

Bucks Free Press

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'GANG FEARS'**

MAN HURT IN BLAZE

Households told to shut windows as smoke flows from business buildings

By James Richings

ONE man is being treated for burns in hospital after a huge fire in High Wycombe.

Smoke was seen billowing into the sky from a property on Rutland Avenue on Monday, as households were told to keep windows and doors closed.

The road was closed and drivers were told to stay away from the area as emergency services

spent hours battling the flames and making the area safe.

The fire service said one man had been cared for by paramedics while the incident was still ongoing and was then taken to Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Firefighters were called at 11.19am after a fire broke out in a commercial building opposite Cross Road.

Full story: Pages 8-9



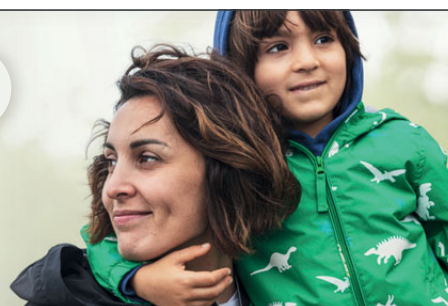
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Sport

FOOTBALL

Flackwell endurance earns late winner

JANUARY is often considered a month of endurance, and it was Flackwell Heath who displayed considerable resilience to deliver a last-minute winner at home to a battling Enfield side, winning 2-1.

The temperatures were cold, the sizeable crowd fantastic, but in truth the first half was tepid at best. The Heathens struggled to make any real impact in the attacking third and were somewhat run ragged in midfield, with Harry Mepham seemingly covering every blade of

grass defensively for his team. The key moment came 11 minutes from the break - a ball from the Enfield defence to Sam Bessadi coincided with a Lewis Patrick slip and Bessadi putting the visitors ahead.

Half chances came and went, until parity was restored by Jamie Ayres just after the hour mark - a through ball which the left winger latched on to, superbly firing home. The next 34 minutes of action, in truth, was all Flackwell, with the game looking likely to fizzle out to a draw.

If there is one word to describe a Chris Ayres side, it is 'resilience'. They've shown it in the battle to win the title against Rayners Lane last season and their last ability to pick up a point when it looked like hope was lost. And they demonstrated this once again in the dying embers of the game, the sixth minute of added on time. A corner, beautifully whipped in by Wiktor Makowski, landed perfectly on the head of Callum Mapley to send the ball home - cue chaotic scenes of joy and celebration.



Flackwell left it late to beat Enfield. Picture: Glenn Alcock

FOOTBALL

Chesham United bag four points in a hectic week

CHESHAM United completed the first week of four where they play fixtures on a Saturday afternoon and a Tuesday night, with four points accrued over two games.

Saturday's fixture at home was against second place Maidstone United. Chesham pulled off one of their best wins of the season to overcome a side who had been unbeaten in the league since September, winning 2-0. After an even first half Chesham took control of the game with two quick strikes, and afterwards rarely looked like losing their lead.

This was the first game for impressive new signing Taylor Foran who has joined on a month's loan from Bromley. The visitors came into the game on a run of seven wins and shaded the early possession. Chesham had the first serious effort on goal on 25 minutes, when Nathan Minhas set up T'Sharné Gallimore for a shot that flew over the bar. Eight minutes later another neat move set up Connor Roberts who advanced into the penalty area but sliced his shot wide.

The course of the game was changed in the third minute of the second half, when good work by Joe Grant on the right set up Ashley Lodge for a powerful drive into the net from just outside the area. Chesham doubled their lead shortly afterwards. Connor Roberts curled a free kick into the area and Connor Stevens stole in behind the defence to side-foot the ball in off a post. Despite lots of possession Maidstone's endeavour came to nothing as a very determined Chesham defensive line kept the visitors at bay and the home fans delighted in cheering

By Andy Westlake

the departing Maidstone supporters as they left before the final whistle

Tuesday was the visit of Chelmsford City, a team just one point behind Chesham in the table. It was a game that required Chesham to come from behind twice but ended with another important point to add to the tally, ending 2-2.

