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## SPORT

## Positive Covid test for Wheeler

### THE FAN FAVOURITE CONFIRMED THE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

WYCOMBE midfielder David Wheeler has confirmed that he missed his side's victory over Accrington Stanley on August 7 after testing positive for Covid-19.

The 30-year-old, who joined the club in 2019, confirmed the news via his Twitter page, where he also revealed that he is self-isolating.

This comes as a blow for the former QPR man, as it meant he would miss playing in Wanderers' Carabao Cup first round tie against his former club, Exeter City, at St James Park.

Speaking on social media, he said: "So gutted to not be involved today after testing positive for Covid, but will be watching at home hoping to see more scenes like this today at Adams Park!"

"Come on Wycombe!!!  
"Hoping our fans have a great day out back at the football."

Wheeler has scored seven goals in 80 matches since joining Wanderers from QPR two years ago.

At Exeter, Wheeler enjoyed a successful four-and-a-bit seasons in the West Country, as he played 171 times in all competitions and scored 38 goals.

## Second round booked

### THE CHAIRBOYS WILL MAKE THE SHORT TRIP TO HERTS THIS MONTH

WYCOMBE Wanderers will play Stevenage in the second round of the Carabao Cup.

The Chairboys, who defeated Exeter City in the first round on penalties, will travel to the Lamax Stadium in Hertfordshire, to try and book their place in the third round of the competition.

It will be the first-ever meeting between these two sides in this contest, and their first fixture against each other will be the first since October 2019, when the Boro defeated Wanderers 1-0 at Adams Park in the Football League Trophy.

There have been 13 matches between Wycombe and Stevenage with Wanderers and Boro winning five games each, with there also being three draws.

The fixture will take place the week commencing August 23.

# SPORT: The boss' view following opening day win Ainsworth's analysis after victory against Accrington



Wycombe Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth was speaking following his side's win against Accrington Stanley (PA)

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has admitted that he is 'not afraid in giving young kids their debuts', after Olly Pendlebury made his league bow in the victory over Accrington Stanley.

The 19-year-old, who joined this summer from Reading on a free transfer, was originally acquired to play in the development squad.

However, with Dominic Gape and Curtis Thompson out injured and with David Wheeler testing positive for Covid, the former England Under 16 player was given his EFL debut in Wanderers' 2-1 victory against Stanley in their first match of the season.

He played the whole 90 minutes and was a key part in breaking down the Stanley attacks.

Ainsworth said: "I've told him to keep the shirt as today was a big, momentous occasion for him.

"He's on the winning side, played 95 minutes and I think he was shot at the end as I think he'll realise what it takes to be in the league as a professional footballer.

"Pendlebury is supposed to be in the development squad, but we've had injuries to Gape, Thompson and Wheeler - the three players that could play in that position.

"He's had to come in.  
"I am not afraid in giving young kids their debuts."

His brilliant performance was one of many as Wycombe held on to win their first game back in League One at a rocking Adams Park.

After Garath McCleary scored a brace inside 15 minutes, Wanderers could have easily scored more but Sam Vokes' first-half header was cleared off the line, Daryl Horgan fired wide on several occasions and substitute Adebayo Akinfenwa forced debutant keeper James Traf-

ford into a save.

And despite Matt Butcher scoring late on to give Stanley hope inside the last 10 minutes, Wycombe held onto the victory - their first at home against Accrington in 12 years and their first in the regular League One season since February 2020.

Ainsworth continued: "I think we should have scored more.

"We created plenty of chances and when we are on top, I think it's really important to take them.

"Football is a strange game, because when the mental side kicks in the second half, you start to look back at the chances you missed, you start to think if you can hold on and in the typical Wycombe way, the last five minutes were very nervy, but I have got some good players and I am very proud of them.

"I have also got some good players to come back as well and I am looking forward to next week against Cheltenham.

"That's a good result for us as I truly believe Accrington will pick up some good points this year with the team that they have got, but I am glad that we have got that 12-year hoodoo off us now, but it's only one game hopefully we'll get many more points."

