ross Marshall

WYCOMBE WANDERERS boss Gareth Ainsworth feels his squad are in a stronger position to compete for a playoff place this season compared to last term.

Last season, Wanderers failed to win any of their last eight games as a brutal fixture list and injuries took their toll on Ainsworth's men.

Now, with five games remaining and with the Chairboys just three points off the playoffs, Ainsworth remains confident that his team have enough to force their way into the reckoning.

He said: "We are definitely better equipped to go on a run this year as opposed to last.

"We have had a great season with two great cup runs and we don't want to lose sight of that. We wanted to be flirting with the playoffs this season and hopefully we can keep flirting with them right to the end and just get in there.

"That would be fantastic. It would be a really good achievement. The expectation levels are good here. They are always high. The fans want success and they are disappointed when they don't get it.

"We have really come a long way as a club in the last three years and to be in this position is great. We

should have had two more points after Saturday and that would make it even better.

"Let's just see where we end up and I want this right until the end of the season, with something to play for right until the Cambridge game."

Against Cheltenham, striker Scott Kashket made his long-awaited comeback from injury when he was introduced as a second half substitute.

Ainsworth explained he was delighted to have the former Leyton Orient man back for selection and the manager believes he will be a key player in the remaining five games.

He added: "I was very impressed with his cameo last weekend. People don't know the extent of his injury and he wasn't 100 per cent for that game.

"We have to be careful with him. We don't want to lose him for the season but we do want the best out of him so it is a real fine balance with him.

"If I can start a fit Scott Kashket then I will because he is above the level and he has proved that already and he is big threat when he is on the pitch."



Akinfenwa goes on the attack



Wycombe celebrate Garry Thompson's goal. Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

Keeper confident for final five games

JAMAL BLACKMAN is very confident Wanderers can bounce back from last week's disappointing draw against Cheltenham and record a win against fellow playoff hopefuls Mansfield Town today.

Blackman has been in superb form lately between the sticks and the on-loan Chelsea stopper believes that the Chairboys have an excellent chance of recording their first league win at

home since February 4.

He said: "Everyone has just got on with it in training this week and we are all looking forward to the next game. Obviously it is a huge game against Mansfield and we need to get the points.

"We have done reasonably well against Mansfield this season in the league and in the Checkatrade Trophy and hopefully we can get the win.

"When we played them at their place we drew, but I think we should have won that game with a decision going against us but we have a good run against them so am confident we can get the win."

Blackman, who produced penalty heroics this season against Mansfield on their way to the Checkatrade Trophy semi-finals, commented everyone can't wait to get going for the remaining five games.

He explained: "Everyone is relishing the opportunity to play against a team who are in a similar situation as we are so it is a good opportunity to kick on and start another run."

Blackman added: "Everyone still believes we can make the playoffs. That is our main goal.

"If we can get the wins on the board then we will be fine. We are playing well and we are hopeful."

WYCOMBE: Agony for Blues as Robins grab late equaliser

Chairboys slip to a disappointing draw

WANDERERS

GARETH AINSWORTH cut a frustrated figure after seeing his side only draw 3-3 with League Two strugglers Cheltenham Town at Adams Park on Saturday.

After going 2-0 down within the first 15 minutes thanks to goals from Billy Waters and Harry Pell, Wycombe managed to get themselves 3-2 up thanks to two goals from Garry Thompson and a penalty from Joe Jacobson.

But, the relegation-threatened Robins, who also had Jordan Cranston sent off after receiving two yellow cards in the first half hour, managed to gain a deserved point after Waters forced home his own penalty, which had been initially well saved by Jamal Blackman.

Other results went for the Chairboys on a sun-drenched spring afternoon, and means they are now just three points off the playoffs, with five games to go.

However, Wycombe boss Ainsworth was determined to remain positive in the aftermath of that result.

He said: "It's two points dropped.

"We want to be winning these type of games, but fair play to Cheltenham, they are fighting for their lives and they dug in really well, but we expected to get the three points.

"Our defending wasn't good enough for the first two goals, we were caught playing in the wrong



Gareth Ainsworth was unhappy to see his Wycombe side drop two points at home to struggling Cheltenham Town last Saturday

areas and they punished us for it. The third goal is just a long hopeful ball up front, and the lad's won a penalty.

"We are gutted because the results have gone for us. We are a point closer to the playoffs. We have to win four out of five now until the end of the season, I think we need at least 12 points to make the playoffs.

"But, I'm always positive.

"We are disappointed with the way we defended and the way we started the game, but we must stay positive and look forward to the next game on Friday."

The squad now face a tricky Easter double-header against Mansfield on Good Friday at Adams Park, and then travel to The Hive to face Barnet on Monday.

