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Bucks Free Press

Friday, February 24, 2023 | *Covering Wycombe, South Bucks, Chilterns and Aylesbury since 1856* | £1.50

STUDENT BECOMES THE MASTER AS AINSWORTH BIDS FAREWELL

Bloomfield is back in Bucks

– *Wycombe Wanderers lastest on page 63 & 64*

PINEWOOD APPROVED

TV studios expansion plans signed off despite backlash

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OUT OF STOCK

Shelves show shortages amid veg crisis

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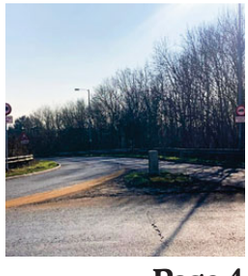
TRAVEL

Village ban on large lorries



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Flasher attack near Lido Park

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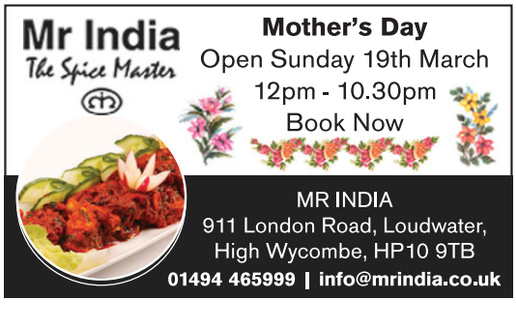

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

For Pic of the Week this week, we have gone for this apt photo of Matt Bloomfield (left) and Gareth Ainsworth (right). Bloomfield is now Wycombe Wanderers' new manager after replacing Ainsworth who departed for QPR on February 21. This was taken in April 2022 after Wanderers' 2-0 win over Plymouth Argyle at Adams Park.We wish the two best of luck in their new roles. C'mon you Blues. #UpTheWyc.

MP 'delighted' at further funding to help support households

GREG Smith MP has welcomed the news that the Conservative Government have announced the new Household Support Fund Allocations for Local Authorities across England.

Buckinghamshire Council will receive £4,798,381 in this latest round of funding to help families that need support with the cost of essentials in the face of rising costs.

This funding takes the total level of support provided to Buckinghamshire residents to £11,995,953, demonstrating the Conservative Government's unwavering commitment to support the most vulnerable in times of financial hardship.

The Household Support Fund is a discretionary fund provided to local authorities enabling them to provide support to vulnerable families struggling to cover essential costs who may not be eligible for other Government support schemes – run as the Helping Hand scheme in Bucks.

The Conservative Government is also delivering further support on top of the £1 billion of funding for the Household Support Fund including means-tested £900 Cost of Living Payments, a £150 payment for disabled people, and £300 for pensioner households. The Conservative Government's Energy Price Guarantee is also protecting people from rising energy costs this year until the end of March 2024, bringing a typical household bill to around £3,000 per year in Great Britain.

Commenting, Greg said: "I know many families in Buckinghamshire are struggling to make ends meet in the face of rising prices caused by global economic pressures including Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

"That is why I am delighted that the Conservative Government have allocated a further £4,798,381 to Buckinghamshire Council through the Household Support Fund, doubling down on our Conservative commitment to help the most vulnerable families with rising costs.

"This fund is a lifeline for local residents, and this extension will ensure this vital support is available for families who are struggling for another year."

Commenting, Mims Davies, Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression said: "The Household Support Fund has already helped many people across England through these challenging times and I am pleased it will continue to do so for another full year.

"This is just one part of our extensive and targeted £26 billion support package, which includes payments of £900 for millions of people on benefits and additional support for disabled people and pensioners, whilst every household will continue to save money thanks to our Energy Price Guarantee."

To find out more about the Helping Hand scheme in Buckinghamshire and apply for help visit: https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/

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Forino on form after Bolton

WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Chris Forino believes the Chairboys are 'still within touching distance' of reaching the play-offs this season.

