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Covering Wycombe, South Bucks & Chiltern Districts
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Street party

Family festival to
return to town

Freetime pull-out

Back of the net

England manager
watches at Adams Park

Bumper 12 pages of sport



AXED?

As five Bucks councils scrapped in ground-breaking move, is it finally time to say goodbye to the bosses on six-figure salaries? And what does huge shake-up mean for failing children's services, cash-strapped schools and potholes?



Bucks County Council chief executive Rachael Shimmin is on £195,000



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Wycombe District Council's Karen Satterford is on £143,310



Aylesbury Vale District Council's Andrew Grant is on £125,028-£145,247

Special report: Page 4&5

NEWS

Slate Meadow
plans 'imminent'



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CRIME

300 ruled out in
murder probe



Page 10

CRIME

Dozens found
living in garden



Page 11

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COMMENT

With
**NICHOLAS
TUNNEY**



WELCOME to this week's edition of sport.
A revamp of the sports pages is always good to keep everything fresh and gives me more chance to review sport that sometimes doesn't get the coverage that it deserves.
We have 12 pages of sport for you this week ranging from Wycombe Wanderers to seeing how the young sporting starts across south Bucks are doing.
I was at Adams Park on Saturday to see the Blues draw 1-1 with Cambridge United.
It was a much-improved performance by the Chairboys from their previous two games where they lost to Morecambe and Coventry.
They were the better side for most of the game and had the better chances and it was another goal by Adebayo Akinfenwa that gave the

home side a deserved lead.
However, a late equaliser by Paul Lewis felt like a real kick in the teeth and you could sense how gutted Gareth was interviewing him after.
I thought it was one of the best defensive performances of the season with Adam El-Abd and Dan Scarr outstanding at the heart of the Wycombe backline, keeping the likes of Uche Ikpeazu and Jabo Ibhere quiet.
If they replicate that performance tomorrow, I see no reason why they can't beat Barnet who have steadied under the guidance of experienced manager Graham Westley.
They looked to have added a bit more steel but I believe the Blues will be too good for them and win 2-0 at The Hive.
As well as Wanderers going for promotion, they are so many teams across south Bucks that have lofty ambitions of their own.
The likes of Beaconsfield, Chalfont St Peter, Chesham United, Penn and Tylers Green FC and Ris-

borough Rangers all have a shot of winning the title or an elevation to the league above.
In rugby, Beaconsfield and Amersham also have great opportunities for a successful season and it is sure to be an amazing end to the campaign in both sports.
Chesham's shot at promotion is all the more incredible considering the off-field uncertainty with a new ground and the fact they start-

ed the season in shaky fashion.
Now they are on the precipice of promotion and it shows what a fantastic job Jon Meakes has done at The Meadow since the departure of the well-respected Andy Leese.
With about two months to go until the end of the winter sports, I cannot wait to keep featuring those teams in their promotion races and I am sure there will be plenty of twists and turns.



Wycombe celebrate their goal against Cambridge

Wycombe Wanderers



VS



Barnet

LAST FIVE LEAGUE
GAMES: WWLLD

LAST FIVE LEAGUE
GAMES: DLWLD

OPPOSITION VIEW



- 40. George Legg
- 20. Mauro Vilhete
- 5. Ricardo Santos
- 13. David Tutonda
- 7. Ryan Watson
- 15. Ruben Bover
- 19. Fumnaya Shomotun
- 8. Curtis Weston
- 26. Dan Sweeney
- 9. John Akinde
- 23. Alex Nicholls

