

# Bucks Free Press

Friday, December 15, 2023

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## Major plans revealed for The Chilterns

## 2023's bonny babies

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## Sixteen-page leisure and entertainment section



# Council chief: 'We will not go bankrupt'

## Leader's promise amid financial crisis



'BANKRUPTCY' is not on the cards for Buckinghamshire Council in the next two years, its leader has pledged.

Conservative councillor Martin Tett said the local unitary authority would not issue a Section 114 notice a council's declaration of effective bankruptcy.

He told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "We are not going to issue a Section 114 notice. Certainly not this year, certainly not next year."

By Charlie Smith

"I can't guarantee that at some point in the future [we won't], particularly if central government changes and their funding for us changes significantly."

Cllr Tett gave the assurances as local authorities across England face a £4 billion funding gap, according to the Local Government Association.

Full story: Page 4

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## Festive fun

## Academy's Christmas shows

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## Howley gets his Welsh return



Rob Howley (right) at Twickenham Stadium

ROB Howley has been appointed to Warren Gatland's coaching staff for the Six Nations in his first involvement with Wales since being banned for breaching betting regulations.

Howley served as Wales' attack coach from 2008 to 2019 in a golden era for the national side that featured four Championship titles, three of them Grand Slams.

The former Lions scrum-half was forced to step back from the game in the build up to the 2019 World Cup when his betting activity came to light, resulting in an 18-month ban from rugby, half of which was suspended.

Now he has returned to the fold as a 'technical' coach in a role that also sees him involved with the Wales Under-20 side ahead of their Six Nations.

"It feels to me like the time is right and I'm really looking forward to returning to the fold with Wales," Howley said.

"I have a second opportunity to do a job I've dedicated my working life to and I'm grateful to everyone in Welsh rugby for their acceptance and their faith in me, it's faith I intend to repay to the best of my ability.

"I have been through an extremely challenging time in my life. Speaking out and talking about it has enabled me to move forward."

"Rob is one of the most successful and experienced Welsh coaches on the international arena at the moment," Gatland said.

"When we lost Rob from Welsh rugby we lost a hugely significant amount of intellectual property, knowledge of the game in Wales and of the international scene. We are delighted that he will be joining the 2024 coaching team and it's a major coup."



Michael Smith celebrates with the Sid Waddell trophy in January

## Smith aiming to chase greatness

MICHAEL Smith is not ready to stop at winning just one World Championship title and wants to become a multiple champion.

The 33-year-old lifted the Sid Waddell Trophy for the first time in January after a stunning performance against Michael van Gerwen in the final, hitting a nine-dart finish in the greatest leg in the history of the sport.

He begins the defence of his crown on Friday night, playing against either Kevin Doets or Stowe Buntz, and is dreaming of joining Gary Anderson, Adrian Lewis, John Part and Peter Wright on two titles.

"I always wanted to be a world champion, now I have done it the dream is to be a multiple," Smith told the PA news agency.

"I don't want to finish my career with just one star on my chest, I don't know how many I can get, but the minimum is two now. When I get to two the minimum will be three.

"I don't feel the pressure but it is going to be like that. Everyone wants to take it off me and everyone playing wants to be world champion."

## Howe targeting swift UCL return

By Damian Spellman

Press Association Sport

EDDIE Howe has challenged his Newcastle players to book themselves another crack at the Champions League after seeing them slip out of Europe in dramatic fashion.

At one point on Wednesday evening, the Magpies were heading for the last 16 of European football's premier club competition, but they ended it empty-handed after AC Milan came from behind to snatch a 2-1 win at St James' Park.

That booked them a Europa League berth and ended Newcastle's continental involvement for the season, but a disappointed Howe is targeting a swift return.

He said: "I'd love the opportunity to do that again and I think that has to be our focus very quickly. I don't think we can look at anything other than that.

"We want to be there again and



Newcastle lost to AC Milan

we're still close enough in the Premier League to do that and compete.

"All these things happen for a reason, I'm a believer in that.

"The ambition is there, of course. It's there from all of us - but doesn't mean it'll happen. We have to make that happen.

"Any time you don't achieve what you want, you have a setback, you have a disappointment, you have to use it as fuel and that's

very much has always been my way.

