

Bucks Free Press

Friday, December 6, 2024

Covering Wycombe, South Bucks, Chilterns and Aylesbury since 1856

£1.70



Street evacuation shock: P5

Panto dream comes true for Vernon



PAGE 47

Town centre ban for serial thief



PAGE 6

DOUBLE CRASH TRAGEDY ON BUCKS ROADS

Two men die after their car hits tree

FULL STORY: PAGE 7

Passengers taken to hospital with minor injuries



TWO men have died after a car crashed into a tree in Gerrards Cross.

Police say a Vauxhall Astra left the carriageway on the A413 at around 6.55am last Thursday before colliding with the tree.

Two men, aged in their fifties and twenties, were pronounced dead at the scene.

Two passengers were taken to hospital with minor injuries where they remain at this time.

No arrests have been made after

By Timothy Edgley

the crash which didn't involve any other vehicles.

As the investigation continues, police confirmed both men came from London.

Tributes have been paid after the incident with people posting their condolences on social media.

One Facebook user, Nome Spindlow wrote: "How awful just before Christmas as well, condolences to the men's family and friends."

PAGE 5

Family pay tribute to much-loved son, brother and daddy



Brandon killed in bike smash

WIN £250



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

TOKEN: PAGE 39

Conveyancing solicitors in Aylesbury |

Ready to support your next move.

Contact us to help you buy or sell your home for a sensible fixed fee.

kiddrapinet
SOLICITORS

01296 506035
kiddrapinet.co.uk

Sport

GOLF

Maidenhead and Flackwell to merge

MAIDENHEAD Golf Club (MGC) & Flackwell Heath Golf Club (FHGC), two well-established and member run golf clubs have agreed to merge, with members from both clubs to be based at the FHGC site from 1st January 2026.

Following the decision by RBWM to redevelop MGC's current site at Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead at the end of 2025, the club has sought to find a new home for their members over the past few years. Following a detailed and lengthy search, the club has agreed to merge

with FHGC, to create a new club with the current working title Maidenhead & Flackwell Heath Golf Club (M&FHGC).

The clubs, which share a history spanning over 120 years by way of one of the longest running inter-club matches in the UK, can now look to the future with optimism with a shared goal to create one of the leading golf experiences in the area.

A Heads of Terms agreement has been signed by the boards of both clubs, and further to member consultation and

due diligence, we aim to sign the final agreement by early 2025.

"We are incredibly pleased to be merging with Maidenhead. Combining the strengths of both clubs and their respective memberships is the perfect match", said Andy Ferguson, Chair, FHGC

"Maidenhead Golf Club are delighted to have found a new home for our members" said Brian Aldridge, Club Captain, MGC. "With our long-shared history and proximity to Maidenhead, FHGC is a perfect fit."



'Perfect fit' as clubs to merge.

FOOTBALL

Windsor return to winning ways with Holmer victory

WINDSOR FC returned to winning ways on Tuesday, beating Holmer Green 3-0 at Stag Meadow in Combined Counties Division One.

Their bright start was rewarded in the 10th minute when Max Jarzabek picked up the ball on the edge of the area, weaved his way through three defenders before smashing the ball against the underside of the bar – Troy Williams was there to tap in the rebound to give the home side the lead.

Windsor really should have increased their lead in the first minute of the second half when the ball fell perfectly for Ollie Saunders on the left-hand side of the penalty area, but somehow, he managed to sky his half volley over the stand.

Three minutes later, he scored what must surely be a contender for goal of the season. Sam Bell in the Holmer Green goal cleared the ball which fell nicely at the feet of the Windsor captain, who promptly fired an unstoppable shot from 45 yards into the top left-hand corner of the net.

Both sides continued to play neat attractive football but it was Windsor who came closest to adding a third when Reilly Hudson's deft header bounced back off the inside of the post into the Sam Bell's hands.

In the closing minutes, Avta Akhshvili raced past full back James Jarrot before crossing to Sam Healey at the near post, who glanced a near perfect header to the left of Bell in the net.

On Saturday, the Jacks had suffered a narrow 3-2 defeat at Staines & Lammas after being forced into making seven changes due to illness and injury.

