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SPORT

Four star show for Wanderers



It was a good day for WWWU18

WYCOMBE Wanderers Women Under 18s smashed Tilehurst Panthers 4-0 on October 10.

Wanderers started strongly as Naomi Tilley hit her free-kick just over the bar in the first few moments of the first-half. The Chairgirls continued to be on the front foot and in the 39th minute, they went 1-0 up through Amelia Gilbert.

The lead was doubled two minutes later, as Ruby Paish gave it to Jorja Louise Bray who produced a lovely cross into the box for Gomes who got her goal.

The pendulum swung in the second period as Tilehurst had more of the ball, and due to an injury to Wanderers' keeper, Gomes played some part of the second period between the sticks.

The away side peppered the goalscorer with shots but she was on hand to keep them at bay, with the visitors also missing a penalty.

This gave Wycombe the chance to seal the win, as Molly Carter got Wanderers' third and Ruby Paish got the fourth.

McCleary on his good form

WYCOMBE winger Garath McCleary has revealed he has enjoyed playing in his new role as a number 10.

The 34-year-old, who joined from Reading last season, played as a second striker in the latter parts of the previous campaign, accompanying Uche Ikpéazu in the Wanderers attack.

And with Wycombe second in the table with McCleary playing a huge part in that recent success, he aims his fine form of five goals in 10 games will continue.

Speaking after the Gillingham win, he said: "I'm working hard in the gym and the gaffer has been brilliant so long may it continue.

"Playing in a 10 is a new system to me, even though I played there last year. It's good to get another 90 minutes and hopefully I can get to Bayo's age and keep playing."

Wycombe on a roll as wins continue

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers are in the top two of League One after they defeated Gillingham 2-0 at Adams Park.

Gareth Ainsworth's men were quick out of the traps as Garath McCleary tested Jamie Cumming inside the first 20 seconds, but his bending effort from 20-yards was easily saved by the visiting keeper.

Moments later, Gillingham registered their first effort of the game when Kyle Dempsey forced David Stockdale into a save, before Steve Evans' men caved under some brilliant Wanderers play.

With 90 seconds on the clock, McCleary smashed in his fifth goal of the season to give the home side the lead.

He managed to elude two defenders before getting the ball out of his feet, where he then unleashed a fierce drive that flew past Cumming to put Wanderers one up.

It's his fifth goal in 10 league matches this season, meaning he has already beaten his tally of last year, where he got four goals.

It was an electrifying start, and it only got better for Wycombe in the opening stages of the first-half.

After Jordan Obita fired wide moments later, Wanderers got their second through a player that Gillingham fans will know a lot about.

Brandon Hanlan, who spent two seasons with the Gills between 2018 and 2020, made it 2-0 after seven minutes.

McCleary was at the heart of the goal, as he managed to get around two defenders and laid it off to Curtis Thompson.

The midfielder gave himself a couple of touches before having a shot from just outside of the box that took a huge deflection.

The ball ricocheted into Hanlan's path who slotted it past Cumming and inside 10 minutes, Wanderers were cruising.

It's his third of the season and his first in the league for his new club.

That's also two goals in two games for the former Bristol Rovers man.

Wycombe continued to dominate as McCleary again tried his luck, before the



Wycombe boss Gareth Ainsworth was pleased with the way his side played as they defeated Gillingham 2-0 at Adams Park (PA)

away side were given a lifeline as they were awarded a penalty on 26 minutes.

Josh Scowen was penalised for fouling Kyle Dempsey in the area, and up-stepped Vadaine Oliver, but he smashed his spot-kick over.

Despite this chance being squandered, Gillingham continued to attack as Stockdale did brilliantly to deny Danny Lloyd on two occasions, before he clawed out

Alex MacDonald's low drive moments before half-time.

The second-half started with Gillingham having more of the ball but Wycombe having the chances.

Jacobson saw his free-kick go over from 25-yards about 10 minutes into the second period, before Sam Vokes and Thompson both forced Cumming into two brilliant saves.

The first was from a header by Vokes which Cumming tipped over the bar, before Thompson tried his luck from range, but the goalkeeper again was there to deny Wanderers going further ahead near the hour mark.

Hanlan could have wrapped up the win by getting a second against his former side, but his effort from 15-yards was deflected onto the post.



Wycombe have won their last seven league games at Adams Park

Making Adams Park a fortress for opponents

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth hopes to make Adams Park into a 'fortress', after Wanderers defeated Gillingham 2-0 in south Bucks.

Goals from Garath McCleary and Brandon Hanlan inside the first seven minutes sealed all three points for the Chairboys, after the Gills missed a penalty and failed to really test David Stockdale in the Wycombe goal.

The victory means Wycombe have now won their last seven

home league games, which includes the first five of this season.

Speaking after the victory, Ainsworth said: "We really feel that we have got this home advantage at times.

