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Little ones welcomed during 2022

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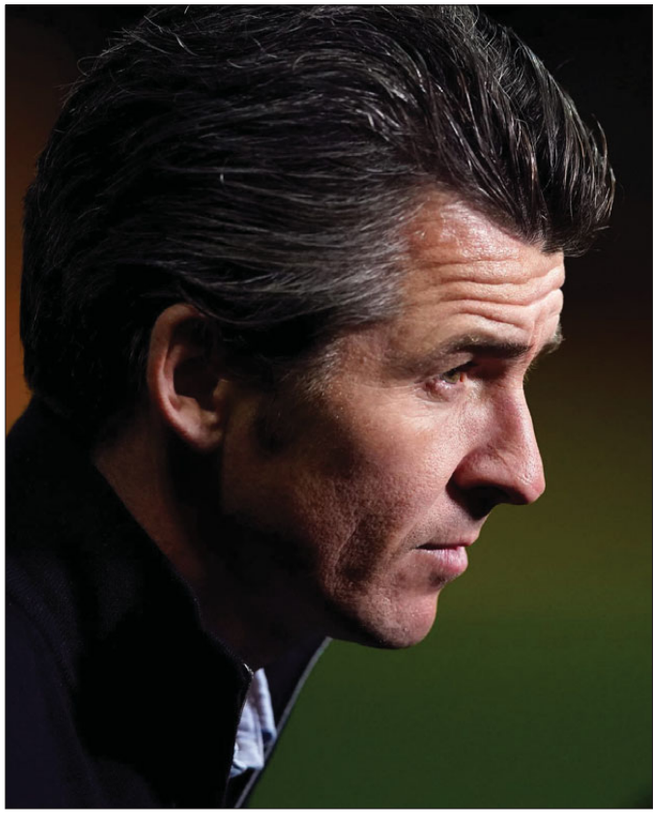
Barton's rant at Wycombe's style

By James Richings



Joey Barton congratulated Wycombe on their victory over Bristol Rovers, but slammed the Chairboys' style of play (PA)

BRISTOL Rovers manager Joey Barton has criticised Wycombe Wanderers' alleged style of play along with the referee's performance, following their 2-1 defeat against the Chairboys on Boxing Day.

The Pirates had taken the lead inside four minutes through Josh Coburn's sixth of the season, before David Wheeler and Lewis Wing turned things around for Gareth Ainsworth's side.

The result means Wycombe are now unbeaten in their last four games where they have picked up 10 points from 12, whilst Rovers suffered only their second loss in 13 games.

After the final whistle, Barton took aim at referee Sunny Gill for his performance, claiming that he was 'naïve' and that some of his decisions, which included booking Bobby Thomas after seven minutes for timewasting, as 'baffling'.

He said: "We scored early on and then one of my players is being booked for timewasting after seven minutes.

"We don't want that as we're a footballing team full of fit and hungry young players, and in the second half, they [Wycombe] just proceeded to take, what is known as the 'Michael' out of the officials.

"They [the officials] didn't do anything about it so it was baffling.

"We had a couple of penalty appeals turned away, a couple of their players in [Sam] Vokes and [Jordan] Obita had their elbows clash with our players' head.

"Overall, I thought it was a strange refereeing performance."

On Wycombe and Gareth Ainsworth, Barton added: "Gaz has done a fantastic job, he is a great guy, and the Wycombe fans are behind him.

"He took them to the Championship, and they beat us [Fleetwood Town] in the semi-final, so you have to give them credit in how they do it.

"But do I want to do what they do? Not at all.

"I don't want to watch 180 passes and tell players who have played in the Championship to boot the ball as high as they can, but it works for them and it's effective.

"Booting it long can get you in the Championship, but it doesn't keep you in there.

"I wasn't Lionel Messi, but I played three seasons outside of the Premier League in this country.

"They were all in the Championship, so I am well versed in either winning it or getting out of it and I know what it takes to keep yourselves in there.

"And booting the ball long and having wrestling matches doesn't do that, but Wycombe beat us fair and squad.

"We play them in four weeks at home and I wouldn't swap jobs with Gareth or swap their personnel for ours."

