

## Taf: Everyone welcomed me with open arms

Loan star reflects on his time at Adams Park so far.



Arsenal right-back Tafari Moore says he's eyeing a successful end to his first loan spell in English football as he hunts a promotion medal with the Chairboys.

The name 'Tafari Moore' was a new one for virtually everyone inside Adams Park on January 13th, just a day after the right-back had arrived on loan from Arsenal to ease an injury crisis in the Chairboys' backline.

But come 5pm after the 3-1 win over Colchester, Moore had caught the eye with an all-action display up and down the right flank, contributing to a fine victory over long-time rivals and coming close to a dream debut goal after a mazy run which saw him dance past a host of opposition defenders.

Since then, he's played his part in memorable wins against Crewe, Luton and Swindon as the Chairboys embarked on a phenomenal run to lift them into the top three.

Reflecting on his debut against Colchester, Tafari revealed: "That morning I was looking through my phone and seeing loads of messages coming in on Twitter. Normally I don't get nervous but when I saw all these messages and the high expectations people had of me, I had to turn off my phone.

"I'd been waiting a long time to play my first senior game in England so I knew I needed to keep focused. I got myself ready and when the game came around, I was pleased to show what I could do. If that goal had gone in after my run, that would've been the icing on the cake, but I was happy to win my first game and it was a dream debut for me. I heard the fans singing my name which I've never had before, so that was amazing."

From the under-23 environment of Arsenal to the experienced professionals at Wycombe, the 20-

year-old knew to expect a cultural difference between academy life and the rigours of League 2, but says his new team-mates have played a massive part in helping him settle in.

“To be honest, I’ve handled it better than I thought I would do. From what I’d heard of League 2, I thought it would be all long balls and physical, but in the first few games the ball was on the ground a lot more than I was expecting. I think the game at Exeter was the first match which was more like the League 2 style that I expected, but I’ve been enjoying it and the results have been amazing.

“I thought I’d be nervous when I came here, joining a different team. I didn’t know much about the club, although I knew about the gaffer and how he was still playing just a few years ago.

“Everyone welcomed me with open arms; they made the time to come and talk to me and I felt part of the team straightaway. Bayo came over to me before the Colchester match and said ‘I’ve seen what you can do in training; just go out there, play your normal game and express yourself.’ The gaffer said the same thing; it was great to hear that and it gave me confidence.

“The gaffer believes in his players; he has a thing about good people and positive energy. There are no big egos here; it’s important for me to feed off that. He’s a great manager and he’s the one who gave me a chance because he believes in me.”

High Wycombe is the latest stop on Tafari’s journey of development, having taken an unusual step by spending last season on loan at Dutch club FC Utrecht. He talks us through his experience.

“It was really difficult to leave England,” he admitted. “I’m the youngest of six, so I’ve always had people around me – my brothers, sisters, mum and dad. When I had to leave and say goodbye to my mum, that’s when it really hit me. I was moving to a different country, a completely different environment, but that helped me grow as a person.

“It made me more mature; I had to do things on my own and not rely on my parents. At home I might come home from training and chill on the sofa, but in Holland I was having to come home and cook for myself. It helped me grow up and I had a lot of time to think about my football, so I think it benefitted me and made me a better player.”

Now Moore has his eyes set on a successful end to his loan spell, with the ambition of returning to Arsenal in the summer with a promotion medal around his neck.

“Words can’t describe what it would mean to win promotion,” he said. “It’s my first season in English football and to win promotion could only set me up for big things.

“Everyone here has that winning mentality and no-one wants to settle for a draw or a loss. Nobody was getting comfortable even though we had that good run and we want to win every game we play. We’re not looking at the teams below us; we’re looking upwards at Luton.

“Winning at Luton in January was a big confidence booster for us. They’re a big team and top of the league, but we beat them convincingly and now we know we can beat any team as long as we have the right mindset.”