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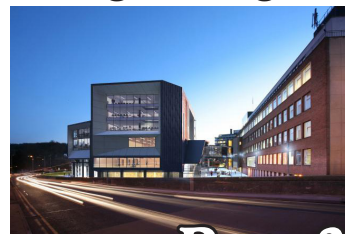
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SPORT

‘Best thing to happen’ – Boss

THE AMERICAN HAS HELPED WITH THE CHAIRBOYS’ FINANCES

GARETH Ainsworth insists that Rob Couhig is ‘the best thing to have happened to this football club in years’.

The American businessman officially took over the club at the start of the year, and has helped the club buy players rather than rely on free transfers.

He said: “The good thing about this is that Rob has come in, which is the best thing to happen to this club in years. “He’s put the club on a firm footing.

“Getting promoted was the next best thing, with what it brings, especially with no fans being allowed in, looks like that’s until next season now, that would have killed us in League One or League Two.

“Rob would’ve been there for us but it would have been a big strain on him too so being promoted into the Championship has been absolutely fantastic.

“We’ve been able to start a B Team, sign a few young players that we want to start developing.

“We have plans for the future so for me to play a part in this.

“I’m so proud and the players and fans should all be proud of that because it’s a fantastic thing.”

Eight years later

BOSS CELEBRATED EIGHT YEARS AS WYCOMBE’S MANAGER LAST WEEK

LAST week, Gareth Ainsworth celebrated his eighth anniversary as the club’s boss.

The 47-year-old, who has been at the club since 2009, took over as the manager on September 24, 2012, replacing Gary Waddock who was fired two days previously before Ainsworth was officially appointed.

He has since managed 411 games as Wycombe’s manager, winning 166 of them, drawing 103 and losing 142 of those games.

Speaking after the Swansea loss, Ainsworth told the Free Press: “I have enjoyed every single moment, every single day, I love it.

“I love managing this club.

“I have had some highs, lows, and hopefully we’ll be remembered for the good times that we have had at this place which includes Championship football.”

FOOTBALL: No wins so far this season for Wycombe Chairboys lose third game in a row as rut continues

By Alan Parry

WYCOMBE are still searching for that elusive first point and first goal as a Championship outfit, after they lost 2-0 at home to Swansea City on Saturday.

It is now three defeats in three games for Wanderers in a challenging start to the new campaign, but there were enough positives to suggest they are learning how to cope at this level, as they can take great encouragement from their second half showing against one of the best teams they will face this season.

But the first half at a windswept Adams Park is best forgotten.

Wycombe looked like rabbits caught in the headlights as Swansea raced into a two-goal lead through Andre Ayew and Jamal Lowe, two strikers who between them cost over £20m in transfer fees.

The Blues couldn’t handle the slick passing and fluid movement of their opponents, who were playing in the Premier League only two years ago, and another drubbing looked on the cards.

However, the second half was a different story.

Wanderers had more possession and tightened up defensively, denying Swansea the time and space on the ball they had enjoyed in the first 45 minutes.

But despite their improvement, Wanderers failed to find a way past visiting goalkeeper Freddie Woodman and they now find themselves second from bottom in the Championship table.

Manager Gareth Ainsworth will have taken consolation from the promising displays of Ryan Tafazolli and Dennis Adeniran, two play-



Daryl Horgan’s overhead kick was saved on Saturday (photo by Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

ers making their full debuts in the quarters.

At 6 foot 5 inches tall, it was obvious Tafazolli would be dominant in the air, but the new recruit from Hull City proved he can also deal with skilful opponents when the ball is on the ground.

He put in a solid performance on his first start for Wanderers as replacement for Darius Charles, suspended following his red card at Blackburn Rovers.

On this evidence, Tafazolli looks likely to keep his place for the next game away to Luton Town on October 3.

Another stand out performer in Wycombe’s much improved second half was 21-year-old Adeniran, who had taken part in only two training sessions with his new team mates and probably didn’t even know their names.

Signed on a season-long loan from Everton, Adeniran was an imposing

presence in midfield, adept at breaking up Swansea’s attacks and getting Wanderers moving forward with some astute passes.

