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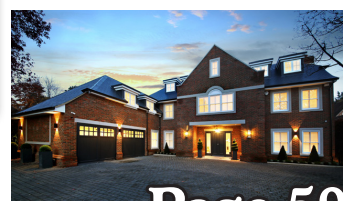
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PROPERTY

Town 'attracting football stars'



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SPORT

Annihilation at Ewood

By Alan Parry



A frustrated Daryl Horgan at Ewood Park (Andy Rowland/Prime Media)



Ryan Allsop did his best but was beaten five times (Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

GARETH Ainsworth had hoped for a dream homecoming, but it turned into a nightmare as Wycombe were torn apart by Blackburn Rovers, the club he has supported since growing up in the Lancashire town.

The Wanderers boss was looking forward to this game more than any other after guiding the Blues to promotion to the Championship, but it was a day he will want to forget as the Chairboys lost 5-0 at Ewood Park.

Ainsworth was a season ticket holder at Ewood Park before he was signed on by Rovers after being spotted playing for a local junior team.

He went on to figure regularly in their youth and reserve sides before being released on his 18th birthday, which he described as 'the worst day of my life'.

This crushing defeat will make him feel almost as bad.

Wycombe were second best in every department and the score line would have been even worse but for a string of fine saves by goalkeeper Ryan Allsop, one of a handful of Wanderers players who can be satisfied with their performance.

They have now lost their first three games of the season in league and cup, and this hammering at Blackburn will have knocked the confidence of the players who were celebrating promotion just a couple of months ago.

Ironically, Wycombe looked the better side in the opening stages, forcing Rovers onto the back foot with some adventurous attacking play.

They had an effort cleared off the line and another saved by home keeper Thomas Kaminski.

However, after Blackburn were gifted a penalty in the 16th minute – emphatically converted by star striker Adam Armstrong – Ains-



worth's team were under siege for the rest of the game.

A second goal followed just four minutes later, scored by Tyrhys Dolan, a teenager Rovers snapped up when he was let go by neighbours Preston North End, a decision they will surely regret as much as Blackburn did after rejecting the youthful Ainsworth. Dolan tormented Wycombe's defenders throughout and looks an exciting prospect.

Things got even worse for Wanderers just before half time when they gave the ball away after winning a corner, and found themselves outnumbered as Rovers broke clear in a lightning counter attack.

Armstrong scored his second goal and Blackburn's third and it was a shellshocked Wycombe team that trooped off the pitch at the interval.

Any hopes of a second half revival by the visitors were dashed just before the hour mark when they were reduced to ten men.

Wanderers were once again hit on the break and when Darius Charles was outpaced by Armstrong, he hauled the Rovers player back and was shown a red card by referee Peter Bankes.

Ainsworth introduced new signings Ryan Tafazolli and Uche Ikpeazu for their Wycombe debuts, but Derrick Williams increased the home side's lead and when Armstrong completed his hat trick, the rout was complete.

Blues fans knew their team would take time to adjust to the highest level the club has ever achieved, but time is something you don't get in this unforgiving league.

It has been a tough start to life in the Championship for Gareth Ainsworth's men, with the hammering being a harsh sense of reality for how tough the second-tier of English football can be.

But, as we have seen in the division as well as with Wycombe, miracles do happen and no doubt there will be bright days ahead for the Adams Park outfit this campaign.

And with some of the fixtures in October being against clubs which are not too far away from Wycombe geographically, such as Luton, Watford and Reading, there is an incentive for Ainsworth's men to win for local pride.

Up next for the Chairboys is Swansea City at Adams Park.

Ainsworth upbeat despite Blackburn battering

CHAIRBOYS boss Gareth Ainsworth believes that the team will learn from last week's disappointing 5-0 defeat to Blackburn Rovers.

3-0 down at half-time and with Darius Charles being shown a straight red card just before the hour mark, the manager felt that the team improved in the second half, and that it is individual mistakes letting the team down.

It was the first time Wycombe had conceded five goals in a match since losing to Preston North End 5-1 in the FA Cup back in 2018.

