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Friday, November 17, 2017

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Christmas party



Page 18&19

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for 'wasting money'

'CLUELESS'

See page 7

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COMMENT

With
**NICHOLAS
TUNNEY**



IT was a very disappointing Saturday up in Morecambe. Having never lost at the Globe Arena, hopes were high that Gareth's men could get at least a point from a game against a battle-hardened, but struggling, side. The team just never got going in the first half and found themselves staring down the barrel at the break by being two goals down. To be fair, Wanderers fought valiantly in the second half to get back into the game but despite numerous chances, only had a solitary Akinfenwa goal to show for their efforts. Speaking to Gaz after, he was understandably very unhappy with his side's first half display. I think the loss against Jim Bentley's side really hurt and he knows that was at least a point lost. The team have a great

opportunity now to pick themselves up and go on a fantastic run, hopefully trying to emulate last season's success at this time last year. The winning run they conjured up was a joy to watch and it represented my first eight games as a reporter for the paper. They won the lot! I think Gareth thought I was some sort of lucky charm but unfortunately all good runs have to come to an end and the first loss I saw was at Spurs in 'that' game! It has been brilliant to be involved with Wycombe for a year now and I always receive a warm welcome from Gaz and the players at Adams Park and away from home. Thanks go to Matt Cecil and Tom Jarvis from the Wanderers media team for their help and assistance over the past 12 months and you see the work they put in to make my job a lot easier. And of course my colleagues at the BFP! Incredibly, I have only seen Wycombe lose away in the league

three times in the past year and two of those have been the last two games! Looking ahead to my second year at the BFP, the Blues begin with Crawley at home on Saturday. Harry Kewell's men seem a well-drilled outfit, especially away from home. They are unbeaten on the road since September and the free-scoring Chairboys may have a tricky

afternoon tomorrow. It was great to see Luke O'Nien back in league action last weekend and I think he could be a real key player in the coming weeks for the team. This match begins a run of games where Wanderers can target wins and I believe my second year will get off to a winning start with a 2-1 victory. COYB!



Luke O'Nien is back in action

Wycombe Wanderers

LAST FIVE LEAGUE GAMES: DDLDL

VS



Crawley Town

LAST FIVE LEAGUE GAMES: DLDDD

OPPOSITION VIEW



- 1. Glenn Morris
- 2. Lewis Young
- 6. Mark Connolly
- 5. Joe McNerney
- 22. Josh Lelan
- 21. Dannie Bulman
- 8. Jimmy Smith
- 19. Cedric Evina
- 11. Jordan Roberts
- 23. Thomas Verheydt
- 7. Enzo Boldewijn

THIS week's Opposition View is from Crawley Observer sports editor, Graham Carter.

How have Crawley started the season?

Crawley made a slow start, losing their first four matches but after jump-started their season with a 3-0 win away at Swindon Town who at the time were top of the table. Since then results have been inconsistent, with some good away results. Home results have been poor, with only one win achieved so far, a 2-0 victory over Yeovil and along the way losing 2-0 to bottom of the table Chesterfield.

Who are your key players?

Goalkeeper Glenn Morris has kept solidly and is an automatic choice for league

games. Captain Jimmy Smith is top scorer with four goals despite being a midfield player. Dutch striker Thomas Verheydt is expected to score goals for Reds this season since making his move during the summer from Dutch football.

What are the hopes for Crawley this season?

Head coach Harry Kewell has not broadcast publically what his aims for the team are. They are stabilised under his new regime, having taken over from former head coach Dermot Drummy in May. Certainly the fans are hoping for a good midtable finish after suffering poor seasons over the last three years.

What are your thoughts on Wycombe?

Wycombe have made a good start to the season lying in seventh place in the table and look to be on course under Gareth Ainsworth to reach the playoffs.

Prediction?

2-1 win for Crawley.



Graham Carter

In the CHAIR



MICHAEL DAVIES



Michael Davies, WWFC general manager

THE BBC published their annual Price of Football results this week and once again Wycombe Wanderers were proven to offer excellent value compared to other clubs in League Two.