"We use this place as a fortress and of course, teams get beat at home but you look at the top teams with these records of not being beaten at home for two or three years like your Liverpools, Man Citys, Man

Uniteds and I think that is key to success in a team.

"Being at home is so important to these boys as they feel, especially this season, they can achieve at home, and we to make Adams Park a difficult place to go to.

"I would back us against anyone at home and I am looking forward to the next few games."

Up next for Wanderers at AP is Crewe on October 23.

Naz Bajwa remembered

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has praised the family of the late Naz Bajwa following Wanderers' 2-0 win over Gillingham.

Mr Bajwa, who was a lifelong Chairboys supporter, passed away on Sunday, October 3, 2021, after falling ill when watching his sons play football.

His death came just one day after Wanderers defeated Morecambe 4-3 in an extraordinary game at Adams Park.

He was remembered with a minute's applause at half-time in the 2-0 victory against the side from Kent on October 9, with £23,000 being raised to support his family through a JustGiving page.

And speaking after the win over Gillingham on Saturday, Ainsworth

said: "My thoughts are, win, lose or draw, it's insignificant compared to what that family is going through.

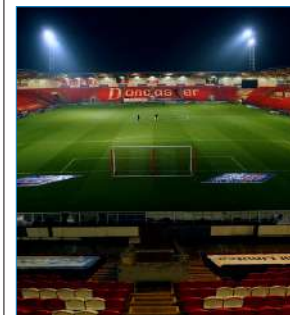
"I was so pleased to be able to go up to [Naz's family] and give them a scarf that was close to him.

"They've got more strength than I have ever got, and the strength they are showing is amazing right now with the loss of a dad and a husband.

"There are two strong boys there and I am hoping they can take solace from that, as their dad would have loved that today."

If you would like to donate to help Mr Bajwa's family during this difficult time, you can any amount of money by visiting www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/fornaz.

Fan's view: Looking at Doncaster Rovers away



The Keepmoat Stadium (PA)

WYCOMBE fan Jamie Cameron looks ahead to this week's match.

Wanderers are back on the road this weekend as they make the trip to South Yorkshire to take on struggling Doncaster Rovers.

After home wins on back-to-back Saturdays, this game marks the start of a testing couple of weeks for Wycombe, with the team also facing a midweek journey to high-flying Rotherham and a longer trip still to Fleetwood at the end of the month.

Rovers may be bottom of the league, but have played two games fewer than some of the sides close to them and are undoubtedly a club in transition.

James Coppinger; the Matt Bloomfield of Doncaster if you like, ended his playing days at the conclusion of last season and this campaign's team haven't been able to live up to his outstanding influential and technical qualities.

Following previous manager Darren Moore's move to Sheffield Wednesday, Richie Wellens was selected as his long-term successor in the summer.

The 41-year-old gave Swindon Town their best season for a number of years in 2019-20 when he guided them to the League Two title, and looked a shrewd appointment despite a short spell at Salford City.

However, Wellens perhaps wasn't given the resources he needed at the Keepmoat Stadium to build a competitive League One squad.

Experience midfielder Tommy Rowe returned to the club in the summer, and Ben Close also looked a solid signing.

Despite that, there's still not enough EFL knowhow there and 'Donny' are having to rely on inexperienced players taking their first foray into senior football.

Attacking-minded loanees Tiago Cukur and Rodrigo Vilca have struggled to adapt to the English game, and that's come at a bad time with two proven goalscorers currently out of the side.

Fejiri Okenabirhie has been injured all season, and Omar Bogle is out of favour and is believed to be training away from the first team.

Doncaster have still won their last two home league games, keeping great attacking teams Morecambe and MK Dons at bay, but those are their only two three-point hauls in League One so far. Their troubles going forward have been clear to see, netting only six times. No other team has scored fewer than nine.



There was a round of applause for Naz at half-time in the win over Gillingham on October 9 (PA)

Ainsworth humble after Wanderers' win



Gareth Ainsworth was speaking after Wycombe's 2-0 win over Gillingham on Saturday, October 9 (PA)

GARETH Ainsworth still believes that he is a 'novice' in the managerial game and has thanked his previous and current chairmen for support.

The 48-year-old has been in charge of Wycombe since the 2012/13 season and has managed the Chairboys 472 times in that time, winning 184 of those fixtures.

He also took charge of 11 games at QPR in the 2008/09 campaign across two spells.

However, he still says he has a lot to learn, and speaking after his side defeated Gillingham 2-0 at Adams Park, he believes more is yet to come.

He said: "I can't thank every chairman for the time they have given me enough, because to create this culture and to create this experience is something I am still learning.

"I have still not cracked anything as I am still a novice at this and I will keep learning and now, as our expectation levels have risen, that is something else to manage but I firmly believe that we are capable of achieving due to the talent that we have got.

"However, we can never ever lose what we had at Torquay that day and all through all those years since then to now, because if we lose any of that foundation, we'll be kicking ourselves as that is what build teams.