The game started very evenly and for the first 30 minutes was in the balance with the best Chesham chance falling to Samson Esan. However, on 37' the visitors struck first as Saleem Akanbi dispatched a good through ball into the far corner of Chesham's goal. 4 minutes later and Chesham were back level! A free kick was whipped in to the box by Matt Lench and Lewis Rolfe headed home.

The second half went the same way as the first! Chelmsford once again got themselves in front courtesy of a Jake Hyde penalty and after several Chesham changes had a late penalty of their own awarded on 87' which Matt Lench dispatched to get the game back to 2-2. After 4 minutes of added time the game ended with the points shared. Michael Murray in his post-match interview said he was "happy with the point but disappointed with the performance". They'll be looking to put that right on the road on Saturday against Bath City and then at home on Tuesday against Salisbury.

Chesham Women's first team will also be in action this weekend against Cambridge United FC on Sunday at 2pm.



Ashley Lodge with a beautiful strike gives Chesham the lead. Photo Neale Blackburn.

DARTS

PRDDL scores and fixtures

RESULTS and forthcoming fixtures in the Princes Risborough and District Darts League.

Results from games played on Thursday, January 16:

DIVISION 1 (Sponsored By Avocet Construction)

Chinnor Pavilion D 6-5 The Bull B
Bradmoor Farm A 5-6 The Crown Royals
Bradmoor Farm Warriors 4-7 Whiteleaf Cross B
Rivets 9-2 Bledlow Village Cricket Club A
Chinnor Pavilion A 5-6 Weavers
The Bull A 7-4 Chinnor Pavilion B
The Crown Jacks 3-8 Thame Snooker Club

DIVISION 2 (Sponsored By Wessex Landscapes & Brickwork)

Aylesbury Vale FC 3-8 Bay 19
Chinnor Pavilion C 0-11 New Zealand
Golden Cross 4-7 Bradmoor Farm D
The Bell B 9-2 Wendover RBL
The Black Horse 8-3 The Plough
Bradmoor Farm B 10-1 Chinnor Pavilion E
Bledlow Village Cricket Club B 8-3 The Three Horseshoes

Fixtures for 23 January 2025:

Division 1 (Sponsored By Avocet Construction)

Bradmoor Farm A vs Chinnor Pavilion A.
The Bull B vs Bradmoor Farm Warriors.
The Crown Royals vs Rivets.
Chinnor Pavilion B vs Chinnor Pavilion D.
Bledlow Village Cricket Club A vs The Bull A.
Whiteleaf Cross B vs The Crown Jacks.
Thame Snooker Club vs Weavers.

Division 2 (Sponsored By Wessex Landscapes & Brickwork)

Aylesbury Vale FC vs The Bell.
The Three Horseshoes vs The Black Horse.
New Zealand vs Bledlow Village Cricket Club B.
Bradmoor Farm D vs Bradmoor Farm B.
Chinnor Pavilion E vs Chinnor Pavilion C.
Bay 19 vs Golden Cross.
The Plough vs Wendover RBL.

FOOTBALL

Rams edge Stotfold in five-goal thriller



Beaconsfield Town edged Stotfold on Saturday. Picture: Craig Anderson

BEACONSFIELD Town edged a five-goal thriller at Stotfold, winning 3-2 in Southern League Central Division, writes Craig Anderson.

The Rams started brightly, but it was the hosts that broke the deadlock from that spot, Robbie Buchanan went over in the box after being judged to have been bought down by Rams keeper Brewery and Matthew Ball scored the penalty in the 22nd minute.

Stotfold was not ahead for long when a nice move with Ok-William and Marcon set up Silvera to finish into the bottom corner in the 29th minute.

After half-time, Beaconsfield took a grip of the game with two impressive goals from Josh Marcon.

His first, surrounded by defenders, slotted into the bottom corner on 55 minutes. His second, the winner and the most impressive of the game, was a freekick to the left of the goal at a tight angle, a few inches into the near post. Stotfold got one back in added time, but it was not enough.

The Rams made it two wins in a week building from cup success on Tuesday night against Wycombe Wanderers in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup.

Sat 15th in the league, eight points clear of the relegation zone, the Rams' win keeps Stotfold in the bottom four on goal difference.

Beaconsfield host Hadley at Holloways Park on Saturday (3pm ko).

