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# Bucks Free Press

Friday, June 2, 2023

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## STOLEN DONKEY FOUND

Little Moon bizarrely discovered in field  
38 miles from where she was taken two  
weeks ago - Page 3

## SEASIDE TRAGEDY



Local schoolgirl, 12, dies alongside boy,  
17, as man is arrested for manslaughter

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Tributes to  
M40 crash  
victim



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### NEWS

ISIS fanatic  
jailed for life



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## SPORT

## From despair to delight

CRAIG BOWLER admits he is happy to sacrifice family time in his pursuit of more glory on the greens.

The aptly-named Olney bowls star, 44, bagged a brilliant Commonwealth bronze medal last summer and is now gearing up for another jam-packed summer of action.

Bowler is a triple amputee after attempting to take his own life 15 years ago and spending nearly two months in a coma.

He lost both his legs and an arm before he was 'nursed back to life' by his physiotherapist's assistant, Abby, with the two remarkably now married and having two children, Max and Tilly.

The Buckinghamshire star insists his memorable Leamington Spa medal is only the start of his journey and he is willing to put domestic life on hold as he chases more outdoor season success.

"My wife calls herself a bowls widow," said Bowler, speaking at a Bowls' Big Weekend event in Chingford.

"I am playing about five or six days a week, but I love the sport and I love helping other people enjoy the sport as well.

"Because I am never at home, I am literally playing most nights, I am at the bowls club a lot of evenings.

"But I think deep down she probably enjoys that; she enjoys her space and I do most weekends with the kids and the family.

"So, during the week I play bowls and then during the weekend it is all about family."

Bowls' Big Weekend took place between 26-29 May, with clubs across the country holding open days to encourage new players to give the sport a go.

The event gave the bowls community the opportunity to come together and celebrate the sport, with clubs across the country opening their doors for free to enable new participants to discover everything that is great about the game.

Bowler joined forces with partner in crime Kieran Rollings to battle onto the podium at last summer's Commonwealth Games.

And he's relishing the prospect of another exciting season of domestic action.

He said: "I, for my local club in Top Club, which is quite a big national competition so I am looking forward to that.

Bowler was first inspired to take up the sport by Bob Love, who competed for England in the open para-sport triples event at the 2014 Commonwealth Games and won a bronze medal.

And Bowler said: "I started obviously playing able-bodied stuff first for my local club.

"Then I watched a bloke called Bob Love, he was born with no arms, and he bowled with his feet.

"In 2014, he won a Commonwealth Games bronze medal bowling with his feet, and it just made me think that if a bloke with no arms can do it then I should give it a try."

## Buckinghamshire beaten in the west



It wasn't Bucks' day last week (Pixabay)

BUCKS made a disappointing start to their National Counties Trophy campaign when they lost by three wickets to Wiltshire in their opening 50-over group game at Marlborough College on Monday.

Batting first after winning the toss, Bucks were bowled out for 240 in 49.2 overs, before the hosts edge home with just ten balls to spare.

Bucks seemed well-placed at 109-2 at the half-way mark, after useful contributions from Alexei Kervezee (45), AJ Woodland (30) Ewan Cox (26) and Teddie Casterton (27), but a middle-order collapse saw them slip to 183-8, and it needed a valuable 31 from Conner Haddow as the last two wickets added 57 from the final ten overs.

Wiltshire got off to a flying start in reply against the Bucks opening attack, reaching 109-2 in 20.3 overs. But tight bowling by Woodland, Haddow and Ed Bragg reduced them to 170-6, before Wiltshire captain Ed Young (75 off 88 balls), scored the only half-century of the match to see his side home.

Bucks will be hoping for more fortune when they entertain Dorset in their second group match at Gerrards Cross on Sunday, starting at 11am.

All-rounder Michael Payne, who missed the Wiltshire game with a finger injury,

By Michael Knox

is fit and is included in the squad for the game, along with seamer Tom Weymes, who has recovered from a leg injury.

Spectators at Sunday's match are asked to park in Dukes Lane if the car park is full and not in the private road leading up to the ground.

Bucks squad: T Hampton (High Wycombe) capt, AJ Woodland (High Wycombe), E Cox (Buckingham), E Casterton (High Wycombe), A Kervezee (Halesowen), R Richardson (Blackheath), M Payne (Amersham), C Marrow (Gerrards Cross), H Ramanadapulle (Buckingham), E Bragg (Halesowen), C Haddow (High Wycombe), T Weymes (Tring Park), S Croft (Harefield).