BARNET currently sit second from bottom in League Two and installed Graham Westley as their new manager in mid-January in a bid to get them out of their current situation.
Westley has overseen two wins, four draws and four defeats from his 10 games in charge, including an impressive home win over Notts County and a victory on the road against Colchester.
Their last game saw them draw 1-1 at home to fellow strugglers Port Vale.
The home side got off to the perfect start as Ryan Watson hit the crossbar and his rebound fell to Alex Nicholls who tapped home in the fourth minute.
A mistake by goalkeeper George Legg allowed Anton Forrester to head Vale level and they held on for a point.
Earlier, Legg produced a

fine save to tip Marcus Harness' turn and volley round his post to maintain the lead.
After the interval, however, he failed to keep hold of a corner and the ball spilled to Forrester who headed in from close range.
The Bees came close to retaking the lead when Curtis Weston saw an effort from long range go just wide.
The reverse fixture at Adams Park at the end of September saw Wycombe run out comfortable 3-1 winners.
Wanderers went ahead thanks to Adebayo Akinfenwa's first-half header before further goals from substitutes Josh Umerah and Nick Freeman sealed the deal.
Barnet pulled one back through Mauro Vilhete's close-range volley but the Blues were always in control.
After that game, Ainsworth said: "It could have been a

couple more. We made a couple of rotations and the team are really firing on all cylinders.
"There is no superstar. It is down to everyone and that is what I want and we have been able to build this over five years and get a good squad with depth."



Graham Westley

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Arsenal Women beat off



The FA WSL Continental Tyres Cup victors

THE country's media attention turned to Adams Park on Wednesday evening as Arsenal Women played Manchester City Women in the FA WSL Continental Tyres Cup Final.

The game went the way of Arsenal who won the Continental Tyres Cup for a record fifth time.

Vivianne Miedema scored the game's only goal, slotting in after good build-up play from England's Jordan Nobbs.

Miedema's Netherlands teammate Dominique Janssen had earlier struck the crossbar as the Gun-

ners impressed.

City went close through Nikita Parris and substitute Jane Ross after half-time, but could not find an equaliser.

The holders of the Women's FA Cup, Women's Super League One title and Continental Tyres Cup [League Cup] before Wednesday's match, City had been tipped to remain in possession of all three of English women's football's most sought-after pieces of domestic silverware.

But Arsenal, enjoying something of a revival since Australian Joe Montemurro's arrival as manager in November, began brightly and led through 21-year-old Miedema's superb finish through Ellie Roebuck's legs.

Miedema's goal came in her first final in English football since her 2017 move from German giants Bayern Munich and was enough to earn Montemurro's team victory in his first possible final since being appointed.

The match - played between the only two sides to have won this competition since it began in 2011 - was a repeat of the 2014 final.



It was a memorable win for Arsenal over a Manchester City side who had taken their mantle



Arsenal players lift the trophy



A Manchester City Women supporter gets behind them



The final was a repeat of the 2014 match



City had overtaken Arsenal as the game's leaders



Arsenal players embrace

Manchester City Women



Arsenal players celebrate their historic victory



Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth was in attendance



It was a close game between the two powerhouses of women's football



City player restrained after tussle



Fans flocked to Adams Park for the game



City supporter gets behind her team



It was a hard-fought match between the sides



City player tries to break past a stubborn Arsenal defence

WANDERERS RECAP

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Ainsworth despondent with draw despite improvement

By Nicholas Tunney

Wycombe 1-1 Cambridge

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth said his side's draw on Saturday was a 'tough one to take' as Cambridge scored a last-gasp equaliser at Adams Park.

It looked good for the Chairboys as Adebayo Akinfenwa gave the home side the lead in first-half stoppage time with a textbook header from Scott Brown's long kick.

Wanderers edged the game overall and improved from their recent defeats against Morecambe and Coventry, with Akinfenwa denied by David Forde in the second half and Luke O'Nien saw his cross deflected onto the post by George Taft.

However, Cambridge struck in the 94th minute when substitute Paul Lewis rifled the ball home to send the U's fans into raptures.

Ainsworth bemoaned the build-up to the equaliser, explaining he thought there was an infringement leading up to it.

He said: "I thought there was a foul in the build-up to their goal and I think a lot of people agree with me but the referee didn't and that is the story of the game.

"I think they had two shots on our goal which is frustrating as we limited them.

"We had some decent chances and I thought they rode their luck at times.

"We hit the post, had one off the line and Forde made a good save from Bayo's left-footed shot.

"It wasn't a pretty game. Cambridge came with a plan to use their two big front men and ultimately they created a chance which they scored off at the end.