FOOTBALL

Chairgirls return to winning ways at Woodley United

SUNDAY saw the Wycombe Wanderers Ladies get back to winning ways as they executed a 3-1 win over hosts Woodley.

Axelle Courlander claimed her first of the campaign and Kayla Potter added two to her season tally to secure all three points on the road and send Wycombe up to second in the league.

As both sides battled to get ahead before the half-time break, Wycombe were the ones to convert first in nice fashion in the 37th minute. It was Potter who made a fantastic run from inside the Chairgirls' own half and down the right channel to allow her to square the

ball in from the edge of the box. Courlander found herself on the receiving end of the assist and toed it across the line and into the top of the net for her first goal of the campaign.

The Wanderers doubled their lead in the first minute of added time with play built up from a left, out-swinging corner delivered by player of the match, Danielle Puddefoot. A few touches from both sides were taken within the box, but it was Potter who made work of a loose Woodley touch to pelt home and make it two 2-0 going into the break.

It was a quieter second

half despite both sides converting later in the game. Having been awarded a free-kick from 25 yards out, it was Puddefoot who stepped up to deliver. Her initial hit was taken into the box and punched away by the Woodley keeper to allow for play to build up out wide by Ailish Carolan and Eman Kassem. Kassem's cross into the box was cleared by the home side's defence but only as far as Potter who was able to strike it home.

The home side were able to claim one back 20 minutes before the final whistle as a looping hit netted behind Taylor in goal.

The win sends the Chairgirls up to second in the league table with 23 points, as third place Portchester follow closely behind on 22 points with a game in hand.

The Wanderers now take on Penn & Tylers Green Ladies in the rescheduled quarter final of the Berks & Bucks County Cup.



A big win for Wycombe Wanderers Women. Picture: PA

BOSS CARL SIMON, SAYS:

"It was always going to be a really tough test. Woodley always make it a competitive game, a physical game,

and that's exactly what we faced today but we're really happy with the outcome in the end."

Holmer Green back on winning trail away

HOLMER Green recorded their fourth away win of the season, beating Rising Ballers Kensington 2-1, writes John Anderson.

It also means that Holmer have done the "double double" over RBK in their two CCL seasons.

The pitch was very well-prepared and did not cut up, but it was never conducive to a passing game. Holmer do not adapt to the "get it forward" way of playing when away, but they dug in and produced a fine team effort with

two great goals. Both strikes being first Holmer goals for the respective scorers. With Manager Keith Scott unwell, Jez Hodges kept the team focussed from the dug-out, assisted by Anthony Tyson. Like at Addlestone Moor at the weekend, the air was cold and windless

On 42 minutes Oskar Esplund-Evans and Peck combined neatly, well forward on the right. The former lofted a pass, across the RB goal the far post where Mirza arrived to volley a super goal with almost his first touch.

The lead, which Holmer held at the break, lasted less than one minute into the second half. Poor defensive play allowed a low cross from the right. Two RB players outnumbered Esplund-Evans at the far post, and the scores were level.

Holmer regained the lead on 52 minutes. Matt Wooster found attacking midfield space in the opponents' half, taking the ball forward. He produced a super low diagonal through ball, which found Harry Loakes coming in from the

right. Approaching the penalty spot, he guided the ball first-time under the advancing keeper.

On 58 minutes Wooster had been sin-binned for protesting at the treatment. This is the first Sin Binning that Holmer have been given all season. The ten minutes passed without too much trouble, but the constant tackling in midfield meant that stoppage time ran into some seven minutes.

A good win, Holmer moved up to seventh.

FOOTBALL

The Ducks twice hit for three

AYLESBURY United suffered a pair of narrow defeats, losing to Hertford Town and Biggleswade United.

On Saturday, Hertford hosted the Ducks and won 3-2 at Hertingfordbury Park.

Trailing at the break, Sonny French equalised shortly afterwards.

A pair of strikes for the hosts took the tie away from Aylesbury, but French had the final word and grabbed his brace shortly before full-time.

It was a similar story at home to Biggleswade on Wednesday, losing 3-2 at The Meadow, Chesham.

The visitors lead by two at half-time, scoring early and late in the period from two set pieces.