Despite winning five games in a row, the Adams Park club are sitting outside the top six.

Currently just three points off the lucrative spots in League One, Wycombe will travel to fellow promotion rivals, Shrewsbury Town, this weekend.

Forino said: "We're buzzing [after beating Bolton on February 18].

"It's another game ticked off in what has been a tough week as we have faced two of the teams in and around us [Derby and Bolton].

"We've come out with nine points from the three games so it has been a really good week.

"It's really good at the moment.

"Considering how shaky our start of the season was, we'll still within touching distance and everyone knows that if Wycombe are in touching distance, then we have a real chance."

Finally, the 22-year-old wished his teammate Jack Grimmer well, after the latter suffered a concussion in the Chairboys' 1-0 victory over Bolton Wanderers on February 18, whilst also congratulating Alfie Mawson on a 'brilliant' playing career.

Mawson retired from the sport on February 14 at the age of 29 due to persistent knee injuries.

Grimmer to miss a weekend

WYCOMBE Wanderers have provided an injury update on Jack Grimmer.

The 29-year-old right-back suffered a head injury in the Chairboys' 1-0 victory over Bolton Wanderers on February 18, and was replaced by Jordan Willis after just 33 minutes.

This led to first-half stoppage time adding up to nine minutes, which is when Lewis Wing scored the only goal of the match to secure Wycombe's fifth league win in a row.

It's also the first time that Wanderers have secured five consecutive victories in the third tier of English football.

Speaking on Grimmer, former manager Gareth Ainsworth said: "Jack is fine.

"He got a concussion so that will rule him out for a week and we will rally around him.

"I have got a fantastic medical team around me that I trusted implicitly.

"Hopefully he will recover quickly."

One of the best is remembered

John Motson with Esther Ruck at Adams Park in November 2008, passed away at the age of 77 on Feb 23 (Wycombe Wanderers)

By James Richings

JOHN Motson, one of the most iconic and influential commentators of the 20th century, has passed away at the age of 77.

The broadcaster, who was the voice of more than 2,000 games during his career, died in the early hours of Thursday, February 23.

One of his most notable reports was in 1990 at Adams Park, the home of Wycombe Wanderers.

Dressed in his famous sheepskin coat, Motson spoke at the Hillbottom Road venue in the middle of a snowstorm.

The Chairboys were due to take on Peterborough United in a FA Cup tie, but the game was postponed after gale force winds and heavy snow, forced the match to be postponed.

Standing in the centre of Adams Park, battling the cold conditions, Motson said in his report: "I'm afraid to say that Mark West and Martin O'Neill will have to wait a few days longer if they are going to add another chapter to Wycombe's famous cup history.

"As you can see, this part of Buckinghamshire is snowbound and there's a bit of gale blowing as well."

Motson, popularly known as 'Motty' by a generation of football fans, enjoyed a 50-year career with the BBC during which he covered 10 World Cups, 10 European Championships and 29 FA Cup Finals.

After starting as a newspaper reporter in Barnet and at the Sheffield Morning Telegraph, Motson joined the BBC in 1968 as a sports presenter on Radio 2.

Motson's commentary on Ronnie Radford's famous long-range strike which helped non-league Hereford knock top-flight Newcastle out of the FA Cup in 1972 saw him take top billing on Match of the Day – pushing him into the spotlight and the affections of the sporting public.

His long career also took in two Olympic Games and Wimbledon's memorable 1988 FA Cup final triumph against Liverpool at Wembley as the Crazy Gang beat the Culture Club.

In 2001, Motson received an OBE for services to sports broadcasting.

Over the course of his career, he commentated on almost 2,500 games for BBC television, working on Match of the Day from 1971 until he retired in 2018.

Sky Sports News presenter Jim White added: "Sad news, legendary football commentator John Motson has died.

He was 77."

Numerous other broadcasters and clubs have paid tribute to Motson, which includes Wycombe Wanderers, who shared the image of him standing at a snow covered Adams Park 32-and-a-bit years ago.