Staines must have thought that

By James Earnshaw

Christmas had come early when Cairo Richard in the Windsor goal spilled an innocuous free kick from Joshua Hooks into his own net after just three minutes.

Staines had two chances in the 25th and 31st minutes which were despatched clinically by Hooks for his second and Daniel Bamba.

Windsor needed at least one goal before half time to make a game of it and it duly came in the 42nd minute when Ollie Saunders' neatly taken half volley found the corner of the net.

Troy Williams netted a penalty in stoppage time to reduce the deficit but it was not enough to earn a point from the tie.

On Saturday, the Jacks had suffered a narrow 3-2 defeat at Staines & Lammas after being forced into making seven changes due to illness and injury.

Staines must have thought that Christmas had come early when Cairo Richard in the Windsor goal spilled an innocuous free kick from Joshua Hooks into his own net after just three minutes.

Staines had two chances in the 25th and 31st minutes which were despatched clinically by Hooks for his second and Daniel Bamba.

Windsor needed at least one goal before half time to make a game of it and it duly came in the 42nd minute when Ollie Saunders' neatly taken half volley found the corner of the net.

Williams netted a penalty in stoppage time to reduce the deficit but it was not enough to earn a point from the tie.

Windsor travel to Langley on Saturday (3pm ko).



Windsor FC. Credit: Trophy Photography

HOCKEY

Marlow Hockey Club scores and scorers

MARLOW Hockey Women's 1st team travelled to Bristol to play Clifton Robinsons 2s in their first rematch of the season.

The home side started ferociously scoring a goal in the opening minute. Martha Goodridge equalised in the seventh minute with a goal from a penalty corner. Marlow continued to press the Clifton defence and Rachel Clarke put the reds ahead with a great strike from open play. Clarke put Marlow 3-1 up just before half time following a great piece of individual skill from Goodridge, which Clarke finished off at the back post. A lapse in concentration in the opening five minutes of the second half saw Clifton score two goals in two minutes to level the scoring. Clifton earned all three points in the last seven minutes even though Marlow pressed for an equalizer until the final whistle blew.

The 2nd team won their fifth game in a row away at Amersham and Chalfont 2s. A dominant first half display yielded three converted corners without response sealing the three points.

Other results: the 3rd team drew 1-1 with Staines 1sts away. 4s drew 0-0 with Reading 6 away. 5s lost 4-3 to Amersham & Chalfont 4. 6s beat Reading Phoenix 2 1-0. 7s lost 1-0 to Amersham & Chalfont 6

The men's 1st team kept up their challenge for promotion by beating Oxford OBU. They were given an early wake-up call when the home team scored first in the 11th minute. That stirred Marlow into action with three goals, 2 by Cameron Beazley-Clark, the other by Tom Gray. Oxford were still dangerous though and made the score 3-2 on the stroke of half time. Marlow scored straight away in the 2nd half with Theo Seymour adding a 4th goal followed by further goals by Matt Ashton and Alex Land and Oxford made the final score 6-3 shortly before the end. This keeps Marlow in 2nd place only one point adrift but only a point above Staines who they meet at Pound Lane on Saturday at 11.45.

The 2nd team were at home to Witney 1sts looking to build on their recent momentum. The side were also bolstered by news that former player Rohit Kapoor was joining as coach.

However, a nervy start to the game saw the reds concede two early goals. Marlow have endured a tough first half of the season, and frustratingly going behind at home has been a familiar position. The side now has more experience as a unit though, and with it, greater bouncebackability. Phil Cowell clawed a goal back before half time from a short corner, to make it 1-2 at the break.

Marlow continued to improve as the game progressed, restricting Witney to chances on the break. The home side pushed for an equaliser and had a number of chances to level the game, including one shot cleared off the line.

Other results: the 3rd team lost 2-1 to Thame 1sts away. 4s beat Milton Keynes 3 6-3 5s match was cancelled. 6s drew 1-1 with Amersham & Chalfont 6. 7s beat Wycombe 5 4-0.

Chesham drop after one point out of six

ANOTHER week and another two games for Chesham United in National League South, writes Andy Westlake.