"The pain that you feel now is motivation for tomorrow.

"We now have to focus on the Premier League and have to try to make sure we get our form in the Premier League as strong as we can."

The defeat by Milan - the Magpies' third on the trot in all competitions - came courtesy of goals from Christian Pulisic and substitute Samuel Chukwueze after Joelinton had blasted them ahead.

They will resume domestic action against Fulham on Saturday sitting in seventh place in the table, seven points adrift of Manchester City in fourth.

Newcastle have won only once on the road and with their injury problems starting to abate - Callum Wilson, Sean Longstaff and Dan Burn were all involved against the Italians - Howe is calling for a fresh focus, claiming: "I don't want a hangover from this."

## Youngster wowed by debut



MICAH Hamilton admitted he was struggling to take everything in after his dream goal-scoring debut for Manchester City in the Champions League.

The 20-year-old former club ball boy grasped his opportunity as manager Pep Guardiola made wholesale changes for Wednesday's final group stage dead rubber at Red Star Belgrade, and the youngster scored in the first half with a superb strike.

"I don't even know what to say," the academy graduate told the club's website.

"I started just trying to ease into the game and then the moment came and I just took the opportunity.

"I didn't know what to do to celebrate!

"It's not even sunk in yet. I'm just taking it all in. It's amazing."

## Fury called out by AJ



ANTHONY Joshua says British rival Tyson Fury looked like a "flat slob" in his recent fight with former mixed martial arts champion Francis Ngannou.

Fury, who will fight to become undisputed world heavyweight champion early next year, narrowly avoided an upset when he beat the Cameroonian in a split decision in October.

34-year-old, Joshua told TNT Sports Boxing YouTube Channel: "He just looked like a flat slob that just can't fight. He says that bodybuilders can't fight, but he got smacked up by one."



## Sport

## SO CLOSE FOR POPULAR SPORTSWOMAN

### Personal trainer proud with podium place

A personal trainer based in High Wycombe has finished second in a national award.

Hilary Spearing, who runs the Functional Fitness Studio on Cryers Hill, was recognised by the National Fitness Awards where she was nominated in the 'functional training gym of the year' category.

And despite having a huge online following, the PT narrowly lost out to first place at the Leicester-based award ceremony at the end of November.

The PT's business caters to those who are not able-

bodied and primarily helps individuals who are battling degenerative disorders such as Parkinson's Disease, multiple sclerosis and arthritis.

Hilary said: "So proud to be a runner up in my category at the National Fitness Awards and [hopefully I'm] going to win the category next year."

She then added: "Having felt I let myself down on Friday [November 24], as I don't like losing, I was chuffed to receive this message to say I was one of two runners up in my category: 'Hi Hilary, please

don't be disappointed as you were one of the two runners up in what I know was an incredibly strong category and just to be shortlisted is a massive achievement in itself."

"Onwards and upwards and on to next years."

The business was founded in November 2019, and currently helps many people across the South Buckinghamshire area, along with clients in Berkshire.

The overall winner of the Hilary's category was the Scottish gym, Synergy Group Fitness.



Hilary Spearing is based in High Wycombe

## SPORT: ACTION PACKED WEEKEND IN BUCKS

### How did the hockey teams in Marlow do last week?

By David Wiltshire

MARLOW men's 1st team were at home to Haslemere and it turned out to be an exciting end-to-end encounter.

Haslemere caught Marlow on the counter after only three minutes with a fine goal from a very narrow angle.

Marlow knew they were in for a tough game but soon settled down with some fluent hockey which resulted in a goal by Isaac Maddern who took the chance well to complete a passing movement involving several players. Marlow went ahead before halftime after more pressure on the visitor's goal gave Mark Lowden a chance to score from close in.

In the second half, Marlow continued to have most of the play but Haslemere with some fast direct play were turning defence into attack at speed and after Marlow went further ahead through Josh Covus, Haslemere struck twice to level at 3-3.

Marlow continued to play an attacking game and another goal by Josh Covus sealed the win although Marlow had a few more anxious moments in the closing minutes.