The trophies were handed to the snooker players following a long four-year wait (Don Rexall)

Trophies handed to snooker players after four years

AMATEUR snooker players were finally given their trophy prizes four years post Covid-19.

The Wooburn Working Men's Club celebrated the players who won competitions in 2019 during the Thames Valley Summer Snooker League.

A belated trophy presentation was held four years later on Sunday, February 12, to hand the prizes to the well-deserved winners.

Don Rackstraw said: "Due to the lockdown and the restructuring of the League, the trophies arrived at the club at the beginning of February 2023.

"The winners were Paul Job and Steve Rose, and runners up were Pete Hales and Russell Watson. All trophies were presented by Don Rackstraw. Well done to all winners."

The Wooburn Working Men's Club entered four teams for this competition, two of which came 1st and 2nd.

To read more of the local sports stories in the Bucks Free Press, go to www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport

Matt Bloomfield was in charge of Colchester for five months before leaving to re-join Wycombe on February 21 (PA)

Bloomfield on ex-club

THE incoming Wycombe Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has spoken about his time at Colchester United.

The 39-year-old departed the U's after just five months to replace the outgoing Gareth Ainsworth, who joined Queens Park Rangers as their new boss.

Bloomfield made an impression during his time in Essex, as he moved the club from 21st to 18th in League One, and was awarded with the Manager of the Month award for January, after he won for of the team's six fixtures that month.

"With that being said, it was not an easy decision to leave Colchester.

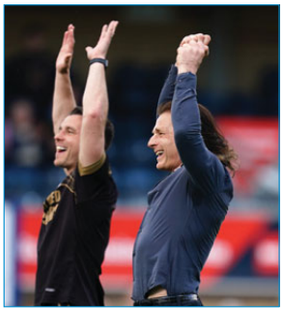
"I have a lot of respect for the people at the club, the supporters, and the players so it was not easy to walk away from that.

"I had mixed feelings about it all because I cared about the job we were doing there, I cared about the people we were working for, and I cared about everyone in the dressing room.

"It wasn't the case of getting up and going, but it was obvious that the opportunity presented itself and I was going to take it."

His first game in charge is against Shrewsbury Town on February 25.

Alan Parry's Previews: A new dawn at Adams Park



Bloomfield is the new man (PA)

IT was the news that no one wanted to hear, but the blow of losing Gareth Ainsworth to Queens Park Rangers was softened by the appointment of fans' favourite Matt Bloomfield to replace him as Wycombe manager.

Bloomfield inherits a Wanderers team in fabulous form after three wins in a week - two against leading promotion contenders - and they look a good bet to reach the playoffs for the third time in four seasons.

Wanderers have taken maximum points from nine of their last 12 games, and their rivals for a place in the top six arguably have tougher fixtures in the run-in to the end of the season.

Only two of Wycombe's remaining 15 games are against sides currently above them in the table - Barnsley (H) and Ipswich Town (A) - and after recent results they need fear no team in the division.

Next up is a trip to Shrewsbury Town on Saturday, February 25, with the hosts having seen their seven-game unbeaten run come to an end last week against Accrington Stanley, who had lost to the Chairboys a few days earlier.

The two clubs are old rivals and have met no fewer than thirty times since first facing each other in the 1993/94 season, Wycombe's inaugural campaign in the Football League.

In the most recent fixture, Wanderers lost 2-1 at Adams Park in August last year despite going in front through a Garath McCleary goal.

Matthew Pennington equalised, and the Shrews snatched a last-minute winner with a penalty converted by Luke Leahy.

On their last visit to Shropshire in September 2021, Wanderers won 2-1 thanks to goals by Joe Jacobson and Ryan Tafazolli with Pennington again on target for the home side.

Historically, the Chairboys have held the upper hand against Saturday's opponents with twelve wins and only five defeats, but most games (14) have ended in a draw.

