



Ephraim plays down talk of Wanderers deal

TRIALIST Hogan Ephraim said he's been training with Wanderers to stay fit – and won't necessarily be signing permanently at Adams Park.

The forward was a former team mate of Blues boss Gareth Ainsworth at QPR but is currently without a club after being released by the Hoops in the summer.

He was the star turn as he impressed with his skill and work rate in playing the full 90 minutes for Blues in their 2-2 draw with Chesham United on Tuesday night.

But after the game the 26-year-old Tweeted: "Just to clear things up, an old friend Gaz Ainsworth

is doing me a big favour getting me as fit and sharp as possible. My footballing future is a few weeks away from getting sorted – so when's there's news on that I'll update you."

Ephraim, who had spells on loan at Peterborough United and Toronto last season, was one of three trialists to be fielded by Wanderers at The Meadow.

Will Hudson, a former pupil at Dr Challoner's Grammar School who has been playing college football in the USA, was given an extended run-out in midfield and ex-West Ham defender Callum Driver was given another chance to stake a claim after making a late substitute appearance

against Chelsea last week.

Ainsworth was tight-lipped over both players' futures with Wanderers but said he liked what he saw from them at Chesham.

He said: "There's a couple of players tonight who looked very comfortable out there.

"I keep my cards close to my chest with regards trialists coming in but they raised the level a little bit.

"I was really pleased with some of our attacking play, which is what we lacked last year. Some of the interplay around the box and the finishing was just lacking, but the chances we were creating were very pleasing. I'm sure we can build on that."

Ainsworth: I've got a starting team in mind

Andy Fitzsimons



New Blues signing Peter Murphy.

GARETH Ainsworth said it's up to his players to play themselves into contention for an opening day starting place after admitting he has an idea on his strongest XI.

The Blues boss has chopped and changed the side throughout pre-season in a bid to give as many of the team an opportunity to build their fitness up.

With the League Two campaign kicking off in two weeks' time Ainsworth is now having to consider who he wants in the team that faces Newport County on the opening day.

And he said: "I know more or less every position, who I fancy at the moment. It may change in the next couple of weeks.

"The last two weeks of pre-season, we'll have a think about getting the shape together and the way we're going to play and the way we're going to attack.

"I've brought specific players in for specific jobs. There's

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maybe one or two more yet to add – we'll see. I'm very happy at the moment with where I am."

Speaking after Tuesday night's 2-2 friendly draw with Chesham United, Ainsworth added: "The likes of [Matt] McClure and Paris [Cowan-Hall] didn't play tonight so there's some big names there. There's plenty of calibre off the pitch tonight. If we need to ramp it up, we can do that with the squad."

Ainsworth has told his men to expect things to get more physical as they reach the conclusion of their pre-season campaign.

They face Championship side Reading at Adams Park tomorrow, go to non-league Wealdstone on Tuesday, July 29 before their last friendly away

at Barnet next Saturday.

Ainsworth said: "Now we are getting closer to the season the games do get more competitive. They ramp up now.

"The tackles that come in, you need to be up to speed for the first game.

"Nothing can recreate that first game but the Reading and Barnet games will be feisty affairs, especially the Barnet game with Martin Allen coming up. He's always got a trick or two up his sleeve – we'll have to be on it."

Wanderers are likely to be without last season's captain Stuart Lewis for tomorrow's visit from the Royals after he picked up what's thought to be a metatarsal injury.

Lewis was hurt by a stiff challenge from the Generals' Ryan Blake and needed crutches to make it back to the dressing room, although the 26-year-old discarded them before leaving The Meadow.