Ainsworth said he felt the char-

acter shown by the side to get from 2-0 down to 3-2 up will stand them in good stead.

He said: "It was brilliant character from the lads. At any level to come from 2-0 down to 3-2 up shows great character."

"I think we need 71 points to go into the play-offs, and it's going to be tough. It wasn't good enough today, but we must remember we are punching well above our weight, but we have got a big enough and good enough squad to do it.

"Friday is going to be a good game. We want to bounce back, it's one of the games I want to get something out of, it's all to play for."

Fan favourite Adebayo Akinfenwa made a big impact off the bench for the Chairboys when he was brought on at half time, but Ainsworth said he didn't regret not starting the imposing centre forward.

He said: "I never have regrets as a manager.

"I thought we had enough firepower on the pitch at the end of the game to win it, and some sloppy defending cost us.

"The balls up to him could have been better, and we could have given him better service."

Ainsworth was also full of praise for Jamal Blackman.

He said: "What a keeper we have got.

"For the first goal, he's made a hell of a save from the free kick, and we need to follow that in better."



In the Chair

COLUMN:
Adams Park is
the place to be



Michael Davies joined as General Manager in January

I HAVE thoroughly enjoyed being welcomed into the Wycombe family since I joined Wycombe Wanderers as General Manager at the start of the year.

When you first come into a new job the most important thing is to try to acclimatize and understand the culture of what you are coming into.

A Trust-owned football club like ours is not a pure business. You are not trying to make money for the money's sake. It is about trying to reinvest back into what your core values are and I believe the new Wycombe Wanderers season ticket launched today on our Quid-A-Kid day here at Adams Park reflects that.

We are a family centric club, from players to staff to our amazing supporters. We are all one big family and to grow as a club and a family, we have to share our story to more people in Wycombe and Bucks as a whole.

Our new Family Stand season ticket is designed for a wonderful afternoon out for families supporting their hometown team. In our Family Stand all children under 11 will be free and junior season tickets (12-18 year olds) are just £2 per game.

For example, a family of five season ticket holders, with two adults, two children under 11 and one under 19, is great value at under £26 a match - in fact one of the cheapest deals in the league. One adult with two children under 11 would be under £12 per game.

The matchday experience for our fans at Wycombe Wanderers delivers for all the family.

As soon as you enter through the Adams Park gates you feel the excitement of the pre-match build-up. Straight away there is the Fanzone, open from 1pm with an inflatable football target practice for all to have a go, plus music and the Blues BBQ. You can also book mascot opportunities with stadium tours, penalties on the pitch against Bodger and pre-order healthy food lunch boxes for children.

Thommo hails fighting spirit after two goal fightback

GARRY THOMPSON said he was "disappointed" that Wanderers only managed a draw against Cheltenham Town but focused on the fact that they still managed to gain ground on the teams ahead of them.

Thompson put the Blues right back in with a first-half brace to claw the scoreline back to 2-2 before late heartbreak condemned Wycombe to a 3-3 draw.

The veteran forward said: "To get ourselves back from 2-0 down to then being 3-2 ahead and to concede so close afterwards is ultimately disappointing.

"However, we gained a point in the teams in and around the playoffs. It isn't what we wanted but we will take it at the end of the day."

Wycombe will 2-0 down inside 15 minutes and Thompson explained that the start was down to poor play early on.

He added: "It was sloppy from us. We didn't start the game properly. We didn't react from the free-kick when Jamal made a great save.



Thompson tried to focus on the positives after his side's 3-3 draw with Cheltenham Town last weekend. Photo: Anita Ross Marshall

"We showed great character to get back into the game and when we scored the penalty I thought we were going to go on and win the game. We had enough chances to do that but ultimately we couldn't hold on."

The resilience shown by the team to come back from that early deficit is down to the squad's character and Thompson was keen to heap praise on the team from coming back from that double setback.

"There were a few changes and the

lads who came in did really well and the gaffer made a chance to bring Bayo on and their keeper made a great save from him and it was unfortunate we couldn't add more to the tally," explained the striker.

A cause for debate was the award of the first goal to Thompson, which took a big deflection en route into the Cheltenham goal but the 36-year-old claimed he definitely got something on the ball and he was pleased with his own personal display.

He commented: "I did get a touch on it and I am taking it. I like to think I got a little touch on the first one and the defender has obviously done the rest for me.

"The second one definitely won't be taken off me and I also managed to win us the penalty so personally it has been a good day's work for me and I was very happy with my own performance.

"It is just a shame we couldn't get the win but we move onto the next game."

SPORT

Rugby

Marlow cap off terrific season with title
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