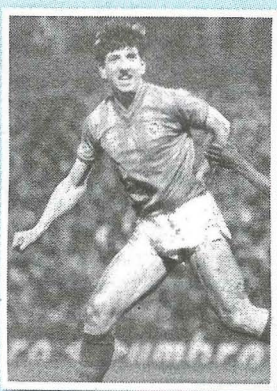


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Pompey striker Matt Tubbs fires an effort goalwards during today's goalless draw with Wycombe at Adams Park
PICTURE: JOE PEPLER

WYCOMBE.....0
POMPEY.....0
Att: 5,829 (1,550 away fans)



BLUES
PROVE
THEIR
POINT

Pompey secure impressive draw on the road as side produce performance to make Awfs proud

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POMPEY MATCH REPORT

Blues ease pressure on manager Awfs after difficult seven days at Fratton Park with sterling point away from home

Pompey rally round Awford to claim draw at Chairboys

Pompey picked up an impressive point at Adams Park today – but it could have been so much more for Andy Awford's side.

Following a difficult week in which his future was debated, the Blues boss rang the changes for the trip to Wycombe – making six alterations and reintroducing the wing-back system.

But his new-look side did him proud with a very good performance, which left the hosts and league leaders before kick-off today thankful for a point.

Pompey's purple patch was in the first half, with Matt Tubbs twice put clean through on goal.

There were also chances for Jed Wallace, Jack Whatmough, Paul Robinson and Ryan Taylor in the first 45 minutes, but the visitors crucially failed to net any of them.

The Blues were not so effective after the break but still posed problems for the Chairboys with some gutsy play.

In the end both sides settled for a goalless draw, yet that shouldn't detract from a hugely encouraging Pompey display on the road by Awford's men.

The Blues now head into next weekend's visit of

WYCOMBE	0
POMPEY	0

LEAGUE TWO
Adams Park
Att: 5,829 (1,550 away fans)

by **NEIL ALLEN**

bottom-placed Hartlepool – who defeated Plymouth 3-2 this afternoon – to Fratton Park with an increased sense of confidence after helping knock Gareth Ainsworth's side off the top of the League Two table.

Top spot now belongs to Shrewsbury after their 1-0 win at Newport, with Burton in second following their 1-0 victory over Bury.

As mentioned, Pompey made six changes to the side who were beaten at home to Southend last Saturday for the visit to Adams Park.

Employing wing-backs, Awford gave a debut to Josh Passley on the right, with Dan Butler recalled on the left.

Also returning to the starting line-up were Danny Hollands, Whatmough, Ben Chorley and Taylor.

Nicky Shorey and Adam Webster were left out of the match-day 18 and Joe Devera, Andy Barcham,



Marcus Bean challenges former Pompey team-mate Jed Wallace for the ball during the Blues' trip to the Chairboys



Josh Passley walked straight into the Pompey starting line-up for the trip to Adams Park

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Craig Westcarr and Nigel Atangana were dropped to the bench.

Wycombe were without leading scorer Paul Hayes through injury.

And there were two changes to their starting line-up.

Hogan Ephraim replaced Aaron Holloway, who dropped to the bench.

Meanwhile, Matt Bloomfield made way for Matt McClure, while one-time Blues loanee Marcus Bean started in midfield.

After 30 seconds Aaron Pierre was pulled up for climbing over Tubbs 35 yards from goal.

Butler's free-kick was flighted to the far post, where Chorley steered his header wide of the target.

On eight minutes captain Robinson was forced to put the ball out for a corner to prevent Fred Onyedima receiving Sam Wood's pass, but it came to nothing.

Bean, playing against his former team, twice had to come across and intervene to prevent a Blues counter-attack.

The first was an aerial challenge to deny Wallace

– and then, when the ball sprang loose, the midfielder came over to stop Hollands.

On 10 minutes Passley's first touch in the opposition half was a dangerous low delivery from the right which Pierre sliced out for a corner.

From the resulting flag-kick, Butler's delivery was flicked on at the near post by Taylor and just over the head of the lurking Wallace.

There were Pompey appeals for a penalty on 15 minutes, when Tubbs kicked the ball against the hand of Pierre.

The debate was how intentional it was from the Wycombe man.

Regardless, referee Andy D'Urso was not interested and allowed play to continue.

Tubbs should have broken the deadlock in the 19th minute after a ball from the left from Wallace.

The striker found himself clean through on goal but took the ball wide and Pierre was able to get in a crucial block.

Pompey were dominating and, from another right-wing corner, keeper Matt Ingram had to come off his

line to palm the ball away from Tubbs following an excellent flick-on from Whatmough.

Another glorious chance fell to Tubbs on 22 minutes – and again it was wasted.

A smart flick from Taylor put the striker clean through down the left.