Following their triumph against Stanley on August 7, they travelled down to Exeter City in the Carabao Cup first round, and defeated the West Country side 4-3 on penalties, following a 0-0 draw after 90 minutes.

They return to the West of England this weekend as they take on Cheltenham Town, before going up to Wigan on August 17.

## SPORT: Wycombe Wanderers 2-1 Accrington Stanley



Accrington Stanley boss John Coleman was not happy with goals his side conceded against Wycombe Wanderers (PA)

## Coleman on 'pathetic goals'

ACCRINGTON Stanley manager John Coleman has described the two goals his side conceded against Wycombe Wanderers as 'pathetic'.

Garath McCleary bagged a brace for the Chairboys inside the first 15 minutes, as Wanderers defeated Stanley 2-1 at Adams Park.

His second was a stunning strike from outside the box, with the win ending a run of nine games without a victory at home for Wycombe against Stanley.

Matt Butcher scored a late goal to give the visitors hope, but McCleary's first-half double sealed all three points for Gareth Ainsworth's men.

Coleman said: "Two pathetic goals in the space of seven minutes have ultimately cost us the game.

"First time Wycombe entered our final third was after eight minutes when they scored. Before that, we had four of our players in their box, looked dangerous and started the game really well.

"On the balance of play, we've gone 2-0 down in the first-half but I thought we were the better team, quite comfortably really.

"That game could have been so different as a couple of things could have gone in our favour but that's football."

**SPORT:** Ex-Wycombe keeper joins Championship side

# Allsop signs for Derby County

**FORMER** Wycombe goalkeeper Ryan Allsop has joined Derby County on a free transfer.

The 29-year-old, who departed Adams Park as a free agent in the summer, has signed for Wayne Rooney's men on a one-year contract following a short trial period with the club.

Coincidentally, Allsop's final appearance for the Chairboys was against Derby back in February, with County defeating Wanderers 2-1 at Adams Park thanks to an Andre Wisdom winner in stoppage-time.

Speaking to Rams TV, he said: "I'm really excited.

"As soon as I got the phone call which registered interest, it was a no-brainer for me.

"I live in Birmingham so it's a local one and this is massive.

"The set-up here's unbelievable, so it was a no-brainer."

He also revealed that the opportunity to work under Rooney played a part in signing for the Rams. Overall, he played 129 matches for

Wycombe across two spells.

He first joined the club in the second-half of the 2015/16 season, where he played 18 times as Wanderers finished 13th in League Two.

Two-and-a-half years later, Allsop re-signed for the Chairboys in the summer of 2018 following his release from then Premier League AFC Bournemouth, after he played 27 matches for the Cherries across five seasons - two of those games came in the top-flight against Everton and Leicester City repetitively in 2015 and 2017.

During his second spell with the Chairboys, he played 111 times in the next three seasons, before being dropped in February 2021 for David Stockdale, who would subsequently take the number one spot at Adams Park.

Allsop has been given the number 31 shirt at Derby, and made his debut for his new club in their entertaining 3-3 draw against Salford City in the first round of the Carabao Cup.

# Cup win comes at cost

**PLAYERS ARE HURT IN VICTORY OVER EXETER CITY ON TUESDAY**

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has hinted he may go to the transfer market to 'patch up the holes' that are currently in his squad.

Wanderers defeated Exeter City 4-3 on penalties in their previous match in the League Cup first round following a 0-0 draw after 90 minutes, but it came at a cost, as the Chairboys ended the game with nine players due to injuries.

Captain Matt Bloomfield and Jason McCarthy were the two notable casualties who had to come off, whilst Jordan Obita, Joe Jacobson and Curtis Thompson also couldn't continue at St James Park.

And with Wycombe playing five away games in August, Ainsworth could be forced to try and get some new signings.

He said: "Worry overrides elation at the moment.

"My squad is a thin squad as it is and we need to make sure that we are fit enough as it is, because a fit Wycombe Wanderers squad with this calibre can do things, but one or two injuries weakens us majorly.

