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COMMENT

With
NICHOLAS TUNNEY



IT has been yet another exciting week for sport across south Bucks as well as covering Wycombe's first away game of the season up in Yorkshire on Saturday, as well as keeping my fingers crossed for another cup run.

It has been an up-and-down week for the Blues but I think that win in the Carabao Cup will do the guys a power of good.

I was at the Keepmoat Stadium last Saturday and for an hour, Wanderers were well in the game, albeit with Doncaster shading the chances.

That first goal then really knocked the stuffing out of them and a couple of errors crept in at the back and it shows at this level you will get ruthlessly punished for your mistakes.

I spoke to Gareth after and he was as upbeat as ever and backed his players to bounce back from that loss.

They did in dramatic circumstances on Tuesday evening as they beat Northampton Town on penalties at Adams Park.

Overall, I thought the team performed well and were the better side for the majority of the game. It was great to see Randell Williams get on the scoresheet with a very impressive goal.

He was also man of the match, for me, at Doncaster and has had an excellent start to the season since signing on loan from Watford.

That goal seemed to send a surge of confidence through the team but unfortunately, Northampton notched an equaliser just minutes after Yves Ma-Kalambay saved a penalty from Cobblers skipper Ash Taylor.

With the game deadlocked, the tie went to penalties and Wycombe scraped through thanks to more heroics from Ma-Kalambay and the winning penalty from Adam El-Abd.

I am convinced this will pave the way for an upturn in results and performances.

This afternoon's visitors are certainly familiar foes to Wanderers over the years and I am expecting a very closely-fought contest against a side who have lost their opening two games and will be determined to pick up some points.

Then comes a long way for the players, fans (and me!) with Wanderers travelling down to Plymouth on Tuesday evening then up to Bradford on Saturday. The

League One season really is back in full swing.

It was great to see Tom Ingram keep up the pace in the BTCC despite a horror run in his first race.

It shows his strength of mind to come back from that setback and I hope I am reporting on him as champion in a few weeks time.

And the football season has kicked off and the best of luck to all our south Bucks sides.



Yves Ma-Kalambay

Wycombe Wanderers



VS



Bristol Rovers

'The Chairboys'

'The Rovers'

OPPOSITION VIEW



1. Sam Slocombe

15. James Clarke

4. Tom Lockyer

5. Tony Craig

16. Tom Broadbent

6. Ed Upson

8. Ollie Clarke

7. Liam Sercombe

33. Alex Rodman

9. Stefan Payne

23. Kyle Bennett

WE take a look back at Rovers' last game, a 2-1 win against Crawley Town in the Carabao Cup with Bristol Post reporter John Evely

ROVERS boss Darrell Clarke was pleased his side managed to get through a tough test against League Two side Crawley on Tuesday.

He said: "It's an important win, we had to win the game anyway we could today.

"I think people turned up expecting us to win so it was a bit of a no win situation for us, but there are shocks in every round and the lower league teams sometimes win, but it was a professional job by the lads and I am pleased with the effort."

Clarke tried new signing Stefan Payne and Kyle Bennett together and the pair linked well in patched during the game

The Rovers manager added: "He did have more support, you know me I will look at it and change things round, bits and pieces.

"Maybe I didn't get the call right on Saturday but that happens at times and we change things round but you could go on until the cows come home with formations and what not, sometimes you have just got to do the basics right and I felt we did that for long spells in this game."

Clarke, however, was slightly concerned that his side again conceded from a cross.

He added: "Maybe we could do better to stop the cross, but it was a corner. In any game of football you are going to be able to pick holes in it, even if it was 4-0.

"We look at things, we look at every goal we concede, analyses it, work out why we conceded it and try and make sure it doesn't happen again.

"It is early days. It is pleasing we have won a match, we have had two disappointing performances but this was a game everyone expected us to win at the Memorial Ground and these games are very difficult sometimes."



Darrell Clarke

In the CHAIR



Wycombe goalkeeper Yves Ma-Kalambay



Yves Ma-Kalambay

WANDERERS goalkeeper Yves Ma-Kalambay revelled in his role as hero after he saved the crucial penalty to give the Blues a Carabao Cup first round victory over Northampton Town.

Ma-Kalambay saved a crucial sudden-death penalty in the shootout as well as one in normal time to send the Chairboys through to round two.

After his penalty heroics, Ma-Kalambay explained his enjoyed his role as underdog in the shoot-out.

He said: "The goalkeeper is the underdog. You expect the quality player to score from the spot. I just trusted my reactions and tried to depart to make the save as late as possible.

"It is nice to win but we have to see the bigger picture. The performance from the whole squad was pretty amazing.

"Everything was spot on and the personnel made that happen for us. The communication was fluid and it is promising to see how we are coming together."