First to last Saturday which delivered the home team's first 0-0 draw of the season against an Eastbourne side who went into the game fourth in the league. In the end a draw was a fair result, as neither side did enough to deserve a win in a largely uneventful game.

There was little action at either end until the 27th minute, when a Jack Cawley long throw caused problems in the Eastbourne area. Shortly afterwards another Cawley cross came to Samson Esan whose shot was blocked for a corner. The visitors had at least as much of the ball in the first half but did little with it. However, on 44 minutes Alfie Pavey crossed low from the right and George Alexander was denied by a fine reaction save from Ben Goode.

Early in the second half Jack Cawley's 30-yard free kick flew just over, then in the next minute Alfie Pavey broke for Eastbourne but his shot was parried by Ben Goode.

Chesham came back and a shot on the turn by Nathan Minhas was turned behind by Eastbourne keeper Joseph Wright. Just after the hour mark Eastbourne came close when a free kick ran loose in the Chesham area, but some last-ditch defending saw the ball cleared for a



Nathan Minhas, a scorer on Tuesday, has a shot blocked against Eastbourne. Photo Neale Blackburn.

corner.

The game became scrappy in the later stages, not helped by an over-fussy referee who booked eight players plus visiting manager Adam Murray. Chesham came close to snatching a win late on when a Jack Cawley long throw caused problems and Karl Oliyide and Connor Stevens were both denied by Wright. In the sixth minute of stoppage time another shot on the

turn by Karl Oliyide was tipped away by Wright to preserve the stalemate. 0-0 at full-time.

On Tuesday night Chesham lost 3-1 at home to Hornchurch.

The visitors started more brightly than Chesham and took the lead on 13' courtesy of Harry Gibbs after a free kick to Hornchurch. 20 minutes later and Chesham were back in it after Nathan Minhas levelled the game. Connor

Stevens flicked on a long throw and Minhas nudged the ball through the keeper and the helpless Hornchurch man on the line.

However, the game changed four minutes later when Chesham's Lewis Rolfe was shown a red card for a stamp. Michael Murray, one of Chesham's managers, felt Chesham were the better team from that point in the game. However, with Chesham looking for a

breakthrough it was Hornchurch that found two late goals from Ade Yusuff (83') and Darren McQueen (93') that gave the visitors all 3 points on the night in a 1-3 win. Chesham drop to 13th in the table off the back of the loss.

Next up Chesham United face Salisbury at home on Saturday in the 3rd round of The FA Trophy. Chesham's women travel to London Seaward FC in the FAWNL on Sunday.

FOOTBALL

Magical Makowski on target

FLACKWELL Heath took their impressive recent form to the London Borough of Barnet, as they faced Hadley FC. It was the visitors who left Brickfield Lane delighted after a 3-0 win, extending their winning run to four games as November's fixtures come to an end.

The Heathens delivered another impressive performance throughout the 90 minutes, with the frankly outstanding Wiktor Makowski adding another two goals to his season's tally. The first goal of the afternoon came from Flackwell's unstoppable striker, who fired home confidently from close range in the 19th minute after a great run through the Hadley defence. Same phase of the second half, same man, same result as Makowski rounded Charles Taylor in the Hadley goal to slot home just after the hour mark. The third goal - a tap in from six yards for new signing Sean McGuinness after a low cross from Makowski - added the cherry on top of an excellent away day for the club, who now move above Hadley into third as the festive period looms.

Next up, the impressive Reds face home fixture against 18th placed Northwood, whose manager Gary Meakin led Rayners Lane last season in the hotly contested battle against the Heathens to win the Combined Counties Premier North

CHAIRBOYS

Bumper crowd

WYCOMBE Wanderers are set to experience their highest crowd of the year on Saturday as Reading make the short trip to Buckinghamshire.

The Chairboys are riding high at the top of League One and are without a defeat since August.

More than 1,800 away tickets were snapped up by Royals fans within three days last month for the trip to Adams Park, always a popular fixture for supporters.

Despite experiencing their best start to a season for many a year, crowds in HP12 are rarely exceeding 5,000.

LET US KNOW!

