

Bucks Free Press

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PAGE 4



Marina blaze drama

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PAGE 15

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PAGE 14

Homeless Londoners are sent to live in Wycombe

Page 7

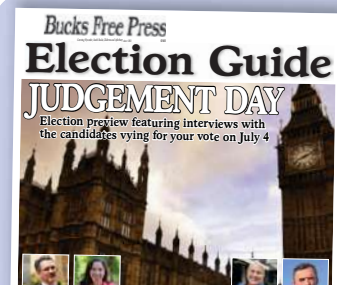
A LONDON borough is sending dozens of homeless families to live in Wycombe, it can be revealed.

Brent Council placed 69 households in temporary accommodation in the town and its wider area over 12

By Charlie Smith

months, as well as five in Wendover. Labour-led Brent Council claimed it was 'forced' to settle homeless families in Bucks due to London's eye-watering accommodation costs.

Figures reveal council has moved 69 households into temporary accommodation



Your election guide - inside

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Sport

SPORT: FOOTBALL

Chesham fan favourite hangs up his boots

FORMER Chesham United cult hero Kieran Murphy has announced his retirement from professional football.

The ex-General, who spent six seasons at The Meadow, played in 205 matches for the club where he scored 11 goals.

During his time in South Buckinghamshire, he has helped the Claret and Blues achieve promotion to the third tier of the Non League pyramid.

In an open letter to the club's fans which is able

to read via the Chesham United website, he said: "Thank you to all the players and rest of the management team who have put up with me – you've helped me retire a happy man.

"A huge thank you to my family.

"The best parents anyone could dream of.

"Over the years, there have been as many words of wisdom and support as there have been miles travelled around the country. Thank you!

To my brothers who

were always ready with a jibe or two to keep my feet on the floor but have been a bigger support than they would ever realise.

Thank you to my wife who has always been the one that has picked me up after a bad performance or a bad result and has sacrificed a lot for me to be able to keep playing for so long.

"Seeing you and Joanie jumping up and down behind the goal after the second one at Harrow is a special memory."



Murphy played over 200 times for Chesham (Chesham United)

FOOTBALL

All change at Chesham for upcoming season

HERE is what Chesham United's chairman, Peter Brown, has got to say in his weekly update.

The break from football has been short this year with the start of Euro 2024 tonight, unfortunately as a proud Welshman there will be no Wales to cheer on this summer, but plenty of good football to look forward to over the coming weeks I am sure.

Those of you that have watched England matches in The Chess Suite during past tournaments will know what a superb atmosphere there is, and I am delighted to say that Tanya will again be opening the doors for the three England group games, starting this Sunday for the match v Serbia. Doors open at 6.30pm (8.00pm kick-off) with the bar open throughout the game and you are welcome to bring your own food along – or order a takeaway to be delivered to the club. The club will be open again on Thursday, from 4.00pm, with the match v Denmark, with the same arrangements for food. If you are looking for a family friendly venue to watch the games, The Chess Suite is the place to be.

A reminder that the season ticket Early Bird offer ends at midnight Sunday, with the price going up by equivalent to 3 games (£45 for adults) if you miss this deal. I have been delighted by the response with us having already surpassed last season's season ticket numbers, including almost a third so far that are new season ticket holders. Details are on the website, be sure to order yours by the end of this weekend to get the best deal. If you feel unable to pay out for a season ticket in one lump sum, let us know at press@cheshamunited.co.uk and we can see what is possible. We want everyone to be able to watch their local football team next season.

Work continues to progress around the ground, with our ground-grading expected in late July or early August. A huge thank you to our team of volunteers who have been spending their Monday mornings carrying out important maintenance, refurbishment and repair jobs, I am just sorry the weather has been so wet and miserable for you. On the plus side, the wet weather has saved the club hundreds of pounds by not having to water the pitch!

We will soon be starting the line and fence painting around the ground, and we are in the process of extending the size of the away dressing room to meet the standards required for National League South. Once this is completed we will be looking to arrange a 'concrete party' to prepare the groundwork for an additional turnstile entrance and emergency exit that we will be installing. If you can be a part of this, please get in touch and we can discuss timings and availability.

Gibbs selected for the Paris Olympic Games

MARLOW rower Rory Gibbs is hoping to turn Tokyo pain into Paris gain at his second Olympic Games.

