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Friday, October 13, 2017

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ANALYSIS

COMMENT

With
**NICHOLAS
TUNNEY**



ANOTHER Wycombe game, another Wycombe victory!
These seem to be pre-requisites to write this column. Since the unfortunate home defeat to Luton, the Blues have won four on the spin. Talk about a positive reaction.
The latest win for Gareth Ainsworth's men came on Saturday against Cambridge, who have ambitions for lofty heights in League Two this season. The first half was a tight affair, marred by a serious looking injury to Nathan Tyson. I certainly wish him and Michael Harriman all the best as they both face lengthy spells on the sidelines.
However, after the break, two pieces of quite sublime skill by Ebere Eze knocked the stuffing out of the home side.
The first goal was technically perfect, a beautiful half volley with his

right foot into the top corner and his second was arguably better, curling in a belter into the same corner.
The really good players have the ability to do this; turn a game in their favour with an extraordinary bit of improvisation. That is exactly what Ebere did and even opposing manager, Shaun Derry, was effusive in his praise of the young playmaker.
On top of that, the beneficiary of Nathan's terrible misfortune was Josh Umerah.
He took his late goal like a seasoned professional and that will stand him in good stead having scored on the past two Saturdays. While Eze may take the plaudits, Josh's workrate and pace will terrorise defences in this division and he adds a different dimension to the attack.
Certainly that mix of youth and experience is serving the Blues well at the moment and long may it continue. They do, however, have a tough task against the league leaders, Exeter, tomorrow.

They, despite having lost their two best players in the summer, have made a brilliant start this season and Wycombe have to be mindful of their threat.
However, Exeter will also be wary of Wanderers' current form and the goals keep on flowing, which makes the Chairboys top scorers across all four divisions in this country.
I think Gaz's men will extend

that winning run and that would be quite an achievement at this stage of the season.
Elsewhere, we have the latest non-league football news and also congratulations to Beaconsfield who showed true character to come back to win by two points.
They look a force to be reckoned with this season and I would hope to be writing about a hugely successful campaign next April.



Ebere Eze

Wycombe Wanderers

LAST FIVE LEAGUE GAMES: LWWWW



Exeter City

LAST FIVE LEAGUE GAMES: WLLWW

OPPOSITION VIEW



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THIS week's Opposition View comes from Exeter City reporter James Hawkins from Devon Live.
How have Exeter started the season?
After many feared a 'hangover' from last season's play-off final defeat, I don't think anyone could quite imagine the club finding themselves top of the league. After losing key players Ollie Watkins and David Wheeler, many questioned City's ability to maintain last season's stunning second-half form which saw the club go from the foot off the Football League to Wembley.
Who are your key players?
Striker Reuben Reid got off to a flyer, with seven league

goals to his name already this season. Club-record signing Jayden Stockley has also impressed with four goals. At the back, Troy Brown has been immaculate at centre-half, with just four home league goals conceded so far.
What are the hopes for Exeter this season?
After narrowly missing out on promotion last season, fans and players are hoping that City can go one better this time around. League Two is such a hard league to predict, with seven points separating 11 teams at present. However, with such an excellent start this season, many are expecting the Grecians to make at least the playoffs.
What are your thoughts on Wycombe?

With four wins on the bounce, Gareth Ainsworth looks to have made Wycombe into genuine promotion contenders. Adams Park is never an easy place to go, and City haven't won there in over seven years. Adebayo Akinfenwa looks to have made an excellent start to the season, so it could be a thrilling tussle between him and City's Troy Brown.
Prediction?
A tricky one, but I'm going for a score draw: 2-2



James Hawkins

In the CHAIR



MARK ROGERS



Mark Rogers played for Wycombe between 1998-2003

ON Tuesday April 14, 2015, I - with seven friends from Canada - made the journey back to Adams Park to watch an important match with Exeter City.

It was great to see the ground again and catch up with old friends. At that time, both sides were fighting down the stretch to either gain promotion or battle it out in the playoffs.

The game didn't disappoint; a 90+12 minute penalty winner from Paul Hayes sent the Chairboys supporters home with a smile and my pal Chris won the 50/50 half-time lottery.