Get in touch

IF you have a sports story, please email it to James Richings (james.richings@newsquest.co.uk) and James Earnshaw (james.earnshaw@newsquest.co.uk).

FOOTBALL

Beaconsfield suffer frustrating defeat

BEACONSFIELD Town were beaten 1-0 by Thame united in an extremely frustrating game at Holloways Park, writes Arran White.

Beaconsfield dominated most of the opening half, creating good chances that should have seen them going into the break comfortably ahead. The hosts were denied a penalty by the referee despite a strong claim for a foul on Joe Lawal. As the game approached the break, Beaconsfield had several good chances, with Manu Oke - William's header going inches over the bar, before Josh Marcon's freekick flew just wide of the post. Beaconsfield's best chance came just before the break, when Oke - William found himself with the ball just inside the 6-yard box, only for his well struck shot to bounce back off the bar and out.

The second half started on a more even footing, with both teams creating chances but cancelling each other out with strong defensive displays. Some excellent football

from Beaconsfield saw Joe Lawal, Eli Grant and Maks Jarzabek link up well as they played their way through Thame's half, before a shot was blocked for a corner.

As the minutes ticked by Beaconsfield were still looking for a way through, coming close yet again, this time with a curling effort from Troy Silvera being tipped past the post by Matthew Crowther in the Thame goal.

In the final few minutes Thame had a great chance to take the lead, but were denied by a brilliant point blank save from Eddie Brearey. A draw would have felt unlucky for Beaconsfield who had created plenty of chances and should have been well ahead. In the last moments of the game Beaconsfield were dealt a cruel blow as Thame's Curtis Brown's curling effort flew past Brearey and into the top corner to give them a 1-0 lead with no time to respond.

Beaconsfield will be determined to bounce back when they travel to Enfield on Saturday.



The teams line up before kick-off. Credit: Ben Cousin.

Sport

WEALDSTONE 0-2 WYCOMBE WANDERERS

Wonderful Wycombe win at Wealdstone

WYCOMBE Wanderers progressed into the third round of the FA Cup after they defeated National League Wealdstone 2-0 at Grosvenor Vale.

The League One leaders saw goals by Beryly Lubala and Richard Kone proving the difference.

Wealdstone should have taken the lead after 22 minutes when Sam Ashford crossed low across the face of the goal to find Alex Reid – yet somehow put his connection over the bar from under three yards out.

Wycombe punished the missed chance six minutes

later in the most devastating way possible.

After Dan Udoh was upended by Jack Cook from 25 yards out, Lubala delivered an unstoppable free kick to give the visitors the lead.

A second goal for the visitors came almost eight minutes after the restart, when Jacob Adams scooped a Ryan Tafazolli header off the line.

Wycombe almost gifted Wealdstone an equaliser a minute later, when shot-stopper Shamal George had to deny Reid after a poor David Wheeler header

was too short.

Reid picked up on another mistake, this time by Tafazolli, and saw his 71st-minute solo run matched by George.

The visiting side ensured their passage to the third round when a powerful solo run by sub Kone was finished with a fierce shot home.

The result means Wycombe have now won their last 11 games, with this being their first win at this stage of the FA Cup since 2017/18, when they defeated Non League Letherhead.



Richard Kone scored Wycombe's second away (PA)

JOE JACOBSON PRAISES MATT BLOOMFIELD

Ex-captain on Wycombe's terrific league season so far

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers captain Joe Jacobson believes the club have a chance to write history this season.

The Chairboys currently sit top of League One on 39 points from their 17 matches, two points clear of second-placed Wrexham.

Their most recent fixture saw them come from two goals down to rescue a point away at Exeter City, which made it 14 games unbeaten in all competitions, and 15 unbeaten in the league.

Jacobson, who of course won promotion out of League One and into the Championship with Wycombe in 2020 told SportsBoom.com: "It's been an amazing start to the season for Wycombe, it's quite incredible really."

"I want them to do well, I want them to get promoted, like I do with all of my old teams."

"I had my time."

"What we did under Gareth is completely different to what they're doing now."

"I want my friends to succeed."