"So we need to make sure that everyone recovers well and maybe go into the transfer market and almost patch up the holes that are here.

"It was a really, really tough night with injuries and I really didn't need that at all.

"It's a long journey down here, we have prepared the right way, so everything was good.

"I rested five of the starting 11 (against Accrington Stanley) and the plan was to give Jordan Obita a half, Jason McCarthy a half and juggle things.

"The league is our bread and butter as the league is where we want to be as we know we can achieve in the league.

"With the cup, are we going to win this? Who knows, but, the League Cup is always a hard one as it is the first Tuesday after the season starts and this was a real blood, guts and thunder affair as they wanted to beat a higher league opposition."

On to the match and the boss was 'elated' with his side's performance, as they progressed to the second round for the first time since the 2018/19 campaign.

He continued: "I don't know how we got through that.

"It was Andre Burley and Sullay Kaikai's debut, Ollly Pendlebury and Sam Vokes' second game and we had Nick Freeman playing as a centre back for a bit, and it's frightening to see what these boys will do for each other.

"They can achieve but we need to keep them fit and healthy."



Ryan Allsop was seen speaking to Rams TV following his move from Wycombe Wanderers this month (Rams TV)

**SPORT:** Wycombe end Accrington jinx at Adams Park

# Garath gets the goals as it's a winning start for Wanderers



Gareth Ainsworth was impressed with Garath McCleary's contribution in the win against Accrington Stanley on August 7 (PA)

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for Garath McCleary, as the latter scored a quick-fire brace in Wanderers' 2-1 win over Accrington Stanley on the first day of the season.

The former Reading man, who is now in his second season with the Chairboys, scored his first after nine minutes with a cool finish from eight yards, before producing a beautiful chip over James Trafford for his second six minutes later.

These were his first goals for the club at Adams Park, as his four strikes last season all came away from home.

Speaking after the game, Ainsworth said: "He's been outstanding from the moment he walked in.

"I said 'this is League One, I know you've played at the highest levels, but you can be a leader, a talisman for us' and I thought he, Daryl Horgan and Vokes played really well.

"They were great goals, he was unlucky to not get his hat-trick but I am sure it'll come soon.

"He was tired.

"I know that feeling as I played into my 30s and I think he was relieved.

"He's a real leader to this squad and sometimes he doesn't realise it, so I have to tell him how much respect he gets off the other players due to the level he has played at.

"He's very humble and probably

**By James Richings**

doesn't understand that."

McCleary's goals mean that he has now already halved his tally from last season, as the ex-Forest man bagged four goals for the Chairboys in 2020/21.

The win also secured Wanderers' first at home against Stanley since January 2009 - ending a run of nine matches at Adams Park without a victory against John Coleman's men.

McCleary, who is from Oxford but has played international football for Jamaica, has enjoyed a stellar career in England's second and third tier since signing for Nottingham Forest in January 2008, from Non League Bromley Town.

Despite only playing eight times in Forest's promotion-winning season of 2007/08, he managed to get himself on the scoresheet once, before being a regular first team name in the seasons ahead in the Championship.

His peak then arrived in the summer of 2012, as he signed for Premier League new boys Reading.

He spent eight years with the club and played 270 games for the Royals in that time, scoring in a FA Cup semi-final defeat against Arsenal in April 2015.

# SPORT

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## SPORT: Five away games this month for Wycombe Gruelling challenges in August for Blues



Wycombe will be on the road against Cheltenham and Wigan on August 14 and 17. This ends a run of three straight away games before taking on Lincoln City at Adams Park on August 21 (PA)

THE new season is only a few days old, but Wanderers are already in the midst of a gruelling schedule, with two midweek overnight trips sandwiched by what will be a testing encounter at Cheltenham.

Tuesday's long journey to Exeter was a fruitful one in the sense of the result, as Wycombe progressed to round two of the Carabao Cup, but the number of injuries suffered put a dampener on that.