At £13 for an adult matchday ticket (when purchased in advance of the game), we offer the cheapest ticket in the division and in my opinion the best value for money. I believe that's something everyone should be proud of, when you consider the quality of the facilities at Adams Park, the enjoyable and welcoming experience that we offer to home and away fans, and also the reality that we live and work in an area with one of the highest costs of living in the country.

We've made a commitment to making football affordable for everyone, and particularly the younger generations. Not many clubs offer a young adult ticket price for those aged 19-25, many of whom have just come out of full-time education and are at the start of their careers with relatively little disposable income.

This summer, we expanded the range of ages at which children can get free tickets in our Origin Family Stand, moving from under 7s to under 11s, and junior season tickets (ages 12-18) worked out at only £2 per game.

The Price of Football survey also highlighted the reciprocal ticket deal we arranged with Barnet, offering a Quid-A-Kid deal for all junior fans at both matches between the clubs, and look forward to making our trip to The Hive in March a fantastic day out for our away supporters.

There is always a challenging balance to strike between making our prices as attractive as possible for fans to come along, and making sure the business operates as efficiently as it can to remain financially stable.

We welcome all old and new supporters to bring friends and family along to share in the fantastic family friendly experience at Adams Park, especially over the Christmas period with the FA Cup second round game here on December 3, and nothing beats the tradition of a home match on Boxing Day!

WANDERERS RECAP

Ainsworth unhappy with 'terrible' half

MORECAMBE 2-1 WANDERERS

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth bemoaned his side's 'terrible' first half display as the Blues lost 2-1 to struggling Morecambe on Saturday.

Wanderers found themselves with a mountain to climb as they conceded two first half goals after a disappointing display before the interval.

Adebayo Akinfenwa gave the Chairboys a lifeline and almost grabbed an equaliser as Wycombe were much improved in the second half but Ainsworth explained that the second half performance merely glossed over the first.

He said: "It was a game of two halves. We were easily the better side in the second half but you can't give away two goals like we did in the first half.

"We were terrible in the first half and I have not said that this season. It wasn't us.

"We played as individuals and not as a team. The balls forward were hopeful and the marking for both goals we can't let happen.

"The second goal wasn't unbelievably clever either. It was just the basics and we had no-one with him and he easily slotted in the goal.

"There were mistakes there and once you get yourself two goals down, you have a mountain climb.

"We nearly climbed it but nearly isn't good enough. The second half will gloss over what we did in the first half but not for me. We weren't good enough first half and we need to make sure we start games like we did in the second half.

"It is a tough place to come but it is three points dropped. We wanted to win this match but fair play to Jim Bentley, he has got us again but we have to put it

right next week against Crawley."

Ainsworth made just one change from the team that won at Solihull Moors, including an unchanged backline.

With experience pouring through Morecambe's lineup, Ainsworth had thought about bringing back skipper Adam El-Abd but after a clean sheet the previous week, decided against it.

He added: "There was a thought about starting Adam but there is pace through their side too and Adam had a hamstringing a couple of weeks ago.

"He did come on last week but felt a little bit sore and another week under his belt will do him the world of good."

Wanderers had the first chance after just 20 seconds when Ebere Eze let fly from 20 yards but Roche held it comfortably.

The bright start continued when Nick Freeman wriggled into the box and his fierce strike was parried away smartly by Roche.

McGurk almost scored a goal of the season contender for the home side after 15 minutes when he spotted Scott Brown off his line and his effort from 35 yards went inches over with Brown struggling.

With the Blues 2-0 down, a reaction was needed but they had to wait until the 82nd minute when Akinfenwa powered in a header.

Moments later, he headed agonisingly wide with Roche beaten all ends up.

Mackail-Smith also came close but this defeat leaves Wycombe without a win in five league games, as they remain in the last of the playoff places.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Brown, Gape (sub: Cowan-Hall, 67), Scarr, Stewart, Jacobson, Bean, Saunders (sub: O'Nien, 67), Eze, Freeman, Akinfenwa, Mackail-Smith. Subs: Ma-Kalambay, El-Abd, Bloomfield, Southwell, Jombati.