It was good that three of Marlow's four goals were scored by the two youngest members of the team in a victory that was hard won but on the run of play was well deserved.

The men's 2nds were also at home to tough opposition in Fareham 2 and the way the match went was very similar.

The first half ended 1-1 with Marlow's goal the result of a penalty stroke taken by Dave Harding, who unfortunately had to go off injured later and missed the second half.

Fareham started the second half strongly and went 3-1 up but Marlow were not downhearted and came back into the game pressing the visitor's defence hard and levelling the score with two opportunist goals by Dan Field and Pat Staal.

When it looked as though the game would end in a draw Fareham sealed

their win with their fourth goal.

Other men's results 3rd team lost 2-1 to Windsor 1, 4s beat Windsor 2 2-1 away, 5s beat South Berkshire 5 11-2, 6s lost 6-1 to Yateley 3, 7s drew 1-1 with Yateley 4 away

#### Women's results

Marlow travelled to Southampton to play Trojans 2 in a top vs bottom of the table match. Marlow played some great passing hockey but the Trojans goalkeeper made numerous saves to deny the visitors until the 25th minute.

Captain Rachel Goodwin led by example and scored a rocket of a strike in open play which eluded the Trojans keeper.

Trojans had their own chances, with Marlow keeper Alys Ramm having to stay alert and make some important decisions when faced with a 1 on 1 to keep a clean sheet.

Marlow improved their accuracy of passing in the second half and Rachel Goodwin scored her second of the day at a short corner.

Rachel Clarke was in the correct position at the back post to score Marlow's third in the 50th minute. Milly Conibear scored her first goal of the season at a penalty corner to make the score 4-0.

The final goal came for Emma Turrell in the final minutes of the game with a calm finish from the back post. Player of the match went to Colette Fitzpatrick for her tireless work in the midfield which led to many of the attacking opportunities Marlow enjoyed.

Marlow remain top of the league having won 10 games from 10 as the league closes for the Christmas break.

They look forward to taking on the Army in the EH Cup next week.



Rachel Goodwin in action for Marlow last weekend

## SPORT: RUGBY

### Moment of history for the Under 9s

YOUTH rugby players from Aylesbury Rugby Football Club will receive sponsored kits for their first year of in playing the contact version of the sport.

The 31 members of the team have progressed from tag rugby to contact rugby, with the children all being part of the Under 9s squad.

The students, who ate all in Year 4, have new personalised rugby shirts to wear for tournaments, fixtures and training, thanks to a £1,000 donation from Vistry Thames Valley.

The housebuilder is building new homes in Aylesbury under its Bovis Homes and Linden Homes brands at Orchard Green in the new Kingsbrook neighbourhood.

Paul Andrews, Youth Chairman at Aylesbury Rugby, said: "Rugby is a very underfunded and non-commercialised sport, and the children's kits have to be durable for all of the rough-and-tumble contact element involved in the game."

"Thanks to Vistry's sponsorship, each Under 9s player will receive a sponsored game shirt personalised with their own name and the club on the back, their initials on the sleeves and the sponsor logos on the front."

"They will be able to wear their shirts with pride at rugby festivals, fixtures with other rugby clubs, and during their twice-weekly training sessions. "The shirts are very durable and stretchy and so will last a good few years until they grow out of them."

"They will then be able to keep them as a great memento from their early years of rugby."

Aylesbury Rugby was established in 1931 and is a family-oriented Rugby Union Football Club based in Weston Turville, a bordering village of Aylesbury, just three miles from the new homes at Orchard Green.

Alix Laflin, marketing manager for Vistry Thames Valley, said: "Providing sponsorship for grassroots sports clubs is one of the ways we can support the local community as our new homes take shape in Aylesbury."

"We are therefore pleased to help the Under 9s at Aylesbury Rugby by funding new kit as the youngsters embark on their first season of contact rugby."

We'd like to wish them the very best for the rest of the season ahead."

Vistry Thames Valley is currently building 138 new homes at Orchard Green.

For more information, visit [lindenhomes.co.uk](http://lindenhomes.co.uk) or [bovishomes.co.uk](http://bovishomes.co.uk).