Speaking ahead of the Swansea clash, Ainsworth said: "We've picked the bones out of last Saturday, it probably was not a 5-0 but it was.

"They really dictated the second-half but first-half was the damage, 3-0 down, we've looked at that game and it was three mistakes.

"You're going to get punished if you give mistakes away at this



level.

"We've got to eradicate the mistakes and take our chances because we had a great 15 minute spell where we were well on top.

"Tony Mowbray said after the

game that he was worried after the first 15 minutes that it was going to be a long afternoon for them, but we let them in the game with a couple of silly mistakes and we've got to stop that.

"We have to make sure that tactically and technically we're on it.

"The league has come on so much.

"It's a mini Premier League and there are some super players, so we've got to find a way of bridging the gap.

"We'll do it, we just need a few games to work this league out."

Despite a difficult start, with two defeats from two and no goals scored in the league, Ainsworth is enjoying the matches and is confident he can turn it around in the coming matches.

"I don't think anyone was expecting us to be winning games left, right and centre in the Championship.

"We're definitely the underdogs at this level, one of the smallest clubs that has ever been in the Championship, so we're really happy and buzzing to be here and looking forward to our first win.

"We've just got to keep working hard and working smart.

"We bridged the gap from League Two to League One financially and player wise, and they were gaps that you can bridge and get away with.

"This bridge now is enormous, ridiculous, one of the most lucrative leagues in the world, and we need to make sure that we are competitive and find a way to do that.

"It is going to take some working out but I'm really pleased with the attitude from the boys.

"As long as they stay positive like me we're winners anyway."

Saturday's fixture will be the first time since October 2007 that Wycombe would have Swansea, with the two sides battling in the Football League trophy.

In the league, their last fixture against each other was back in January 2005, with the sides sharing the points in a 2-2 draw.

WYCOMBE: No goals yet for Gareth Ainsworth's men

Perfect chance for redemption

LEGENDARY commentator and Wanderers fan Alan Parry has given us his insight into the Chairboys' next fixture against Swansea City this weekend.

Ainsworth's men go into the game on the back of two consecutive defeats, but Alan thinks the match at Saturday lunchtime will be the ideal chance to show football fans in the Championship what Wycombe can do.

Alan says: "The visit of Swansea City to Adams Park on Saturday gives Wycombe the perfect chance to show that lessons have been learned from their baptism of fire in the Championship.

"The Welsh club will provide the sternest test yet of Wycombe's ability to hold their own in the second tier.

"Swansea had seven consecutive campaigns in the top flight before relegation in the 2017-18 season, and last season they finished sixth in the Championship to qualify for the play-offs.

"Their hopes of clinching a return to the Premier League were ended when

they lost to Brentford in the semi-finals.

"They are one of the biggest clubs in the division with a budget to match.

"Swansea's wage bill is reported to be over £60m-a-year and one player - Ghana international winger Andre Ayew - reputedly earns more in one week than Wycombe's entire starting 11!

"This is the world in which Wanderers now find themselves in, so it is no surprise that they are taking time to adapt.

"Three games in league and cup have yielded no wins, seven goals conceded and just one scored.

"Last Saturday's 5-0 defeat at Blackburn was the hardest to take, and Gareth Ainsworth and his players spent time this week dissecting what went wrong on a disastrous afternoon at Ewood Park.

"They hope to put it right against a Swansea team who finished five places and seven points above Ainsworth's hometown club in last season's Championship table."

Boss on Swans gaffer Cooper

AINSWORTH PRAISES HIS OPPOSITE NUMBER BEFORE HOME MATCH

GARETH Ainsworth is expecting another tough battle this weekend, as Swansea City visit Adams Park on Saturday.

The Chairboys have lost both league games so far this season and are yet to score a goal, whilst the Swans have picked up four points from their first two matches this campaign, and are currently sixth, but Ainsworth is confident of turning things around.

He said: "This is a fantastic team, Swansea.

"Steve Cooper is a great manager and got them to the play-offs last year.

"We've looked at them again and have just got to be at our best on Saturday.