Gibbs will race in the men's eight as part of a 42-strong rowing squad who have been selected, across ten boats, to represent Team GB.

The 30-year-old was part of the four that missed out on the podium at Tokyo 2020 after a high-profile steering error in the final few metres of the final.

"There was a lot of disappointment in Tokyo from wanting more and that was a painful process to overcome," said Sholto Carnegie, another member of the Tokyo four now in the eight for Paris.

"Tokyo is definitely going to help me savour the moment even more and leave no stone unturned.

"It taught me a lot and shaped me a lot to get back to the spot I'm at now, but this is a new boat and a new project. I'm using it for experience but not living in the past."

Gibbs will benefit from Aldi's Nearest & Dearest programme in Paris, which helps maximise support and minimise potential distractions for athletes so that they can focus on their performance and make the most of the unique opportunity to compete on one of the world's largest stages.

Gibbs will be joined in the men's eight by Jacob Dawson, Sholto Carnegie, Morgan Bolding, Charlie Elwes, Tom Digby, James Rudkin, Tom Ford and coxswain Harry Brightmore.

The eight have swept all before them in this Olympiad, winning two world and three European titles to be installed as favourites to reach the top step of the podium in the French capital.

It's a run that Dawson, part of

By Tom Harle

the crew that won bronze at Tokyo 2020, puts down to openness.

"Maybe in other environments, it would be described as finger-pointing," said Dawson. "But we criticise each other heavily just because we want the best out of each other and the best for each other. Off the water, we're so close and just such great friends.

"It's only professional - it never gets personal. It's just about doing the job better."

Of the 23 women and 19 men in Team GB's rowing squad, 50% are making their Olympic debut and 50% are returning Olympians, including two-time Olympic gold medallist Helen Glover.

"The Olympic experience in this squad is huge, and I have no doubt it will be an asset to those rowers who will make their Olympic debut in Paris this summer," said Team GB Chef de Mission Mark England.

"Our rowers have posted some outstanding results this season and I am sure the crews will relish the opportunity to showcase their talent in front of their friends, family, and Team GB fans."

Glover, who will be part of the women's four, is aiming to become the first British mum-of-three to win an Olympic medal.

Glover said: "A huge reason for aiming for Paris was thinking how great it will be to have my family there to watch and support me and being able to share all of this with them is so special."

Aldi are proud Official Partners of Team GB & ParalympicsGB, supporting all athletes through to Paris 2024



Rory Gibbs is off to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games

Couhig felt 'uncomfortable being Wanderers' chairman'

ROB Couhig has revealed he felt 'a little uncomfortable' being Wycombe Wanderers' chairman as he was 'getting involved in another project.'

The 75-year-old had spent five seasons as the club's owner before selling his 90 per cent share to the Georgian billionaire, Mikhail Lomtadze, in May of this year.

Despite the takeover, he remained on the Wanderers board in a new role as chairman, but left Adams Park roughly one month later.

He has since revealed the reasoning for his departure in an exclusive chat with the Bucks Free Press, as he addressed rumours that he might become the new owner of Wycombe's Thames Valley and League One neighbours, Reading.

The Royals are currently up for sale following the disastrous stewardship of Dai Yongge, who has crippled the club's finances.

When asked about his exit from Wanderers, along with his activity since then Couhig told the Free Press: "It's been very interesting.

"I said I would help Mikhail with the transition.

"I stayed for the whole of May but I was getting involved in another project.

"We spoke about it and I admitted to feeling a little uncomfortable.

"I love Wycombe and I will help Wycombe no matter what, but I thought



Couhig spoke to the Free Press on June 17 about all things Wycombe and Reading. Picture: PA

our formal relationship should end, so we pulled the trigger a few weeks ago."

When asked about the sudden nature of his departure, he explained: "I haven't been back to Burgers Café for breakfast in Marlow for about six weeks, so I miss all of that.

"But the truth is that Mikhail could not have been better [buyer for Wycombe] as he was every-

thing that I wanted to do, and why I wanted to do it.

"I'm a very active guy and I like to push things, so I thought the time had come for others to step forward and as long as I was there, it would have been difficult for them."