He cut inside his marker and drove a right-foot shot goalwards, but the ball was comfortably pushed out by Ingram.

The busy Tubbs had his head in his hands at his latest missed opportunity, with the visitors still finding themselves locked in a goalless draw despite their superiority.

Still Awford's men forged forward and Passley's cross from the right was met with a left-foot half-volley from Taylor, which flashed over the Wycombe bar.

Next up, Robinson won a corner from the left and Tubbs' acrobatic flying kick deflected off Joe Jacobson and the ball went wide.

From that resulting corner-kick, delivered by Wallace, Whatmough arrived at the far post, only to head the ball into the side netting from a great position.

For all their pressure, worryingly, the Blues were still without the lead against the Chairboys.

Sure enough, Peter Murphy managed to get space down the right and his cross was glanced wide by Wood when he could so easily have broken the deadlock.

On 40 minutes there was another Pompey chance.

Tubbs combined with Wallace inside the penalty area and the latter curled in a shot which was plucked out of the air by Ingram.

Nonetheless, the hosts were comfortably second best during the first 45 minutes, irrespective of the scoreline.

It was the visiting fans doing all the singing, enjoying watching their team cause the league leaders plenty of problems.

But on 43 minutes there was a nervy moment for the Blues, when the ball fell to McClure inside the box.

However, his left-foot shot was comfortably off target.

Then, in their next attack, excellent play from Murphy sent the ball to Jacobson, resulting in a ferocious left-foot shot which ricocheted off the underside of the bar.

Wood, following up on the left, could not steer the loose ball into the empty net and the visitors had a let-off.

Pompey's response was swift.

Butler's excellent right-wing corner picked out Robinson's run at the far post but the defender couldn't get anything on it.

As the half drew to a close, Wallace tried his luck from long range – firing in a snap shot which whistled past Ingram's right-hand post.

Half-time:
WYCOMBE.....0
POMPEY.....0

In the 48th minute Onyedima flicked the ball on but keeper Paul Jones came out to claim the high ball just ahead of the onrushing McClure.

Moments later, Wallace combined with Tubbs and the latter flashed a shot wide of the target.

At the other end, on 51 minutes, Wood surged forward to crash a left-foot shot off target, although the match was struggling to live up to the promise of the first half.

Debutant Passley became the first player to be booked following a foul on Wood in the 52nd minute.

Hollands' long throw on the right was steered back into the penalty area by Wallace and Taylor's header drifted wide of the far post.

Passley, who had already been booked, had a ticking off from D'Urso after preventing the Chairboys from taking a quick throw-

in.

The match was still proving to be a competitive affair, but Pompey were lacking the domination which characterised their play in the first half.

Meanwhile, Wycombe were hardly threatening, looking every bit like a side short on goals as they have been of late.

The hosts made a substitution in the 66th minute, with Holloway coming on for Ephraim.

Wycombe were beginning to pose more of an attacking threat and on 70 minutes Jacobson's left-wing cross was headed wide by Onyedima at the far post.

From certain angles it looked like the ball may have entered the net but, to the away fans' relief, it flashed narrowly wide.

In the 79th minute there was another Chairboys change, with Steven Craig coming on for Onyedima.

On 81 minutes, Passley drilled in a cross from the right which Taylor hurled himself at but, unfortunately for the Blues, he couldn't make a connection.

Whatmough became the second player of the afternoon to be booked by Holloway moments later.

In the 86th minute Jones received a yellow card for time wasting.

There was a late scare for the Blues when Jones dropped a cross from the right but, thankfully, Alfie Mawson couldn't react in front of goal.

Chorley was forced off through a knock a minute from the end and replaced by Devera.

Then Awford threw on Johnny Ertl in place of Tubbs.

Yet the Blues still had four more minutes to negotiate, with Sido Jombati and Bean both firing shots from long range over the bar.

But Pompey held out and had their point against the high-fliers in a difficult week for Awford.

THE TEAMS

WYCOMBE (4-3-3): Ingram, Jombati, Pierre, Mawson, Jacobson, Bean, Ephraim, Murphy, Onyedima, Wood, McClure. Subs: Bloomfield, Craig, Richardson, Rowe, Kretzschmar, Holloway, Senior.
POMPEY (3-5-2): Jones, Chorley, Robinson, Whatmough, Passley Dunne, Hollands, Wallace, Butler, Tubbs, Taylor. Subs: Poke, Devera, Ertl, Atangana, Barcham, Chaplin, Westcarr.
REF: Andy D'Urso (Billerica)

ONLINE NOW Andy Awford video interview at portsmouth.co.uk



Danny Hollands, left, and Jack Whatmough apply pressure to Wycombe front man Matt McClure during today's game. Right: Pompey boss Andy Awford



PICTURES: JOE PEPLER

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