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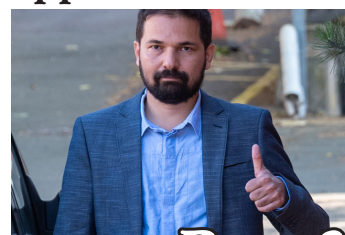
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WANDERERS: Playmaker enjoying his crucial role

Freeman admits to penalty nerve

WYCOMBE playmaker Nick Freeman admitted to a bout of nerves before his excellent penalty finish against Accrington Stanley.

Freeman equalised with 20 minutes to go with a spot kick buried right into the corner but unfortunately Wanderers couldn't go onto to win the game.

Freeman said: "I had an agreement with Bayo [Akinfenwa] that if JJ [Joe Jacobson] isn't on the pitch then I get the ball.

"It was a long time coming and I am just happy to finally get off the mark.

"I can't say I wasn't nervous but it was a great feeling to see it go in and it was a good point and we move onto Saturday now."

Freeman has been a regular in recent weeks in the number 10 role and the midfielder explained that is his favoured position having played all across the midfield in his Wycombe career.

He added: "That number 10 role is my favoured position.

"I have wanted to play there for a while now and I am just grateful that I am playing there right now and I am excelling and I just want to carry on this form to be honest.

"I am very pleased with how I am playing. We have a great team and it is a great league.

"We are third and we are buzzing."

Freeman also pinpointed a slow start to the game which hurt Wanderers' chances of making it five League One wins out of five so far this term.

He added: "It was a bit gutting that it took us to half-time to change but at least we did it second half and we played the way that we played.

"Hopefully we can take that into Portsmouth from the first minute and hopefully we will be fine.

"The gaffer told us to change our style at half-time and it worked and in the last 20 minutes it looked like there was only one team that was going to win.

"We lost that game last year so there is improvement."

Blues lose to the Gills

Wycombe Wanderers

WYCOMBE slumped to their first defeat of the season with a 2-0 defeat to Gillingham at the Priestfield Stadium on Saturday.

After an uneventful first half, Mikael Ndjoli scored a second half brace, who blasted home following excellent play from Brandon Hanlan before converting a penalty following a foul on Olly Lee.

Alex Samuel was proving a willing runner, and he slotted a chance wide.

Gillingham hadn't registered a shot in the first 33 minutes but nearly opened the scoring when Olly Lee's free-kick was flicked on and Max Ehmer found space at the back post, only to be denied by the boot of Ryan Allsop with a low side-footed effort.

Ndjoli opened the scoring on the hour, being set-up by Hanlan before smashing home into the top corner.

Scott Kashket was denied a clear run on goal by an excellent last-ditch challenge from Tom O'Connor following an Akinfenwa flick-on, and Oforbhor went close with a fizzing effort from distance before Giles Phillips and David Wheeler came into the fray, with Jacobson and Jack Grimmer making way.

It meant a change in shape for Wycombe, going 3-4-1-2 for the final 20 minutes, with Wheeler and Freeman out wide in midfield.

However they were barely on the pitch for a minute when Gills won a penalty for an alleged foul by Phillips on Olly Lee, and Ndjoli fired home his second of the game, beating Allsop away to his right and the Gills held on for the win.

Ainsworth commits future to Blues

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth pledged his future to the club, having been linked with the managerial hotseat at Lincoln.

He said: "We've enjoyed a really strong start to the season and it's always flattering to see us - staff, players and the club as a whole - talked about in high regard. However, it's important that the focus is on ourselves and what we do as a club to make sure that things continue to move in the right direction.

"After completing the five-year plan in the summer, which was achieved thanks to a brilliant team effort from everyone on and off the pitch under Trust ownership, I believe we have an opportunity to keep developing by welcoming Rob Couhig and seeing where his expertise can take us.



Nick Freeman was delighted to score his first goal since February 2018. Photo: PRiME Media

BLUES: Club captain hails the quality of the squad Blooms: I didn't envisage us being in the top three



Bloomfield is delighted to see Wycombe in the top three

WYCOMBE club captain Matt Bloomfield admitted he is surprised that the Chairboys are in the top three of League One at this stage of the season - but hailed the quality of the signings that have come in.

The Blues are sitting pretty in third and have suffered just the one loss in the league, a 2-0 defeat to Gillingham last weekend.

The Chairboys finished 17th last season and the main aim is to better that but Bloomfield is enjoying the success that Wycombe are having so far this term.

He said: "I didn't see us being in this position is the honest truth.

"First day of pre-season we had nine players on the grass. There was nine of us who thought was is this season going to hold for us.

"Then we had journalists turning up wanting to write about us and what is happening on and off the pitch and we are all thinking what is going to happen this year.

"Then suddenly Rob [Couhig] and Pete got involved and we had Fred Onyedima walk through the door, Dave Wheeler walk through the door, Alex Pattison walk through the door, Josh Parker and Jack Grimmer walk in.

"Suddenly you think we have a decent team here and let's give it a go but I never thought we would be third.

By Nicholas Tunney

"There are going to be some bumps along the way. We have had a good start but our feet are firmly on the ground.

"For us, the only thing kind of success starts with hard work and humility and if we lose those, then we will be on a slippery slope.

"We need to keep that and know where we come from and where we are looking to go to, and take all our values with us."