"I was friends with the manager for a long time as much as he was my manager and teammate."

"I want success for the club."

"The fans there are great."

"I went to an ex-players dinner recently so I still have a big affiliation with the club."

"What we did in the past, getting promoted to the Championship, or the early 2000s with the early cup runs the club had, those guys will always be heroes."

"People will look back at that history, but that's done now."

"But these guys have the chance to make their own history. I'm as big a fan as anyone else for it."

Jacobson joined Wanderers in the summer of 2014 in what was a turning point in the club's history.

After narrowly escaping relegation to the National League that year (relegation would have put Wycombe in finan-

cial ruin), Gareth Ainsworth recruited numerous unknowns, along with proven EFL regulars in the hope of a better season.

This proved to be a masterstroke as the signings of Jacobson, Alfie Mawson, Fred Onyedinna, Sam Saunders, Nico Yennaris, Aaron Pierre, Sido Jombati, Peter Murphy, Hogan Ephraim, Marcus Bean and Aaron Amadi-Holloway helped Wanderers win 23 of their 46 league matches.

A place in the play-offs was confirmed despite spending 21 non-consecutive weeks in the automatic places.

But heartbreak soon followed as Wanderers would lose the 2015 play-off final to Southend United via penalties.

Promotion to League One eventually came three years later with Jacobson playing a huge role in the club's successful 2017/18 year before Championship football followed in 2020.

A solitary year in the second tier was all Wycombe were able to experience, but with three top-half finishes in the league since 2021 (6th in 2022 and a play-off final defeat, 9th in 2023 and 10th in 2024), there are fresh hopes that they can return to the Championship in 2025.

Jacobson, who retired from the game after his 400th appearance for the club in April, added: "I was down at the club recently actually."

"I still talk to a lot of the players, Matt Bloomfield who I've spent a lot of time with over the years."

"I also wanted to meet the new guys in charge there, the new ownership group."

"It's a club that became my home."

"It was the team from now every time the weekend comes along they're the first team I look out for."

"It's been incredible what they've done."



Joe Jacobson spent 10 years with Wycombe between 2014 and 2024, playing 400 times in that period (PA)

CHAIRBOYS

Smiles all round as Wanderers progress

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield praised the professional attitude of his players as they defeated Wealdstone 2-0 at Grosvenor Vale in the FA Cup.

The second round tie at Grosvenor Vale could have been a potential banana skin for the Chairboys, but a stunning free-kick from Beryly Lubala and Richard Kone strike in the final 10 minutes sent Wanderers through.

Now, with the possibility of facing a Premier League side in the third round, Bloomfield believed the League One leaders dealt with a difficult tie well.

Speaking after his side's 11th straight victory, he said: "The fear at the start of the game was being the story of the day, live television and a big crowd are her."

"We wanted to make sure we conducted ourselves in the right manner, I spoke to the players about that this morning."

"We knew the threat Wealdstone would hold, there would be some awkward moments, and I think we dealt with the majority of that well."

The hosts should have taken a 22nd minute lead when Alex Reid somehow put a Sam Ashford cross over the bar from under three yards out.

They were punished by an unstoppable Lubala free-kick six minutes later from a distance of 25 yards.

A second goal for the visitors came almost eight minutes after the restart, when keeper Jacob Adams scooped a Ryan Tafazolli header off the line.

The League One side made sure of their passage to the third round when a powerful solo run by sub Kone was finished with a fierce shot home.

Wealdstone manager Matt Taylor believed the quality of finishing proved to be the difference between the two sides.

He said: "You're talking about tiny errors, good players at good clubs punish even the smallest of errors."

"We didn't get the result but we got the performance."

"The first-half chance would have changed everything, the supporters were desperate to get behind the team."

"If the first goal had gone in you would have seen this place become quite intimidating, but it wasn't to be."

Just under 4,000 fans made the trip to Ruislip on November 30 making it Wealdstone's highest attended game of the season so far.

The 11.30am kick-off time was also unique, making it Wycombe's first competitive morning fixture since the 1980s.