Fast forward eighteen months and once again Exeter City are the visitors.

Both teams are off to strong starts, but this time Exeter City are top of the league, Wycombe are fourth and I will be watching the match on my tablet thanks to the new iFollow service via the Wycombe website.

I do miss listening to the commentary from Phil Catchpole and ex-teammate Keith Scott over a coffee at 7am Pacific time, but have really enjoyed watching the games and watching the team grow during the first two months of the season.

There are other similarities too.

In 2015, Wycombe were reliant on goals from Paul Hayes, an experienced striker of advanced years.

Paul will forever be a hero to my son Sam. We were in the heart of the Wycombe fans at White Hart Lane when he hit that volley against Tottenham.

This season has started with three strikers of similar experience and impact.

Akinfenwa, Mackail-Smith and Tyson have each contributed with goals when needed but just as importantly they have contributed with work rate, providing a glimpse into their character - they are leading by example.

Thoughts for a speedy recovery go out to Nathan Tyson after what looked like a nasty knee injury suffered last week away at Cambridge.

In the end, my trip down memory lane will have no impact on what is going to happen on Saturday, but just like in 2015, it should be a memorable match.

WANDERERS RECAP

Manager dedicates win to stricken stars

WYCOMBE WANDERERS 3-1 CAMBRIDGE

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth dedicated Saturday's 3-1 win against Cambridge to Nathan Tyson and Michael Harriman.

Harriman suffered a broken leg in the build-up to the game, injuring himself on the training ground and looking at four months out with a broken leg.

Tyson went off against the U's after half an hour, collapsing in a heap after a shot at goal. Ainsworth confirmed that Tyson suffered a 'nasty looking' knee injury and could be out for an extended period of time.

He said: "I have gone in the dressing room after the game and said we have picked up two serious injuries.

"Nathan has had a nasty knee injury there and Michael broke his leg mid-week. That result is for those two.

"They are a huge part of what we are trying to achieve and they are both fantastic players. If we can keep going, we have some big players coming back around Christmas time.

"We will assess Nathan's knee injury in the week but it does look a bad one."

Ebere Eze was the hero for the Blues, scoring two stunners to set the Chairboys on their way, with Josh Umerah notching the other.

Ainsworth waxed lyrical about the young QPR loanee. He added: "The headline will go to Ebere.

"I worked with him in training and said he is due a goal. What a fantastic talent to have around, he is a great character and I enjoy working with him.

"Josh was superb as well. He has a great attitude and he will have a good career in the game."

The away form for Wanderers has been absolutely fantastic, with only one away league defeat on a Saturday

since last November.

Ainsworth added: "That is brilliant. It all changes very quickly and you are always judged on your last game.

"People can manipulate stats however they want but there is a time when you have to look and take note.

"What a great bunch we have here and I love working with all of them."

Cambridge were the better side early on as they looked to make a quick start against Gareth Ainsworth's men.

Wycombe came back strongly and two minutes later after some probing by Eze, Sam Saunders' curler from 25 yards was tipped away by Forde.

Forde produced another excellent save on 37 minutes when he denied Mackail-Smith a goal which looked destined for the bottom corner.

A minute later, Brown rivalled his opposite number with a superb stop, denying Elito with a brilliant block after Sido Jombati was caught in possession.

After Eze's memorable double, the home side pulled a goal back with 21 minutes thanks to Medy Elito's penalty but Eze was leading the Cambridge defenders a merry dance down the other end. After jinking his way into the box on 74 minutes, he saw his bullet strike parried wide by Forde.

Umerah had a brilliant chance to make the points safe on 89 minutes when Saunders found him in the area but the overworked Forde made a brilliant stop before the Charlton loanee had the final say.

A wonderful fourth win in a row for Ainsworth's side, who climb to fourth in the table.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Brown, Jombati, Stewart, El-Abd, Jacobson, Bean, Saunders, Eze (sub: Scarr, 84), Tyson (sub: Umerah, 27), Akinfenwa, Mackail-Smith (sub: Freeman, 86), Subs: Ma-Kalambay, Gape, Southwell, Williams.