Biggleswade had a second penalty saved shortly after the break and Jack Wood gave the hosts a lifeline when heading a corner into the back of the net.

Pushing for an equaliser, the visitors hit Aylesbury on the break and rounded off the scoring for a second defeat in which three goals had been conceded.

FOOTBALL

Mistakes prove costly for Windsor in pair of defeats

WINDSOR FC remarkably lost 4-3 at home to Oxhey Jets last Friday in Combined Counties Division One.

Avtandil Akhshashvili, after 22 minutes, substitute Troy Williams (49) and Sam Healey (60) put them 3-1 up, but substitute Dominic Mosca sensationally turned the game around by scoring a hat-trick in the last 10 minutes.

On Tuesday, mistake-laden Windsor lost 6-3 at play-off chasing Yateley United after conceding three goals in the opening 15 minutes. They were behind 4-1 at half-time and also missed a penalty.

Their goals came from Liam Jenkins, Sam Healey and Jamil Yusef.

This Saturday, Windsor are away to Eversley & California.

The Jacks sit 16th heading into the trip to their 10th-place hosts on the weekend.

Sport

EX-SUNDERLAND MAN NOW THE FAVOURITE

Another name linked to the Wanderers job

FORMER Fleetwood Town and Sunderland manager Lee Johnson is leading the way to become in the new man in charge at Wycombe Wanderers.

The 43-year-old, who has faced the Chairboys on several occasions in the opposition dugout, saw his odds go from 20/1 to 2/1 in the space of one day.

This comes after the Free Press learnt that Brentford's assistant manager Claus Norgaard is not

expected to replace Matt Bloomfield at Adams Park.

This is despite leading the way for much of the last 10 days.

Other names that have been mentioned include Dean Holden, Leam Richardson and Des Buckingham.

A spokesperson from Oddschecker said: "Another twist in the Wycombe next manager betting market has seen Lee Johnson rise to the top of the odds boards.

"Having opened on Wednesday as a 20/1 outside, a flurry of bets has come in for him, causing bookmakers to cut his odds to the 2/1 favourite.

"Over the past 24 hours across our platform, 74 per cent of the bets placed have backed Johnson to replace Matt Bloomfield at Adams Park."

At this present moment, development coach Sam Grace will remain in charge for the interim period.



Lee Johnson has been out of work since 2023 (PA)

CHAIRBOYS

Reaction to brilliant away win at Mansfield

WYCOMBE caretaker manager Sam Grace hopes the club's recent 2-1 away victory at Mansfield Town has shown the rest of the division that Wanderers are 'fully focussed on achieving promotion' this season.

The Adams Park team went into their clash at Field Mill four days after the sudden departure of previous boss Matt Bloomfield, who left for Championship side Luton Town.

The 40-year-old joined the Kenilworth Road team on a three-year deal, in which he took assistant manager Richard Thomas, goalkeeper Lee Harrison and analyst Ben Crine from Wycombe.

Grace, who grew up a fan of the Chairboys and is from the town, took charge of the first team for the inaugural occasion versus Mansfield on January 18, as goals from Richard Kone and Garath McCleary gave Wycombe their second league victory of 2025.

They sit second on 54 points, two points behind league leaders Birmingham City, but the Blues have two games in hand over Wanderers.

Speaking after the win, Grace said: "It is a great way to end the week.

"The staff has put in a lot of time [for preparation against Mansfield], whether that's the analysts getting extra footage up, the coaches in terms of what we needed to deliver on the pitch, and the goodwill from all the members of staff and the fans and the players as well.

"Losing a manager as fundamental as someone like Matt [Bloomfield] has been over the years could easily derail the season.

"But this group is laser-focused and highly motivated and today [January 18], was a game where we had to be completely committed physically and mentally to get something.

"And every man, whether it was for 90 minutes, or a few minutes at the end, put in a performance to be proud of.

"We want to keep on pushing for that promotion."

McCleary's winner came with two minutes of the 90 remaining before another 10 minutes were played in stoppage time.

The scenes at full-time resembled a team that had achieved promotion, as Wycombe's players immediately embraced one another; whilst the substitutes left the bench to join in the celebrations.

Grace added: "A game like today is a marker to show that we are still fully focussed in trying to achieve promotion.