"I thought Nathan Tyson was a thorn

in their side all game. Paris Cowan-Hall did well too, Nick Freeman looked good when he came on and we had plenty of attacking players on the pitch and plenty of shots at their goal.

"However, we just needed one more goal. 1-0 is a precarious scoreline and they didn't cause us too many problems but they popped up late on as we have done so many times this season.

"I am a bit disappointed but we have stopped the rot and I am hoping they will be a good reaction ahead and we still have plenty to play for."

Defensively, Wanderers were excellent and Ainsworth heaped praise on his players, especially Adam El-Abd and Dan Scarr for their performances.

He added: "Adam was superb. He was gladiatorial and Dan played through a real bad injury.

"He had an ankle injury picked up in the first half and I am glad I didn't take him off because we needed to change Joe Jacobson.

"Tafari Moore is learning all the time. We had Bloomfield and O'Nien throwing themselves into things and it is brilliant to see as a manager.

"Not every manager gets that. They don't get the commitment from their whole squad like I do so really pleased with that side of the game."

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Brown, Moore, Scarr, El-Abd, Jacobson (sub: McGinley, 60), Gape, O'Nien, Bloomfield, Cowan-Hall (sub: Freeman 85), Akinfenwa, Tyson. Subs: Ma-Kalambay, Bean, Kashket, Freeman, Mackail-Smith, Thompson.

CAMBRIDGE UNITED: Forde, Halliday, Taylor, Taft, Dunk, Deegan, O'Neil (sub: Brown, 80), Maris (sub: Lewis, 19), Waters (sub: Amoo, 67), Ibehre, Ikpeazu. Subs: Mitov, Carroll, Legge, Elito.

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Ainsworth was pleased with his side's performance but gutted that they couldn't hold on



Tafari Moore in action



Jacobson challenges for the ball



Akinfenwa duelling with the defence



Cowan-Hall on the attack

Player ratings:

WANDERERS vs Cambridge

SCOTT BROWN: No chance with goal, virtual spectator - 6

TAFARI MOORE: Good in attack, solid in defence - 7

ADAM EL-ABD: Led by example, rock in defence - 8 (BFP STAR MAN)

DAN SCARR: Composed, read the game well - 7

JOE JACOBSON: Solid until he went off injured - 6

DOMINIC GAPE: All energy, good display - 7

LUKE O'NIEN: Terrific box-to-box play - 8

MATT BLOOMFIELD: Caused Cambridge problems with his running - 7

NATHAN TYSON: Thorn in Cambridge defence, pace worried them - 7

ADEBAYO AKINFENWA: Gave U's backline a tough time - 7

PARIS COWAN-HALL: Tricky, gave Akinfenwa good support - 7

WANDERERS: Skipper happy with improvement El-Abd: Defence is on right track

WANDERERS skipper Adam El-Abd explained he felt the points were 'pinched from their pocket' as Cambridge scored a barely deserved last-gasp equaliser.

Paul Lewis' 94th minute goal was only the U's second shot on target for the whole game and El-Abd felt his side were the better team throughout.

He said: "We felt like we had the points in our pocket only for them to be pinched out.

"That is football I suppose. Against Swindon we scored a last minute winner but unfortunately against Cambridge they managed to nick an equaliser.

"It was avoidable from our part. We will learn from it and hopefully it doesn't happen again."

Despite the last-gasp goal, defensively the Blues have been a lot more solid in the past couple of games and El-Abd feels the team are going in the right direction defensively.

He added: "Morecambe aside, in games such as Cheltenham and Exeter too we have limited them to one or two shots at our goal and Brown [Scott Brown] has had one or two saves to make which suggests we are getting closer to where we need to be.

"There have been moments where we have lapsed and teams have scored but if we can continue to perform this way then the clean sheets will come and hopefully one goal will be enough for us to win.

"At the minute we are having to



El-Abd is happy the defence is going the right way

rely too much on our strikers to score two or three goals a game which is not good enough but if we can keep going on the right track,

the clean sheets will definitely follow.

"We have been better defensively as a unit and hope it continues."