Find out more about Aylesbury Rugby's Minis and Juniors section on the club website [aylesburyRFC.co.uk](http://aylesburyRFC.co.uk) and on their Instagram [@aylesbury\\_rugby\\_minis\\_juniors](https://www.instagram.com/aylesbury_rugby_minis_juniors).

## WYCOMBE 0-1 S'BURY TOWN

# Manager understands fans' frustration



Wanderers have lost their last four games in the league, which includes five defeats in eight League One matches (PA)

MATT Bloomfield has told the Free Press he 'understands the fans' frustration' following a fourth league loss in a row.

The Chairboys have not been victorious in League One since defeating Fleetwood Town on October 7, in which they have been defeated five times in their last eight fixtures.

And following the 1-0 home defeat to Shrewsbury Town, which was the Shrews' second consecutive league triumph over the Chairboys in as many seasons, many fans were seen leaving for the exit with roughly 10 minutes remaining.

Additionally, the attendance of 3,937 was the lowest for a league match at Adams Park since November 2017.

This was when Wanderers defeated Yeovil Town 2-1 in front of 3,834 spectators.

He said: "I understand that there will be

criticism from the fans and rightly so because of the results.

"I'm in a results-based business so I get that but they are going against us at the moment.

"Barring the Morecambe performance when I told you guys how unhappy I was with it, we've played some very good stuff.

"I understand their frustration due to the run that we're on.

"They pay money to watch us up and down the country to come here on cold winter days, and I've got a close bond with the fans that's lasted 20 years.

"I share their pain and frustration and it's a tough place to be as a manager when you're not winning games.

"If I saw players throwing in the towel or being inept, I would be telling you [the press], that it wouldn't be right."

## AP'S COLUMN

# Win needed at Derby

With only one win from their last 10 games in League One, the last thing Wycombe need right now is a trip to Derby County, the biggest club in the division, on Saturday, December 16.

Wanderers form has fallen off the edge of a cliff and with some fans demanding a change of manager, Matt Bloomfield will feel the pressure ahead of the visit to Pride Park where Derby have lost just two of their nine league games this season.

This is only the fifth meeting between clubs who have been at opposite ends of the football pyramid for most of their history.

Derby were founder members of the Football League in 1888 and have spent most of the time in the top two divisions, while Wanderers joined the professional ranks only 30 years ago.

In the early 1970s, when Derby twice became English champions and reached a European Cup semi-final, Wycombe were still a non-league outfit.

Recently, the Rams have enjoyed two spells in the Premier League, but they suffered a decline in fortunes after losing their place in the top flight in 2008, winning only one game in the entire season.

They have since suffered major financial problems leading to the club going into administration and were relegated to League One two seasons ago.

They played Wycombe for the first time in November 2020 after Wanderers had won promotion to the Championship for the first time in their history.

The game ended in a 1-1 draw with Bloomfield scoring a late equaliser, his last goal as a Wycombe player before joining the coaching staff.

In the return fixture at Adams Park, Wanderers were unlucky to lose to a stoppage-time goal after having a strike by Daryl Horgan incorrectly ruled out for offside.

Last season, the Chairboys lost 2-1 at Pride Park despite taking the lead through Anis Mehmeti but won the home game 3-2 thanks to goals by Sam Vokes and two by Lewis Wing.

The Chairboys desperately need the boost in confidence a good result at Derby would bring ahead of the festive programme, but another defeat would only deepen the crisis.

## WYCOMBE WANDERERS 0-1 SHREWSBURY TOWN

# Perry bags a peach as woes for the Chairboys continue

WYCOMBE Wanderers made it eight league games without a win as they were defeated 1-0 at home to Shrewsbury Town.

Matt Bloomfield's side started the better and nearly took the lead on 21 minutes when Luke Leahy saw his free-kick get tipped over the bar by Marko Marosi, before David Wheeler fired wide six minutes later.

For large parts of the

contest, Wycombe bossed the ball but lacked any creativity, whilst the Shrews sat back and led Wanderers to enjoy possession.

This passive play allowed the visitors to sit back as they took the lead five minutes before the break through an incredible goal by Taylor Perry.

The ex-Cheltenham Town man picked up the ball from smashed home a terrific drive beyond Max

Stryjek for his third goal of the season.