The New Orleans native also thanked all the Wycombe fans for their support during the last five years, and has revealed he 'misses' being in the area.

He concluded: "I have a

tab open for all the thank you notes that I have got to send.

"My nephew, Pete, wrote such a fantastic goodbye letter that was gold standard.

"From the first time I met Trevor Stroud, who brought me into the club, and Mark Palmer, all the guys on the board, the trust, and my God I've had my disagreements with them from time to time, but it's been with

the common goal of trying to make Wycombe better.

"The fans, and the keyboard warriors who would sometimes get my goat, we were all part of it and we got there eventually.

"I miss that community as we spent a lot of time in Marlow but time moves on, and I believe this is the single best thing I could do for the club."

OLYMPICS Wish come true for rugby star

HIGH Wycombe rugby star Lauren Torley's birthday wishes have finally come true after being selected for Paris 2024.

The 24-year-old has been named as part of Team GB's 12-strong sevens squad for this summer's Olympics, one of eight debutants in the team.

Torley is ready to make her own Olympic memories after being inspired by London 2012.

"London 2012 was huge for me because we went to watch the race walking and gymnastics," she said.

"I had never watched them before and it's ridiculous the things those sports can do.

"The atmosphere was so incredible, and I was so inspired and ever since then, any birthday wish I've had had been me asking to go, no matter the sport.

"The unity the Olympics brings form every walk of life is so unique.

"It's difficult to even think that I'm going to one until I get there and cross the line.

"You're dreaming about this one thing for such a long time, when it happens, it's quite hard to comprehend."

Torley didn't grow up playing rugby but instead found the sport later in life through the format of touch rugby.

Just wanting to get involved in sport and have fun, she soon found that she had incredible skill on the pitch and quickly rose to success, making her GB debut in 2022.

"I came into rugby really late actually," she said.

"I played netball and hockey growing but then went on a gap year and when I came back and went to uni, I decided that those sports were too much of a commitment.

"So, I took up touch rugby and loved it. From there I grew into the contact game and haven't looked back since."

Rugby sevens will see just its third Olympic outing at Paris after making its debut at Rio 2016.

Team GB have been part of all three showings, with the women's team set to begin their campaign in Paris on 28 July.

The pools are yet to be determined, with preliminaries to be played over the first two days before the competition heats up to a golden battle on the 30 July.

Team GB finished a heartbreaking fourth place at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020, losing 21-12 to Fiji in the bronze medal match last time out.

Head coach Ciaran Beattie said: "We want to be competitive in Paris and approach each match as one that can be won, with the ultimate aim of medalling, at the same time being respectful of the huge quality of other teams."

To secure Paris 2024 qualification the GB men's rugby sevens team need to win this weekend's Olympic repechage tournament in Monaco.

SPORT: FOOTBALL

The Pole in the goal moves back home

EX-WYCOMBE Wanderers keeper Max Stryjek has found himself a new club.

The 27-year-old has joined Jagiellonia Bialystok in his native Poland on a free transfer.

His move back to his home country ends his 10-year spell in the UK, where he was on the books at Sunderland, Boston United, Accrington Stanley, Eastleigh, Livingston, the Chairboys, and most recently, Crewe Alexandra.

In all, he played 82 times for the Chairboys keeping 26 clean sheets.

He joins the current Polish champions on a two-year deal with an option to extend his contract by a further season.

Speaking on his Buckinghamshire exit, he said last month: "I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude to the club and everyone involved for the past two years that I have spent playing for Wycombe Wanderers."

"It has been an incredible experience and one that I will always cherish.

"I understand and respect the decision not to extend my contract, due to the club's financial constraints and my own ambition to play in a higher league.

"I want to thank you for the opportunities you have given me and for the support and guidance I have received during my time at the club.

"I will always look back on my time at Wycombe Wanderers with fond memories and I am grateful for the friendships and relationships I have formed along the way.

"I wish the club all the best in the future and hope for continued success on and off the pitch.

"Thank you again for everything and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to have represented Wycombe Wanderers."



Max Stryjek joined Wycombe in 2022 (PA)

Sport

SPORT: WYCOMBE WANDERERS

Fan favourite Chris Forino says farewell

CENTRE back Chris Forino has left Wycombe Wanderers to join League One rivals, Bolton.