"If we had lost, other teams might think we're wobbling, so it was important to send that message out."

Grace has become the first Wycombe manager; permanent or caretaker, to win their first game in charge.

The last man to do this was Peter Cawley, when Wanderers defeated Coalville in the FA Cup back in November 2004, following the resignation of Tony Adams several days earlier.

Up next is Northampton Town at home on January 25.

MANSFIELD TOWN 1-2 WYCOMBE WANDERERS

Marvellous McCleary gives Wanderers late away victory

A LATE Garath McCleary goal gave Wycombe Wanderers a much-needed 2-1 victory as they defeated Mansfield Town.

The week leading up to the Chairboys' first visit to Field Mill in eight seasons was dominated by the sudden departure of manager Matt Bloomfield, who, alongside assistant boss Richard Thomas, goalkeeper coach Lee Harrison, and analyst Ben Crine all sensationally left for Luton Town.

Development coach Sam Grace led the Adams Park side out, as he made three changes to the team that lost to Huddersfield Town in the club's last league outing 11 days prior.

In came Jack Grimmer, Declan Skura and Beryly Lubala, with Joe Low missing out through illness, whilst Tyreeq Bakinson and Dan Udoh dropped to the bench.

The opening 10 minutes were a real dingdong affair as both clubs looked for the opening goal.

For the Stags, Lee Gregory's header went wide whilst a George Maris header clipped the Wycombe crossbar.

For the visitors, Lubala fired wide, whilst Richard Kone and Dan Harvie also went close.

The first save Scott Flinders had to make was to hold onto a fierce Lubala attempt, as the Congolese forward was carving out several attempts.

The first period ebbed and flowed so goalless at the break was a fair reflection.

However, Wycombe came out all guns blazing in the second half, and their persistent pressure paid off, and they took the lead in 57 minutes.

By James Richings

Jordan Bowery, once of Aston Villa and Wanderers' Thames Valley rivals, Oxford United, clipped Lubala in the box, and referee Sam Purkiss had no option but to point to the spot.

Up-stepped Kone who had his penalty saved by Flinders, but the Ivorian was on hand to smash in the rebound and his 17th goal of the season.

However, the lead didn't last long as two of Mansfield's subs worked well to get their equaliser 10 minutes later.

Stephen McLaughlin's cross was brilliantly headed in by Lucas Akins, as his attempt flew over Franco Ravazzoli.

The Argentinegoal keeper was on hand to make an excellent save to deny Will Evans, who had another attempt goal just wide.

This kept Wycombe in the game, as with two minutes remaining, McCleary managed to dribble his way into the box, beating three players, and placing his cool effort underneath Flinders.

It was his third goal of the season, and his first in 2025.

The result, which is Wycombe's first away at Field Mill in the league since 2015, keeps Wanderers second on 54 points, two points behind league leaders Birmingham City.

Their tally of 52 goals scored in League One this season is the highest for any team in the division so far.

Up next is Northampton Town at home on January 25.

Attendance: 7,459



McCleary's strike was his third of the season, and his first this calendar year. His last goal came in September against Cambridge

DEFENDER REMAINS ABSENT

Injury update provided on Ryan Tafazolli



Ryan Tafazolli has played just five times for Wycombe this season with his latest outing being in December (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers caretaker manager Sam Grace has provided an injury update on centre back Ryan Tafazolli.

The 33-year-old, who is now in his fifth season with the club, has only featured in seven matchday squads this campaign, playing just five times.

His last outing came in the 2-1 home defeat against Swindon Town in the EFL Trophy, in which he started the fixture.

He has since missed the last nine games in all competitions, and it is not known he will next return to the frame.

Speaking ahead of the club's home clash against Northampton Town this Saturday, which will be Grace's first in charge of Wycombe at Adams Park, he said: "The competition for centre back places is tough.

"We do have great depth in that [department].

"I know Taff well and I have worked with him [for several years], and he is working hard to be in the best possible place but nothing has been decided yet.

"We will have a sit down with the staff on Friday and make that final selection."

Grace also praised the attitude of his players following Matt Bloomfield's departure to Luton Town on January 14, in which he noted the leadership of the senior players.