Before their surprise defeat at Accrington, Shrewsbury had not lost a league game since New Year's Day, a run that included six wins in-a-row. At home they have beaten promotion contenders Bolton Wanderers and drawn with Derby County.

Another tough game awaits Gareth Ainsworth's men, but confidence is high and victory would increase the gap on the teams below them in the table before consecutive home games against Exeter City and Fleetwood.

Players react to the exit of Ainsworth

Wycombe's players have taken to social media to share their views on Gareth Ainsworth's exit, and Matt Bloomfield's re-arrival (PA)

By James Richings

THE Wycombe Wanderers players have reacted to the news that former manager Gareth Ainsworth has left the club.

The 49-year-old departed Adams Park on February 21 after more than 13 years in South Buckinghamshire, to took take up the head coach role at one of his former clubs, Queens Park Rangers.

Ainsworth's replacement is former club captain and fan favourite, Matt Bloomfield, who has departed Colchester United just four months after originally leaving the Chairboys to take up his first managerial role.

Speaking on Ainsworth's exit and Bloomfield's re-arrival, many of the Wanderers players took to social media to share their gratitude, memories and positive messages.

Club captain, Joe Jacobson, said: "Gaffer, Dobbo, thank you for everything.

"Also, welcome home Blooms!"

Three-time Player of the Season, Adebayo Akinfenwa, said: "Today [February 21] is a day of contrasting emotions.

"The end of an era of two certified Wycombe legends, but the beginning of another Wycombe legend's journey.

Central defender, Ryan Tafazolli added: "Unbelievable two-and-a-half years working with this man.

"It was a pleasure, Gaffer.

Jasper Pattenden, who was signed at the start of the season for the development team, added: "Thank you for everything, gaffer."

Utility player, David Wheeler said: "This was the highlight [promotion in 2020], but there's so much more to Gaz and Dobbo's legacy that can't be put into words.

"They've created a lasting positive culture at Wycombe and so many memories money can't buy.

"I have so much respect for both of them and wish them every success at QPR."

Chris Forino said: "Thank you for everything, absolute pleasure."

Right back Jack Grimmer, who was signed at the start of the 2019/20 promotion winning season to the Championship, added: "Can't thank the Gaffer & Dobbo enough for bringing me to this special club and for the moments we've shared.

"Also, welcome home Blooms."

Ainsworth leaves with 550 games under his belt, whilst Bloomfield arrives after helping Colchester move from 21st to 18th in League Two.

During his time at Adams Park, Ainsworth was part of three teams that won promotion (2011 as a player, 2018 and 2020 as manager), as well as reaching to playoff finals in 2015 and 2020, which ended in defeat against Southend United and Sunderland respectively.

SPORT

Ainsworth spoke to players the day before Pic: Wanderers TV

Gareth Ainsworth's emotional goodbye at Wycombe Wanderers

HERE is the moment that former Wycombe Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth told his ex-players he was leaving the club.

The 49-year-old officially departed the Adams Park team on February 21, ending a 13-year relationship with the Chairboys which began on November 20, 2009.

His move ro QPR a club where he spent seasons at between 2003 and 2010, also saw former Wanderers assistant Richard Dobson, and ex-Wycombe analyst, Josh Hart, join him in West London.

Speaking to the players on February 20, a day before his departure, he said: "This is tough.

"You guys have given me this opportunity and I can't thank you enough.

"This is a lot harder than I thought it would be.

"I want to go and smash the Championship with QPR and keep that club up.

"In the meantime, I will be looking down at you and hopefully, you'll be winning those play-offs so you can come and join us in the Championship.

"You've got all the possibilities to do that as you're an amazing bunch of guys and girls.

"I wouldn't change one thing in the last 13 years.

"This place has played a big part in my life and I can't thank the Couhigs enough for backing us.

"All of you can reach the Championship, just keep playing the way you are playing."

Blooms is back in Buckinghamshire

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers have officially confirmed Matt Bloomfield as their new manager, a day after a revealing that the move between the two parties had been made 'in principle'.