The Saint Lucian international, who joined the Chairboys when the club were a Championship side in April 2021, was out of contract at Adams Park this summer and rejected a new deal to remain in South Buckinghamshire.

In all, the 24-year-old played 90 times for Wanderers, in which he scored eight times.

He joins the Trotters, who lost the League One play-off final to Wycombe's Thames Valley rivals, Oxford United last month, on a free transfer.

Speaking on his departure, he said: "Wycombe have given me everything that I've wanted up until this point.

"Whatever I go on to do for the rest of my footballing journey, I'm forever grateful and be forever indebted to that football club.

That's from the way

they nurtured me into professional football and the way they took care of me as a person.

"Then, they developed me as a footballer and allowed me to make my professional debut."

His Wanderers contract will come to an end on June 30, and will officially be a Bolton player on July 1.

It is believed that the deal Forino has signed is for three years.



Chris Forino spent three years at Wycombe (PA)

THE CHAIRBOYS

Wycombe confirm pre season tie at Swindon

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed their second friendly of their pre-season campaign, taking on Swindon Town on Saturday, August 3.

Matt Bloomfield's side travel to the County Ground just a week before kicking off their 2024/25 League One campaign, which begins on August 10.

Supporters are able to attend this fixture, with ticket details still to be announced.

Only one other fixture has been announced to date, with Watford visiting Adams Park on July 30.

The club's first friendly of the summer will be against Aylesbury United on Friday, June 28.

The Chairboys have regularly faced the Ducks in previous seasons, with the fixture this month taking place at the home of Beaconsfield Town, Holloways Park.

Wycombe Wanderers Women have also confirmed eight pre-season friendlies ahead of the Southern Region Women's Football League Premier Division season getting underway.

Playing their home matches at Burnham's 1878 Stadium, all home fixtures are open to supporters.

July 7: Epsom & Ewell - A
July 14: Stevenage - A
July 21: Haywards Heath - A
July 28: Farnham Town - H
August 4: Chesham Utd - A
August 11: Dorking W - A
August 18: Beaconsfield Town - H
August 25: Kidderminster Harriers - H

Meanwhile, the league have confirmed that the Premier League will consist of 11 teams for the forthcoming season:

AFC Portchester
Ascot United
Badshot Lea
Long Crendon
Oxford City
Selsey
Sholing
Warminster Town
Winchester Citty Flyers
Woodley United
Wycombe Wanderers

To read more about the latest Wycombe Wanderers news, go to www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport. You can also follow the Free Press Chairboys correspondent, James Richings on X (formerly known as Twitter) by looking up @James_BFP.

He will be speaking to EFL guru Gabriel Sutton on June 25 about all things Wanderers ahead of the League One fixture release day, and what lies in store for the Chairboys.

You can watch the podcast via X.

Also, if you would like your sports story in next week's edition, send in your reports to our Send Us Your News section on our website.

SPORT: WYCOMBE AND READING

Could Rob Couhig move from Bucks to Berkshire?

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers chairman Rob Couhig has spoken publicly for the first time following speculation that he could purchase Reading FC.

Speaking exclusively to the Bucks Free Press and the Reading Chronicle, the 75-year-old American, who owned the Chairboys for five years, was coy when asked about his future endeavours following his exit at Adams Park earlier this month.

Rumours in recent weeks have suggested that the lawyer is currently 'leading the way' to buy out Dai Yongge's share of the Royals, but there is no news of when an official takeover will take place, if it even happens.

Couhig officially sold his 90 per cent stake of Wanderers in May to the Kazakhstani-based Georgian billionaire, Mikheil Lomtadze, almost 12 months after he announced the club up for sale.

He moved from owner to chairman, but left his post after one month in the role.

Speaking on the speculation, he said: "We're looking at helping some people with possible acquisitions in the UK.

"I'm looking at a variety of options but I'm back at the law firm [in New Orleans].

"I've learned a lot about football because when I first started, I didn't know much about it at all, as I don't compare my knowledge to anyone else.

"But I have an idea of the budgets that go into it, so we're consulting with a few people, and I think there are some opportunities which will come around and if they do, we can fit ourselves in."

If the American were to become the new owner of Reading, he would be reintroduced to the Royals fans who he briefly encountered via social media back in March.