He continued: "When you get players like Jack Grimmer, Sam Vokes, Matt Butcher, Luke Leahy and Garath McCleary, the older players especially, they're making sure that nothing is going to derail the season.

"They want to get promoted - that is the number one goal.

"While they would have loved to have had Blooms stay, it doesn't change the overall objective."

BRADLEY AND SKURA SHINE IN AWAY VICTORY

Centre back partnership full of praise after huge win

WYCOMBE Wanderers caretaker manager Sam Grace has praised the defensive partnership of Sonny Bradley and Declan Skura following their recent 2-1 win away at Mansfield Town.

It was the second consecutive game that the two had started alongside each other, following their inaugural game together which came in the 2-0 victory against Portsmouth on January 10.

There is an 11-year difference between the duo, but their display at Field Mill helped the Chairboys secure their second league win of 2025, and their first since the departure of previous boss Matt Bloomfield.

At the time of writing, Wycombe sit second in the League One table.

Speaking at full-time, Grace said: "That's two games that they have played now and two wins too.

"The moment with Declan that stands out was the header at the end against Aden Flint [injury-time] - probably one of the best headers I have ever seen from him, so I am pleased.

"He had Lee Gregory to deal with who has got a lot of experience and I thought Deco did very well along-

side Sonny.

"I'm not saying they are Pique and Puyol, but I know Pique spoke about how it was better to have Puyol alongside him because of the organisation and leadership.

"I think Sonny gives that calmness to him, he helps him with his positioning and for a young player to be stepping into games like this, is invaluable."

Grace also praised new signing Anders Hagelskjær who made his debut in the victory.

The Danish centre back came on in injury time for Cameron Humphreys and produced two huge clearances in the dying embers of the contest.

Regular centre back, Joe Low, missed the victory with tonsillitis.

He added: "Once we took the lead, we wanted to match up with them after they put Flint on.

"Anders allowed us to have five at the back, which meant we could match up with their wing-backs to reduce their crosses which came from wide positions, which is how they scored their goal.

"I'm pleased he came on and made his debut."



Sonny Bradley scored his first Wycombe in the 2-0 win over Portsmouth on January 10 at Adams Park (PA)

Who will take over as Wanderers' new manager?

FORMER Wigan Athletic and Rotherham United manager Leam Richardson has become one of the front runners to take over at Wycombe Wanderers.

The 45-year-old is currently available following his departure from the Millers in April last year, but his stint with the Yorkshire-based team was one to forget, as he only won two of his 24 games in charge, tasting defeat 18 times.

According to Oddschecker, he

is currently 3/1 to replace Matt Bloomfield at Adams Park, after the latter joined Luton Town last week.

Other names that have been linked to the Wanderers job include ex-Plymouth Argyle and Stoke City boss Steven Schumacher, former Oxford United manager Des Buckingham, ex-Charlton Athletic manager, Dean Holden and Lee Johnson, who has been out of work since leaving Fleet-

wood Town in December 2023.

Prior to his stint in the North West, he also had spells with Hibernian, Sunderland, Oldham Athletic, Barnsley and Bristol City.

The latter is currently the assistant manager at Saudi Pro League side Al-Ettifaq, who are managed by former Liverpool captain and England international, Steven Gerrard.

The club are expected to an-

nounce their new man at the helm by the end of the month, with development coach Sam Grace currently looking after things in the interim.

His first game in charge of the first team was in the recent 2-1 victory against Mansfield Town on January 18.

He is expected to remain in charge for when the Chairboys take on Northampton Town this weekend at Adams Park.

CHAIRBOYS

New face arrives at HP12

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed the signing of Scottish U21 international Alex Lowry for an undisclosed fee.

The 21-year-old becomes the Chairboys' sixth signing this month following the arrivals of Sonny Bradley, Anders Hagelskjær, Magnus Westergaard, Jonny Pettitt and Ryan Cole respectively.

Lowry played 14 times for the Gers' first team, scoring twice before his move south of the border.

He also had a successful spell on loan at fellow Scottish outfit Hearts last season, scoring once in 17 appearances.

Chief Football Officer Dan Rice told the club's website: "Alex is someone we've identified as a really talented prospect for us and he comes with good experience in both youth and senior football in Scotland.