It was your typical smash-and-grab strike.

During the second period, Wycombe made several changes as Lyle Taylor, Garath McCleary, Chris Forini and Sam Vokes all came on, but Marosi in the Shrewsbury goal kept Wanderers at bay.

The defeat means Wanderers are now winless in the league in eight - their third worst run since 2020.

During that year [despite promotion to the Championship], Wycombe failed to win their first eight league games of the 2020/21 season, but after securing two back-to-back wins, they would not gain three points for another 11 matches.

This run happened between November and December 2020.

Up next for Wycombe is an away trip to Derby County on December 16.



Taylor Perry (left) scored Shrewsbury's winner against Wycombe on December 9 (PA)

### SQUAD SELECTION IN DEFEAT

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Max Stryjek                    | 11. Harry Boyes (Sam Vokes 68)       |
| 2. Jack Grimmer                   |                                      |
| 16. Richard Keogh                 | 22. Killian Phillips                 |
| 3. Joe Jacobson (Chris Forino 87) | 7. David Wheeler (Lyle Taylor 55)    |
| 23. Kiran Sadlier                 | 20. Dale Taylor (Garath McCleary 55) |
| 4. Josh Scowen                    |                                      |
| 10. Luke Leahy                    | Formation: 3-4-1-2                   |

# Matt Bloomfield is one of football's 'good guys'

SHREWSBURY Town manager Matthew Taylor has described Wycombe boss Matt Bloomfield as a 'brilliant and good person', following their 1-0 win over Wanderers on Saturday.

The Shropshire-based team secured only their third-ever win at Adams Park in their history, with it being their second consecutive win at the Hillbottom Road venue in as many seasons.

Additionally, the result means Wycombe have now lost their last four

games in the league, whilst also being defeated five times in eight matches in League One.

And since their last domestic triumph, which came against Fleetwood Town on October 7, the club have picked up four wins from their last 13, with each victory coming in cup competitions.

Taylor said: "He is one of football's good guys.

"Being a football manager is difficult but Matt is an exceptional coach away

from that and this is where we'll see him come into his own, is that he is a brilliant and good person.

"You can see that the players are giving everything for him and this will turn positively for him.

"I wish him all the luck in the world.

"He's a mate of mine as I speak to him quite a bit and we spoke quite regularly before he got this job.

"While we're competitors against each other for 90 minutes, I know that if I had an issue with anything, Matt

would pick up the phone."

On how Shrewsbury kept Wanderers at bay, he added: "Look when you come here and you frustrate an opposition team, who I believe is really good, and you make them change shape after 60 minutes you are doing something right," the Town boss continued.

"But if you look at that as performance out of possession, our players were exceptional, I don't remember Marko (Marosi) having to make an outstanding save to keep us in the game."



# SPORT

0963-2336



## Remaining upbeat despite fourth league loss in a row



Wanderers have not won in the league since October (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield believes his players 'gave him everything' despite their 1-0 home defeat against Shrewsbury Town.

A Taylor Perry strike from 25-yards just before half-time gave the Shrews only their third-ever victory at Adams Park, with it being their second in the league.

The loss also means that the Chairboys' winless league run has been stretched to eight games – their worst run since 2020 when they failed to pick up a victory in nine, then 11.

Wanderers had the better chances

as they accumulated 16 shots on goal with five being on target, compared to Shrewsbury's five attempts, with their goal being the club's only shot on target.

Bloomfield said: "We cut through Shrewsbury but their one shot on target proved to be more than our five.

"They didn't get in our box at all, as their goal came from outside the box from 25yards.

"We also played most of the game in their half and that's what going against us at the moment.

"We need to be better in the

opposition box as we need to find that killer instinct, but today, we had crosses and shots.

"We had 36 crosses as we had players like Lyle Taylor and Sam Vokes on, we had several shots but they were blocked or cleared off the line...the game is not based on exact science but moments, and we're asking the players to attack and dominate the attacking half.

"We also want the boys to use the wide areas and have freedom as 36 crosses tell you that.

"We had an XG of 1.77 whilst they

had 0.27, but the game is down to fine moments and at the moment, they are going against us."