This was Ma-Kalambay's first outing of the season with Ryan Allsop between the sticks on both league games.

Ma-Kalambay admitted the competition is healthy and hoped when given the chance he would continue to put in good performances.

He added: "Ryan is a good goalkeeper and we need to accept the manager's decision. He played the first two games and has done well. I just need to keep pushing and give the gaffer a headache.

"At the end of the day, I give 200 per cent and will continue to do so."

Ma-Kalambay joined the Blues last season and despite a limited number of appearances, is relishing his time in south Bucks.

He added: "It is a blast here. Coming in firstly as a player, then player-coach, then back again as a player is brilliant.

"It is a great club. I enjoy every single session. Playing games is a bonus and the end result of everything. For me, coming here to such a nice and welcoming club is a blast."

WANDERERS

Boss: Rovers reverse was a 'reality check'

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth urged his side to be more clinical after their 3-0 loss against Doncaster Rovers on Saturday at the Keepmoat Stadium.

Second half goals from Mallik Wilks, Joe Wright and John Marquis sealed an ultimately comfortable win for Rovers, despite the Blues matching their opponents until Wilks' goal on the hour.

Ainsworth was pleased with that first 60 minutes but warned his team they have to get used to life in League One pretty quickly.

He said: "I was pleased with the first hour. We more than matched them and had a couple of good chances.

"We usually create more and we are going to have to get used to this league.

"Teams aren't going to let us in as much as they did in League Two and we are going to have to work hard for our points.

"Last half-hour we weren't good enough and I am sure we can bounce back next week.

"We have got players coming back. I changed the shape a little bit to deal with Doncaster and it worked for an hour but once they got their first goal there was only one team in it.

"We can fight and scrap and I believe we have enough, and some, to stay in this league. This was a bit of a reality check for us."

Ainsworth took time to praise loan midfielder Bryn Morris, who made his debut for the Chairboys against Rovers.



Ainsworth urged his side to get to grips with League One quickly Williams was a bright spot on a disappointing day

The Wycombe boss said: "I thought Bryn did really well.

"He stuck a couple of tackles in and he has a good passing range.

"He is in the squad because he is an excellent ball player and there is plenty more to come from him, as there is from the rest of the boys."

After a fairly even opening 55 minutes, Wilks opened the scoring with a thumping effort from 20 yards which went through a crowd of

players and beat Ryan Allsop.

Centre-half Wright made it two on 77 minutes when he coolly slotted past Allsop after a wonderful through pass by Tommy Rowe.

Marquis then made it three and sealed the deal for Rovers at the second attempt on 80 minute. After Allsop saved well initially from the striker, Marquis poked home the rebound.

Adebayo Akinfenwa had a good

chance in the first half.

However, Wilks crashed home to give Doncaster the lead before the evergreen Sam Saunders almost pulled the Blues level on 63 minutes when he worked space on his left foot and his curling strike went inches wide with Marko Marosi struggling.

Allsop made a fine save from Herbie Kane before the late goals sealed the win.



BLUES: Midfielder says surviving is the objective Bean: This was a tough lesson for us

WYCOMBE midfielder Marcus Bean reflected on a tough afternoon for the Blues as they lost 3-0 to Doncaster Rovers at the Keepmoat Stadium.

Wanderers matched their opponents for an hour before three late goals condemned the Chairboys to their first defeat on the road since December.

Bean called the match a "tough lesson" but insisted his team-mates would learn a lot from the defeat.

He said: "It was a tough lesson for us.

"It was even up until the first goal and we have to handle going behind a lot better than that.

"We capitulated by our standards and it was unfortunate. It is a tough league and we will have to defend

for long periods. I think we did that well and we were decent on the counter attack but we didn't take our chances."

Bean also looked at Rovers and what they have achieved since being promoted from League Two as champions in 2017 and the midfielder explained that Grant McCann's side could be a good role model to follow.

He added: "Last year, Doncaster managed to stay in the league and that is what we have to do now.

"We need to stay in this league by any means necessary.

"This was definitely a harsh lesson. They were clinical when they got their chances and we weren't happy with the manner of the goals either."



Marcus Bean reflected on a tough afternoon

Injuries have also been a problem for Wycombe so far and Bean added: "Any manager will tell you he wants all the tools to utilise and he hasn't

had that at the minute.

"We lacked concentration in the key moments here and that has cost us."

THE BIG MATCH: Cowan-Hall close to a comeback

CHAIRBOYS boss Gareth Ainsworth is hoping to include Paris Cowan-Hall and Sido Jombati in his squad for this weekend's home game against Bristol Rovers.

Cowan-Hall missed the defeat at Doncaster last weekend and the cup tie against Northampton due to injury and Jombati was forced off against the Cobblers after a whack on the head.