Matt Bloomfield and Joe Jacobson were both substituted because of injuries, while Alex Samuel and Daryl Horgan also had to receive treatment on the St James Park pitch.

Gareth Ainsworth's medical staff are up against it in the second half of this week to ensure it's as strong a squad as possible that makes the relatively short trip to Whaddon Road at the weekend.

The strength in depth that Wanderers now have compared to a few years ago means it's not a disastrous situation, but with Ryan

### By Jamie Cameron

Tafazolli still not fully fit, the defence could look somewhat makeshift in the coming games.

Saturday is Cheltenham's first League One home game for 12 years, so they will certainly be up for it, and will pose a real challenge to the Chairboys.

For two years, the Robins were consistently the best side in League Two, and if it wasn't for the Covid-enforced suspension in early 2020, Michael Duff's men likely would have earned promotion a year before they eventually did.

If Duff isn't approached by a bigger club, Cheltenham should go well this season.

Defensive trio Will Boyle, Ben Tozer and Charlie Raglan make the Gloucestershire club difficult to play against, and they have a mix of youth and experience in attack, with veteran Andy Williams operating alongside the likes of Callum

Wright and Ellis Chapman.

Just three days afterwards, it's a third straight away game for the Chairboys, and a first meeting with one of the real promotion favourites in Wigan Athletic.

The Latics were going strong in the Championship 18 months ago and the sky was the limit under Paul Cook, but after going into administration and narrowly avoiding relegation to League Two, the rebuilding process is well underway at the DW Stadium.

Proven goalscorer Charlie Wyke was the headline summer addition, but the signings of Max Power, Tom Naylor and Jordan Jones also caught the eye.

Young manager Leam Richardson has been backed by the Bahraini ownership, and although it remains to be seen whether Wigan will live up to their pre-season billing, Wanderers' first game in that corner of Greater Manchester since 2002 will be a very difficult one.

### HEAD-TO-HEAD

Wycombe travel to Cheltenham with an impressive record against Michael Duff's men, as they are currently unbeaten in their last seven matches versus the Robins.

In those last seven outings, there have been two 3-3 draws (both at Adams Park in consecutive seasons), and a thumping 4-1 away victory in November 2014.

Overall, there have 10 draws between the two sides, with Wycombe winning eight times and Cheltenham being victorious on five occasions.

However, the head-to-head battles against the Latics isn't as favourable.

Out of the 16 matches Wycombe and Wigan have faced each other, Wanderers have only won twice in that time, with their last win coming in September 2001 - a 1-0 victory at Adams Park with Andy Rammell getting the only goal of the game.

Other than that, Wigan have dominated this fixture, winning 10 times. There have also been four draws.



Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

## Stockdale is the hero in Exeter

### THE BOSS WAS VERY HAPPY WITH HIS TEAM'S PERFORMANCE

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for David Stockdale, after the goalkeeper produced three saves and scored a spot kick in their penalty shootout win against Exeter City in the League Cup.

The match, which finished 0-0 after 90 minutes, went to a shootout with the Chairboys coming out as 4-3 winners at St James Park in sudden death.

This means Wycombe have progressed to the second round of the competition for the first time since the 2018/19 season.

It's only the third time since the 2007/08 campaign that they have made it over the first hurdle, however, it has been just over 14 years since Wycombe last won a League Cup match in 90 minutes - a 1-0 away win against Charlton Athletic in December 2006, who were then a Premier League side.

That year, Wanderers got to the semi-finals before losing to eventual winners Chelsea.

Speaking after the long night in the West Country, Ainsworth said: "It's a brilliant result."

"We played 30 minutes with 10 men but we showed spirit and endeavour to see it out to penalties."

"We had one recognised defender on the pitch at the end because of injuries."

"But Sam Vokes led by example, digging in to help us."

"Stocco is the hero, obviously. I put him fifth on the list to take one and I'm glad I did."

"It's like a scene out of Platoon in the changing room and we'll need to see who's fit for Saturday."

Up next is another trip to the west, as Wycombe take on Cheltenham Town on August 14.