Ainsworth expressed his pride with seeing his Chairboys team record their fourth successive victory

WYCOMBE: Loanee credits experienced players Young star revels in wonder strikes

ON-LOAN QPR starlet Ebere Eze was over the moon to score his first senior goals as Wycombe swept aside Cambridge United 3-1.

Eze scored two crackers within eight second half minutes to give the home side a mountain to climb.

The first was a half volley which found the top corner from 25 yards and the second a fantastic curling strike with his weaker left foot.

He said: "The first one just came down and I had a shot and luckily it went in.

"The second one I was thinking I could place and I was delighted to see it go in the top corner.

"It meant a lot to me to score those goals but the main thing was to get the win and I am buzzing to see that.

"It was a big pitch and I didn't get

the ball as much as I would have liked but I knew it was only go to be a matter of time before I did."

Eze hailed the experienced players in the side, including Adebayo Akinfenwa, who teed up Eze's first strike.

He added: "The likes of Bayo and Blooms help me. Bloomfield tells me to work off the big man and it has paid dividends.

"It is brilliant to play with Bayo. He holds the ball up so well and carries it on his chest which allows you to play higher up the pitch. It is fantastic.

"Having that experience and playing with all of them and you don't really need to think for yourself and they tell you what they need."

The young dynamo also had kind



Eze has been in sensational form for the Chairboys

words for Michael Harriman and Nathan Tyson following their serious injuries. He explained: "We wanted to do it for them.

"It is part and parcel of football but it isn't nice to see so I am really glad we could win the game for them and us."

Skipper hails competition for starting berths

IN the wake of the injuries to Nathan Tyson and Michael Harriman, Wanderers club captain Matt Bloomfield hailed the depth of the squad at Gareth Ainsworth's disposal.

With the younger players such as Josh Umerah and Nick Freeman pushing for places, Bloomfield said the competition is great to keep pushing everyone on.

He said: "I know that both Michael and Nathan will be working tirelessly with Cian O'Doherty and David Waters to return as soon as possible and stronger than before.

"Being without Tys is another big loss to the side and to the squad, Josh came on at Cambridge and scored his second goal in two games which is a massive boost for him.

"Nick has scored two already this season as he continues to establish himself as a real force in our squad.

"Paris Cowan-Hall is on his way back from a calf niggle and Dayle Southwell is training really well and patiently waiting for his chance. These guys are all fighting to lead the line and give the gaffer options up front."



Bloomfield is delighted to see the depth in the current squad

WYCOMBE: Gaffer wants to extend winning run Boss issues injury update

By Nicholas Tunney

WANDERERS manager Gareth Ainsworth is hoping the injury Nathan Tyson sustained at Cambridge on Saturday isn't as bad as first feared.

Tyson was stretchered off with a serious looking injury to his left knee after going down in innocuous circumstances. With ligament damage being diagnosed, Ainsworth is hoping that the fleet-footed winger won't be out for as long as initially thought.

Tyson joins Michael Harriman in facing a spell on the sidelines and Ainsworth gave an update on how both are doing.

He said: "Nathan and Michael Harriman are going to be out for quite sometime.

"We haven't got a specific time frame on Nathan yet. He has had a scan and we know it is a ligament issue. However, we do know the major ligaments are clear which is good news.

"There is no time limit on a ligament injury in a knee but it isn't a cruciate injury which is good. He has had a couple of injuries on that knee before and it is about looking after him and when he comes back he is as strong as he was.

"Nathan has proved time and time again that he keeps his pace and fitness and this looked a nasty one but I am hoping it isn't as bad as we first thought.

"Tys has been in fantastic form. The way he stretches defences is special. The positive is we are going to be getting some good players back in the middle of the season such as Scott Kashket, Harriman and Tyson, which will be a big bonus for us.

"If we can keep this form going



Tyson suffered ligament damage but it is hoped the injury isn't as severe as first feared

until then that would be fantastic."

With time to dwell on the Cambridge result at the weekend, Ainsworth said that confidence is oozing through the camp and the squad are riding high.