Nathan Tyson and Darius Charles are also not too far away from making their first appearances in a matchday squad this season too.

Ainsworth explained that players were slowly coming back from injury

and was encouraged at the depth of his squad.

He said: "Paris is probably closest to a return out of all the guys who are out.

"We will have a look to see if he can have any impact on the squad. The good thing is we didn't pick anything up on Tuesday apart from Sido getting a whack on the head, which we have to be careful with.

"We are ready to go again on Saturday with a strong side and a win under our belts so I am really pleased."

Scott Kashket came on in the game against Northampton, coming through that match unscathed.



Cowan-Hall may return after injury

CHAIRBOYS: Ainsworth urges his side to evoke cup memories Boss delighted with cup progress

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth was a happy man after seeing his side go through on penalties to see off Northampton Town in the Carabao Cup first round at Adams Park.

Skipper Adam El-Abd scored the winning spot kick to make it 7-6 on penalties after Yves Ma-Kalambay saved Jordan Turnbull's effort.

In normal time, it was 1-1 with Randell Williams giving the Blues the lead before Sam Hoskins equalised late on.

Ma-Kalambay performed more penalty heroics at 1-0 when he kept out Ash Taylor's effort was 10 minutes to go.

Ainsworth was delighted to go through at this stage after a barren run in this competition in recent season.

He said: "We haven't won a game in this competition for a long time and that was pleasing.

"What is also pleasing is the way we did it. I thought we were the better side and asked a lot of questions of them.

"It is great to win on penalties. It isn't nice to be on the other end. We played some good stuff.

"The front three ran their socks off, we had energy in the midfield and the back four, with Jason McCarthy back in there, was a big plus and Yves did really well tonight."

With Ainsworth making seven changes for the game, most of them performed very well to stake their claim for a starting berth against Bristol Rovers on Saturday.

Ainsworth added: "This game is about squads. Everyone wants to play and the whole squad will be used this season."



Ainsworth was pleased to his side go into the hat for round two

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double ton
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Motorsport
Ingram keeps
up hunt for title
- Page 62



McCarthy buzzing to be back at Adams Park

Defender backs squad to excel at this level



By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE 'new boy' Jason McCarthy explained he is delighted to be back and is convinced he has seen enough quality throughout the season to have a successful season in League One.

McCarthy signed last week on a three-year deal after a successful loan spell in the 2015/16 season which saw him crowned player of the year.

Speaking to the Bucks Free Press yesterday, McCarthy declared he

was raring to go and was delighted to return to Adams Park.

He said: "I am buzzing to be back. It has been a surreal week. It was great to play the other night and it is nice to be back at Adams Park."

"There are a lot of familiar faces still here from last time and I am buzzing to link back up with the gaffer and it is exciting to be back here."

"It has helped knowing a lot of the guys already to settle in and it was great to play on Tuesday."

"The last time I played was the

third round of the FA Cup in January and I was really pleased with how I played on Tuesday and it was great to get the win."

McCarthy started the game on Tuesday against Northampton at right-back but moved to centre-half when Sido Jombati went off with an injury.

The former Barnsley defender admitted he would play wherever manager Gareth Ainsworth wants him to.

He added: "Right-back is my preferred position but I can definitely

do a job at centre-half and wherever the gaffer wants me to play I will give 100 per cent."

Having only been back in south Bucks for a week, McCarthy is already confident that the squad has enough about it to have a decent campaign.

He said: "I have already seen more than enough to suggest that we will definitely survive."

"I think we can do a lot more than that, definitely. We have some really good players across the pitch and we need to enjoy the challenge."



Gaffer looks for first win

Wanderers

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth is hoping his side can take some momentum with them into this weekend after their midweek win against Northampton in the Carabao Cup.

The Blues haven't won yet in League One but Ainsworth is keeping his fingers crossed that his side can follow up against Bristol Rovers tomorrow.

Games against Rovers have always been tasty affairs over the past few seasons and Ainsworth is expecting a tough game against Darrell Clarke's side.

He said: "It is going to be a game where both teams are looking for the points because after a couple of games both sides have less than they hope for."

"It is still early days. Darrell is a good manager and has had successive promotions and they have Stefan Payne up front and he will cause some problems."

"We have to match them. We are at home and I am expecting a good crowd and the fans like the spice of this occasion."

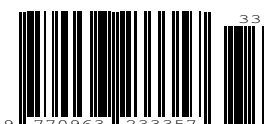
"We have started well at Adams Park this season and we want to continue that."

"We needed a goal and a win and we got both on Tuesday. After the Doncaster game, I said the feeling would have gone and there is a different one now because of the win."

"I want the feelings we have to be positive. You are only as good as your last game as that is what people remember."

"We have to perform to stay in this league."

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