When asked if he was 'desperate' for a win, he answered: "Desperate is the wrong word if I'm honest as it sends out the wrong message.

"That word would insinuate that you're not sure how things are going, but we're keen and want one.

"The lads gave me everything and I can't question their application...it's just finding that final touch.

Up next for Wanderers is a trip to Derby County on December 16.

## Happy Hanlan pens contract extension

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed striker Brandon Hanlan has penned a new contract with the club.

The 26-year-old, who joined the Chairboys in the summer of 2021, is expected to miss the remainder of the current season due to suffering an ACL injury in the club's 1-0 home defeat to Stevenage in November.

The forward's previous deal was due to run out in the summer of 2024, but he will remain at Adams Park beyond this current season.

He had been linked with a move away from Wycombe back in August, as it was suggested League Two Wrexham were close to securing his services, but no transfer materialised.

Speaking on his extension, Hanlan said: "I'm buzzing about it.

"There's nothing worse than being injured for a long period of time than being out of contract.

"Hopefully this is something to look forward to and I can't wait to be back out playing at Adams Park.

"As a football, you always want to know where your future is, especially when you're injured, so being here is great for me."

Manager Matt Bloomfield added: "We think the world of Brandon and we're determined to make sure he comes back stronger than ever before.

"It's well documented that we turned down interest in him in the summer and he was just hitting top form when this injury was inflicted on him.

"He remains a key part of our plans going forward and this new contract gives security both to him and to the club so that we

By James Richings

can work towards him getting back to fitness and leading the attack again for us next season.

"I'd like to thank Rob and Pete for their backing of both me and Brandon in getting this deal finalised and we're excited to see him back in the light and dark blue quarters again as soon as possible."

So whilst Hanlan will remain on the sidelines for a lengthy period, Bloomfield has confirmed that several players could be back for some of the festive fixtures this month.

The Chairboys have been hit with an extensive injury list which has seen more than 10 names sit in the treatment room. But Bloomfield has given updates on some faces who have been missing for a little while.

He said: "Jason McCarthy did a running session on Saturday at Adams Park as the training ground was too wet for him.

"The good thing with Jason was that his injury wasn't muscle-related, it was a bone that needed to be removed from his foot.

"That's all been done and he's slowly getting back.

"Kane Vincent-Young is also nearly back, and this is a huge boost for us as we think very highly of him.

"Freddie Potts is also getting closer too.

"The boys have worked so hard.

"They are an honest bunch and I question their work ethic and their application."

The Chairboys travel to Derby County this Saturday.



Brandon Hanlan will remain at Wycombe beyond the end of this season despite his ACL injury (PA)

## Preparing for the trip to Pride Park on Saturday

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield believes his side's trip to Derby County will be a 'tough test' this Saturday, but he is confident of the Chairboys' 'threats' that could cause an upset at Pride Park.

The Adams Park side are currently without a league victory in eight which includes an existing run of four defeats on the bounce.

During that period, Wanderers have plummeted to third bottom of the form table with two points gained from the last 18 available, in which they have scored just once in their previous five league outings.

This is a complete contrast to the Rams' current form, as Paul Warne's side have secured six league wins from their last seven games, in which they have kept five clean sheets.

The ex-Premier League side have also never lost at home to Wycombe in two previous encounters.

Speaking ahead of their trip to the Midlands on Saturday, Bloomfield said: "We're going to be up against a team that have got a lot of attacking threat with lots of pace.

"They've got some fantastic players who have had brilliant careers like Nathinal Mendez-Laing, James Collins, Craig Forsyth, Conor Hourihane and many others.

"We are up against a team with a lot of know-how, so we know we need to be tactically ready for them, but we have got threats of our own that we want to use.

"We need to show our threats as we know it'll be a tough test.

"They're in really good form, they're a huge football club so we know it'll be a tough afternoon.

"We accept the challenges we're up against as Paul [Warne] has got a well drilled team but we want to show ourselves in a good light.

"We've done that against Charlton, Peterborough, Portsmouth and Oxford, all away from home, where we have been close to get results.

"We're looking forward to the afternoon but we need to turn the performances into results.