He added: "The morale is awesome. We are working really hard on the development of the boys off the field too and I try and get them prepared mentally as much as possible.

"We have a mentally strong bunch and that Cambridge win was probably the pick of this mini-winning run we are currently in.

"However, it can soon come off the rails and that is when the resilience comes in and how we bounce back from things is just as important as when we are doing well and we have some tough games coming up and I am really looking forward to seeing how the boys do on Saturday."

The Luton loss is seen as a bit of a turning point by Ainsworth and the squad who felt they had been dealt a cruel late blow in that match.

The response has been immaculate thus far and Ainsworth is

hoping that words said after that match continue to be adhered to.

"I said immediately after the game we didn't deserve to lose that match," added the 44-year-old.

"I told them to remember the feeling of being robbed in that game just before we played Colchester.

"For me, that Luton game served as a timely kick up the backside to keep working hard.

"Let's stay consistent with the performances and hopefully we can then find ourselves at the right end of the table thanks to those good displays."

Midfielder enjoys new holding role

WYCOMBE midfielder Sam Saunders is relishing playing in his new deeper role in midfield and says the current winning run is exciting for everyone.

Saunders has played an integral role in Wanderers' four-match winning run and is playing alongside Marcus Bean in the midfield and the two have struck up a great partnership, with the two's friendship going back years.

Saunders said: "I am feeling good fitness-wise and I picked up an injury after the Port Vale game, where I felt I did ok, so it was a shame to be out for a bit of time.

"I am enjoying the deeper role.

"I am 34 now and I need to be realising that I can't be sprinting past the front man every five minutes and need to use my attributes in a different way now.

"Hopefully I can be a calming influence on the team when it needs to be calmed down and to keep possession and I am enjoying playing with Beany.

"We have come full circle. We have played together and hopefully playing this role can prolong my career for a few more years yet."

With Wycombe scoring 25 goals in just 12 league games, and 11 in their last four, the Chairboys have found themselves to be top scorers in the whole country and Saunders said the attacking style currently in place is right up their street as they continue to find the net with fantastic regularity.

He added: "It is the way we are, we are a front foot team.

"We want to go out there and get that first goal. Once we get that first goal it plays into our hands as we have an abundance of pace and can hit teams on the counter.

"We want to go out there and get as high as we possibly can in the league and you have to go out there and earn it.

"It has to be the case that we have to work our socks off and get on the front foot from the off.

"It is exciting football.

"We may concede a few but we are confident enough that we have a lot of goals throughout the team to win most of the matches."

SPORT

Wanderers

Ex-Wycombe star gives
his views
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IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Hatton tops Ryder Cup rankings after Dunhill double

See page 80



ALFRED DUNHILL
INKS CHAMPION

All Dunhill photos by Mark Runnacles/PA Wire

Ainsworth wary of Exeter threat

BLUES boss Gareth Ainsworth is looking forward to an exciting game against Exeter City tomorrow, but is fearful of Paul Tisdale's side.

Despite losing Ollie Watkins and David Wheeler in the summer, Exeter sit top of the table and have won their previous two matches.

With two of the longest serving managers in the country ready to pit their wits against each other,

Ainsworth is certainly wary of the problems Exeter are likely to pose.

He said: "They have started really well and carried on where they left off.

"We beat them at home last year and I can empathise with Paul losing in the playoff final. Paul is a great guy and a good manager and he has done a very good job for a long time.

"I have a lot of respect for him

and I know he is going to be bringing a team who are flying high and full of confidence.

"They are playing good football and they have changed their style slightly from Exeter teams of old.

"We are top scorers in the country and we go forward well and put teams under pressure and with all this in mind it looks as though it is going to be a great game tomorrow.

"League leaders against a team that are scoring freely and who are gradually tightening up at the back so am very much looking forward to it.

"Paul churns out young players and Exeter are very similar to ourselves in terms of being trust owned and he still keeps a strong squad and a strong side.

"I hope for a bumper crowd at Adams Park tomorrow."

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Ainsworth is expecting a tough game