



Gillingham Website

Gareth Ainsworth admitted that it was a tough night as Gillingham were knocked out of the Vertu Trophy in the group stage after a 3-0 defeat to Wycombe Wanderers on Tuesday.

Many players linked to the Gills academy featured in the game, from graduates to players plying their trade with the under-18s. Ainsworth was pleased to give them experience in and around the first team.

The Gills boss discussed the importance of having the right attitude, and commented on the return of Jonny Smith.

Post-match thoughts...

It was always going to be a tricky one. We had three youth team players out there tonight, and that's really good progress for the club that they are in the first team set-up, and then countless first-year pros as well. It tells me a lot. I get a lot of information from these sorts of games. A lot of knowledge about various players, but it is a tough one to take because you never want to lose a game.

We weren't going to risk the likes of Robbie McKenzie, Garath McCleary and Ethan Coleman, and then there were a couple of injuries in there as well that we don't want to risk. At the end of the day, it was a tough night. There was plenty of learning, as we always say: we never lose, we learn. We have got to get ready for Crawley now.

The experience for the younger players...

Joe Dunne and Bryan [Bull] have done a great job with the youth team, and for the likes of Sam Gale and Taite Holtam to be coming through, and the young boys, your [Harry] Waldock's and Logan's [Dobbs], who are on loans and learning. That's great, but to be having youth teamers in the team, which I am classing as in the first team, as it's a first team game.

All three of them, Louie [Dayal], Stan [Sargent] and Cruz [Beszant] are stepping up into unknown territory and getting experience of what it's like to be a professional footballer; knowing what you have to do, and knowing where you have to be. They will learn plenty from tonight. It will hurt, but it will definitely be a learning curve for them.

Importance of having the right attitude...

Your attitude and your athleticism are up there with everything for me. You've got to be fit and you've got to be an athlete, and you have got to do all of your gym work, all of your speed work and all of your stamina work, so you can compete at this level. To get out onto that pitch, you have to be that good. Then your ability kicks in, and goes right, this is what I've got. That attitude and athleticism, you have to have it. You cannot not have that in the modern game. It's really, really important to have.

Thankfully, the attitude at this club, unless I'm missing something, looks pretty spot on. All of the boys are bought in. They all want to do it, they are all listening, and wanting to buy into what we're doing here.

Sam Gale should be a shining example to some of these young boys. He's come through and has earned his first team place. Now he is a regular starter in the first team as a first-year pro. That's a shining example to everyone at this Football Club.

Jonny Smith returning to first team action...

I'm very pleased. He was playing slightly out of position, but again, he had a couple of threatening runs down the wing. I think that he was a little undercooked when he came in, with a lack of game time at Wigan. That's nobody's fault, as it happens sometimes. When they come into an intense environment and straight into the first team, they seem to pick up knocks. Jonny had one, and we're going to ease him back in because he's a special player.

He enjoyed tonight. I know that he was frustrated at half-time because he probably didn't get a hold of the ball as much as he wanted. It was tough because Wycombe controlled the ball a lot tonight, and when we did have those moments and got down the wings and were ready to put the cross in, there were only one or two in the box. I needed the box flooded a bit more, but that's what the boys have got to learn. It was great to see Jonny out there.