With the influx of that talented group through the door, Bloomfield is part of 'The Generals' which included himself, Adebayo Akinfenwa and Joe Jacobson.

Bloomfield believes that they can all play a huge part this season, on and off the pitch, and their experience is vital.

He added: "The good thing about football is you can get written off every season, every month and every match so to prove people wrong adds fire to the belly and motivation to the mind.

"I am sure there was plenty of thought that we would get pushed by the wayside and fortunately we have been able to play a part in our early season form.

"We take our responsibilities very seriously."

WANDERERS

Ainsworth pleased with



By Nicholas Tunney

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth heaped praise on Nick Freeman after the playmaker equalised with a coolly taken penalty in the Blues' 1-1 draw with Accrington. Freeman beat Stanley keeper Dimitar Evtimov from the spot after Scott Kashket was fouled in the area.

Adebayo Akinfenwa came on in the second half and it was his cushioned header that fell into the path of Kashket, who was impeded in the box.

Accrington took the lead in the first half through Dion Charles' header but Wanderers improved after the break to take a share of the points.

Stanley did hit the post late on through Sean McConville but Ainsworth was pleased with an improved effort after the break.

Ainsworth said: "Nick showed nerves of steel.

"We had Joe Jacobson and Alex Samuel off the pitch so who takes the penalty. You want someone to go and get the ball and Nick went and got the ball, and he is a very technically gifted player.

"The only thing I was thinking was which foot is he going to take it with because he is fantastic with both but to slot it in the corner was great.

"Any penalty that hits the net is a good penalty and like I said, it was a crucial time and it was a crucial penalty and I think we have a good player on our hands with Nick Freeman.

"He is going to be a star of the future at higher levels and it is nice to have him at Wycombe."

The Blues fought back in the second half and had chances to win the game but Ainsworth admitted he wasn't happy with his side's below-par display in the first 45 minutes.



He added: "Five more minutes and we could have taken all three points.

"We could have had another penalty and I think that one of their players could have been sent off but they are a good side.

"They are a handful to play against and I think they will rise in this league.

"I am happy it is not two defeats on the spin. I did have to have some choice words at half-time as I thought we were a bit lacklustre and maybe a bit of a hangover from Saturday's defeat.

"We have lost one in nine which is fantastic."



Wanderers' character



Wanderers came back well in the second half after a below-par first-half performance. Photos: PRiME Media Images

SPORT

Football

Chesham go top of the table
- Page 72



BLUES: American is determined to make this work

Couhig reveals his Blues future plans



Rob Couhig (right) is loving life in Wycombe

ROB Couhig has revealed plans moving forward should he be elected onto the board by the Legacy Members, including the potential to make Adams Park more fan-friendly.

Couhig spoke to the Bucks Free Press on Thursday morning to talk about how much he is enjoying life at the moment and what he and his nephew, Pete Couhig, and consultant Mark Palmer are currently working on.

The trio are currently in a 'trial' situation to gain majority control of the club and they require 75 per

By Nicholas Tunney

cent of the votes from the Legacy Members to come on board.

Couhig explained that there have been improvements so far, on and off the pitch, and added plans are already in place should he be given permanency.

He said: "I can't put any more money in until we decide if we are buying in."

"Once that happens, we have met with people to go over the potential of revamping the Park to make it

more fan-friendly and some small expansion, perhaps, to it.

"The entire 5G wiring we need. We need to get wi-fi throughout. We have spoken about the sound system."

"We had the top people in the world who have helped out in Wembley with the traffic issues and they came and met with us and all they need is a cheque to get started."

"This incubation period has been good and we have learnt a lot about the issues off the field."

This weekend, Wycombe entertain Portsmouth and Couhig hasn't given up the thought of Adams Park being

sold out on Saturday.

He said: "It should be a big crowd and I haven't given up the thought of selling it out."

"Portsmouth would have sold it out for us if we had allowed them to do that but we didn't. We want to give our fans the chance to do it."

"I am not an expert in football but I will tell you this. I don't think there is a more exciting in English football when it comes down to the last 10 minutes."

"You know something is going to happen that is game-defining and it could happen again on Saturday."



Gareth Ainsworth

Gaffer wants big support

Wycombe Wanderers

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth has urged the Chairboys supporters to get behind their side as they prepare for a mouthwatering clash this weekend against Portsmouth.

Pompey are one of the biggest clubs at this level and are one of the favourites for promotion to the Championship.

However, they have endured a tricky start to the season with postponement of fixtures and some rocky results so far.

Ainsworth believes that Kenny Jackett's side will be right up there come the end of the season and wants the Wycombe fans in full voice at Adams Park on Saturday.

He said: "The fans can play a huge part for us."

"Accrington at home on a Tuesday I understand the attendance but I feel for the hardcore sometimes because they haven't got the extra 1,000 or 2,000 fans that I know is out there."

"That hardcore will always be there and that is brilliant and I want to get these others out of their houses and down to Adams Park to support their local team."

"We have had some fantastic matches and fantastic occasions down there and get down on Saturday because it will hopefully be a fantastic game."

The Blues boss is under no illusion as to how tough Saturday's contest is going to be.

He added: "It should be a great game."

"Everyone looks for these fixtures and I am sure they will be coming in huge numbers."

"I don't think Kenny has any momentum into them yet. His team will be in the shake-up."

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