"We have to keep the ball better:

"If they come off the pitch saying, 'Gaffer, I've given everything, I've done everything I possibly could, I minimised my mistakes' then what more can I do?

"If the gap is too big to bridge then it's too big to bridge, but I don't think it is."

And with the transfer window shutting in a couple of weeks, Ainsworth is hoping to bring in some more firepower, but is insistent that he has more than enough in the squad when everyone is fully fit.

So far this summer, Wycombe have signed seven players, and are still waiting for the likes of Adebayo Akinfenwa and Curtis Thompson to return from injury.

He continued: "The window is going to be key, but for the window to be key you need big finances and that's how it always is.

"There's not going to be a major amount of players coming in because we can't afford them.

"Daryl Horgan is a good player, he's had Championship experience before which is fantastic, he is getting used to the way we are and the players who play around him.

"Ryan Taffazolli, again has Championship experience, so again really pleased and looking forward to them playing and seeing what they can do against these fantastic sides.

"Uche Ikepeazu has come in and will definitely make an impact, but because he hasn't played since March, he's still getting up to speed.

"The Scottish Premier League cancelled quite early, he had no pre-season, and Uche was in a bit of a limbo.

"I'm not sure he knew if he was wanted up there and because he's had to get up to speed quickly, he's picked up one or two issues but we're close to getting him back."



Gareth Ainsworth was left pondering after the hammering to Blackburn last weekend (Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

WANDERERS: Stadium to have new seats and wifi

Championship life sees changes at Adams Park



Adams Park (Adam Davy/PA)

IN THIS new weekly column, Wycombe Wanderers will update Chairboys fans across the town and beyond on their preparations for their next match.

The Chairboys' adventure in the second-tier will be nothing short of exciting, with new facilities being put at the ground, and with the whole world currently battle a pandemic, Wycombe's Championship journey, along with last season, is something that belongs in a fairytale.

Speaking ahead of Saturday's match, the club's head of media and marketing, Matt Cecil, said: "Like football fans across the world, we at Wycombe Wanderers are glued to the news channels, eagerly awaiting positive signs of a return to football grounds of the loyal supporters who are the lifeblood of their respective clubs.

"But until that time arrives, the show has to go on, in this completely 'new normal' society that we find ourselves in.

"Preparations for our first season in the Championship have made it one of the busiest periods in recent history - and that's just with the volume of calls made to and from Gareth Ainsworth's mobile phone!

"While he's been strengthening the squad and readying the team for the challenges to come, the stadium has

By Matt Cecil

undergone a series of renovations to meet EFL regulations, improve the fan experience, and generate new revenue streams for the club.

"Many of these developments can be seen during tomorrow's fixture with Swansea City, which will be broadcast live by Sky Sports and countless TV networks around the globe.

"Lower league clubs such as ours used to preach that 'football isn't a TV show'; fans shouldn't stay at home and watch Premier League match from their sofas, but instead should experience the thrill of a live match at their local club.

"New floodlights have been installed to ensure the lighting levels are adequate for evening matches which are selected for television broadcast, while LED pitchside advertising is now in place on three sides of the ground, creating better exposure for club sponsors and greater income for the club.

"Super-fast wifi and new TV screens are being installed throughout the stadium, and when supporters are back, they can expect greatly improved fan zone experiences, improved retail offerings, food and drink provisions and plenty more to guarantee a great day out."

SPORT

0963-2336



WYCOMBE: Claim dates back to semi-final fixture 'Buffalo' comment faces no FA charge



Adebayo Akinfenwa with Paul Smyth (photo by PA)

THE Professional Footballers' Association have stated that they are 'disappointed' after the FA decided not to take Adebayo Akinfenwa's complaint of alleged racial abuse further 'due to a lack of evidence'.

The Wycombe forward claimed he was called a 'buffalo' during the Chairboys' League One play-off semi-final second leg tie against Fleetwood Town on July 6, by one of the club's representatives.

Wycombe drew the game 2-2 on the night at Adams Park, but won 6-3 on aggregate before defeating Oxford United 2-1 at Wembley Stadium in the final on July 13, to be promoted to the Championship for the first time.