During his playing days, Barton won promotion into the Premier League in those three seasons in the Championship.

They were with Newcastle United in 2009/10, Queens Park Rangers in 2013/14, and Burnley in 2015/16 respectively.

The latter was with Sam Vokes, with the two being teammates at Turf Moor.

Boss happy after win

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has explained why he opted to start with Sam Vokes ahead of Brandon Hanlan in the club's 2-1 win over Bristol Rovers.

The Boxing Day clash at Adams Park saw the Chairboys make two changes to the side that defeated Ipswich Town nine days earlier, as Ryan Tafazolli replaced the injured Alfie Mawson in the centre of defence, with Hanlan dropping to the bench for Vokes up top.

Vokes had not started the last three games for the club following some flat performances, but his display against the Pirates was very much a reminder of what he can bring to the team, despite not getting on the scoresheet.

Gareth Ainsworth said: "It was a different home win for us.

"Recently, we have played some free-flowing stuff on the wings but today [December 26], I thought it was going to be a physical battle.

"We started with Sam Vokes which I knew was going to raise a few eyebrows, especially after we went 1-0 down as some fans might have been asking for Brandon Hanlan, but trust me, I have been in this game long enough to give us some success.

"And our first goal was brilliant as it was from a Vokesy flick on, to Garath McCleary, to Anis Mehmeti who gave it to David Wheeler and we're level.

"It was a perfect goal."

A new 'era' at Wycombe

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has reminded those connected to the club that 'patience' was going to play a huge role in the club's current season.

The Chairboys lost several key first-team players during the summer in Anthony Stewart, Adebayo Akinfenwa, and David Stockdale, whilst Matt Bloomfield and Lee Harrison departed the coaching staff to join Colchester United.

The exists left Ainsworth admitting that the club are in the 'next era', as they aim to finish in the play-off places for a second consecutive season.

He said: "This season was all about patience as we lost so many big characters in the summer and at the start of the season.

"David Stockdale, Adebayo Akinfenwa, Anthony Stewart, Matt Bloomfield, and other members of staff all left.

"But we're in the next era as we have got Anis Mehmeti, Ryan Tafazolli, Alfie Mawson is back, Lewis Wing, Jordan Obita, and more."

Wycombe Wanderers entered the play-off places after comeback win over Bristol Rovers on December 26 (PA)

Victorious over the Gas Heads on Boxing Day

WYCOMBE Wanderers made it four games unbeaten after they defeated an in-form Bristol Rovers side 2-1 at Adams Park.

Played at a frenetic pace, Joey Barton's men took the lead after just four minutes through Josh Coburn's sixth of the season.

After Rovers found themselves in numerous space down the left-hand side, Aaron Collins' low ball was met by the 20-year-old from close range.

Rovers continued to dominate the early parts of the contest, as John Marquis' header looped onto the top of Max Stryjek's goal just four minutes later.

However, Wycombe improved as the half went on as David Wheeler equalised for Wanderers with his fourth of the campaign on 22 minutes.

Anis Mehmeti's low cross was met by the 32-year-old who slide his shot beyond a diving James Belshaw.

Attack was the best form of defence for both teams as numerous long-range attempts were seen at Adams Park, but on 48 minutes, Wycombe went in front.

Another low cross from Mehmeti was met by Lewis Wing and after his first-time attempt initially hit the post and was cleared, referee Sunny Gill gave the goal.

Attendance: 6,664 (1,204 away).

Wycombe travel to Home Park on December 29 for the club's final game of 2022 (PA)

Sell out for final game

PLYMOUTH Argyle have confirmed that their home match against Wycombe Wanderers has sold out.

The Pilgrims take on the Chairboys on December 29, which is the final league fixture for both clubs this calendar year.

And even though around 15,000 fans are expected to attend the clash, tickets are still available for the travelling Wanderers supporters.

As things currently stand, Argyle are currently top of the League One table on 47 points, whilst Wanderers are in seventh position on 32 points for the season respectively.

And even know the Devon-based team defeated Wycombe in the previous meeting nearly three months ago at Adams Park, the Chairboys did complete the double over the Greens last season.

During the two matches, Wycombe beat Plymouth 3-0 at Home Park and 2-0 at Adams Park, with the Chairboys pipping their counterparts for the final play-off place at the back end of the previous campaign.