This was after Wycombe put forward a formal enquiry to purchase Reading's state-of-the-art Bearwood Training Ground for a fraction of the price the Berkshire-based team had paid it

Exclusive By James Richings

for, days after the Chairboys had beaten the Royals at the Select Car Leasing Stadium.

Many accused Wanderers, and Couhig, of asset-stripping the financially-stricken club, a notion the club denied, which led to a peaceful protest taking place outside Adams Park.

The deal never went through, with Wanderers eventually acquiring the services of Chelsea's former training ground, Harlington.

Couhig continued: "One can make the mistake of taking what some people say and doing as speaking for all of the community.

"Some people see things differently, and therefore they respond differently.

"I think those who were particularly aggrieved [about Bearwood] didn't have a clue about what was going on, so they read a rumour which made them feel good to parade by Adams Park.

"One guy on vacation went through the trouble of posting something up outside my law office, but the joke was on him as I hadn't been there for about a month and I'm on the 36th floor - I doubt I would have ever seen it!

"Look, around 90 per cent of the Reading fans know that the club is in real trouble.

"How it saves itself is yet to be determined, but I think outsiders looking at it, making suppositions about what are the sellable assets and what is not, and what attracts a buyer, are speculating unless they put down their own money.

"It couldn't have escaped anyone's notice that there's a parade of people trying to buy the club.

"I suspect if I did get involved there, there would be a big discussion where we can talk and yell at each other like we did at Wycombe occasionally, and move on.



Couhig spoke to us about the Reading links which have been lingering for several weeks (PA)

SPORT: WYCOMBE WANDERERS

What inspired the Chairboys to get their development squad?

THE former Wycombe Wanderers owner Rob Couhig has revealed what inspired him to help launch the club's development squad.

The American, who once owned 90 per cent of the club, decided to set up the 'B Team' at the Adams Park side during 2020 following their promotion to the Championship.

Many players have since joined through the system, with notable graduates being Anis Mehmeti, Ali Al-Hamadi and Chris Forino – three names who have since gone onto pastures news.

Mehmeti now plays for Bristol City in the Championship, Al-Hamadi is with Premier League Ipswich Town, whilst Forino has moved to Bolton Wanderers, who are one of the favourites to get promoted out of League One.

In addition to that, the trio have also been called up to their respective nations in Albania, Iraq and Saint Lucia.

Speaking exclusively to the Bucks Free Press, Couhig said: "He said: 'In honest truth, [the development squad] that was more Pete than me."

"People always say, 'oh, but your uncle and nephew' but we have a good business relationship.

"He understood the economics of English football far better than I did when I first started.

"He was the guy pounding on the table saying we need a development squad.

"We talk about pivotal moments, I re-

By James Richings

*james.richings@
newsquest.co.uk*

member going onto the training pitch and Gaz [Gareth Ainsworth] and Dave [Wates, a sports scientist], were out there joining in with the first-team as they didn't have the numbers to practise against.

"So if you don't have enough numbers to practise with, you're not going to practise well.

"And Pete rightly said that instead of practising against 45-year-old old timers, have them practise against 18/19-year-olds who can also learn their trade and be sold.

"It persuaded me."

The introduction of the squad was a masterstroke by the Couhigs, but the 75-year-old American admitted that it wasn't all plain sailing during his five years at Adams Park.

A global pandemic significantly impacted the Chairboys' year in the Championship, as the club missed out on matchday revenue due to lockdown restrictions.

But the lawyer admitted to remaining positive throughout the ordeal.

He continued: "I'm a very positive guy and everyday you need to be positive, even when you get your teeth kicked in.

"We had some ups and downs, most notably when we bought the club for

the pandemic to start a few weeks later.

"But I'm a largely optimistic yet realistic guy, so you always plan for the worst but you also need to plan for the best.

"We were also blessed as when we joined, Gareth Ainsworth was there who is just so positive.

"We only had seven players when we arrived [in the summer of 2019], but he is a natural optimist.

"We got to meet some fantastic people in our squad like Darius [Charles] and Anthony [Stewart], who were the backbone of this club getting promoted.

"Matt Bloomfield, who I believe will become a superb manager in English football as he grows, all share a common characteristic and that's they are never afraid.