The match scoreboard can be found on the Buckinghamshire Playcricket website.

Due to a fixture/venue clash with the next round of the National Club KO competition, the venue for our Trophy fixture v Staffordshire on Sunday, June 18 has been changed from Porthill Park CC to Moddershall & Oulton CC, Stone, ST15 8RN.

To read more of the latest sports news in Buckinghamshire, visit [www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport](http://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport).

You can also send in your reports to the BFP by emailing them to [james.richings@newsquest.co.uk](mailto:james.richings@newsquest.co.uk).



Many young footballers got prizes at the event last weekend as hundreds of child were celebrated

## Football club celebrates its youngsters

LOCAL grassroots FA accredited football club Stoke Mandeville FC, celebrated a successful year at their End of season presentation day.

The club paid for a number of bouncy castles, inflatable slides, penalty shoot out, a giant football dartboard and a rodeo bull for all to enjoy along with a BBQ, ice cream van and their famous tea bar providing refreshments.

Feedback from parents has been wonderful. An under 9 parent said: "We had a lovely time as part of the U9s and I'm so impressed with such a fantastic day you put together. Really love being part of a club that so obviously cares about every single

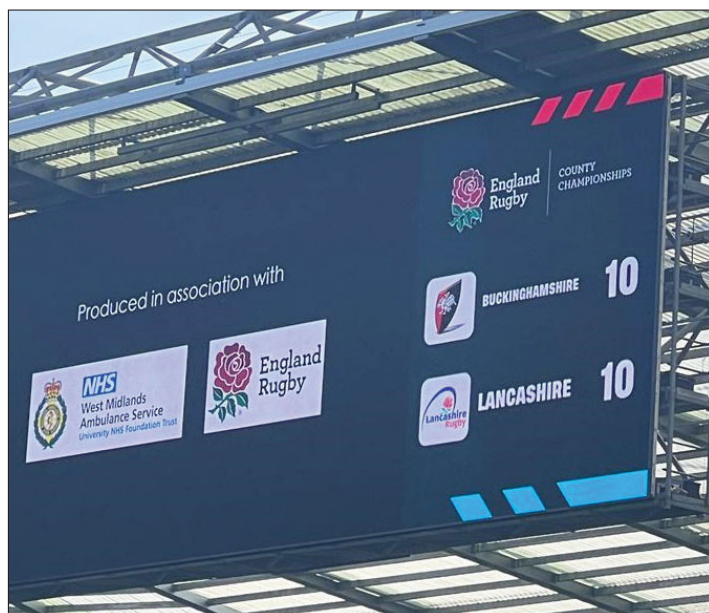
player."

Stoke Mandeville FC recently celebrated their annual end of season presentation day last weekend.

The club invited all of their families from all age groups from first stage stags (age 2-5) right up to the senior teams to enjoy a fun day together.

Each age group had their own presentation in the hall, where every child was awarded a trophy for playing in the season, as well as the four special awards which were voted for by players, parents and coaches for each team.

Chairman, Ben Farrow-Stevenson said: "We are so proud of every member of our club."



Buckinghamshire and Lancashire were all square at the break before the latter won the cup at Twickenham on May 28

# Bucks fall to final defeat

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE women fell short in the Gill Burns Division 1 County Championship Final against Lancashire after a 15-25 defeat at Twickenham Stadium.

The Buckinghamshire side were looking to complete an upset at the home of England rugby with the North West side being overwhelming favourites to win the trophy on Sunday, May 28.

The Thames Valley side started the stronger of the two sides with Lauren Head opening the scoring with a try after a period of sustained pressure.

Coached by England legend Rocky Clark, Bucks were causing their opponents numerous problems, but Lancashire managed to claw their way back into the

match.

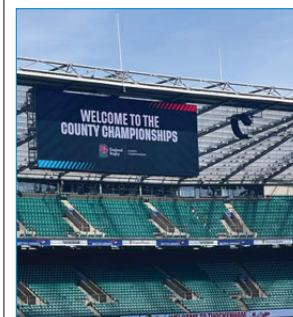
Aimee Wallace converted a penalty before Zena Francis dodged her way through the Buckinghamshire defence to make it 5-10 to Lancashire.

After conceding, Buckinghamshire propelled themselves back onto level terms with another try as the two teams went in at the break at 10-10.

But Lancashire came out the stronger after half-time, scoring two tries as well as converting a penalty, putting them in control of the match.

