

Bucks Free Press

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MAKING BUCKS ANGRY AGAIN

Town centre shopping 'crisis'

By Stephanie Wareham

HIGH Wycombe's town centre is at risk of plunging into crisis as retailers continue to sell up and move out - with two more shops shutting their doors for good in the High Street and the district council set to lose out on £80,000 of rent from the

closure of a popular shopping centre department store.

Both Argos and Poundworld on the High Street will close down, leaving two empty stores on the main shopping street in the town, and the loss of House of Fraser in the Eden Shopping Centre will leave Wycombe District Council

£80,000 out of pocket until a new retailer takes over the prime spot.

The council said it was "extremely disappointed" that House of Fraser was leaving the town after 10 years - but the store is expected to continue trading until 2019.

The news of the closures comes amid complaints from councillors

that High Wycombe's High Street is "one of the worst" - with shops closing their doors and the pavements falling into disrepair - meaning residents are abandoning the area in favour of shopping online instead.

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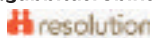
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COMMENT

With
**NICHOLAS
TUNNEY**

WELL, an amazing footballing adventure has come to an end.

It has been an absolute pleasure and a privilege to watch this England team evolve over the past few weeks and to reach a semi-final was a monumental achievement in itself.

Croatia were a bit too streetwise for us on the night but the players can hold their heads high at reaching a first World Cup semi-final for 28 years.

The likes of Harry Maguire and Kieran Trippier have been magnificent this tournament and have seen their stock rise considerably.

Harry Kane is nailed on for the Golden Boot and the likes of Jordan Pickford have grown as the tournament wore on.

I think it says a lot that there has been an outpouring of sympathy for the team despite that loss as they exceeded expectations after years of

failure by supposed better squads.

Now, those expectations will rise ahead of the Euros in two years' time and with Gareth Southgate at the helm, they have shown that anything is possible.

Attention will now turn to the football season, which begins for Football League clubs on August 4 and Wycombe Wanderers kick off their pre-season campaign at home to West Ham on Saturday.

It will be a good test against Premier League opposition but the main aim at this stage is for the players to get up to speed ahead of the Blackpool match at Adams Park.

The squad have been away on a team-building break in Wales over the past few days and after the success of last season's trip to RAF Digby, I am sure it will enhance the togetherness of the squad as they head into what will be a tough season in League One.

The cricket is reaching the business end of the season and High Wycombe are starting to feel the heat after another defeat at the

weekend to Tring Park.

Tomorrow's match against Banbury is as close to a must-win as you can get and I spoke to batsman Teddie Casterton this week about their chances.

He is still confident that they can continue to mount a challenge for the title and tomorrow's game is sure to be a thriller.

Ben Smith is back in action at the end of the month as he continues

his rise up the boxing ranks and I had the pleasure of talking to the welterweight this week about that fight and his hopes beyond that.

As ever, the success continues to flow for our sportsmen and women in south Bucks and with some of our sportsmen, like Tyrrell Hatton and Alex Hales, competing in the biggest events in the coming weeks they will certainly be hoping to emulate England's rise.



Gareth Southgate

SIX OF THE BEST

High Wycombe v
Banbury- Saturday, July
14

IT is getting tense in the Home Counties Premier Division and Wycombe are just starting to wobble at the worst possible time.

They have dropped to fifth in the division but with the points so close, a big win at the weekend would propel them to the brink of the title race and that could well be



back on the cards.

The team lost to Tring Park at the weekend knowing that a win would be the only option but the bowlers gave it a really good go in defeat.

The likes of Tom Hampton and

Cam Parsons have been bowling superbly in the past few weeks and if they click, you feel that a crucial victory could be in sight with the majority of the batting line up in such good form.

Gerrards Cross v Slough
2nds- Saturday, July 14

GX came so close to beating Stoke Green, just as they had done with Henley the week previously but they had to agonisingly settle for yet another draw.

The performances from key players are certainly there and if they can replicate those performances then there is no reason why they can't finally nail down that win they so desperately crave.