"I remember the first game I watched us play as the owner was away at Doncaster.

"We lost 3-1 on February 29, 2020), and when we walked off, I was with Bayo [Adebayo Akinfenwa] and he was apologising saying that we [the players] needed to be better.

"But I said to him, 'I'm not concerned, we're going to be in the play-offs and everything is there for us to advance.

"That's a memory to remember."

Wycombe would eventually secure a play-off place and defeat Oxford United in the 2020 League One play-off final.



Rob Couhig owned Wycombe for five seasons which saw the club reach three Wembley finals between 2019 and 2024 (PA)

Fans go the distance for Wycombe

By James Earnshaw

RESEARCH has found that Wycombe Wanderers fans travelled 4,162km this season – the 56th most in the country.

The research – conducted by Bonuscodebet.co.uk – examined the total distances travelled by supporters of all 92 teams in the English football pyramid during the 2023/24 season, with Tottenham Hotspur covering the least ground at 2,858km – the only club below the 3,000km mark.

The 92 sides travelled a combined total of 467,074km this season – the equivalent of more than 11,000 marathons.

Plymouth Argyle and Carlisle United fans journeyed a colossal 8,189km and 7,618km respectively this season, despite not leaving the UK – more than Arsenal, whose Champions League away days included trips to the Netherlands, France, Spain, Por-

tugal, and Germany.

England's top flight ranked highest of all four divisions for total distance travelled (128,770km), followed by the Championship (121,669km), League One (109,816km), and lastly League Two (106,819km).

Derby County (3,222km), Northampton Town (3,332km) and Burton Albion (3,446km) are the only League One clubs to travel under 3,500km.

Many Chairboys fans put in several long journeys during the previous season, with treks to Exeter City, Barnsley and Wigan Athletic all being on a weekday.

Annoyingly for those who attended, each of these three fixtures in 1-0 defeats for Wanderers.

Another long trek was Carlisle United away in April.

It took place on the penultimate weekend of the season (Wycombe would later play Cambridge United three days later in their final away game of 2023/24), where they won 3-1 at Brundon Park.



Wycombe were rated 56th in miles travelled last season. Credit: PA

SPORT

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Bucks not having the best of times as they lose again



It's been a tough start for Bucks this summer (Pixabay)

BUCKS men's poor form in white ball cricket this season continued when they crashed to a 124-run defeat to Cornwall in their National Counties Trophy Group 3 match at Redruth on Sunday.

The third successive loss confirmed that Bucks will not play in the knock-out stages of the 50-overs competition and are likely to finish bottom of their group.

Once against the batting failed badly, despite Bucks bringing in

Aadi Sharma for Michael Payne in an attempt to strengthen that department.

Cornwall, choosing to bat first, were indebted to an unbeaten 91 not out from Will MacVicar as they reached 245-9 from their 50 overs. Ed Bragg, with 3-55, was the leading wicket-taker, while Max Uttley and Cam Parsons bowled tidily.

This was a gettable target, but apart from Billy Mead's 33 from 51 balls, the Bucks batting completely collapsed.

They were 89-9 before a last-wicket stand of 32 between Parsons and Uttley took them to 121 all out in just 31.5 overs.

MacVicar followed up his fine innings with 3-29, while Ben Ellis (3-20) and Ellis White Ford (4-48) were Cornwall's other wicket-takers.

The result leaves Bucks with just pride to play for in their final group game against Berkshire at Chesham this Sunday.

The Bucks team to face

Berkshire in their final National Counties Trophy group game at Chesham on Sunday is:

T Hampton (Wokingham) capt, A Woodland (High Wycombe), C Hemp (High Wycombe), G Harvey (Eastcote), A Kerzee (Halesowen), R Richardson (Henley), E Bragg (Halesowen), H Ramadanpulle (Great Brickhill), C Haddow (High Wycombe), C Parsons (High Wycombe), M Uttley (High Wycombe), T Wymes (Tring Park).

What happened when Ainsworth left Wycombe

Exclusive By James Richings

EX-WYCOMBE Wanderers owner Rob Couhig has revealed he described Queens Park Rangers as a 'screwed up organisation' in the discussions that led to Gareth Ainsworth's exit at Adams Park.