Goalkeeper Ryan Allsop and defender Anthony Stewart also proved they have taken the step up in standard in their stride, and once Wanderers are back to full strength with players returning from injury and suspension, it won’t be long before they secure their first points of the season.

FOOTBALL: Chairboys yet to score in the league Ainsworth’s analysis on home loss to Swansea



Gareth Ainsworth (photo by Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

AFTER Wycombe’s defeat to Swansea, Gareth Ainsworth thought his side gave their opponents ‘too much respect’ in the 2-0 home loss.

First-half goals from Andre Ayew and Jamal Lowe saw Steve Cooper’s men win at Adams Park for the first time since 2004, with Wycombe not becoming a threat until the second-half.

The away side controlled large parts of the match and were hugely comfortable throughout, but there were several spells during the second period which saw Ainsworth’s men catch the Swans on the back foot and cause a few problems.

These attacking bursts were mainly

through Fred Onyedinma, but it was to no avail as Swansea held on to keep their unbeaten start of the season intact.

Speaking after the loss, Ainsworth said: “We definitely deserved something from the second-half, we shaded them which I’m really pleased about.

“It took us until half-time for us to sort that out and also, we came up with a shape that made them change the way they played, but they then changed, and they did it really well.

“We have got to learn from that and solve problems – the touches, the passes, the ball retention are very important.

“I spoke about it during the week and I thought we did that a lot better, especially in the second-half.

“We almost gave Swansea a bit too much respect.

“In a way, we waited for Swansea to score and then go ‘that’s happened now, let’s get on with it’.

“You’ve got to get in their faces and take the onus yourself but I was proud of them second-half.

“I said to them, if you take that to Luton and take that into training, we will start to build and start to find our feet in this league.

“The changes worked well, the back four defended really well in the second-half.”

FOOTBALL: Ainsworth on 'respecting' the opponents

Finding a way to that first win

GARETH Ainsworth wants his side to respect Luton Town on Saturday, but off the field and once the match is complete.

The Chairboys have lost all three of their league fixtures this season, and are yet to score a goal with the manager believing his side are being too respectful on the pitch.

He said: "It is about changing mentalities.

"If I'm honest, if you say that Wycombe Wanderers are in the Championship, people will raise their eyebrows, so the respect thing I can understand but I don't want it to be there.

"I want us to respect them in a different way - I want us to respect that they're a good side and will give us a good game but we can't wait around for them to score just because they look like they might score.

"We've got to get into them before anything and respect them off the pitch for what they've done in their careers.

"When we are on that pitch, it is about winning.

"You have got to find a way to win, and that's what I did in my career and getting that into the boys is going to be important this week but they know what I want, and if they don't by Saturday then I'll have some issues."

He continued: "I learnt that you pay big money for big players that perform and can win games for you.

"I thought Andre Ayew was superb last week, ghosting past some of our players and his physical attributes alone were fantastic - we have got to find ways of competing with that.

"Technically and tactically they work things out, they're problem solvers.

"When you speak to managers after the games, they give a lot of credit to their players for being very bright and sometimes individuals can just get on and win games on their own.

"It is not all about the tactics, it is the players as well and I have got to make my players believe that they can achieve more than they think they can, and that's my job."

Debut defeat for Dennis

ON-LOAN EVERTON MIDFIELDER IS PRAISED BY GARETH AINSWORTH

NEW signing Dennis Adeniran has been praised by Wycombe manager Gareth Ainsworth after the 21-year-old made his debut in the Chairboys' 2-0 home defeat against Swansea.

The on-loan Everton midfielder made only his second appearance in the Football League and was calm and collected when on the ball, despite Wycombe losing at Adams Park.

He was signed by the Chairboys just one day before the Swansea game, with the youngster playing the whole 90 minutes and is expected to be one of the club's most important players this season.

He came in as a replacement for Nnamdi Oforboh, who returned to Bournemouth following his successful loan spell at the club last season.

Speaking after the 2-0 defeat to Swansea, Ainsworth said: "First-half I thought he was a little bit lost at times, rabbit in headlights, but second-half, he was absolutely established.

"He was alongside Nick Freeman and Freeman was playing in a position that he isn't really use to, as Gape is still out and Thompson is just back from injury.

