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SPORT

Who are you voting for?

BERKS & Bucks FA are calling for people to nominate the #GrassrootsHeroes of your local game before the window for nominations in this year's annual Grassroots Football Awards closes on April 19, 2022.

The Grassroots Football Awards is our opportunity to celebrate the people who make grassroots football great for everyone. They're for the people who make a positive difference.

They're our way to recognise the fantastic people who put their heart and soul into football across our County FA and England.

Most of all, they're a time for us to thank those amazing people who inspire us all with a prestigious national awards ceremony where we can all come together.

This season, our volunteers have worked hard to show the true power of football in connecting people, building communities, and enabling more players to enjoy playing our beautiful game.

Let's show them how much we appreciate their effort, commitment, and impact.

In addition to the national England Football Award categories, we are delighted to introduce several local awards this season. The addition of local categories will help us recognise and celebrate even more members of the grassroots football community for their contribution to the game in our region.

Steph Clark, Football Communications Officer at Berks & Bucks FA said: "The annual Grassroots Football Awards are the perfect opportunity to recognise & celebrate the volunteers that make grassroots football in our region happen week in and week out.

"There are thousands of people involved in the grassroots game across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire who dedicate their time and effort to support clubs and leagues in their local communities.

"It these grassroots heroes that we want to hear about – to do this we need your help, please consider nominating someone for an Award – just being nominated can mean so much to the individuals involved and will help us recognise the work of volunteers across the region."

Shortlisted nominees and category winners, decided by a local panel of judges, are celebrated at an end of season awards ceremony held in the region.

The details of which, along with shortlisted nominees in each category are to be confirmed following the closure of the nomination window.

Supporter pays £180 for taxi ride



Thomas Davidson (centre from left) has not missed a Wycombe game this season and spent an eye-watering amount on his trip to Bristol



The Wycombe Wanderers Reserves thumped East Oxford 6-1 last weekend in one of their biggest wins this season (PA)

MOST football fans will do anything they can to watch their beloved team play, and this Wycombe supporter is no different.

Thomas Davidson, who is also known as the 'Wycombe drummer', made it his mission to attend every competitive Chairboys match this season.

An Adams Park regular who is known across the fanbase, the 29-year-old has not missed any fixture since the 3-0 victory against Burton Albion on the opening day back in July.

However, this aim for the 2022/23 campaign was in doubt when Matt Bloomfield's side travelled to Bristol Rovers on March 14.

Originally pencilled in for Saturday, January 21, the fixture was called off due to a frozen pitch.

Re-arranged to a Tuesday night in March, Thomas realised that he would not be able to catch the supporters coach at Adams Park due to work.

So what did he do?

He decided to book a taxi from Aylesbury to Bristol that cost him an eye-watering £180.

And amazingly, the cleaner who works at the Mandeville Upper School, only missed the first 15 minutes and managed to arrive at the Memorial Stadium in time for Brandon Hanlan's opener 60 seconds later.

Wycombe went on to win the match 2-0.

Exclusive by James Richings

Thomas told the Free Press: "I went straight from work to Bristol by taxi as I said to myself 'I can't miss any games from now till the end of the season'.

"It was down to my love for the club as I wanted to make myself heard for the players.

"I feel like if I am not there I let the team down.

"My life is Wycombe and the players need our fans to really get behind them.

"You only have one life and my one passion is Wycombe.

"I love Wycombe and yes, I stand out from most people and yes, I am a bit different on matchdays but I love this club in every aspect."

"Come on you Blues!"

Collectively, Thomas spent £225 on his trip to the Memorial Stadium (£180 on a taxi, £20 for the coach home, and £25 for a ticket).

And it was an evening to remember as the 2-0 win over the Pirates was Matt Bloomfield's first away from home.

As it stands, the 'Wycombe Drummer' has attended all 44 competitive matches this season.

League: 37
FA Cup: One
League Cup: Two
Football League Trophy: Three
Berks & Bucks Cup: One

Reserves smash Thames Valley rivals at home

IT was a day to remember for the Wycombe Wanderers Reserves as they thrashed East Oxford 6-1 last weekend.

The Chairgirls knew they would be in for a good test after only winning 1-0 in the reverse fixture last year.

The start was not ideal with East Oxford taking the lead but that was the kick Wycombe needed.

By half time the whole momentum of the game had shifted with goals from Victoria Collet and Ruby Paish. After the break Wycombe contained to push on.

A wonderful solo goal from

Emily Norfolk gave the Chairgirls some breathing space.

A fantastic headed goal by Ruby Paish gave her a brace, and striker Shannon Reed also got herself two second half goals giving Wycombe a comfortable 6-1 victory.

Manger Jaymie Bailey said: "Players showed composure and a sense of belief throughout.

They homed in on the scoring, particularly in the shots in the second half. Congrats to the team and we go again on Sunday."