A GREAT MONTH FOR THE WYC

Three players up for monthly PFA award



Joe Low (left), Fred Onyedinma (centre) and Dan Harvie (right) are all up for the prize after a brilliant November (PA)

THREE Wycombe Wanderers players have been nominated for the PFA League One Fans' Player of the Month award.

Left-back Dan Harvie, centre back Joe Low and winger Fred Onyedinma have been put forward alongside Louie Barry of Stockport County, Toby Mullarkey of Crawley Town and Bristol Rovers' Connor Taylor.

It was a fantastic November for the Chairboys as they moved top of the League One table following a fantastic 5-0 away victory over Stockport on Bonfire Night [November 5].

They have remained at the summit ever since, and are currently two points ahead of second place Wrexham with a game in hand.

During the course of the month, Low scored in two away wins at Wigan

Athletic and Lincoln City respectively, whilst Dan Harvie put in several impressive performances – most notable against the club aforementioned clubs, and Mansfield Town.

Whilst for Onyedinma, he bagged a brace in the victory over Stockport, as well as netting a terrific well-worked move in the win at Sincil Bank on November 23.

The goal is expected to be named as one of the Goal of the Season contenders.

Since rejoining Wycombe in the autumn, the Nigerian has scored five times in 14 matches in all competitions. This is now his fourth spell at Adams Park

To cast your vote, go to www.thepfa.com/fpotm/league-one.

CHAIRBOYS

Reaction to draw away to Exeter

WYCOMBE WANDERERS manager Matt Bloomfield felt his side did well to escape with a point after fighting back to draw 2-2 at Exeter which ended their run of 11 straight wins.

Exeter stormed into a two-goal lead inside the first 22 minutes with Millenic Alli and Jack McMillan scoring but Joe Low's header gave Wycombe a route back into the game.

The Chairboys levelled things through Cam Humphreys' delicious long-range curler and both teams had chances to win an entertaining encounter.

Bloomfield said: "We have to be pleased with a point considering the start we made to the game and the tough moment we had at 2-0 down.

"To show that character and determination to imprint ourselves in the game, I think it could have been more and the winning run could have continued.

"We had some good chances that didn't quite go our way. At 2-0 down to show that character and come away with a point, we have to be pleased with that.

"We speak about trust with the players and giving them autonomy to go and deliver performances.

"In those tough moments, you have to live out your values.

"There was always an opportunity for us to imprint ourselves on the game.

"It wasn't as if we were getting picked off and dominated, we hadn't started the game to the level we needed to and usually do.

"We slowly built our way into it and could have had more goals but to come away score two goals and get a point, we have to be pleased with that."

Exeter boss Gary Caldwell felt it was a point gained despite seeing his side throw away a two-goal lead.

He said: "The start was incredible and it could have been more as we created other good chances.

"Our intent, the way we got after them, the quality in which we played through the thirds, our understanding of how we bounce around their number nine was superb.

"I was a little frustrated we didn't score more goals in that period but I said to my coaching staff this game isn't over because this is a really strong Wycombe team.

"You just have to look at the size, the power and quality, so I knew it was still going to be a long 90 minutes and the goal before half-time changes it. Had it been 2-0 I think it would have been a different game.

"But the players were outstanding with the bravery they showed in possession, the effort, the desire out of possession and I thought it was a brilliant game of football."

WANDERERS UNBEATEN IN 14 IN ALL COMPS

Chairboys stay top after a thrilling draw at Exeter City

WYCOMBE Wanderers made it 14 games unbeaten in all competitions, despite their 11-match winning streak ending with an entertaining 2-2 draw at Exeter City.

The home side made a superb start and went in front inside two minutes as a Jack Fitzwater cross found its way to Millenic Alli at the back post and he superbly got the better of his man before deftly dinking the ball over goalkeeper Franco Ravizoli and into the net.

Exeter made it 2-0 after 22 minutes when Tristan Crama headed a Kevin McDonald corner against the upright but Jack McMillan reacted quickest to poke the ball over the line from close range.

However, the Chairboys were back in the game just five minutes later as Joe Low headed in from an Aaron Morley corner.

That goal spurred Wycombe into life and they should have equalised only for Fred Onyedinma and Richard Kone to get in each other's way, leaving Joe Whitworth to make a vital

save.