"We wanted Nnamdi [Oforboh] back but it looks like he's sticking around at Bournemouth, so we've struggled with that defensive midfielder position.

"But Dennis came in and in the second-half, he looked like he had been playing league football all his life.

"For someone to come and take that into his stride and have a Championship performance like that is very good for the future.

"Second-half, he looked like he had been playing with us for a long time and you can tell he has played at a high level.

"He'll be a great asset for us."

Adeniran began his career with Fulham and became the Cottagers' youngest ever scorer, netting on his senior debut in a League Cup victory against Leyton Orient in 2016.

He also appeared for England Under-17s in the European Championships that summer, and went on to represent the Young Lions at Under-18 and Under-19 level, before moving to Everton in August 2017.

He joins Uche Ikpeazu, Ryan Tafazolli, Daryl Horgan, David Stockdale, Durtis Anderson, Jason McCarthy, and Giles Phillips as Wycombe's other first-team signings so far this season and for the current campaign, Adeniran will wear the number 24 shirt for Wycombe.



Wycombe have only scored one goal in four matches so far this season, where they have lost every game they have played

FOOTBALL: Chairboys travel to Luton on Saturday

Keeping the faith as first win still awaits Wycombe



Alex Samuel against Swansea last Saturday (Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

WYCOMBE make the short trip to Luton tomorrow hoping to get off the mark as a Championship club following three successive defeats in which they have failed to score a goal.

The opening month of the new season was always going to be a tough baptism for Wanderers, and although results have been disappointing, they hardly warrant the pessimistic comments made by some supporters on social media this week.

The majority of Wanderers fans have realistic expectations about the tough season ahead, but there were others who took to their keyboards to criticise individual players, the manager's team selection and even to predict that the team would be relegated despite there being 43 games left to play.

The critics have failed to consider how long it takes for clubs of Wycombe's size to adapt to the higher standard of football in the second tier, as a quick search through the record books shows.

Wycombe's old foes Colchester United were promoted to Championship level - like Wycombe for the first time in their history - at the end of season 2005-06.

They lost their first four games but went on to finish 10th, higher in the table than three clubs who are now

By Alan Parry

members of the Premier League, Crystal Palace, Burnley, and Leicester City.

Burton Albion are another example of a smaller club who needed time to adapt to life at a higher level.

Championship newcomers in season 2016-17, they managed just two wins from their opening ten games, but avoided relegation by finishing 20th, above Nottingham Forest and Blackburn Rovers, among others.

If Wycombe fans need another instance of survival against the odds, they need look no further than tomorrow's opponents Luton.

Only last season, the Hatters picked up just one out of a possible 12 points in their first campaign back in the Championship. They were in the bottom four for most of the season, but despite heavy defeats against Brentford (7-0) and Reading (5-0), they avoided the drop.

In fact, Wycombe themselves have proved in the past that a slow start is not necessarily a harbinger of doom. Wanderers lost their first four games in Division Two in 1998-99 and it took them a further nine games to record their first win. If Wycombe finish 19th or even 21st, it will go down as the greatest achievement in the club's history.

SPORT



CHAIRBOYS: New faces to be part of the club's brand new B Team Wycombe sign four players on free transfers



They signed on September 29

A BUSY summer/autumn of signings has continued for Wycombe after they added four more players to the squad.

The club confirmed on September 29 that Andre Burley, Andron Georgiou, Malachi Linton and Anis Mehmeti have all joined the club following successful trials with the Chairboys this summer.

They have joined the Adams Park outfit following the launch of a B Team program, headed up by Sam Grace.

The program will provide the four

youngsters a pathway into first-team action, access to specialist coaching alongside training with the first-team, and enable the players to benefit from more game time during regular practice matches.

Grace, who is the B Team's manager said: "Andre, Andron, Malachi and Anis have done really well since they arrived and deserve this opportunity to develop their ability with us and prove they have what it takes to forge successful careers in the game."

"We've had a close look at dozens of different players over the past couple of months and these four have stood out, not just with their skillsets on the pitch, but their willingness to learn, work hard and adapt to the culture that has brought the club great success in recent years."