Player of the Match: Steph McDaid



Wycombe boss Matt Bloomfield was not happy with his side's defending in their 1-0 home loss against Barnsley (Carol Mason)

So close yet so far

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has stated his team 'needed to defend the goal better' in their 1-0 home loss against Barnsley.

The Chairboys looked like they were heading for their first 0-0 draw at Adams Park this season in the league, but a header from Slobodan Tedic with five minutes earned the Tykes their 21st league victory.

For Wanderers, it was only the second time in 2023 that they had been defeated at home and despite bossing the ball and having more chances than the opposition, Bloomfield was not happy with the defending.

He said: "I'm gutted that we didn't get anything from that performance

as we deserved something from it.

"But it did seem it was our throw from where they scored so I need to watch it back.

"I wasn't far away from it but Jason [McCarthy] has cleared it and it certainly took a deflection, but we still need to defend the goal better.

"That's not just the goal, but the throwing and the cross too.

"If we weren't going to win the game, we needed to make sure that we didn't lose it and that's the disappointing factor.

"We didn't get a result where we did more than enough to get a point."

Up next for the Chairboys is Charlton Athletic away on March 25 at the Valley.

Alan Parry's Previews: Let's not give up



Vokes at the Valley (PA)

THE hallmark of a successful team is how they react to defeat, and following their loss to Barnsley last week Wycombe have the chance to bounce back when they visit Charlton Athletic on Saturday, March 25.

The setback against Barnsley was disappointing and potentially damaging to Wanderers' play-off ambitions, but it was also undeserved and they can take heart from how they played.

They were the better team against a physical Barnsley side who are bidding for automatic promotion and had won five of their previous six games.

Wanderers had more possession, passes, attempts on goal and corners than their opponents, but lost to a sucker punch goal five minutes from the end.

New boss Matt Bloomfield is still learning about his players and he will discover more about their character when they take on Charlton, who have found form at just the wrong time as far as Wanderers are concerned.

The teams met in the reverse fixture at Adams Park back in August, 2022, coincidentally after Wycombe had beaten Barnsley 3-0 on their own ground a week earlier.

Charlton were also on a high following a run of only one defeat in their opening five games of the season.

Anis Mehmeti gave Wanderers an early lead that was cancelled out by Charlton's Jesurun Rak-Sakyi just 60 seconds later, and the game finished with a 1-1 scoreline.

It was the first time in 10 meetings that the clubs had drawn against each other with Charlton winning six of the previous encounters and Wanderers just three.

However, the Chairboys are unbeaten in their last three games against the Addicks including a 1-0 victory on their last visit to The Valley on New Year's Day, 2022 where Sam Vokes scored the winning goal.

His hoped-for return after injury would be a major boost for Saturday's clash.

Charlton's home form has been patchy this season with a record of W6 D6 L6, but they have beaten promotion contenders Plymouth Argyle (5-1), Barnsley and Derby County, and drawn against Ipswich Town and Peterborough United.

It's another tough game for Wanderers and with games running out, it's one they can ill afford to lose if they are to break into the top six.

The fixture will kick-off at 3pm.

Hanlan goal causes Barton meltdown



Joey Barton has lost four games against Wycombe, drawing three. His only win over the Chairboys saw him sent off (PA)

BRISTOL Rovers boss Joey Barton has claimed striker Brandon Hanlan 'didn't have a clue' where the ball was going, after he scored against his former side for Wycombe Wanderers.

The 25-year-old bagged the first in a 2-0 away win for the Chairboys at the Memorial Stadium on March 14, with Chem Campbell getting Wanderers' second.

Hanlan's strike at the expense of his old employers came in what was Matt Bloomfield's first away victory as manager of the club, whilst Rovers suffered their seventh home defeat in 18 games this season.

Speaking to the local press ahead of the Gas' home match against Portsmouth on March 18, Barton, who managed Hanlan before the latter's move to Adams Park in 2021, said: "It can be a bit flat sometimes when you come off the pitch beaten by a side that's better than you.

"But it's worse when you know you're better than the opposition.

"We didn't take our chances and it was one of our old players that came back to haunt us.

"When Brandon was here, he couldn't hit a cow's a*** with a banjo, but he slammed that shot in.

"He didn't have a clue where it's going, and I don't think he'll care.

"When you watch it back, no striker aims to shoot where he

By James Richings

shot.

"But if I had to put everything on Josh Couburn scoring a one-on-one or Brandon Hanlan scoring a one-on-one, I would put my kid's inheritance on Josh.

"But that's the game and they [Wycombe] lived a charmed life with the ball staying out of their net."

Barton has faced Wanderers eight times as a manager and has only been on the winning side once.

This was in Fleetwood Town's 1-0 victory over Wycombe in February 2020 at Adams Park, but the former Manchester City, Newcastle United, Queens Park Rangers, Marseille, Burnley, and Rangers man was sent to the stands for dissent.

