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Contentious call denies Wycombe vital home point

By Alan Parry

WHEN the half-term report is written on Wycombe's first season in the Championship, there are two areas where they clearly need to improve, but a third they can do nothing about.

Saturday's 2-1 defeat to bogey team Coventry City highlighted the need to eliminate defensive errors and be more clinical in front of goal, but they are powerless to prevent the mistakes being made by match officials.

Not for the first time this season, Wanderers were denied a valuable point when they had a perfectly good goal disallowed. The fact that it came deep into stoppage time made it so much harder to take.

Wycombe had forced their way back into the game after being two goals down at half time despite dominating the opening 30 minutes.

Coventry skipper Liam Kelly scored two goals, both of which could have been prevented with better defending.

Gareth Ainsworth made tactical changes and introduced three substitutes early in the second half, and that changed the game in Wycombe's favour. They reduced the arrears when David Wheeler was fouled inside the penalty area, and Joe Jacobson scored from the spot.

The Blues then had chances to draw level, the best when Fred Onyedimma blazed the ball over from close range.

As they threw men forward in search of an equaliser, defender Josh Knight unleashed a powerful shot that visiting goalkeeper Ben Wilson could not hold onto, and



Gareth Ainsworth cannot believe his side's luck (Photo Simon Galloway/PA Wire)

Scott Kashket calmly steered the ball into the net.

As wild celebrations erupted among 2,000 fans, the biggest crowd at Adams Park for ten months due to Coronavirus restrictions, their joy was cut short when the referee's assistant flagged to signal that Kashket was offside.

Replays showed that the official was wrong, a cruel blow that denied Wanderers a draw they deserved after their second-half display.

It is ironic that Wycombe were victims of another wrong decision in the week when Championship clubs were reported to have demanded a meeting with referees' chief Mike

Riley about the poor standard of officiating.

Blues boss Ainsworth will admit that Wanderers must address their own shortcomings if they are to survive in the second tier, but there have been too many games where errors by match officials have cost them precious points.

Boss clarifies tactical choices

AINSWORTH MADE A TRIPLE SWITCH IN THE SECOND HALF OF DEFEAT

GARETH Ainsworth has revealed he felt 'sorry' for the three players he took off in a triple substitution, during the 2-1 home defeat against Coventry City.

Daryl Horgan, Matt Bloomfield and Alex Samuel were all hooked in the 58th minute for Garath McCleary, David Wheeler and Adebayo Akinfenwa respectively.

Three minutes later, Akinfenwa's header was met by Wheeler who was then fouled by Ben Sheaf in the penalty area.

Joe Jacobson took the resulting spot-kick and scored his second goal in two matches.

Speaking after the game, he said: "I don't like doing that [making a triple sub], because the players on the pitch are more than capable of winning this game.

"Two individual mistakes have cost their places in the team – it cost me to make three changes.

"Daryl Horgan, Matt Bloomfield and Alex Samuel are well capable, so it is not like they're not good enough.

"We have had to do this to change the impotence of the game.

"I feel sorry for those guys as they are capable of winning and we showed that."

Sky Blues manager commends Chairboys

'YOU HAVE TO CREDIT THEM' - THE MESSAGE FROM OPPOSING BOSS

COVENTRY City boss Mark Robins praised Wycombe after the Sky Blues defeated the Chairboys on December 12, 2-1 at Adams Park.

A Liam Kelly brace – his first goals in nearly three years, gave City all three points, in a game which saw Wycombe have an injury-time equaliser ruled out for offside.

Robins said: "They put you under so much pressure by putting the ball in behind you, and with the substitutions [Akinfenwa, McCleary, Wheeler and Kashket], and with the quality they bring, they make it tough for you.

"They were unlucky because it was an onside goal.

"You have to credit them.

"That is the way Gareth's team plays."

It was Coventry's ninth straight win over Wycombe.

Ainsworth on referees: 'Officials have got to get the calls right'



Wycombe and Coventry in battle (Photo: Simon Galloway/PA Wire)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth slammed the performance of the match officials after the Chairboys had an injury-time equaliser disallowed in their 2-1 home loss against Coventry City.

Scott Kashket fired in what he thought was his fifth goal of the season as well as securing Wycombe's 12th point of the campaign, in the 94th minute against the Sky Blues.

However, the officials deemed that the 24-year-old's shot, which came from a spillage by City keeper Ben Gibson, who dropped Josh Knight's thumping volley in the final few seconds, was deemed to be offside.

Replays have since revealed that goalscorer Kashket was in fact onside. Speaking after the defeat at Adams Park, Ainsworth said: "This costs clubs fortunes.

"These points, these decisions, and they [the officials] have got to get them right.

"I almost wish there was VAR at this level because we could have had a couple of penalties and an onside goal this year.

"It just seems to be that Wycombe Wanderers don't seem to get decisions in the Championship, and I will end it there before I get into trouble."

Ainsworth continued: "I honestly believe we were the better team.

"Maybe I have got it wrong, but I'm usually pretty good with my eyes.

"We have got to put our chances in and we have got to stop conceding.

"The first goal is a gift and the second goal, we have got to defend the set plays better. But with all those things, we are in the Championship and we're finding our feet still.

"The chances count must have been massive in Wycombe's favour and we scored right at the death and the ref has given an offside, when for all the world it looked onside.