"As a midfielder, he's full of energy and creativity and suits the way we play, and we're really pleased to bring him into the squad.

"We're working around the clock this transfer window to make sure we can continue to make progress and give us every chance of achieving success and bringing Alex to Wycombe Wanderers is another really positive step forward."

WYCOMBE WIN

Clough annoyed after very late 2-1 defeat at home

MANSFIELD Town manager Nigel Clough believes his side were 'hard done by' in their recent 2-1 home loss to Wycombe Wanderers.

The Chairboys took the lead after Richard Kone's slammed home the rebound after his penalty was saved by Scott Flinders, before Lucas Akins equalised with a header.

But in the final few minutes, Garath McCleary's strike sealed it for Wanderers. He said: "We feel hard done by without a doubt.

"I thought we started the game really well, then they got on top a bit so we changed back to our normal shape.

"We still had a few good situations and they did as well.

"It was much more even in the second half - we went toe to toe with them all over the pitch.

"We had to get closer to them to try to stop them playing.

"We were an inch away from taking the lead with the header against the bar.

"It just isn't quite running for us at the moment - that is the difference."

SPORT



Berry nice signing as joyful James arrives in Bucks



James Berry is Wycombe's seventh signing of this month

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed the signing of Chesterfield attacker James Berry on a permanent deal.

The 24-year-old, who began his career with Liverpool and has had stints with his home town Wigan Athletic, Hull City, Altrincham and Macclesfield, arrives in Buckinghamshire for an undisclosed fee.

He scored 10 goals in 28 matches in all competitions this season and has won promotion in each of his last three

campaigns. He achieved back-to-back promotions with Non League Macclesfield before securing a third promotion last year, this time with Chesterfield.

Berry becomes Wycombe's seventh new face this month following the arrivals of Sonny Bradley, Magnus Westergaard, Ryan Cole, Jonny Pettitt, Alex Lowry and Anders Hagelskjær respectively.

The club's latest arrival will wear the number 38 shirt, which was last worn by goalkeeper

Harvey Cartwright two years ago.

Chief Football Officer Dan Rice commented: "We're really pleased with our business so far in this transfer window and bringing someone of James's calibre to the club is another sign of our intent to achieve success this season and beyond.

"Having made reinforcements in defence and midfield already this window, we identified a need to bring in another

attacker out wide and James fits the model with the way he plays and the goal threat he brings.

"Our work continues around the clock as we look to strengthen the squad and recruit the right person to lead the team forward as head coach.

"In the meantime, we're delighted to welcome James into the squad and continue our preparations for Saturday's game with Sam Grace in interim charge."

Taking on the Cobblers and praising the squad

WYCOMBE Wanderers caretaker manager Sam Grace has said his squad 'are so welcome to everyone' after the club signed three new players in the last week.

Danish midfielder Magnus Westergaard, Scottish U21 international Alex Lowry and forward James Berry have all joined the Chairboys on permanent contracts.

This brings the Adams Park side's total new arrivals to seven this month following the acquisitions of Sonny Bradley, Anders Hagelskjær, Jonny Pettitt and Ryan Cole.

Berry, Lowry and Westergaard could all be in line to make their light and dark blue debuts in this weekend's home clash against Northampton Town and Grace is very much looking forward to the occasion.

On his new signings integrating into the team, he said: "The group is fantastic here as they are so welcome to everyone.

"We have a very social changing room, and the squad are good at helping the new boys integrate within the squad.

"You only have to see the celebrations last week to see that.

"This isn't a team of fractions as the players are incredibly welcoming.

"The scenes at the end of last week [against Mansfield Town] show how the fans feed off the players' hard work and commitment.

"It works both ways because the extra cheers behind the goal play their parts for the players.

"Every cheer for a tackle, save, interception is like having a 12th player.

"There is a lot of positivity and I can't speak highly of them as we want to carry on the good work we have done so far this season.

"The energy levels have been

By James Richings

good and I think the players are excited to play this weekend."

His inaugural game at HP12 will see Wanderers take on a struggling Northampton Town who have had a tough 2024/25 season.

The Cobblers are currently one place above the relegation zone, five points clear of the bottom four, but, Crawley Town, who sit one place below them, have two games in hand.

