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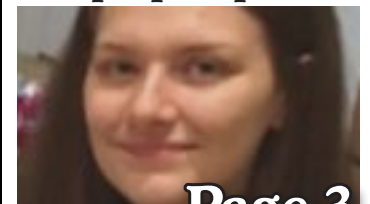
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GALLERY: Blues 1-1 Sunderland



Marcus Bean in the thick of the action



Marcus Bean goes for a header



Nathan Tyson on the charge



Wanderers' Alex Samuel and Luke O'Nien



Alex Samuel celebrates



Gareth Ainsworth salutes the fans



Wycombe's Nathan Tyson challenges Luke O'Nien



Matt Bloomfield on his 500th Wycombe game



Joe Jacobson challenges for possession



The fracas at the end of the game



Nathan Tyson and Sunderland's Luke O'Nien

Samuel: The boys deserved to win that game

WYCOMBE striker Alex Samuel explained the late Sunderland equaliser left the squad disappointed after drawing 1-1 with the Mackems on Saturday at Adams Park.

Duncan Watmore's 94th minute goal was harsh on the Blues, who led through Samuel's cool first-half finish, and the forward admitted the team were gutted they couldn't hold on.

He said: "I think we played absolutely terrific and showed exactly what we can do.

"We limited and restricted them and, although we may have taken a draw before the game, we are disap-

pointed with a 1-1 which shows how well we played. We should have won the game."

Samuel's goal was his first for the club since his last-gasp winner against Accrington back in November, and he was pleased to get back on the scoresheet.

He added: "It was nice to get a goal and hopefully now we can kick on until the end of the season.

"Sunderland didn't really threaten that much apart from hitting the bar, but there wasn't much that was a threat to us either, we looked pretty comfortable.

"We should have won the game."



Alex Samuel scored the opener against Sunderland

WYCOMBE: Blues boss hails his players despite late heartache Mackems nick draw at the death

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth spoke of his immense pride with his players as they came so close to beating the mighty Sunderland before a heartbreaking late equaliser meant the Blues had to settle for a 1-1 draw.

Alex Samuel gave the Chairboys the lead in the 34th minute before Duncan Watmore equalised deep into stoppage time to break Wanderers hearts.

In truth, Wycombe were the better side for long spells of the match and Ainsworth reflected on his team's superb display at Adams Park.

He said: "It is hard to look through the result and look at what happened at the end of the game as I really did think we were the better side.

"We have some awesome players and hearts that beat like lions, and they were magnificent from the first whistle to the last.

"We are here to give it everything and I am really proud of the boys."

Club captain Matt Bloomfield, on his 500th appearance for the Blues, put in a tremendous performance and Ainsworth was quick to praise his impact, as well as goalscorer Samuel.

He added: "Blooms has really done his 500th game absolute justice. What a guy and what a player and what a great leader he is out there."

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Allsop, McCarthy, Jombati, Stewart, Jacobson, Bean, Bloomfield (sub: Thompson, 90), Gape, Tyson (sub: Harriman, 82), Bolton (sub: Cowan-Hall, 27), Samuel. Subs: Ma-Kalambay, Kashket, Owens, Akinfenwa.

SUNDERLAND: McLaughlin, O'Nien, Flanagan, Dunne, James (sub: Matthews, 46), Morgan, Leadbitter, Cattermole, Honeyman (sub: Watmore, 60), McGeady, Grigg. Subs: Ruiter, McGeouch, Gooch, Baldwin, Power.



Ainsworth was immensely proud of his players

In the CHAIR



Louisa Tunney gives her views on Tuesday's game



Nick and Louisa Tunney

TO give a female view and to honour International Women's Day – Friday March 8 – I went along to Wycombe Wanderers v Accrington Stanley under the lights at Adams Park.

Accrington – or 'Accy' – as they are known, hit the bar several times early on, and Wycombe were unable to respond with a shot on target. Standout players for me included Nick Freeman, who carried the ball well and covered a lot of ground. Adebayo 'Bayo' Akinfenwa as always oozed calmness.

Anyway, back to the game at hand. Paris Cowan-Hall scored a beautiful goal in front of the BMI Healthcare terrace after running down the left wing and neatly placing the ball in the top right hand corner.

The years in which Nicholas has worked with Wycombe Wanderers has taught me that 90 minutes can actually last several hours.