The 39-year-old replaces the departing Gareth Ainsworth, who has joined Queens Park Rangers as their new head coach, following the sacking of Neil Critchley on February 19.

Bloomfield, who played over 500 times for the Chairboys between 2004 and 2021, retired from professional football in 2022 on medical grounds but was added to Ainsworth's backroom staff for the latter half of the 2021/22 season.

He continued as coach until being appointed as Colchester United's new boss in September last year, where he won nine matches in 28 fixtures, which included picking up 13 points from six games in January.

This landed him that month's Manager of the Month award.

Speaking on his return to Adams Park, he said: "I'm delighted to be back and looking forward to getting stuck into the task at hand.

"It's a really exciting time for the football club and an exciting prospect for myself. I'm ready for this job.

"I'm so grateful to Colchester for the opportunity they gave me and the faith they showed in me.

"I loved my time there but the lure of coming back here to manage this football club was always going to be too big to turn down."

Goalkeeper coach Lee Harrison, who also joined Bloomfield at Colchester in September, has also returned to Buckinghamshire, along with first-team coach, Richard Thomas.

He added: "It's been a huge experience for me.

"I always had hopes and aspirations of being the manager here one day and I think leaving here, albeit for a short time, has helped me get ready for this opportunity.

"I've had so many special memories at Wycombe.

"I was looking through photos with my girls last night and it brought it all back about some of the amazing times we've enjoyed here."

Wycombe Wanderers tweeted the news at 5pm on February 22 alongside the message: "Wycombe Wanderers are thrilled to confirm the appointment of Matt Bloomfield as the club's new manager.

"Richard Thomas and Lee Harrison also join Matt's management team at Adams Park.

"Let's go!"

Lee Harrison added: "I'm sure we can create so many more special memories here.

"Thank you to the supporters for welcoming me back.

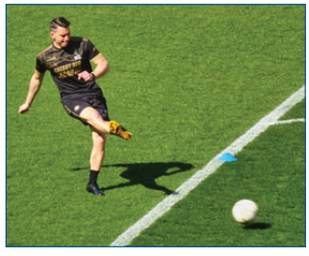
"I am so pleased to be here.

"Keep getting behind the boys, as you have been all season, and I look forward to seeing them very soon."

The appointments of Bloomfield, Thomas and Harrison sees the exit of Erbil Bozkurt, who only joined Wycombe at the start of the month.

In a statement, Wanderers said: "Everyone at Wycombe Wanderers would like to thank Erbil Bozkurt, who will leave the club this week after a short period as Head of Goalkeeping, in which the Blues won all four matches, keeping three clean sheets, and wish him well for the future."

Bloomfield (pictured in 2020) is now Wycombe's new manager (PA)



Matt Bloomfield (Carol Mason)

Returning home to manage

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has revealed that re-joining the Chairboys from Colchester United 'was not an easy decision'.

The 39-year-old, who played 557 times for the Adams Park club between 2003 and 2022, has replaced the outgoing Gareth Ainsworth who departed for Queens Park Rangers after more than 10 years in charge.

Bloomfield has been part of Ainsworth's coaching staff following his retirement from the game last year, and enjoyed a five-month spell with the Essex-team between September and February, winning nine of his 28 games.

Now back in Bucks, he has disclosed why he returned to Wycombe.

Bloomfield said: "When the call came from Rob [Couhig] on Monday afternoon, all my focus at that time was looking at how Colchester can beat Northampton on Saturday.

"But sometimes, life takes you on a path that you are not expecting.

"This opportunity presented itself to me so I met Rob on Tuesday, and we discussed a lot.

"It was too big of an opportunity to turn down.

"It was the lure of returning to a club that I love so much, an opportunity to step up a league, and to work with a group of people that I care about due to my history with Wycombe.

"All I care about is doing a good job here and making sure that we keep moving forward."

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