They are under the stewardship of ex-Bolton Wanderers, Newcastle United and West Ham United man Kevin Nolan, who replaced the long-lasting Jon Brady in December.

He has since won one of his five games in charge, drawing two and losing two.

Northampton have also not tasted victory in their last eight matches versus the Chairboys, losing seven times.

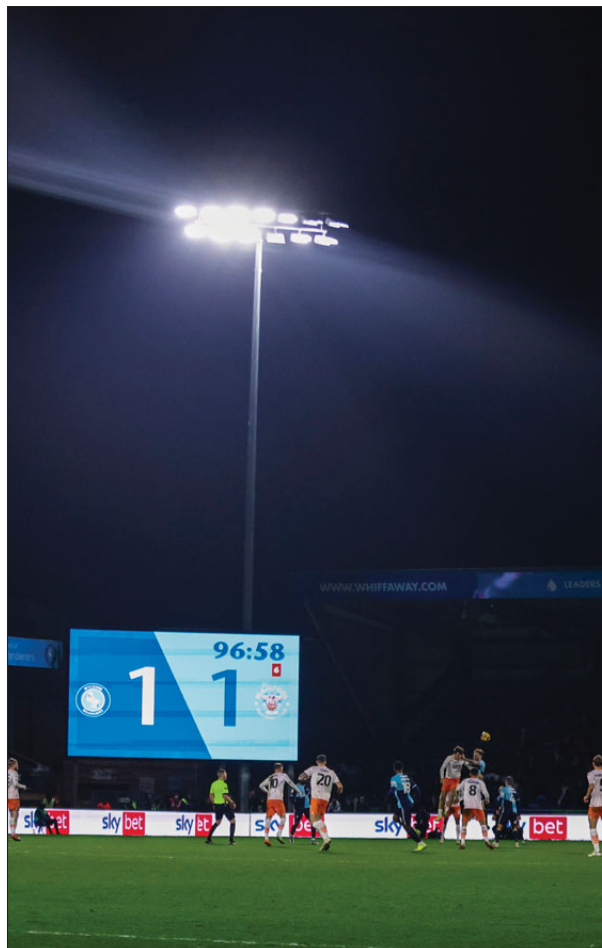
Grace added: "They have had a change of manager and I think they have been quite unfortunate in terms of their injuries.

"I don't think any team will be able to deal with that and be at their best, so I do feel for them in that respect.

"They have recently moved to three at the back and have tightened up, so they have definitely reduced the amount of chances and they also have a threat up top with Tom Eaves and Will Hoskins in attack.

"We have to be on our game with that, but we are looking forward to the occasion and hopefully the bits we have worked on will come through."

The match will kick-off at 3pm.



Wycombe's clash against Northampton will be their first at Adams Park since January 10. Image: PA

Norgaard out of Wycombe boss race

BRENTFORD assistant manager Claus Norgaard is NOT expected to take over at Wycombe Wanderers, the Bucks Free Press understands.

The Dane, who has been the Bees' number two behind Thomas Frank for just over two years, has been heavily linked to the job following Matt Bloomfield's sensational exit from Adams Park just over a week ago.

The latter departed Buckinghamshire for Championship side Luton Town on a three-year contract, taking with him assistant manager Richard Thomas, goalkeeper coach Lee Harrison and analyst Ben Cirne to Kenilworth Road.

Many names have been linked to the vacant role at Wycombe such as ex-Oxford United boss Des Buckingham, former Wigan manager Leam Richardson, and one-time Wanderers player, Russell Martin, who was recently in charge of Premier League Southampton.

However, one man who is not expected to take the reins in South Buckinghamshire is Norgaard, despite being one of the bookies' favourites.

At the time of writing, former Sunderland manager Lee Johnson is the bookmaker's favourite, whilst Steven Schumacher, who was recently fired by Stoke City, is also high on the list.

No date has been set on when an announcement will be made.

It has been a busy month for everyone connected to the club, with the news of a departing manager and backroom staff, along with the arrival of six new players.

The latter number is expected to grow as Wycombe are set to sign Chesterfield attacker James Berry for an undisclosed fee.

He has scored 10 goals in 28 games for the League Two team so far this season.