A victory would keep them in the hunt for a good finish this season and Richard Knudsen's team will be hoping for a turnaround in fortune.

Dinton v Amersham-
Saturday, July 14

AMERSHAM will harbour hopes of bouncing back this weekend after narrowly losing to Datchet last Saturday.

That loss was their first in six matches after a wonderful run which moved them away from the relegation places and into outside promotion contenders.

The defeat to Datchet was down

to the batting with a collapse not helping their cause. The bowling remains in top form and if the batting can click again, the Shardeloes will be very confident of a win.

England v India-
Saturday, July 14

ENGLAND were dealt a blow that Alex Hales would miss the first one-day after his sublime form in the



T20 series against India.

The former Chesham Grammar School student hit a matchwinning innings in the second T20 international at Cardiff to level the series but India won the decider easily at Bristol.

Now, England enter their strong-

est format against arguably the toughest opponents in the world and it should be a wonderful, albeit short, series.

Hopefully, Hales can recover quickly as England will miss his six-hitting ability early on and with the form he has been in, it will be a cruel blow to England's chances should he be missing for longer.

Scottish Open at
Gullane- 12/15 July

WITH The Open the next event on the agenda for the world's elite, some of the top players on the planet have descended on Scotland for a warm-up to the main course at Carnoustie next week.

The likes of Justin Rose, Rickie Fowler and Patrick Reed will all be in attendance as will Marlow's very own Tyrrell Hatton.

Hatton has a fantastic record at links courses. He is the current holder of the Alfred Dunhill Links title having won it two years in a row.

Hatton should feel confident about his chances heading into The Open and a decent week here is certainly not out of the question on what should be an easier test.

Wycombe v West Ham-
Saturday, July 14.

THE Blues are back in action this weekend after an absolutely memo-

rable campaign last time out, which now sees them take on the big boys in League One.

Their pre-season schedule begins with a game at home to Premier League rivals West Ham, which should be an excellent test of fitness and sharpness against Manuel Pellegrini's side.

Although, results won't mean anything, it is always good for players to feel confident ahead of the new campaign and it is paramount for key players to get minutes under their belt.

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New Wanderers kits really catch the eye as League One looms for Blues

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers' brand new home kit was unveiled in a packed out Caledonian Suite at Adams Park on Saturday afternoon.

Produced by the club's official kit supplier O'Neills, the famous light and dark blue quarters now incorporate a marl texture for the first time, plus an outline of the swan across the front.

Also unveiled last week were the new goalkeeper kits, which once again really caught the eye.

Wanderers' chairman Trevor Stroud said: "Our previous goalkeeping coach Barry Richardson was a fantastic character who believed there was a marginal gain to be had by making the goalkeeper appear bigger and distracting to the opposition.

"Although Barry left at Christmas, plans for the new kits were already in place and we're thrilled to see them come together."



Matt Bloomfield parades the new home shirt



Bloomfield and Nick Freeman



Yves Ma-Kalambay



Ryan Allsop in the new jersey



Ladies in search of new players for promotion quest

WYCOMBE Wanderers Ladies are targeting a promotion-winning year in the 2018/19 campaign - could you or someone you know be the new players they need to help make it happen?

The club are recruiting to strengthen their squad ahead of the new season in the Southern Region Women's Football League.

Are you 16 or over and interested in playing for Wycombe Wanderers? They're looking for committed players with experience of this league or higher to join their ranks as they push for promotion to the Southern Region Premier Division.

If you'd like to be part of this, then please contact club secretary Emma Newberry on emma_newberry@hotmail.co.uk.

Meanwhile, 16-year-old Kitty Jones has earned a move to Tottenham Hotspur Ladies Under 18s following a spectacular debut season..

The striker made a speedy transition from under-16 football and impressed in matches and training alike, paving the way for her to make the switch to the Greater London Women's Premier League with Spurs.

Ladies boss Andy McIntosh said: "We wish her the best of luck at her new club."