Joey Barton's dismal record against the Chairboys:

18/19: Fleetwood 1-1 Wycombe
18/19: Wycombe 1-0 Fleetwood
19/20: Fleetwood 1-1 Wycombe
19/20: Wycombe 0-1 Fleetwood
19/20: Fleetwood 1-4 Wycombe
19/20: Wycombe 2-2 Fleetwood
22/23: Wycombe 2-1 Bristol R
22/23: Bristol R 0-2 Wycombe

To read more about the latest Wycombe Wanderers news, go to the Bucks Free Press website (www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport) or follow James Richings on Twitter (@James_BFP).

SPORT



Alfie Mawson told the Free Press his answer (PA)

Ex-Wanderers hero Alfie Mawson reveals the Chairboys' best player

EX-WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Alfie Mawson has revealed who he feels is the best player he played alongside with during his time at the club.

The 29-year-old, who featured 71 times for the Chairboys across two spells, retired from the game on February 14 this year after a lengthy battle with persistent knee injuries.

And prior to the Chairboys'

1-0 home defeat against one of his former sides, Barnsley, on March 18, the former England Under 21 international confirmed to the BFP who he thought was the best.

He said: "Josh Scowen.

"I could have said loads of players from my first spell", referring to the 2014/15 season where the Chairboys agonisingly missed out, through pen-

alties, on promotion to League One on against Southend United in the play-off final.

"But it'll be Josh.

"He's a joy to be around and play with.

"I'm not saying this because he's my mate, but he stands out for me during my time here.

"I have a lot of time for Scowey, I love him to bits but as a player, I don't think Wycombe realise

how lucky they were to get him.

"They do now."

Mawson and Scowen were teammates during their first spells for Wycombe, whilst also playing together at Barnsley during the 2015/16 campaign.

During their time in Yorkshire, the duo were part of a promotion-winning team to the Championship, along with the Football League Trophy.

De Barr revisits on-field episode

WYCOMBE Wanderers striker Tjay De Barr has spoken about the night he was taken to hospital following his medical episode at the end of last year.

The then 22-year-old played for the final 20 minutes in the club's 1-0 away defeat at Plymouth Argyle, replacing the now departed Ali Al-Hamadi on December 29, 2022.

However, the Gibraltarian took a blow to the chest moments after coming on and continued to play despite being in discomfort.

He fell to the ground at full-time, was stretched off, spent several hours in hospital before being discharged.

After a period of rest, he would next feature in Wanderers' 2-0 home victory against Oxford United on January 24 this year.

Additionally, other than a few tweets that briefly explained the situation by De Barr in the days after the incident, March 23 this year was the first time he spoke openly to the press about that night in Devon.

He said: "I didn't really collapse and I remember it well.

"I did OK when I played for the final 20 minutes, but around five minutes after coming on I took a whack in my chest.

"That's when I started to feel it. "As the game went on, I tried to make a run or get on the ball, but I kept feeling a sharp pain in my chest and the referee on the night was really good.

"He kept checking up on me to see if I was OK but there was one moment where we were on the attack, and I just couldn't run.

"I kind of went on my knees. "So, when the match ended, it

By James Richings

all turned quite weird.

"My chest started to close up and I couldn't breathe very well so I decided to sit myself down.

"I never collapsed.

"It was at this point I started to cough up loads of blood and it was Curtis Thompson who saw it all and he called the doctors."

Once the paramedics were noted and several other of the Chairboys players started to take note of what was happening, former manager Gareth Ainsworth created a huddle around the forward so he could receive treatment.

He was eventually taken away from the Home Park pitch, with the now QPR boss accompanying the Wanderers forward in the ambulance to hospital.

De Barr continued: "I just remember being really annoyed because we lost and I actually asked to walk off the pitch but the paramedics said no.

"Then in the medical room, I was told to go to the hospital but deep down, I just wanted to go on the bus with the boys and go home.

"But I understand it was for my safety and everyone was looking out for me.

"I'm really stubborn and I remember the old gaffer telling me to go into the ambulance, and the whole situation was handled well.

"I'm grateful for those who helped because health and safety is the most important thing."

Since returning to the Wycombe team, De Barr has featured in nine league matches.



Wycombe's Tjay De Barr (playing for Gibraltar) fell ill at Plymouth (PA)



Mehmeti left the club in Jan (PA)

Starlet receives call-up

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers winger Anis Mehmeti has been called up to the Albanian Men's Team for the first time.

The 22-year-old, who scored 19 goals in 98 matches for the Chairboys before his January move to Bristol City, will be in the Eagles' squad for their Euro 2024 match against Poland this month.

Mehmeti scored nine times in 30 matches Wanderers this season, but his stellar performances in League One led to his name being spotted by scouts in the Championship and Premier League.

Representatives from Queens Park Rangers, Blackburn Rovers, Nottingham Forest, and Bristol City all had a look at the ex-Norwich City youth team player before he agreed to join the West Country side in a record deal for Wycombe.

Whilst the fee is undisclosed, the deal includes the potential for future payments depending on various landmarks being reached in Mehmeti's career.

Mehmeti has since played eight times for the Robins, starting six of those matches.

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