For the first time I saw an injury to the assistant referee. This required a substitution, several costume changes, confusion, players left out in the cold trying to keep warm, and a prolonged delay to the first half long enough for Accrington to equalise. In the 54th minute. From a penalty. You can be forgiven for thinking that fate was being plain cruel. And it was.

Sat beside me, my QPR-loving husband made several references to Accy's number 38, Paul Smyth, who is on loan from the mighty Rs. It was Smyth who perfected the part of pantomime villain, gleaning two penalties for Accy, both of which were scored by Billy Kee, and scoring an almost carbon copy of Cowan-Hall's early goal to give Accy the win, 3-1.

I really felt for Wycombe, and their enigmatic manager Gareth Ainsworth. The team looked shattered, battle-weary from their excellent performance against Sunderland.

However – what we do know of this club is their spirit. It is certainly felt throughout the press box, as club media, radio, national and local press all help each other out to identify who did what, where and when. And to any women out there wishing to watch football in an inclusive and friendly setting, 'Wander' no more.

WANDERERS

Accrington celebrate victory at Adams Park

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers made it no wins in eight games after a 3-1 defeat to Accrington Stanley in their League One clash at a chilly Adams Park on Tuesday night.

It looked good for the Blues when Paris Cowan-Hall gave them the lead in the first half, but two Billy Kee penalties and a Paul Smyth strike eased the visitors to a win against a below-par Wanderers.

Wycombe made a bright start to proceedings under the lights as Alex Samuel flashed a shot across goal on three minutes.

Accrington possessed a lot of pace in attack and Sam Finley saw his long-range effort on six minutes deflected wide.

From the resulting corner, Sean McConville's clever pass found Jordan Clark who saw his shot crash against the crossbar.

The game fizzled out a little, but was brought back to life on 23 minutes when Cowan-Hall curled home a delightful finish after good work from Matt Bloomfield.

Accrington showed their threat going forward and McConville hit the woodwork, crashing his shot against the post on 28 minutes with Allsop beaten.

With the prolonged injury time, Stanley had a chance of their own when McConville's free kick was tipped wide by Allsop.

From the resulting corner, Smyth was pulled to the ground in a gathering of players and referee Johnson awarded the penalty.

Billy Kee hammered home the spot kick to give Allsop no chance



Cowan-Hall grabbed his fifth goal of the season

and following that incident, the referee blew for half time.

Wanderers almost retook the lead on 53 minutes when Freeman's fierce strike was brilliantly thwarted by Maxted. From the rebound, Cowan-Hall saw his shot blocked on the line by Harvey Rodgers.

With the game on a knife-edge, Stanley were awarded another penalty on 65 minutes when Curtis Thompson was adjudged to pulled

back the lively Smith and Kee coolly slotted home.

Wycombe were huffing and puffing but were dealt a hammer blow on 71 minutes when that livewire Smyth drove into the box and found the far corner.

Wycombe now face a crucial game on Saturday away at Shrewsbury.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Allsop, McCarthy, Jombati, El-Abd, Harriman, Thompson (sub: Owens,

86), Bloomfield (sub: Kashket, 59), Freeman, Cowan-Hall (sub: Bolton, 82), Samuel, Akinfenwa. Subs: Ma-Kalambay, Jacobson, Frempah.

ACCRINGTON STANLEY: Maxted, Johnson, Hughes, Rodgers, Donacien, Clark, Finley, Barlasier, McConville, Kee, Smyth. Subs: Savin, Richards-Everton, Nolan, Brown, Simmonds, Sousa, Armstrong.

REFEREE: Kevin Johnson.

WANDERERS: Manager reflects on a tough night Ainsworth bemoans 'poor' second 45

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth slammed his side's defending as they lost 3-1 at Adams Park to Accrington Stanley.

Despite Paris Cowan-Hall giving the Blues the lead, goalkeeper Ryan Allsop gifted Accrington a penalty right on half-time as he bundled over Stanley's Paul Smyth and Billy Kee hammered home the spot kick.

Accrington were then awarded another penalty when Curtis Thompson fouled Smyth and Kee again found the net.

To compound matters, Smyth made it three late on to leave Wycombe just four points above the relegation zone.

Ainsworth said: "Goals change games and it is a crazy rush of blood that gives the penalty away.

"With the referee's assistant getting injured, that gave them some momentum and you can't give them a leg up like that.

"Second half we just weren't good enough. We gave another penalty away, even though it was soft, but why give the referee a decision to make.

