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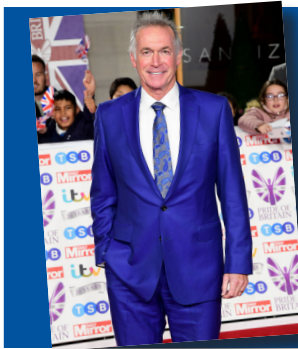
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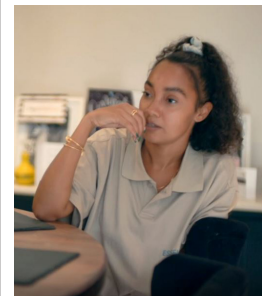
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Music star lauded for comments



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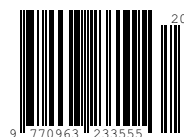
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SPORT

FOOTBALL: Wanderers legends could depart Why Bloomfield and Akinfenwa should stay



Matt Bloomfield (left) and Adebayo Akinfenwa (right), seen about to lift the League One play-off trophy last July, after they defeated Oxford United 2-1 at Wembley Stadium. Both players could leave the club this summer after playing a total of 768 games and scoring 97 goals (PA)

By Jamie Cameron

IT was a historic season for Wycombe Wanderers, but the future of two club legends still lies in doubt.

Long-serving hero Matt Bloomfield, who's made more than 500 appearances for the Chairboys, and Adebayo Akinfenwa, the club's leading goalscorer in the Football League era, may have played their last games for Wycombe.

Bloomfield is under contract until next summer, but it's a deal which includes coaching responsibilities.

That's something he's been doing for much of this campaign after struggling to produce his best at Championship level.

The 37-year-old came off the bench briefly on the final day of the season against Middlesbrough for his first playing appearance since the 3-0 home defeat to Nottingham Forest on February 6.

Akinfenwa, meanwhile, is currently in negotiations about a new deal.

He also took a back seat for much of the second-half of the season, but did of course score that memorable late winner against Bristol City.

This was his first and only goal of the season, and his first since the 3-1 away loss to one of his old clubs in Doncaster Rovers on February 29, 2020.

There's no doubt that both players would still be a considerable asset to the club even in a non-playing capacity, with their incredible experience potentially of great use to younger members of the squad.

The pair could still play a bit-part role in League One despite their combined age of 76, but should the unlikely happen with the potential Derby County points deduction and Wanderers stay up by default, you feel a coaching role would be the most either of them would be given.

Of course, Akinfenwa is a significant figure in more places than just Adams Park, so he may want to pursue other avenues, and that will play a part in any negotiations.

Bloomfield, meanwhile, or 'Mr Wycombe' as he's known, will surely want to stay at the club as long as possible. I don't think anyone would be surprised if he was the manager a few years down the line.

Darius Charles is also leaving the club after his miraculous recovery from near-retirement saw him become one of the stars of the 2019/20 promotion campaign.

The defender didn't get too much game time in the Championship, but he hinted after departing that he may well be back at Adams Park in some capacity in the future.

It would be a shame if Bloomfield and Akinfenwa made their final on-the-pitch contributions in a behind-closed-doors environment, and if they have, hopefully something can be sorted out so the fans can give them a deserved send-off for their

exceptional service.

Most of the building blocks are in place for a successful campaign next time around, and it's more about developing the current squad than it is about recruitment.

Wycombe have had massive rebuilding jobs on various occasions recently, but if a few new additions can be mentored by the likes of Bloomfield and Akinfenwa, it could be another special season.

Speaking after the 3-0 away win at Middlesbrough on May 8 at the Riverside Stadium, Bloomfield said: "I think there is a really exciting future for the club."

"The team has evolved this season, there have been several changes with new formations and some younger legs coming in and it's really exciting."

"If we keep the majority of those boys and add a few more then the future is really exciting."

"Next year will be tough in League One, but, we have shown that we can compete in the Championship."



Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

The boss is looking forward

WANDERERS WERE RELEGATED TO LEAGUE ONE ON THE FINAL DAY

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth believes next season will see a lot of 'excitement' at Adams Park, as the club prepare for life back in League One.

The Chairboys were relegated on the final day of the season, despite defeating Middlesbrough 3-0 at the Riverside Stadium.

It was their joint-highest league win of the season and was part of a run that saw them achieve five victories in the final eight matches.

However, despite their valiant efforts, they will start the season in England's second tier.

Speaking to Mark Clemmit for the EFL's official podcast, the 48-year-old said: "After 46 games you are where you deserve to be, and ultimately we were just a couple of points away from staying up."

"But I always gave my best so I can't really look back and say I should've changed this player or these tactics."

"There was no 'R' next to our name until the final kick of the final game of the season, and we can take pride from that."

"The efforts from everyone were great."

"I'm gutted that the fans couldn't see Championship football, but it's my job to get us back there."

"We're a much better team than we were at the start of the season; we learned a lot, we started slow but finished like a train."

"With one more game, we might have survived."

"The fans coming back is something I'm so excited about. I wake up every single morning and tell myself how lucky I am. I'm a football manager, I've played football all my life, and soon we're going to have the fans back in the ground, right behind us again."