

# ..BFP WEEKLY AWARDS...BFP WEEKLY AWARDS...BFP WEEKLY AW...

## GOLD STAR:

HIGH Wycombe RUFC U14s have finished the season on an all-time high after ending Bridgend's four-year unbeaten run with victory in the final of the West Coast International Festival of Rugby.

Wycombe won 15-5 to back up earlier wins over the likes of Bath and Abertillery.

Wycombe also won the Cobham Festival without losing a game.



## WOODEN SPOON:

REACHING the promotion play-offs and a cup final, not to mention a superb FA Trophy run, could never be described as a poor season.

But Chesham were so close to so much more and after 18 unbeaten games to end the season with a play-off semi-final loss and then defeat in the Berks Cup Final is a sad end.



## STORY OF THE WEEK:

CHRISTIAN Wade will go on his second summer tour for England this summer after being named in Stuart Lancaster's touring party to Argentina on Wednesday.

He scored four tries in two uncapped matches during the tour to South Africa last summer, but should finally win his first full cap against the Pumas.



## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Morale doesn't drop balls and miss his tackles."

Wasps director of rugby Dai Young, who is always ready with a one-liner, refutes the argument that a weakened mindset after their injury-time defeat to Northampton contributed to Wasps' poor finish.



# Wanderers' season at a glance

## THREE THINGS WE LEARNED:

**Home form has to improve:** Wanderers actually won more games on their travels than they did at Adams Park, picking up nine victories on the road and eight on home turf. That needs to be better if they're to improve on 15th place next season.

**You do win things with kids:** Blues have a team packed full of youngsters and what's more it was the likes of Josh Scowen, Charles Dunne and Jordan Archer who were the top performers last season. Add Kortney Hause, Matt Ingram and Anthony Stewart to the mix – who can all only improve – and the future looks bright.

**Rein in the enthusiasm:** Whilst watching players launch themselves into tackles was a refreshing change to some of the limp displays earlier in the season, it led to suspensions at pivotal moments of the season to key players. December saw three players sent off in three successive matches – they're no good to Ainsworth when they're sat in the stand.

## TURNING POINT:

Has to be the 3-2 win at Rotherham in November. A low on confidence Blues squad pitched up at the New York Stadium having dropped to the foot of the entire Football League three days previously and went behind to their high flying opponents inside 16 seconds after a goal-keeping mistake.

They levelled before falling behind again as the 138 travelling fans started to despair at a season that was falling to pieces. But rather than crumble as they might have done previously, Wanderers came back to win thanks to two goals from Matt McClure to renew belief they could beat the drop.

Wanderers went on to win eight out of the next 12 games to move away from trouble to kickstart the Gareth Ainsworth revolution.

## SURPRISE OF THE SEASON:

The transformation between the first and second halves of the season. Put simply, Ainsworth has given a team that looked set for a season of toil and struggle their pride and their belief back.

Before Ainsworth took the reins on a permanent basis Wanderers had collected just 13 points from 15 matches. After he was installed into the manager's hot-seat the side picked up an average of 1.52 points per game – had they managed that over the course of the season they would have finished seventh.

There was a noticeable upturn in performances as the team won three matches after falling behind, thanks to Ainsworth instilling a never say die attitude into his troops.



## STRENGTHS:

Defensively Wanderers now look a lot stronger, with Blues keeping 14 clean sheets in the 39 matches Ainsworth has been in charge of the side.

To contrast that with the old regime, Blues kept just four shutouts in the previous season and Gary Waddock took 81 matches to accrue his last 14 blank scoresheets.

That defensive solidity is down in part to Ainsworth's insistence on his wingers tracking back, having an extra midfield barrier in the form of the hard working Josh Scowen and Stuart Lewis, and being blessed with an abundance of excellent young defenders.

## WEAKNESSES:

Scoring goals. Last season Blues managed just 50, with Plymouth Argyle and the two relegated clubs, Aldershot Town and Barnet, the only three sides in the division who ripped the net less frequently.

First choice striker Matt McClure, who was in and out of the side due to a string of niggling injuries, and Joel Grant contributed nearly half that total between them and they need someone to take the burden off them – particularly those in the centre of midfield, who contributed five goals between them.

In all Wanderers failed to score in 15 league games last season.

## BIGGEST HIT:

When Wanderers were kicking off the season at York City, young midfielder Josh Scowen, left, was playing 300 miles away in Dorchester in front of just 447 people, apparently not a part of manager Gary Waddock's first team plans.

Eyebrows were raised when Ainsworth recalled him from his loan spell at Conference South side Eastbourne Borough and elected to put him straight in the team, despite having only two substitute first team appearances under his belt.

But it soon became clear the boy oozed quality with his eye for an incisive pass or a tackle, and in the end it was no surprise that he swept the board at the player of the year awards after signing a new two and a half year contract midway through the season.

## BIGGEST MISS:

Dare we say Gary Waddock? Already under pressure to deliver after relegation the previous season, murmurs of discontent from the terraces became ever louder as Wanderers made a terrible start to the campaign.

New faces Richard Logan and Dennis Oli failed to spark and loan signings Adam Thompson and Matthew Parsons similarly didn't impress.

Something had to give and Waddock was shown the door after arguably the worst display of the season – the 1-0 home defeat by AFC Wimbledon.

## MATCH OF THE SEASON:

Several candidates came to mind as Wanderers picked up several away victories in the face of adversity.

The Rotherham game which was also the season's turning point was a contender, as were the superb victories at Torquay and leaders Gillingham. But it terms of overall performance and significance, the match of the season was the Johnstone's Paint Trophy win at Portsmouth.

Joel Grant gave Wanderers the lead inside 13 seconds against the 2010 FA Cup finalists and their dominance was rewarded as Dean Morgan doubled the advantage.

A Portsmouth goal didn't unsettle Blues as their young back line defended heroically throughout and Morgan notched his second to seal a result of the round award.

## MOMENT OF THE SEASON:

The last game of the season almost seemed to be written in the stars as Gareth Ainsworth was able to bow out from playing on a high.

Still basking in the glow of his survival job, he had made 599 career appearances from the right wing going into the final day showdown against one of his old clubs, Port Vale.

Ainsworth isn't normally one for self indulgence but nobody will have begrudged him his moment in the spotlight as his current team faced off against an old one that needed a point to guarantee promotion.

His 75th minute introduction from the substitutes' bench was met with a standing ovation from all four sides of the ground as the game, and his playing career, finished with honours even in a 1-1 draw.