In their statement, the PFA said: "The PFA is disappointed that the FA has decided not to carry forward Wycombe Wanderers' complaint of alleged racial abuse from a Fleetwood Town representative toward Adebayo Akinfenwa due to a lack of evidence.

"It is abundantly clear that a

By James Richings

white player with a similar stature to Akinfenwa would never be described in the way he was during this incident.

"Black people have battled dehumanisation for centuries, and the PFA strongly condemns the use of all disparaging remarks that compare black players to animals.

"This type of hurtful, derogatory language is unacceptable, regardless of intent, and Adebayo showed great courage in coming forward to report this incident, which tarnished what should have been a night of celebration for Wycombe Wanderers.

"We recently published a report about racial bias in football commentary, and this incident demonstrates that bias extends to problematic language casually used on our pitches and in the dugouts.

"We encourage every football stakeholder to read our report,

acknowledge the impact of the language they use – consciously or unconsciously – to describe black players and take steps to address their bias.

"We share Adebayo's disappointment that this has allegation will not be upheld, especially since he took steps to speak publicly about the incident's emotional impact.

"We are in contact with Adebayo, and will continue to offer him our support."

An excerpt from the FA's statement read: "The FA interviewed a number of witnesses, including players and staff from WWFC and FTFC, as well as two match officials.

"The witness accounts all confirmed the use of the term 'water buffalo' or 'buffalo'.

"However, some witnesses did not consider the term to be discriminatory and did not consider it to have been used in a discriminatory manner.

"Others were unsure whether the term was discriminatory.

"Some witnesses stated they did consider the term to be discriminatory.

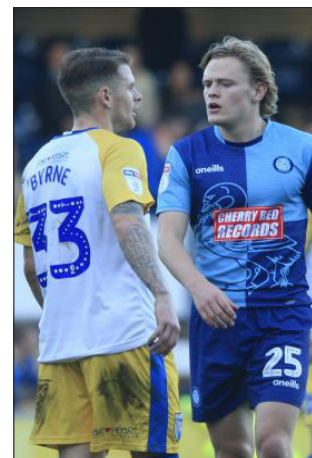
"The match officials confirmed that they had received no complaint regarding the comment either during or after the game and so the discrimination protocol had not been enacted.

"Both match officials confirmed that the alleged term had been used.

"One of which confirmed it was during a dialogue between himself and a member of FTFC during which the member of FTFC was describing the actions of the WWFC player.

"Both match officials confirmed that they had not interpreted the words to be discriminatory in either nature or context which was why no red card had been issued to the member of FTFC.

"The member of FTFC accepted using the alleged words but denied that they were used in a discriminatory context and were instead used to describe the player's actions."



Alex Samuel

Samuel on Swans reunion

STRIKER SPENT FIVE YEARS WITH THE WELSH SIDE BEFORE LEAVING IN 2017

CHAIRBOYS striker Alex Samuel cannot wait to face his boyhood club, Swansea City, at Adams Park on Saturday.

The Neath-born attacker spent five years at the club between 2012 and 2017 but did not make any first-team appearances for the Welsh side.

Samuel said: "I'm really looking forward to it, it is an occasion I am really going to relish and see a few friendly faces.

"It was definitely a game that when the fixtures came out I wanted to see when I was playing Swansea so it is definitely something I am looking forward to."

The former Wales youth player is yet to feature in the league yet this season, but insists that the spirits are still high amongst the squad, and that they are learning more with every passing game.

His only outing for Wycombe so far was in the EFL Cup defeat to Brentford on September 6, where he was substituted after 65 minutes.

He added: "I think 80 per cent, myself included, haven't played at this level before so it is a quick learning process.

"Especially from the two defeats, we've learnt so much already about the league and it is something we are going to have to learn quickly.

"There's so much to learn and so much to develop so we are just trying to find our feet at this particular time but it is something we are still excited about this amazing opportunity we have to be playing in the Championship and as a team, it is where we want to stay.

"Our goal now is to stay in the league and be here, in this incredible league."

Samuel joined the club in 2018.