"Accrington were definitely better in the second half and the first half was much of a muchness.

"We haven't been good enough in the last eight games and we need to find a way to win games. I would say I back my team to win more than two games from the remaining nine and I will be making sure that people know it is a real scrap for points."

One player to stand out for the Chairboys was Nick Freeman, who was back in the side after illness, and Ainsworth was pleased with his display.

He added: "Nick did OK. He and Curtis were both ill and Nick has done really well. He will be glad to get 90 minutes under his belt."



Ainsworth bemoaned his side's second half display

PREVIEW: Lewis Cox assesses Wycombe's rivals 'Shrewsbury fans are very nervous about relegation'



Wycombe beat Shrewsbury 3-2 back in November at Adams Park

SHROPSHIRE Star sports reporter Lewis Cox gives us the lowdown on Wycombe Wanderers' opponents, Shrewsbury Town, ahead of Saturday's match at the Montgomery Waters Meadow.

HOW would you assess Shrewsbury's season after last year's play-off disappointment?

Stop-start, plagued with inconsistency, sadly, and that shows in their league position. They have a squad better than where it is but haven't been able to get any form of consistent results together.

John Askey was sacked in November and, under caretaker stewardship of Danny Coyne and Eric Ramsay, Town clicked into gear and went on a fine run. Things have been a little difficult at times since but they have shown decent form in recent weeks, which was ended in frustrating style at Rochdale on Saturday and Plymouth on Tuesday.

EXPECTATIONS after reaching the play-off final last season.

Expectations rose but Shrews would have desperately wanted to build on what Paul Hurst and his team achieved last season. The replacement did not work out and it feels somewhat like they are building again under Sam Ricketts who, to his credit, got some decent play-

By Nicholas Tunney

ers in January and results have improved. It's stay up by hook or crook time - and they have the quality to stay up - and go properly from the summer.

WHAT is the feeling around the fans and club currently with the bottom of League One so tight?

Fans are very apprehensive and concerned about the prospect of relegation. They feel they have seen little this season to comfort them about staying up - however the recent form has shown that Town can beat some of the better sides in the division and most believes the quality is there to get them over the line.

It is ridiculously tight and one set of results can change everything, so the emotions are on something of a rollercoaster.

Ricketts won't be able to put his true stamp on Town until the summer at the earliest, so it's all about keeping their heads above the water.

WHO is the dangerman?

Probably Tyrese Campbell. An inspired loan from Stoke in January.

The exciting 19-year-old plays on the shoulder and has searing pace. He did net three in three but has since gone three without a goal.

Frempah joins the Chairboys

New signing

WYCOMBE Wanderers have added defender Ben Frempah to their squad on non-contract terms, to provide additional cover for the remainder of the season.

Frempah, 23, featured as a trialist for the Chairboys in pre-season and has continued to train with the squad throughout the current campaign, having previously played in non-league as well as having had spells with Leicester City and Ross County.

Boss Gareth Ainsworth explained: "Ben knows all about how we play and he's shown us enough in training to give us confidence that he can be relied upon if needed to do a job for the team."

"He's got on extremely well with the lads during the time that he's been with us, and now he's got an opportunity to become part of the squad on matchdays and help us achieve our goal between now and the end of the season."

"We're low on numbers after picking up two red cards on Saturday, plus a few injury knocks, but we went into Tuesday's game against Accrington full of confidence."

Ainsworth hopes for injury boost

Wanderers preview

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth is hoping some key players will be returning to the squad ahead of the weekend's clash with Shrewsbury Town.

Dominic Gape and Anthony Stewart missed the Accrington game through injury and Matt Bloomfield hobbled off during the 3-1 defeat but Ainsworth is keeping his fingers crossed that the trio will return on Saturday.

Ainsworth said: "I am hoping that everyone is back for Saturday, which is great."

"We will assess the squad from Tuesday night and there were one or two knocks but I don't think anything serious."

"Hopefully it is good timing with everyone back because this is a good game for us to go into now."

"What I want to do is recreate what we did on Saturday [against Sunderland] and the first 30 minutes from the Accrington game."

"I think the last 60 minutes on Tuesday was poor but you have those games and they seem to be intensified when you are on a bad run."

"I am pleased with Saturday and if we can replicate anything like that, we will have a good chance of getting the points."