REFEREE: Andy Haines



Ainsworth was annoyed with his side's first half display against Morecambe

WYCOMBE: Jacobson: First half not good enough Defender despondent after defeat

JOE Jacobson was honest about Wanderers' poor first half showing as their League Two wobbles continued against Morecambe.

The defeat at the Globe Arena left Wycombe without a win in five league games and Jacobson admitted that the first 45 minutes simply wasn't good enough.

The Blues left-back said: "The first half we didn't deserve anything and we held our hands up at half-time and wanted to give a reaction.

"We huffed and puffed and at times lacked a bit of quality. In the last 10-15 minutes we got in behind them more and got some good chances.

"Even though we probably didn't deserve anything out of the game, I thought we were going to nick a

point but it wasn't to be but on the first half performance I don't think we deserved too much.

"I am not sure why were poor in the first half. Things just happen and there was no real answer for it.

"Sometimes you can carry a couple of players if they are underperforming but it went for most of us in this game."

Adebayo Akinfenwa grabbed his 10th goal of the campaign already against the Shrimpers and Jacobson hailed the impact he is having but added he needs support.

He commented: "He is such a weapon but we can't rely on him to score two or three goals every game.

"We have been chipping in to help him but he has been unbelievable for us.



Jacobson said the team got what they deserved at Morecambe

"You hear opposition managers speak about him every week and it doesn't matter what plans they have, you can't stop him. If the ball

is there you know he is going to stick his head and there is no-one better at what he does. "He is a massive asset for us."

Kashket and Tyson returns getting nearer

WYCOMBE Wanderers have been boosted by the news that there are no fresh injury scares - and the news Scott Kashket's return is edging closer.

Manager Gareth Ainsworth said: "We did well on the injury front at Morecambe with no new injuries.

"We are now close on a couple of long-termers in the treatment room. The only one who he isn't is Michael Harriman.

"He is scheduled to come back probably after Christmas but everyone else looks like they could be back

very soon including Scott Kashket and Nathan Tyson.

"Both are making really good progress. Obviously we won't get them out training until they are signed off but it is great to see them all wanting to be out there.

"These are really good signs for us and things are just turning on the injury front which is great."

Kashket scored 16 goals in 29 games for Wycombe last season but hasn't played since the final day of the 2016/17 season against Cambridge, a game in which he scored the winner.



Kashket is getting closer to a return to the training ground

WANDERERS: Selection posers for Blues boss Midfielder knocks on door

By Nicholas Tunney

GARETH Ainsworth is expecting a tough test this weekend as he prepares his Wycombe side to face Crawley Town at Adams Park.

Despite their lowly league position, Crawley have not been beaten away from home in two months and boast an impressive defensive record for a team in the lower echelons of League Two.

Although they are the lowest scorers in the league, Crawley seem to be a well-drilled outfit under Harry Kewell and Ainsworth is under no illusion as to how difficult this game could be.

He said: "It will be a tough test and I think Harry will be different to many managers.

"He is finding his feet in League Two. He has a great pedigree as a player and there is absolutely no easy games in any football league.

"This won't be an easy game and anyone would be naive to think teams in this division are way apart. They are obviously your big teams such as Luton and Notts County but you look at the results that have happened recently.

"Crawley have picked up points as have Forest Green and Port Vale and Morecambe against us so there is a big respect thing that needs to happen in professional football and we won't be taking any game lightly."

With the Morecambe defeat still fresh in his memory, there were a few positives to pick up from the game, most notably the excellent cameo appearance from Luke O'Nien.

O'Nien has been sidelined lately through injury having proved an integral part of the team in the early part of the campaign and



Luke O'Nien was excellent as a sub last weekend

Ainsworth commented that the midfielder is very much in his thoughts ahead of the Crawley test, as is winger Paris Cowan-Hall. He added: "Luke is a good player. He is a winner. He wants to win everything whether it be on the pitch or at the training ground.

"Paris has been a bit wobbly of late with his form but I thought he came on at Morecambe and did really well. He put the cross in for the goal and he is a dangerous player.