Buckinghamshire's hopes were kept alive by Charlotte Dennis, but Aimee Wallace's penalty meant there was a 10 points gap between the sides heading into the closing stages of the encounter.

## Bucks rugby players 'honoured'



### Bucks lost the showpiece

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S Co-Captain Nicky Gross stated that playing at Twickenham 'was a great experience for everyone in the team and we have loved every second of it', despite losing in their respective cup final.

The Three Counties team fell to a 15-25 loss against a strong Lancashire side in the Gill Burns County Championship Division 1 Final over the Bank Holiday Weekend.

She said: "On the coach over, we were extra excited because we could feel the vibe as soon as we arrived at Twickenham, and we knew it was going to be such a buzzing day."

"We are so honoured to be here this weekend."

The showpiece took place prior to the Barbarians v World XV, and the Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship Division 1 Final where Kent faced Lancashire.

She added: "It is a tough defeat to swallow but we still want the girls to have a good time."

"It is a brilliant weekend of rugby and we need to celebrate all the successes that English rugby has at the moment. To play in the final at Twickenham, it is a massive honour."

## Praise in showpiece despite heartbreak

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE head coach, Rocky Clark, has praised Lauren Head following her performance in the club's recent cup final defeat.

The Thames Valley side lost the Gill Burns County Championship Division 1 Final 15-25 to Lancashire at Twickenham, despite the full back scoring two tries in the showpiece.

Clark said: "She is pretty electric, and she has done fantastic this whole season."

"She is so good with ball in hand and her skill set is a real weapon for this Buckinghamshire side."

"She has really grown into the position."

"The squad is building with the younger generation coming through now, so we are massively rebuilding every week."

# Bucks rue missed chance in cup final



The match between the two sides took place at Twickenham Stadium in North London on May 28

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE suffered a 15-25 defeat in the Gill Burns County Championship Division 1 Final at Twickenham with their head coach, Rocky Clark, emphasising her mix of emotions.

The Thames Valley side were in the contest for large parts of the match, but their northern counterparts came out on top at the home of English rugby over the Bank Holiday Weekend.

Buckinghamshire came out the stronger of the two sides quickly scoring a try going 5-0 up thanks to the first of Lauren Head's two tries.

Clark's team put the first points on the board and went into the break 10-10, however, they were chasing the game in the second half after Lancashire quickly controlled the majority of the second half.

But some moments of poor discipline and too many unforced errors let Bucks down, as they gave away several cheap penalties which the North West team capitalised on.

She said: "Lancashire are a really well-drilled side, you've got to take your hat off to them, they knew their gameplan and they stuck to it."

"We are disappointed with the result there is no point in hiding from it but how proud I am of the girls getting here and putting in a shift all season I am a really proud, happy coach."

"We started really well but we lost our way a bit throughout

By Hannah Peart

the game.

"We struggled to break them down, they had a good 10, a good 13."

"It is the highest honour as a coach to coach these amazing women, but I am a little frustrated we could not get our game going as well as we wanted to but you know that is a testament to Lancashire's defence."

Despite the loss, Co-Captain Nicky Gross highlighted the side's progress over the past few seasons and with it being one of the 'first times in division one which has been much harder than division two'.

In 2019, Buckinghamshire were crowned Gill Burns Division 2 Winners at Twickenham.

"To come back again and play in the final is a massive honour and we want to do one better next year so watch this space'."

Clark has amassed an impressive 137 England caps making her the most capped player in England's international history, including both men and women until Sarah Hunter received her 138th cap at the 2021 Women's World Cup.

To read more about the local sport in Buckinghamshire, go to [www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport](http://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport).

Also, if you would like to send in your team's results to the BFP, email them to [james.richings@newsquest.co.uk](mailto:james.richings@newsquest.co.uk).

## SPORT

0963-2336



Lydia Bedford taught PE in Aylesbury (PA)

## Ex-Aylesbury teacher lands coaching job with Premier League outfit

A former PE teacher who taught at an Aylesbury secondary school has been named as the under 18 coach at a Premier League club.

Lydia Bedford, who recently held roles at the Football Association, Leicester City Women, and Arsenal Women, will now take charge of the Brentford squad for the 2023/24 season.

Prior to her move into coaching, she worked at the Mandeville Upper School in Aylesbury between September 2009 and May 2013.