Collectively, the two clubs have played each other 31 times with Wycombe earning 12 victories, Plymouth 10, along with nine draws.

To purchase your ticket, go to www.wwfc.com/tickets.

Alan Parry's Previews: Going away to Posh

London Road (PA)

WHATEVER 2023 holds in store for Wycombe Wanderers, they could not have faced a much tougher start to the new year than a trip to Peterborough United on Sunday, January 1.

The Posh have a formidable record at their London Road stadium where they have won seven of their nine home matches, scored an average of two-goals-per-game, and conceded fewer times than any team in the division.

After being relegated from the Championship last season, Grant McCann's side has made a solid start to life back in League One, and they stand just one point behind Wycombe in the table with a game in hand.

The teams met at Adams Park in October with Wanderers winning 3-1 despite going a goal down after 22 minutes.

Gareth McCleary equalised on the stroke of halftime, and the Chairboys went ahead thanks to a Lionel Messi-like turn by Nick Freeman to set up Sam Vokes for a tap in.

Anis Mehmeti completed the scoring in stoppage time following a great run by Alfie Mawson, ensuring another high-scoring encounter between the clubs with the last ten league meetings averaging more than four goals-per-game.

The Chairboys have a superior head-to-head league record against Peterborough with 11 wins, eight defeats and six draws, and the Posh have not won a league game at Adams Park for 20 years.

Wanderers have conceded four goals on each of their last two visits to London Road, and their last win there came on the final day of the 2005/06 campaign.

Jermaine Easter and Mike Williamson scored in a 2-1 victory that guaranteed Wanderers a sixth-placed finish in League Two, but they went on to lose to Cheltenham Town in the play-off semi-finals.

This will be a difficult game for Gareth Ainsworth's men and a stern test of their newfound defensive resolve which has helped them to climb the table in recent weeks.

A win at Peterborough added to December victories against promotion contenders Portsmouth and Ipswich Town, would get January off to the perfect start.

Ex-Chairboy racially abused after defeat

Anthony Stewart (in action for Wycombe against Derby in November 2020) received the hateful comment on Christmas Eve (PA)

By James Richings

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers centre back Anthony Stewart has been the subject of online racist abuse.

The 30-year-old, who left the Chairboys in the summer to sign for Scottish Premiership side Aberdeen, received the discriminatory comment after the Dons' 3-1 away defeat at St Mirren on Christmas Eve [December 24].

Following the abuse, Stewart, who is Aberdeen's club captain, said: "There are many highs and lows in this beautiful game, and I take full responsibility for my mistake [against St Mirren], which cost us three points.

"However, I will not take racist abuse lightly."

Stewart then ended his social media post by tagging the individual who allegedly said the racist remark.

Aberdeen have also issued a statement.

Released on December 27, the club said: "We strongly condemn all forms of discrimination and are shocked at the racist abuse aimed at our captain, Anthony Stewart.

"Anthony has our full support and as a Club we are currently undertaking a stringent internal investigation to try to identify the person responsible.

"Aberdeen FC stands free from all forms of discrimination, and we will simply not tolerate this type of abuse."

Since moving north of the English border, Stewart has featured in every single competitive fixture for Aberdeen, where he has scored one goal.

During his time at Wycombe, he collectively played 290 times for the club across two spells in which he scored 12 goals and earned two promotions.

They occurred in 2018 and 2020.

Many fans have come in to defend Stewart, with one Twitter user saying: "Absolutely disgusting.

"No place for this in society in general, and 100 per cent goes against the stand free ethos of the club [Aberdeen].

Another said: "Absolutely disgusted that anybody has to subjected to this kind of hate in 2022.

"We are all passionate supporters but this is unacceptable."

This person on Twitter said: "Anthony Stewart deserves an apology from the individual concerned.

"If you don't rate him as a player then fair enough but that is as far as it should go. "Footballers/managers generally accept the stick they get due to bad performances etc and that is football.

"No need for racism."

The person in question could potentially face a lifetime ban from Aberdeen as well as criminal action through the police.