PREVIEW: Scarr and Jacobson should feature

GARETH Ainsworth is hoping Dan Scarr and Joe Jacobson can shake off knocks they picked up last weekend in their 1-1 draw with Cambridge.

Scarr played the whole match but picked up an ankle injury and Jacobson hobbled off with a hamstring issue but Ainsworth is confident both will be ok for the trip to Barnet.

He said: "We are hoping both of them will be ok.

"We will assess them both and see where they are and they have both played through semi-knocks.

"It has been tough at the back there because I have loads of forwards and midfielders but we are slim in de-

fence and every season we seem to get one or the other.

"We will shuffle round if we need to but anyone who comes in will do a job and hopefully they will be fine."

Ainsworth added: "We are very close now with a few.

"Sido Jombati is the closest to returning and he is at the forefront of those coming back with Michael Harriman and Sam Saunders not too far behind.

"With Harriman, he is still a little bit off fitness-wise but he is getting a lot closer after his broken leg which is great for us and Sam will be back soon too."



Scarr should be fit for tomorrow's match

WYCOMBE: Brown adds dimension to attack Scott assists the forwards

By Nicholas Tunney

THE Chairboys have played some wonderful free-flowing football this season.

Some of the goals have been pure quality and wouldn't look out of place at a higher level.

They can also mix it up and go direct to Adebayo Akinfenwa, who causes havoc in the opposition box with his sheer physical presence.

However, he is more than aided in this by goalkeeper Scott Brown, who set up his goal on Saturday with a huge kick which Akinfenwa converted with a textbook header.

That assist puts Brown level on assists this calendar year with Manchester City and Spain playmaker, David Silva.

Alright, they only have one assist each but it shows what a weapon Brown's kicks are to the opposition and it adds more of a headache for defences in League Two who already have to deal with different elements of the Blues' attack.

Brown said: "I prefer clean sheets but I have contributed a lot in terms of when I have kicked it we have scored within 10 seconds of that a lot of times.

"With the way we are playing, those long kicks find the big man [Akinfenwa] who can hold it up or flick it on for people to get strikes on goal.

"It is a part of my game we use well to get those goals."

The strength of Brown's kicking is no fluke with the Wolverhampton-born stopper practicing diligently in training before games.

He added: "The gaffer places a massive importance on it.

"Sometimes you don't realise how far up the pitch a goalkeeper's kick can get you so if you kick and



Brown assisted Akinfenwa's goal on Saturday

you have a goalie who can't reach the halfway line it is headed back towards the box and you are back under pressure.

"If you can get it 20 yards further up the pitch it is an attacking weapon so it is massive and I kick it ok and it has helped us out."

This weekend's game promises to be a really tough match against Barnet, and with the weather set to be inclement, Brown has kept a keen eye on the weather forecast.

He said: "Some people love Graham Westley's methods and some people don't but he has definitely

had a positive impact on them and they have picked up.

"Looking at the weather it is going to be a lottery of a game. It looks as though it is going to be zero degrees and blowing a gale which is not much fun so we are going to have to play well to get something out of the game."

Wanderers sit handily in fourth and despite a shaky run in the last three games, Brown is delighted where the Chairboys are sat in the table.

"We are in a good position. People say we are on a board run but over

the last nine games out form stacks up and we are right up there.

"If we are go do something similar over the next nine or 10 games we will be right up there and we have been fairly consistent over the course of the season.

"We defended really well on Saturday and everyone put their bodies on the line and we have a lot of experience in the team with guys who know how to get over the line so we know what it is and there will be big games between now and the end of the season and there are none bigger than Barnet."

Ainsworth pride in Eze's QPR displays

IF Wanderers are to get promoted this season, then they will have a lot of players to thank for their contributions.

However, one player, who is now not at the club, lit up Adams Park during a hugely successful loan spell between late August and January.

Ebere Eze, who was on-loan from QPR, scored five goals in 20 appearances for the Chairboys and scored some memorable goals against Cambridge and Yeovil, helping the Blues to vital wins in which without his contributions, they wouldn't have won.

