

From sixth form studies to a League Two contract

by **ANDY CARSWELL**
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JUST over a month ago Tommy Fletcher was finishing his A Levels and looking to go to university – now he’s preparing for life at a League Two club gunning for the play offs.

The central defender admits he’s had to pinch himself over his progress in the last few weeks, having gone from playing at grounds where the fans only just outnumber the players to facing Premier League giants Aston Villa in front of almost 5,000 at Adams Park.

He impressed sufficiently in 45 minutes of his first trial game to be handed a one-year contract with the option of a second – meaning instead of searching round for jobs, he’s looking at an apprenticeship of a different kind at a Football League club.

Fletcher said: “It wasn’t so long ago I was playing in front of 30 or 40 fans and the other week I made my home debut in front of four or five thousand fans against a massive club. It’s a whole new world for me but I’m really enjoying it. I didn’t expect to come on but to get the last ten minutes was great.”

He said: “I was very excited when I found out [about Wycombe’s interest] and a little bit surprised. I hoped my hard work would pay off and it has at Wycombe.

“I was still at sixth form at my local school and I’d just finished all my A Levels, so it was perfect timing that Wycombe came in just



Tommy Fletcher, centre, has joined the Wanderers line-up.

after all exams had finished. “I was looking at universities and apprenticeships to work on in and around London, but football was my main dream and I’m glad I’ve achieved it.

“I’ve changed from two hours a week to four hours a day so it’s a massive change for me.”

Life at Adams Park holds an additional bonus for the lifelong

Tottenham Hotspur fan, as he has the opportunity to learn from former Spurs defender Gary Doherty.

Fletcher, who was playing in the Ryman League North Division for Cheshunt last year said: “Coming in and playing alongside Gary Doherty was a massive plus for me. It’s absolute gold dust learning everything I can off Gary

Doherty – to play alongside him tops it off.”

Asked about his aims for the current season, Fletcher said: “I’d like to push on into the first eleven.

“I know it’s going to take a lot of hard work and there’s lots more experienced players here, but all I can do is bide my time and keep working.”

Lewis leads in captaincy race

THE Wanderers captaincy is still up for grabs, but Stuart Lewis appears to be leading the race.

He has been honoured with the armband throughout pre-season and would appear to be a leading contender to take it on a permanent basis.

But manager Gareth Ainsworth was this week keeping his cards close to his chest and even hinted that his skipper could change throughout the campaign.

Matt Bloomfield was named club captain last year but missed virtually the whole campaign through injury and Dave Winfield, who stepped in for him, has departed for Shrewsbury.

Ainsworth said: “It might be a big thing for a lot of people but I think whoever leads the team out on Saturday will be my captain for the day.

“Being captain of the club is an honour but it can change week in, week out with injuries and suspensions.”

He added however: “Stuart Lewis has done a fantastic job in pre season and he’s right up there amongst them all with a good chance.”

Hard work made fun



Stuart Lewis on a ‘hidden hard day’ at Marlow Rowing Club

MIDFIELDER Stuart Lewis said the most physically demanding days of pre season have been the most fun.

Wanderers’ players have taken a break from the endless running usually associated with pre season training with manager Gareth Ainsworth organising trips to the Wycombe Rye Lido and Marlow Rowing Club.

Lewis said while the activities have been fun, they’ve also been a useful fitness top-up ahead of the start of the season.

He said: “We’ve had good fun days, which is important, but there have been hidden hard days with the rowing and the swimming. It’s been a really good pre season, everyone’s enjoyed it – we are just counting the days now.”

Leading by example

COACH Lee Harrison said manager Gareth Ainsworth is the one person Wanderers can’t afford to be without.

He said Ainsworth has proved an inspiration at bringing together players, fans and staff in all quarters of Adams Park, and that galvanising effect has been key to increasing optimism levels at the club.

Harrison said: “Gaz coming in has been a breath of fresh air for a lot of people. He’s probably the one person the club can’t do without at this time.

“The club’s been taken over by the fans’ Trust, which has been great, but he’s really the one that stands out at the front and beats the drum for it and leads from the front.

“He’ll be the first in the water at the swimming, the first one diving round on the training ground. The young lads look at that and think, ‘That’s how we want to be.’”

No contract, no squad number and a bad injury but Fozzie could still have a Blues future

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DANNY Foster still has a future at Wycombe Wanderers despite not being given a squad number for the new season.

The defender’s contract expired at the end of the last campaign and he has been out since sustaining a serious knee injury at Rotherham in November.

Foster lost his number two shirt to Marvin McCoy and at the moment he’s in contract limbo and still undergoing assessment of the injury.

But manager Gareth Ainsworth said that doesn’t mean the 28-year-old’s career at Adams Park is over.

He said: “He’s got a nasty knee injury and he had an operation. It’s a time factor now for him and we’ll see where he is in a couple of months.

“He’s got surgeons to see and rehab to go through at the moment. He totally understands

the situation and the club are doing what they can to aid Foz in his recovery and get him fit again.

“He was injured on our watch and we pride ourselves on being good to the guys.

“He had a long term injury so he’ll be assessed, but at the moment he’s not part of the full time playing squad.”

Foster has been coming to Wanderers’ training ground to see physio Theo Farley as part of his rehabilitation from the injury.

Ainsworth said: “Theo and the team are doing everything they can to help him.

“Foz is a great pro. He knows he’s getting looked after and he’s doing bits himself, but he knows Theo’s priority is a first team squad to look after.

“He’ll do it right and we’ll assess him further down the line and see where he is. At the moment he’s coming in now and again to get his knee sorted – we’ll see where we go.”



Danny Foster is working his way back in the treatment room.