Wycombe were in complete control at the start of the second half and equalised in style after 54 minutes when Cam Humphreys curled an exquisite effort into the bottom corner from 25 yards.

Ed Francis bent a free-kick just over the bar for Exeter while at the other end, Daniel Udoh forced a fine save from Whitworth late on.

Despite the winning run coming to an end, Wycombe remain unbeaten since the 2-1 EFL Cup loss at home to Aston Villa, with their last league defeat being in August.

In addition to the draw down in Devon, Wanderers' lead at the top of the League One table has been reduced to two points, after Wrexham won 1-0 against Barnsley.

Their winner was scored in the 92nd minute of the contest.

Up next for Wycombe is Reading at home on Saturday December 7, before they face Swindon Town in the EFL Trophy three days later.



Joe Low has scored three goals in his last three away league games for Wycombe (PA)

Could this exit be a boost for the Chairboys?

READING boss Ruben Selles is set to join Championship strugglers Hull City, just days before the Royals are due to play Wycombe Wanderers.

The Spaniard arrived last summer from Southampton and has earned hero status among most supporters for leading the club through troubled waters.

During his time in Berkshire, he won 34 of his 78 games in charge, which includes earning a victory in

his final game.

This was in a 3-0 home win over Cambridge United on December 3, which saw ex-Wycombe man Lewis Wing score twice.

Despite battling constant upheaval off the field, losing members of his coaching staff and playing squad to redundancies and sales, the Royals finished 17th in League One last season.

What is even more impressive is the current campaign as the Royals

sit sixth after 17 matches, his final match in charge seeing a 3-0 win over Cambridge United on Tuesday with less than 8,500 supporters in attendance.

The Tigers sit in the relegation zone of the division above and sacked Tim Walter last month.

It is believed that he returned to Bearwood on Thursday, December 5 to say his goodbyes before heading to the second tier.

This could come as a huge boost

for the Chairboys, who face their Thames Valley rivals this weekend.

It is expected to be the highest attended home league game for the club this season.

Reading won this fixture last year 2-1 at Adams Park, which was their first league victory on the road for just over 12 months.

Wanderers would later win the return game by the same scoreline in March, which was their first at the Select Car Leasing Stadium.

SPORT



Could Wycombe win the FA Cup this season?



Wanderers once got to the FA Cup semi finals back in 2001

ONE of the country's leading betting companies has revealed Wycombe Wanderers' odds for winning the FA Cup this season.

The Chairboys, who are currently sitting top of the League One table after 17 matches, will play 2008 winners and former Premier League outfit, Portsmouth in the third round next month.

Prior to that, they defeated York City 3-2 and Wealdstone 2-0, both of the National League, in rounds one and two respectively.

It is their first appearance at this

stage of the competition since 2021. So what have Betfair predicted (at the time of writing) for this season?

Betfair - FA Cup winner 2024/25

Man City: 4/1
Liverpool, Arsenal: 6/1
Chelsea: 17/2
Man United: 9/1
Tottenham: 12/1
Newcastle: 14/1
Aston Villa: 16/1
Brighton: 22/1
Crystal Palace, West Ham: 28/1
Fulham, Bournemouth, Brentford: 40/1

Wolves, Everton, Nottingham Forest: 50/1

Leicester, Southampton: 80/1
Leeds, Burnley, Ipswich: 100/1
West Brom, Norwich, Derby, Sunderland, Sheffield United, Portsmouth, Coventry, Luton, Middlesbrough, Sheffield Wednesday: 125/1

Cardiff, Watford, Stoke, Birmingham, Hull, Bristol City, Swansea, Blackburn, Plymouth, QPR: 175/1
Preston, Lincoln, Charlton, Peterborough, Oxford, Reading, Millwall: 200/1

Bristol Rovers, Wycombe, Stockport, Bromley, Wigan, Mansfield, Leyton Orient, Morecambe, Exeter: 300/1

Whilst the sentence 'Wycombe could win the FA Cup' but sound nonsensical to many football fans, this nearly became a reality just over 20 years ago.