In an exclusive chat with the Bucks Free Press and the Reading Chronicle, the 75-year-old American, who spent five years with the Chairboys, recounts the day he received a call from the West London side in February 2023.

It was a formal enquiry to see if Ainsworth, who had spent nearly 14 years in South Buckinghamshire as player and manager, would move to Loftus Road as head coach following the sacking of Neil Critchley.

The deal eventually took place, with the 51-year-old lasting only eight months in the role before he was fired in October of that year.

Before his move back to the capital, Ainsworth had enjoyed seven successful seasons with QPR as a player, before having two spells as caretaker manager during the 2008/09 campaign.

Been told that Gareth Ainsworth from Wycombe to QPR is a 'done deal.'

Of course, things could change, but my source has said it's 'pretty much complete.'

Speaking on the 48 hours that saw Ainsworth leave the club, Couhig told the Free Press: "Gareth was sought after and we discussed each of those [approaches]."

"To his credit, he only wanted to leave for a club that meant something to him. "So when the call came in from QPR and I took it, I told Gaz that 'this is the one you've been waiting for'."

"I never said that he should go, but I believe you need to help your employees on their personal journey as it all comes back."

He was like 'I don't know, we've got something going' and he was right, but on the other hand, when does this opportunity come up again?"

"I called the CEO and one of the own-

ers at QPR and said 'he's as good as you can get but I don't think this is a great chance for him, as you're a screwed up organisation', and they'll tell you that I was brutal with them."

"But if he wanted to go, then I would help him pack and that's what we did."

The departure of Ainsworth came three days after the Chairboys had beaten Bolton Wanderers 1-0 at Adams Park – the first time the club had achieved five consecutive league wins in the third tier.

But the lure of returning to a side that he enjoyed great success at as a player was too good of an opportunity to turn down.

This allowed former club captain, Matt Bloomfield, who was at Colchester United, to return to Adams Park as manager.

Couhig explained: "My main job was to know who my next guy was and a few months before that, I had told Matt Bloomfield [who was now a coach] that he should apply for the Colchester United job."

"He said 'why? Am I not doing a great job?' And I said you're doing a great job, 'but you're never going to be the manager here if you stay here'."

He then went to Gaz [Ainsworth] and said 'I don't think Rob likes me' but Gaz said 'no, he's trying to help you.'

"I gave the guys at Colchester a ring and said 'I think we have one of the best young managers in the making' and they hired him."

"He won a manager of the month award and saved them from relegation, so when Gaz left, I called Robbie [Cowling, Colchester's manager director] and said, 'remember when I said this guy was good? Well, I need him back'."

"The guys at Colchester were good about it as they knew Matt was special [to the club]."

"Pete and I spoke every year about what we would do if the manager left."



Rob Couhig (left) and Gareth Ainsworth (right) worked together for four years at Wycombe Wanderers (PA)

Looking back at the good times at HP12

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers owner Rob Couhig has revealed what his favourite moments were when in charge of the club.

The American, who was the proprietor of the Chairboys for five seasons, helped the south Bucks team gain financial stability after several years of uncertainty. His stewardship steered the Adams Park side into its most successful period in their history, with three Wembley appearances, and a promotion to the Championship.

But away from defeating Oxford United in the play-off final in 2020, to holding on against Milton Keynes in 2022, to beating former Premier League sides such as Portsmouth, Ipswich Town, Derby County, Reading and Sunderland, the 75-year-old told the Free Press that his best moments were in fact away from the matchday action.

He exclusively said: "My favourite day of the season would be the last game of the season at Adams Park because all the players would take their kids out on the pitch."

"The fans would also mix with the players and when you see it in action, it gave me a feeling of pride."

"Other great memories include when we got voted into the play-offs with over 90 per cent of the vote in 2020, and when we put the new scoreboard in and changed all the electronics."

"It's not always about going out and spending a lot of money on a left-winger; it's about the money you have to build a better institution, so that you have enough money, to bring in the winger."

"We did that, and I believe we became one of the most attractive teams in League One."

"The hardest thing I had to deal with was having my ambition heading into the people who didn't believe it was justified, and try and persuade them that it was OK to aim high."

"Little setbacks never bothered me so if you have your eye on that gold star, it'll be OK."

"And I'm proud of that as I believe the club are in great shape."