This week, the 19-year-old made his first two starts for the R's in the Championship and he scored the winner against Sunderland on Saturday before turning in a man-of-the-match display against high-flying Aston Villa on Tuesday evening.

Blues boss Gareth Ainsworth explained how proud he was to see Eze produce the goods for QPR and how Wycombe have played a massive part in his development. He said: "I take amazing pride in seeing him play so well.

"He is one of the best midfielders I have ever worked with in an attacking sense. His spatial awareness and first touch is fantastic and he can go past like they aren't there, which was in evidence when he was with us.

"I don't want to say he is the next best thing because he belongs to QPR and I have massive respect for Ian Holloway but I am so glad Ebs has got his chance.

"He is showing at QPR now what he did here and why he should be in the team up there.

"The Championship is obviously a much higher level and Ian is getting the best out of him.

"I spoke to Ebs after he got his winning goal. It was a nice conversation to have and I am very proud that he started his career off here.

"I said to him to keep moving the ball into that space because he is one of the very best I have seen at it.

"He is a very humble guy and I believe he can go all the way. QPR is a great advertising ground for him and I think he can play at the highest level.

"We will watch with interest."

SPORT

Hockey
Ansell gets
England pick
- Page 58



Rugby
Choules is the
Chiltern hero
-Page 61



Boss plays down the 'must-win' importance

Ainsworth relaxed ahead of the final 10



By Nicholas Tunney

THE countdown is on for Wycombe Wanderers' promotion push.

There are 10 games remaining and there are 30 points to play for and the importance of those games gets more crucial with each passing fixture.

Next up for Gareth Ainsworth's side is a tricky trip to Barnet, who are facing a desperate fight against relegation from the EFL.

Barnet have recently installed the experienced Graham West-

ley as their new manager and although they are struggling for wins still, he has installed a steeliness which is making them a difficult side to beat.

For Ainsworth, although they are entering the business end of the campaign, he doesn't rate this as a must-win game just yet but does respect the work Westley is doing at The Hive.

He said: "Graham knows how to get results and his own methods in how to do that.

"We have both been around the

lower leagues a while and Graham will have them organised, will have them working hard and we need to have those bits of magic and good play to try and get the result.

"It isn't a must-win game at all. If we lose on Saturday and then win nine, we will get promoted. I will let you know when the must-win games but it is definitely a game I want to win because it looks for all the world that we should be winning these games.

"Over the course of 46 games, you want to be really consistent against

the teams in the bottom half.

"That is what gets you promoted and that is what wins you a lot of points and so far this season we have done that well."

With the majority of Ainsworth's squad due back for the run-in, Scott Kashket came off the bench and produced a lively cameo against Cambridge and the manager was delighted to get him playing.

"It is great to get Scott back after a thigh strain and we have a lot of quality going forward," said the 44-year-old.



Wycombe Abbey success

LACROSSE SPECIAL

ONE thousand girls competed at Wycombe Abbey this Sunday and Monday as part of the Rathbones National Schools Lacrosse Championships (RNSLC) U19A tournament.

The RNSLC, the UK's largest lacrosse tournament, was due to take place from March 2 for five days at Surrey Sports Park in Guildford but was postponed due to inclement weather. The Under 19A championships was rearranged to take place on March 11 and March 12 after Wycombe Abbey volunteered to host the tournament.

Head of lacrosse at the school and captain of the bronze medal England team, Laura Merrifield, told the Bucks Free Press how the tournament went.

She said: "It was a real honour to host the event.

"It was a real festival atmosphere with 47 schools competing for the title which was brilliant and we have had a lot of positive feedback which is fantastic for us."

With the Surrey Sports Park the home of lacrosse in the UK, the event is likely to go back there next year but Ms Merrifield hopes that the organisation of the event this time around will mean selectors look at Wycombe Abbey once again.

She added: "We haven't thought a lot about next year yet but the tournament went well and if there is an opportunity to host it again, we will put our hat in the ring."

The winners this year were Lady Eleanor Holles who beat St Catherine's School in a 2-1 win on Monday.

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