Back in the 2000/01 season Wanderers, who were in Division 2 (League One), managed to find themselves in the FA Cup semi-final where they narrowly lost to eventual winners, Liverpool, 2-1 at Villa Park.

Getting ready for the Thames Valley derby

IT is fair to say that Wycombe Wanderers vs Reading is a fixture that has got a lot interesting since last season.

A popular midfielder leaving one club for another, an away day to remember for both the Royals and the Chairboys, a training ground saga and a protest outside Adams Park.

Additionally, a failed takeover of Reading by Wycombe's former and very charismatic American chairman.

High Wycombe and Reading may only be separated by 20 or so miles across the Buckinghamshire/Berkshire border, but we could be in for a very tight and close game on Saturday when the two teams meet in the first Thames Valley derby of the campaign.

To look ahead to the clash, I spoke to James Earnshaw at the Reading Chronicle to see what he thinks ahead of their visit to Adams Park.

How has the season been for Reading this season?

JE: This season has gone much better than anyone had expected in pre-season, challenging for the play-offs after 17 matches. With the manager set to depart and no new owner in site, it is a matter of enjoying it while it lasts.

Who are the key players to look out for?

JE: Lewis Wing, as the Chairboys fans will no doubt be very aware of. The likes of Sam Smith and Harvey Knibbs are more than a match for any defensive line in the division, while the centre-back partnership of 19-year-old Tyler Bindon and 21-year-old Amadou Mbengue continues to look wise beyond its years.

What do the fanbase think of Wycombe following the training ground saga and the Couhigs po-

By James Richings

tential takeover?

JE: Not sure there is too much animosity regarding Wycombe these days seeing as the Couhigs are no longer connected to the club. You are the league leaders and as local a club as they come for Reading, but there is little more to it than that.

What is the expectation for this season?

JE: 48 hours ago, many were talking about a surprise push for the play-offs. A lot can change in football, and many would now be content with 21st on goal difference and a new owner.

How good has Lewis Wing been for you?

JE: Player of the Season last year, it is safe to say Wing is a fan favourite. Yet to hit the heights of last season this time around, he scored two terrific goals on Tuesday and continues to lead the very young group from a slightly deeper role.

Score prediction

Wycombe Wanderers 2-0 Reading

Match stats going into Saturday's fixture at Adams Park

- Wanderers are unbeaten in their last 14 games in all comps, whilst going 15 games without defeat in the league

- Reading's 2-1 win over Wycombe at Adams Park last November was their first win away from home in 12 months

- Wanderers' last blank in the league was back in April, a 0-0 draw against Derby County

- Reading have scored the fourth-joint highest amount of goals in L1 this season with 29



Wanderers' Matt Bloomfield (pictured centre in 2020 against Reading) will manage his 99th game of the club this weekend (PA)

Chairboys to face Pompey in the FA Cup

WYCOMBE Wanderers' FA Cup third round opponents have been confirmed.

The Chairboys, who are making their first appearance at this stage of the competition in four years, will play at home to 2008 winners and former League One rivals, Portsmouth.

At the time of writing, Matt Bloomfield's team are top of the third tier, whilst John Mousinho's Pompey are currently bottom of the Championship – meaning there is just one place between the two clubs in the football pyramid.

The fixture will take place the weekend of January 11/12.

Overall, the two teams have played each other 20 times since their first-ever encounter back in October 2012, with Wanderers winning on five occasions, Portsmouth eight, and there being seven draws.

In the FA Cup, there has only been one previous match – a 2016/17 first round tie at Fratton Park, which Wycombe 2-1.

Paris Cowan-Hall and Adebayo Akinfenwa got the goals, in the Chairboys' second and most recent win on the South Coast.

Wycombe progressed in the third round of the competition after defeating York City 3-2 at Adams Park in the first round, and Wealdstone 2-0 in the second round.

Coincidentally, both teams are in the National League.

The fixture against Pompey next month will also see the return of former Wanderers man, Freddie Potts.

The midfielder spent the 2023/24 campaign with the Chairboys, where he won the club's Young Player and Player of the Season awards respectively, whilst on loan from West Ham United.