SPORT

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Curtis Thompson is back after injury (PA)

Thompson makes his return after 10 months out with knee injury

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has revealed it was 'brilliant' to include Curtis Thompson in a matchday squad for the first time this season following his lengthy injury issues.

The 29-year-old suffered a medial collateral ligament injury in the Chairboys' 5-5 draw against Cheltenham Town in February and missed the remainder of the 2021/22 season.

He then suffered a setback during pre-season causing his absence from the squad to increase, but after 310 days out, Thompson finally made his long-awaited comeback appearance in Wanderers' 2-1 victory over Bristol Rovers on Boxing Day.

The midfielder played the final 12 minutes of the contest, where he replaced Lewis Wing.

Ainsworth said: "He injured his MCL (medial collateral ligament) against Cheltenham and he did it again in pre-season coming back, but it t was brilliant to put him back on.

"He got a great cheer, and he is going to be so important for us come the second part of the season, and it was great to be able to put him back on.

"I'm leaving Daryl Horgan, Ali Al-Hamadi, Dom Gape, and some other key players out of the squad of the moment and I think people need to realise how good of a squad this is.

"We're aiming for the play-offs and it will be an incredible achievement if we get there, but this is such a competitive league and we know it's not going to be easy."

Racking up the Christmas miles

By James Richings

GARETH Ainsworth has admitted that the quick turnaround of fixtures during the festive season is 'challenging', but has remained positive as Wycombe prepare for back-to-back away matches.

Following their 2-1 victory over Bristol Rovers on Boxing Day at Adams Park, the Chairboys will head down to Devon to face top-of-the-table Plymouth Argyle on December 29.

Upon arriving back in Buckinghamshire after the crunch clash with the Pilgrims, Wanderers will then travel east to face Peterborough United on New Year's Day at London Road.

This will mean that two return trips will see the team rack up 632 miles in just three days.

Speaking ahead of the visit to Home Park on December 29, Ainsworth said: "We do find it challenging but myself, Josh Hart, Dobbo and the rest of my staff will find a way to make sure that we are well rested and ready for Plymouth and Peterborough in the coming days.

"We won't get back home until the early hours of Friday morning, then we'll be getting ready to go to Peterborough, but I have got one or two things up my sleeve to help us.

"They [Plymouth] are top of the league and even though they did go four games without a win, they have had two convincing wins since and they look very good.

"But we are hoping to go down there and cause some havoc like we have done before at Home Park but we know it will be tough.

"They are flying this season and rightly so.

"They have sold out the ground and that will be good for my boys, so let's see how well we can do."

Wycombe did the double over Plymouth last season, where they scored five goals and conceded none.

Their visit to Peterborough on January 1 will also be their trip to London Road in three years.

Their last match at the ground ended in a 4-0 victory for the Posh with Ivan Toney bagging a brace.

In that same match, Giles Phillips was shown a straight red card for denying a clear and obvious goalscoring opportunity just 21 minutes in.

It was his second sending-off that season and it was the final time he played a competitive fixture for Wycombe, before being loaned out to Non League Aldershot the following campaign.

He was however an unused substitute when Wycombe defeated Oxford United in the 2020 League One play-off, and therefore received a winners medal.

To see reports on Wycombe's match against Plymouth, visit www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport, or go to @James_BFP on Twitter.

Ainsworth will see his team travel over 600 miles across three days (PA)

Connor Parsons (WWFC)

Parsons confirms departure

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that attacking midfielder Connor Parsons has left the club on a permeant deal.

The 22-year-old, who joined the Chairboys in the summer of 2021, has signed for the League of Ireland First Division club, Waterford, for an undisclosed fee subject to international clearance.

Parsons played seven times for Wanderers in his 18-month spell at Adams Park, and scored on his debut in a 3-1 home defeat against the Aston Villa U21s in the Papa John's Trophy in August 2021.

Away from his time in Buckinghamshire, he had three separate loan spells at Non League Notts County, Bromley, and Solihull Moors the latter was this season where he featured in 11 matches in all competitions.

Upon joining the Waterford, Parsons, who has also had a successful YouTube account, said: "I can't wait to get started.

"I like to move the ball with speed and take risks.

"As footballers, we are there to entertain and that is what I want to do."

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