"And I am happy with the boys as they deserve it."

On his side's start, which saw

By James Richings

them score twice inside seven minutes through Garath McCleary and Brandon Hanlan, he added: "I asked for an intense start and sometimes it can be difficult.

"You can easily sit back on your laurels when we were decent, but it's my job to keep inspiring the players with these fast starts.

"We did it against Charlton the other week and Lincoln, and today was similar to that and that is what I wanted.

"I think it's important to tell the lads what they're good at than what they are bad at sometimes.

"We're structured and organised and I am proud of the start as well as the finish."

It was Wycombe's first win over Gillingham in nine seasons, as the Chairboys move up to second in the League One table.

The victory was Wycombe's seventh consecutive home league win which is their best run as a Football League side, since their promotion in 1993, eclipsing the run of six straight wins in 1993/94, 2018/19 and 2019/20, with the latter being the campaign in which Wanderers were promoted to the Championship.

Up next for the Chairboys is an away trip at bottom-of-the-table Doncaster Rovers on Saturday, October 17.

SPORT



Garath is loving life again at Wanderers



Nick Freeman (PA)

New deal for Nick Freeman

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that midfielder Nick Freeman has signed a contract extension with the club.

The 25-year-old, who has played over 100 league games for the club since joining from Hemel Hempstead Town in the summer of 2016, has agreed a new deal until 2023.

He spent the second part of last season on loan at Leyton Orient in League Two, where he played 15 times – 10 of those as starts.

Freeman then came back into the Wycombe frame this summer and played the Chairboys' first four games of the season against Accrington Stanley, Exeter City, Cheltenham Town and Lincoln City respectively.

However, he suffered a 'long-term cruciate ligament' injury in the victory over the Imps, and is expected to miss a large chunk of the season.

Speaking on the new deal, manager Gareth Ainsworth said: "Nick has come a long way with this club, from League 2 to playing in the Championship, and he's been a big part of our journey over the past five years.

"He's suffered a nasty injury and we wanted Nick to know that he remains an important part of Wycombe Wanderers, and there's light at the end of the tunnel of his rehab programme, knowing that he has the security of another year on his contract to come back and get back to the top of his game.

"Nick will keep working hard with our medical team to come back fitter and stronger than ever before and we look forward to seeing him back on the pitch when the time is right.

"That might not be this season, but we're a tight-knit club that looks after each other, and we're proud to support him in this way."

Chairman Rob Couhig added: "Nick is our kind of Wanderer.

"He trained hard, played hard, and has a bright future ahead of him.

"It was incredibly frustrating for the team when he was injured.

"It was doubly so for him. However, the way he has handled himself and his approach to recovery has been inspiring, not just to his teammates but to all of us. We want Nick to be back playing soon.

"More importantly, we want him to know we expect him to be a valuable player for us next year."

Overall, he has played 130 times for Wycombe and has scored seven goals.



Garath McCleary has scored five goals so far this season which includes two braces against Accrington Stanley and Charlton Athletic (PA)

By James Richings

GARATH McCleary is rolling back the years this season.

The 34-year-old has already bagged five goals in 10 league matches this season, eclipsing his total of four during the last campaign.

His arrival at Wycombe last autumn saw him finally end a turbulent last two seasons at Reading, leaving Berkshire under a cloud.

Despite 270 appearances for the Royals, which included 31 in the Premier League in the 2012/13 season, McCleary, along with several other first team players, were ordered to train away from the club when

Jose Gomes was in charge of the club.

But after the Portuguese manager was fired in the autumn of 2019, he was brought back in from the cold by new boss Mark Bowen.

He ended up playing 24 times in his final year as a Royal, but opted to seek a new challenge following his release from the club - and in came Wycombe Wanderers.

After a somewhat inconsistent beginning, which saw him start once in his first five games as a Chairboy, he has now established himself as a starter in Gareth Ainsworth's plans, while proving his critics wrong with brilliant displays - most notably against Accrington

Stanley, Lincoln City, Charlton Athletic and Gillingham this season.

Speaking to the press after the win over the side from Kent on October 9, he said: "I am feeling very good.

"I am enjoying it.

"I'm enjoying my football now more than any stage of my career, 100 per cent.

"The love I have felt here from fans, the gaffer, the players has been brilliant second to none I've experienced.

"When you're happy, you play your best football.

"I'm not the sort of person who wanted to go to somewhere for the last hurrah.

"I always want to push myself to the limit and give as best as

performance as I can."

On his latter years at Reading, he said: "I'm not going to lie, with Reading, at the end, it was very hard.

"I fell out of love with the game, I was considering packing it in.

"I was literally training by myself running around a park last year.

"I am thankful the gaffer brought me here, I didn't have much in terms of offers and that surprised me.

"But coming here, it has just been brilliant.

"I saw their togetherness and it completely change the decision."

McCleary has also played 24 times for the Jamaican national team between 2013 and 2016, scoring three times.