PREVIEW: Shrews boss hoping for bounce back Ricketts assesses Wanderers



Shrewsbury manager Sam Ricketts

SAM Ricketts feels his Shrewsbury side are showing improvement in their performances but admits he understands football is a results-based business.

Town are gearing up for a huge return to Montgomery Waters Meadow as they welcome Wycombe Wanderers after more away woes in the shape of back-to-back defeats.

Shrewsbury recently went five games unbeaten but are now winless in three, taking just a point from nine available against a trio of opponents from the bottom half of League One.

Ricketts, whose side are 20th and outside the bottom four on goal difference, feels displays are heading in the right direction but Town's players must back those up with results.

"It's a really big game on Saturday. We had a really good patch of performances and results," said the Town boss, who has won three from 17 league games in charge.

"Performances, certainly on Tuesday (at Plymouth), were good enough to get a result but we haven't done that."

"But it's not like we've not played

well and been beat. You can say it's disappointing to play well and get beat but I'd rather play well and understand why you've played well."

Shrewsbury's game at Plymouth was a bitter pill to swallow for the Shrews as Ricketts' men lost 2-1 to compound their dismal away form further.

Graham Carey's spot-kick denied the visitors a deserved point after Shrewsbury had improved significantly after the break and netted an equaliser through Ollie Norburn's rebounded penalty.

Former Salop man Freddie Ladapo continued this season's former player curse by netting a poor - if controversial - opener inside 10 minutes and Shrews somehow survived with just a one-goal deficit.

One of the worst halves under Ricketts was put right after the break and Town had a deserved point until Anthony Grant fouled man of the match Ruben Lameiras in the final minute.

Ricketts' side, now winless in three, remain 20th - now outside the drop zone on goal difference ahead of the weekend's game.

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Ainsworth not worried by his side's away form

Wycombe boss ready for Shrewsbury clash



Gareth Ainsworth is backing his side to bounce back

By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth is not worried about his side's poor away form as they prepare for a crunch clash with Shrewsbury Town this Saturday (3pm ko).

The Blues travel to the Montgomery Waters Meadow tomorrow with just three league away victories all season, belying their usual strong campaigns on the road.

They head into the clash on the back of three straight losses on

their travels, but Ainsworth argues facing much stronger opposition is the main reason why Wycombe's form has dipped away from the comfort of Adams Park.

He said: "It is the league we are in. It is a tough, tough league.

"We got promoted knowing that we were a bottom-half team in League Two, so never mind what we are in League One.

"Realism and perspective are what's needed. I am not going to start chucking my toys out of the pram because we have only won

three away from home.

"We have had some good results away from home, some good draws, but it is tough in this league and we have to accept we are not going to roll teams over like we did last year.

"We were on a heck of a run and we were on great form. This season has been a lot different, I knew it would be.

"If we can stay up, which was the plan, I will be a happy man and whether that's higher than 13th or finishing 20th, it doesn't matter. Just staying above that line was the re-

mit and that is still my only aim."

Wycombe have an incredible record against the Shrews, having not lost to the Shropshire side since 1994.

Ainsworth added: "You can take heart from that and you get runs against teams. I think you can look at that either way and that Shrewsbury will be up for it as they never beat Wycombe.

"It has to be the work ethic that we put into place that we have to take up there and I want to try and make that count."



El-Abd set for 'huge six-pointer'

Wycombe Wanderers

WYCOMBE skipper Adam El-Abd is treating this Saturday's clash with his former club Shrewsbury Town as a "six-pointer" as Wanderers bid to arrest their poor run of form in the league.

Wanderers have not won since January and are now just four points above the relegation zone.

And El-Abd believes the Shrews clash is a massive game for the club.

He said: "It is a huge game and I think it is a six-pointer really because if we beat them it puts seven points between us and them.

"If they beat us then the gap is down to one point. At this stage of the season with nine games to go, it doesn't really get bigger.

"We have lots of games against teams in the lower half of the division coming up. However, we have said all season that it doesn't matter where these sides are in the table, it is on the day what counts.

"If we can perform to our capabilities, we have a chance of winning any game of football and if we make sure the details our right, we have a better of chance of swinging the finer margins of the games in our favour."

El-Abd is returning to his old club for the first time since leaving, and admitted he cannot wait to go back.

He added: "I am looking forward to it.

"I had a good time there. Although we didn't have the best of the seasons, I enjoyed my time there.

"I am looking forward to going back there and hopefully we can win."

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