"It is one of those days."

SPORT

0963-2336



Pride in performance despite defeat in Dorset



AFC Bournemouth's Jack Simpson (left) and Adebayo Akinfenwa

THERE was no shortage of praise for Wycombe's performance against Bournemouth on Saturday from Gareth Ainsworth.

The Wycombe boss insisted after the game that he was 'absolutely buzzing' with his team's performance, despite the defeat.

The recently-relegated Cherries had to rely on Wycombe going down to ten men to find the breakthrough.

Ainsworth said: "I'm absolutely buzzing with that performance. We're going to go again and we'll take teams to the cleaners playing like that."

Although Alex Pattison's

dismissal and another injury for Dominic Gape added to the Chairboys' selection issues in midfield, the Wanderers manager was pleased with the attacking performance.

"Hogs [Daryl Horgan] has had a fantastic cameo at the end there, his legs are tired from all the games he's played but he's been one of our best performers.

"Garath McCleary's work-rate was phenomenal and Uche [Ikpeazu] showed what he's going to be able to do."

Ikpeazu returned from injury on a night of many positives for Wycombe, but Ainsworth

regrets what might have been if the sending off hadn't been given.

"I wish this game would've been at home, I don't think that would've been a red card at all and we would've taken something from the game. We lost the game but we haven't lost the war."

The 2,000 home fans were vocal in support of their team throughout the match, and arguably had a say in the decision that proved to be pivotal.

"Of course the fans influenced the referee. We're on the end of a few poor decisions in my opinion."

Wanderers fall to a third straight defeat

By Jamie Cameron

A SPIRITED display from Wycombe Wanderers wasn't enough to take anything from Championship high-flyers Bournemouth as The Cherries edged to a 1-0 win.

Gareth Ainsworth made four changes to the side that were defeated by Coventry, attempting to address the lack of goals that the Chairboys have suffered from all season.

All the signs pre-match suggested a dominant performance for Bournemouth following their 5-0 victory over Huddersfield at the weekend.

It started in that fashion as Junior Stanislas' free-kick was headed goalwards by Dominic Solanke and kept out by Ryan Allsop.

The Chairboys defence, with Jason McCarthy at centre-back, held their opponents off resolutely and limited the majority of their attacking output to long-range efforts.

Wanderers had a couple of forays forward before the break, with Garath McCleary involved, but it didn't quite fall for Gareth Ainsworth's side.

Just before half-time, Stanislas found himself with the ball six yards from goal, but his curled effort was easily cleared by McCarthy.

Dominic Gape's stop-start season suffered another blow as he sustained an injury and had to be replaced by Nick Freeman, but the Chairboys went into the interval at 0-0.

Akinfenwa headed Jack Grimmer's cross back across goal in

a promising move for Wycombe at the start of the second period, but it was cleared.

That was followed by a more intense spell of pressure from Bournemouth, but Wanderers responded in the form of a Nick Freeman shot that had to be dealt with by Asmir Begović.

The experienced 'keeper was called on again when McCleary turned inside the area and curled the ball towards the far corner, but Begović tipped it round the post.

The red card came soon after that as Pattison committed a recklessly high challenge on Lewis Cook and was given his marching orders after the Bournemouth players surrounded referee Matt Donohue.

It was always going to be an uphill battle for the Chairboys after that, but the 2000 Cherries fans didn't have long to wait for the man advantage to tell.

David Brooks played a nice one-two with Stanislas before the Welsh winger put it back across goal for Stanislas to tap in.

Ikpeazu caused a couple of worrying moments for Bournemouth after he came on with fifteen minutes remaining, but the big talking point of the closing stages came at the other end.

Surridge curled a shot wide, much to the annoyance of Stanislas, who made his feelings known - and the two had to be separated by their teammates.



Chairboys players react to Alex Pattison's being shown a red card (Photo credit: Andrew Matthews/PA Wire)

Ainsworth questions dismissal

MIDFIELDER SAW RED IN THE 64TH MINUTE AT THE VITALITY STADIUM

ALEX Pattison's red card against Bournemouth 'was never a sending off', according to Wycombe boss Gareth Ainsworth.

The Chairboys were right in the game when the midfielder was dismissed for a high challenge on Lewis Cook, with the eventual Cherries winner coming a few minutes later.

Ainsworth said: "They needed a sending off that was never a sending off - it's his [Pattison's] first tackle of the game, it's not reckless."

The situation was perhaps intensified by several Bournemouth players, including goalkeeper Asmir Begović, charging towards referee Matt Donohue and urging him to show the red card.

On this, Ainsworth said: "I really feel for Patto.

"It's not a red card until their players go sprinting over to pressure the referee.

"Everybody ran and charged towards Alex Pattison and I just think that inflamed the situation."

Despite the result increasing Wanderers' winless run to nine, Ainsworth was happy with his team's performance.

He said: "I am so proud of my boys. They were absolutely outstanding. I thought they took top of the league all the way and if we keep playing like that, we'll be more than fine.

"Their keeper has had to make the biggest save of the game. We can't do much more, apart from putting it in the net. A good run is just around the corner."

On the challenge of facing such a strong side, Ainsworth said: "Up against £100m of talent, just watch how we played and trying telling me you're not proud of them."