Her appointment has made her the highest profile name woman to take charge of a professional boys'/men's team, with her assistant being the former Wycombe Wanderers striker, Jon-Paul Pittman.

The 36-year-old departed from his position as a youth coach at Forest Green Rovers to work alongside the ex-PE teacher.

Pittman had two separate spells with the Chairboys between 2009 and 2011 and 2013 and 2014, where he played 93 times and scored 17 goals.

Discussing Bedford's appointment as head coach of Brentford's under 18 side, as

well as the addition of Pittman, Brentford FC director of football Phil Giles said: "We undertook an extensive recruitment process for these roles.

"Lydia and Jon-Paul were the two best candidates, and thankfully we were able to finalise their recruitment to the staff.

"I'm sure they will excel."

# Breaking down the 22/23 figures

WITH the 2022/23 League One season over done with, here is a look back at Wycombe Wanderers' season in numbers.

### League Position: Ninth

This is a drop of three places from the previous year when the Chairboys secured the last play-off place in 2022.

### Points: 69

There was a difference of 14 points from the season before, with Wanderers only picking up nine from their last 30 at the back end of the campaign which has just finished.

### Competitive games won: 21

This is made up of the 20 wins in the league and the solitary victory in the League Cup away at Northampton Town back in August.

This is down from the 25 wins Wycombe picked up in the 2021/22 season which included 23 victories in the league.

### Competitive games drawn: 11

Wycombe only shared the points nine times during the course of the season, with four of the draws coming in Matt Bloomfield's opening 15 matches since taking over in February.

The other two draws occurred in the Football League Trophy against Tottenham Hotspur Under 21s and Peterborough United respectively.

### Competitive games lost: 21

In terms of defeats, 17 were recorded in the league which is an increase of 12 from the previous season, when Wycombe lost only nine times in League One.

Seven of those 17 losses came in the final 15 matches, whilst Wanderers suffered three consecutive defeats in August, where they conceded eight goals in that spell against Bolton Wanderers, Exeter City, and Shrewsbury Town respectively.

### By James Richings

### Most appearances: Nick Freeman (49)

In what would turn out to be his final season at Adams Park, Nick Freeman ended the campaign with the most appearances than any other player in a Wycombe shirt during the 2022/23 campaign.

This comes after playing just four times the previous year after suffering an ACL injury against Lincoln City in August 2021.

His last outing in a Chairboys kit was against Portsmouth on the final day of the season, which finished 2-2 at Fratton Park.

### Least appearances: Josh Blunkell and Declan Skura (zero)

Both goalkeeper Blunkell and centre back Skura were the only two names to not feature in any competitive game for the Chairboys this season.

It's important to note that they spent the season working in the development squad.

### Competitive goals scored: 64

The tally of 64 goals scored for Wycombe registered 59 in the league, three in the League Cup, one in the Football League Trophy, and one in the Berks & Bucks Cup.

This is a decrease from 88 in all competitions the previous year.

### Competitive goals conceded: 63

This season saw Wanderers ship 63 goals across the five competitions they played in this season, with actually lower than what they did during the 2021/22 campaign.

Last season, Wanderers shipped 75 goals across the six competitions they were in.

*This article continues on the right-hand side.*



The 2022/23 season saw Wycombe finish ninth and miss out on the play-offs



Wycombe finished ninth in '23 (PA)

## Wanderers' season in numbers

CONTINUED FROM THE MAIN ARTICLE:

### Highest scorer: Lewis Wing and Anis Mehmeti (nine)

Despite leaving for Bristol City in the Championship, Anis Mehmeti ended the season as Wycombe's joint-top scorer with nine goals. He shared the accolade with Lewis Wing who scored his ninth of the campaign in the final game of the season against Portsmouth.

### Highest attendance: Wycombe Wanderers 0-1 Sheffield Wednesday (8,302 - 2,572 away)

The Chairboys' home loss against the now promoted play-off winners on January 14 this year saw just over 8,000 cram into Adams Park, with more than 2,500 cheering on Wednesday.

It was the second season in a row that Wycombe's highest home attendance happened to be against Wednesday.

### Lowest attendance: Wycombe Wanderers 1-1 Peterborough United (Wycombe win 4-3 on penalties) (567 - 84 away)

Despite it being six years (at the time) since Premier League development squads were allowed to participate in the Football League Trophy, fans still continue to boycott the fixtures when the early stages of the competition are played.

This was no exception when Peterborough visited Adams Park in October, as just over 500 Wycombe fans were in attendance.