So who are the club's latest signings?

Andre Burley, 21, is a defender/midfielder who was previously at Reading, who has spent time on loan in Ireland with Waterford United.

Andron Georgiou, 20, made a handful of senior appearances for his former club Stevenage, whilst also enjoying loan spells with Kings Langley, St Albans, and Hendon. He is a winger.

Malachi Linton, 19, is formerly of Ipswich Town, where he also played for Lowestoft Town and Crewe Alexandra.

Anis Mehmeti, aged 19, left Norwich City's academy last season and has represented Albania at under-19 level. He plays as an attacking midfielder.

FOOTBALL: Luton Town up next for the Chairboys Can Wycombe end winless league run?

GARETH Ainsworth is expecting another tough test against an 'inspirational' Luton Town side as Wycombe travel to Kenilworth Road this weekend.

The Chairboys are yet to pick up a point or score a goal in the league so far this season, but he insists that they are working out ways of picking up points in the Championship.

Speaking before Saturday's game, the 47-year-old is looking to use the Hatters' great escape last season as inspiration for his side this campaign.

Ainsworth was also full of praise for Luton's manager Nathan Jones, who masterminded the club's great escape last campaign, as he kept the Bedfordshire-based side in the Championship.

He said: "Nathan is a great manager."

"He kept them up in the Championship last year and after his brief break becoming Stoke manager, he's come back and worked the league out."

"They have started like a train so we are going to have a tough game without a doubt."

"They went through a lot of financial difficulties and got themselves out of the mire, and we're a team that seemed to be alongside them a lot."

"We've had some great battles over the years but this is going to be a tough game."

"They're an inspiration to us to stay in the Championship."

"I'd love to do that, but there's a

By James Earnshaw

lot of work to do before we start thinking about that.

"We need to start getting our first points on the board and I'm looking forward to trying to do that at Kenilworth Road."

Saturday's clash will be the 29th time the two sides would have faced each other, with Wycombe only winning five of those matches.

The last time these two sides were in the same division was in the 2018/19 campaign when Luton and Wycombe were in League One.

That season, the Hatters won promotion to the Championship whilst Wycombe enjoyed a late run of positive results which kept them in the division.

So far this season, Jones' men have won two of their opening three league matches and are currently sitting in seventh place.

And with the odds firmly in favour of the hosts, Ainsworth is still hopeful of the club breaking their duck on Saturday.

He continued: "We're still working this league out and still want to get some players in but we are looking forward to the game."

"It's exciting, it's a Championship game where we can learn plenty and hopefully get something from Kenilworth Road."

The match on Saturday will kick off at 3pm and is available to watch through the club's iFollow streaming service which is accessible on their website.



Richard Dobson and Gareth Ainsworth (Andy Rowland/Prime Media)

'Got to be positive'- Ainsworth

MANAGER UPBEAT DESPITE CLUB'S POOR START TO THE LEAGUE SEASON

CHAIRBOYS boss Gareth Ainsworth believes that his side 'will get the results to keep us in the league', after Wycombe lost their third league game in a row.

His side lost 2-0 at home to Swansea on Saturday lunchtime, with Steve Cooper's men being the better side throughout the contest, with Wycombe eventually turning up in the second-half.

The gaffer made five changes following the hammering against Blackburn seven days previously, which saw Dennis Adeniran and Ryan Tafazolli make their full debuts, with Alex Samuel playing his first league game of the season.

Ainsworth said: "In the first few games, I want to work the Championship out and see what teams are going to do to us tactically."

"I also need to see my squad and see who is up to this Championship standard because it is going to be a tough league."

"Your passes, touches and your ball retention has got to be superb as well as your decision making and finishing."

"But once we get that right and get the players on the pitch who can do that right, then I'm sure we will get the results to keep us in the league."

"You've got to be positive to the end and that is what I have said to the boys."

The gaffer also spoke about how he plans to rotate his team, once he gets a fully fit squad.

Ainsworth continued: "We've got Gape, Akinfenwa and Ikpeazu to come back and when they do, we'll have a different way of playing which will upset teams. Ikpeazu didn't play due to a hamstring injury as he hasn't trained for a long time, but he'll be back soon."