"Again he will be a big part of what we do. Both are definitely in contention for this weekend but

there are some really good players who have done it for me in previous weeks so all to play for and selection headaches is what I want as a manager."

The following fixture is a long away trip to Accrington on Tuesday evening. However, after that, the Blues' next longest trip in 2017 is a short hop up the M40 to Coventry.

Although this could be deemed an advantage approaching the festive period, Ainsworth added that at some point every side has to do those long trips to the likes of Carl-

isle and Morecambe.

He said: "The travelling does take a lot but everyone has to do them.

"We got a point at Carlisle which is a great result but lost at Morecambe so I think being on the road is good for us but these long trips on a Tuesday take preparing for.

"December looks a local fixture pack and that should be ok on the legs and getting the necessary rest. Christmas is always mental but I am really looking forward to a few Saturday-Saturday games instead of Tuesday games being thrown in for us."

Freeman enjoying a run in the side

YOUNG Chairboys star Nick Freeman is enjoying life at Wycombe as he gets a thoroughly deserved extended run in the side.

Freeman has been in superb form for Wanderers in the past month or so, providing important assists for the likes of Adebayo Akinfenwa as well as chipping in with a couple of vital goals.

The playmaker has been a beneficiary of the injury suffered by Nathan Tyson in early October and he hasn't looked back with a string of impressive displays.

He said: "I am really enjoying being in the side. It feels good to be in the team and getting a run of games and having a feel for what League Two is like by playing regularly.

"Playing on the left is a role I really enjoy because I can come inside on my right foot so it is the position I like playing."

Earlier on in the season, Freeman was playing a crucial role from the bench, lighting up Adams Park with some terrific cameos from the bench.

Every time he has stepped out on to the playing surface, Freeman added: "It gives me plenty of confidence to be given a run like this because it shows the gaffer trusts me at home and away in the real nitty-gritty matches.

"It shows that he has faith in you and that is what you want as a player.

"The gaffer and the staff really like the wingers to track the full backs and be aggressive and go up for headers. They love wingers to have that work rate and I have had to learn that is what I have to do to stay in the team."

Alongside Freeman in the front three has been Akinfenwa and Craig Mackail-Smith and he said it has been a joy to play with these two experienced professionals. "I love playing with those two," commented Freeman.

"Pinging crosses into the box for Bayo is what he loves and that is what I do for and Macca's work rate is phenomenal and his quality is top drawer."

With the Chairboys looking to record their first win in six games against Crawley, Freeman warned: "Every game this season has been tough and we can't go in thinking we will win every time."

SPORT

Boxing
Thorne to contest
title eliminator
- Page 107



Ainsworth: No pressure despite this mini-wobble



Ainsworth is happy with the reaction of his players in training ahead of the Crawley game tomorrow

Boss embraces promotion challenge

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE WANDERERS boss Gareth Ainsworth has explained he is feeling no pressure at all with his Blues side without a win in five league games.
Despite this, the Chairboys are currently sitting pretty in the play-off zone, just three points off automatic promotion and Ainsworth commented that the team have been dealt a bit of bad luck in their run recently.
He said: "I don't feel pressure. I know that I work really hard, we work really hard as a team.

"There have been a couple of things that have gone against us the last five games.
"The penalty rescinded at Carlisle and the foul at the end of the Cheltenham game. These are knife-edge moments where we are looking at two wins out of five rather than three draws and two defeats and that change is huge.
"I don't feel the pressure. I know we are doing everything right and the performances have been there. We have had one bad half at Morecambe which I definitely accept and we aim to put that right against Crawley.
"On the whole, I have great back-

ing from the boys, the board and the fans and we are working really hard and what I have player-wise is good enough to win each and every game this season without a doubt.
"It is the consistency I want to keep high and that is going to be important.
"You talk about pressure. I have been to Torquay facing relegation out of the league during the last game of the season. That's real pressure and not this mini-wobble we are in at the moment."
Wycombe face Crawley this weekend at Adams Park, beginning a run of three games in seven days (kick off 3pm).

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