Wycombe Wanderers Ladies are on the lookout for new players

BLUES: Midfielder gets ready for 17th professional campaign

Bean there done that for Marcus

By Nicholas Tunney

FRESH from signing a new deal, Wycombe midfielder Marcus Bean admitted that pre-season doesn't get any easier as he prepares to head into his 17th season as a professional footballer.

Bean, 34, was outstanding in the heart of the Blues engine room last season and scored his first goal for the club in the game of the season, the winner in a 4-3 victory over Carlisle at Adams Park in February.

Speaking at the kit launch on Saturday, Bean said: "Pre-season never gets any easier.

"The older you get, the more you just want to get through it without any injuries and make sure you are ready for the first day of the season.

"You have to be sensible at my age. Dave Wates (strength and conditioning coach) gets a good balance between working us hard and knowing when to ease off so we don't pick up any of those injuries."

With the Blues ready to embark on a campaign in League One, Bean explained that there has been no difference in his preparation despite the fact the Blues are now in a different league.

He added: "In the back of your mind you have to realise the level has gone up and we need to raise our game. If we don't do that then we will stand still or go backwards.

"When playing the bigger teams, we have processes in place. The manager sets out what he wants us to do and if we keep to that I believe we will have success.

"However, if we come away from that and don't perform to the level then we won't."



Marcus Bean is raring to go ahead of Wycombe's League One season

SPORT

Hockey
Danson gets
England call
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Cricket
Hales hopes to
keep up form
-Page 65



Jacobson: Hammers test will be exciting

Defender wants to keep winning mentality



By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Joe Jacobson has been one of the most consistent players in recent seasons at Adams Park during Gareth Ainsworth's tenure.

The left-back has been a mainstay in the side the past few seasons and his assured displays in defence have led to his manager calling him "the best left-back in the bottom two divisions".

Jacobson is now preparing for life in League One for the first

time as a Chairboy, but it is a level he knows well as he captained Shrewsbury during the 2012/13 season as they confirmed their League One status.

Now, Jacobson prepares to face his old club next season, as well as the likes of Sunderland as Wycombe have five pre-season games to get themselves ready for the rigours of third tier football.

First up is a home friendly against West Ham at Adams Park tomorrow (Saturday, 3pm ko), a contest Jacobson is relishing.

He said: "It is a really exciting game for us.

"They will obviously bring a very strong squad which has been assembled for millions and millions of pounds so it will be a really tough test.

"It will be our first game for eight or so weeks and we want to give a good account of ourselves. We want to get our work in so it won't be perfect, but we want to get into the game and play well and try and win the game.

"We want to keep that winning

mentality and take into the new season."

Jacobson added: "Pre-season has been tough. It is nice to have a break but you want to get back in and see your mates and everyone is still buzzing after what happened last season and there are a couple of new faces and new bits added to the training ground.

"It has been really enjoyable so far. They make it really enjoyable here and the staff like to make it interesting and mix it up.

"We are working extremely hard."



Smith ready for 'tough test'

Boxing

WYCOMBE boxer Ben Smith is ready for his "toughest test yet" as he prepares for the seventh fight of his career on July 29 in Bedford.

Welterweight Smith, 21, will be fighting at The Corn Exchange with a view to competing on a big undercard in September under Frank Warren.

As of yet, Smith doesn't know who he will up against on July 29, but has been assured that it will be the hardest fight of his career so far.

He said: "It is going to be a step up from the previous six fights I have had. The time for fighting journeymen has come to an end now and I will be having a tough fight at the end of the month.

"I feel in the best shape I have ever been in at the moment and there is no way I am going to lose on the 29th whoever I am facing.

"I have made so many sacrifices for this fight, like missing out on holidays with friends. I have been on sleep, eat, train, repeat over the past few weeks and training has gone so well and I can't wait to get in the ring again."

Smith allowed himself a little look ahead after the 29th too. He added: "It will be great to get on a big undercard in September.

"Once the fight on July 29 is done, I will have three days rest then crack right back on with training and working hard as that fight and then going into next year will be so big for me."

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