

# Bucks Free Press

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Covering Wycombe, South Bucks, Chilterns and Aylesbury since 1856

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## Home closure heartbreak

Outcry after residents moved far away

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## On our way to Wembley

## 'Shocking' parking loss at hospital



Bucks NHS £100m repairs backlog: PAGE 2

# Murder bid charge after woman hurt

## Victim taken to hospital in 'critical state'

A MAN has been charged with attempted murder after a woman was attacked at the weekend.

Thames Valley Police were called to Melbourne Road in High Wycombe at around 1.20am on Sunday, following reports of an assault.

A woman, in her 40s, suffered serious injuries and was taken to hospital in a critical condition and remained there as we went to press.

Officers swarmed the area and a police cordon was in place for the

By Eleanor Burleigh

remainder of the weekend, with forensic teams on site.

A nearby resident told the Free Press they had been woken up by the flashing police beacons in the early hours of Sunday.

They said: "The police were going door-to-door, but they didn't say much, so hearing it was an attempted murder investigation is very worrying."

"I've got grandchildren who visit quite often, but [now] you have to think about whether it's safe for them here."

"I live and work in the town so to hear that this has happened is very scary. I was shocked."

Detective Inspector Tracey Smyth described the attack as a "serious incident" that was being "investigated thoroughly".

Full story: Page 6



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## Sport

## Rugby

## Beaconsfield play fantastic v Milton Keynes

BEACONSFIELD RFC welcomed back key forwards Braiden Brougham, Harry Berryman and Bobby Head, and moved the ever-exciting Joe Thomas from 15 to fly-half, as they travelled to Milton Keynes and looked to make it 18 wins out of 18 in the league.

Playing against the wind, outstanding defence around the ruck and in the centres repelled the home side's early attacks. But a mistake in the backs, followed by the wrong call at the lineout, gave MK an early 7-0 lead.

Mature patience combined with pace and venom from the breakdown, saw the dazzling Joe Thomas make a trade-mark clean break. With a quick transfer to Tyson Evans-Peters, the strapping winger finished in his customary style. Young flanker Thomas Rendell was then unfortunately forced to depart with a head injury, Callum Saganowski stepping seamlessly up to ably replace him.

A quick tap from the human eel Alex Springer at 9 saw some superb

interplay, seemingly inevitably resulting in talismanic skipper Henry Revill, the prince of centres, going over from 30 metres.

Powerful carries from Braiden Brougham and Tom Field in particular were now paying dividends, as Beaconsfield went up a gear. The backs were incisive in the wide channels, and winger Sam Mark added the bonus point try after a Tyson penalty had extended the lead. With Bobby Head and Harry Berryman now dominating the air, the backs were given a perfect



Skipper and centre Henry Revill

## CHESHAM UNITED

## Another 3 points on the road for The Generals

By Andrew Westlake

IT was another important weekend for both of Chesham United's senior teams with CUFC looking to extend their lead at the top of the table and the Women facing a game against the team below them in the table in the FA Women's National League Division 1 SE.

Saturday's Southern League Premier Division South's tie saw The Generals name the same 16 players as last week. There were two changes to the starting eleven with Lewis Rolfe and Ricardo German coming in and Roddy Collins and Ogo Obi dropping to the bench. The first half was scrappy with little flowing football. Chesham barely mustered an effort on goal, although on the half-hour Ricardo German was clean through but was flagged offside. 0-0 at half-time.

After the interval Chesham began to put some moves together, and on 54 minutes scored the game's only goal. A throw from Lewis Rolfe on the right was hurriedly cleared, Bradley Clayton's shot beat keeper Ryan Gosney but the ball came back off the post and Jordan Edwards netted from the rebound.

Second half chances for Ricardo German, Ogo Obi and Eoin Casey were all cleared and although there was good pressure for Chesham there was no finished product. Late in the game Sholing had one chance to equalise but Byron Mason's shot cleared the bar. Chesham finished the game on top with late chances for Ogo Obi and Bradley Clayton and the game ended 0-1 with Chesham



DB Photography

taking all three points.

With Salisbury only managing a draw Chesham now have a 9-point lead at the top of the table with a game in hand over 2nd place.

On Sunday Chesham United FC Women were due to host AFC Sudbury at The Meadow but due to heavy overnight rain the game was reversed and Chesham made the 2 hour trip to Suffolk. The

game ebbed and flowed with both sides creating great chances and scoring some equally good goals. AFC Sudbury opened the scoring on 9', but Chesham's Danielle Puddefoot levelled in the 26th minute. Sudbury then scored 3 minutes later to take a narrow lead into the break. In the second half 2 quick goals from Gemma Fraser (64' and 72') got Chesham back on top (2-3) but Sudbury

managed to grab an equaliser on 77' and while both teams had chances to win it the tie ended 3-3 and a point a piece.

Next up Chesham United FC welcome Poole Town to The Meadow (3pm on Saturday 24th) and Chesham United FC Women travel to Ashford Town (2pm Sunday 25th).

## VOLLEYBALL

## Disability sports team sponsorship



Team picture

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S own dynamic force in the world of sitting volleyball, the Sitting Bucks Volleyball Club, is celebrating a new partnership with Guidant Global, powered by Impellam Group, having dominated in last week's events where the team won four out of four matches.

Sitting volleyball, an adaptation of the traditional game, sees competitors engaging in electrifying matches while seated on the floor. Despite the unique format, the sport embodies the same spirit of teamwork, skill, and determination found in its standing counterpart. Originating as a rehabilitation exercise for injured soldiers, sitting volleyball has evolved into a fiercely competitive discipline, gaining recognition on the global stage, including inclusion in the Paralympic Games.

Founded in 2018, Sitting Bucks Volleyball Club has rapidly ascended the ranks of the national sitting volleyball scene.

Through dedication and perseverance, the club has achieved remarkable success, culminating in back-to-back national titles in 2022 and 2023.

Led by club chairman and team captain Mike Knight and founder Steve Smith, Sitting Bucks embodies the values of camaraderie, sportsmanship, and resilience.

Steve Smith is also the club manager and a volleyball referee who has officiated the standing game for 15 years and sitting volleyball for around 10 years.

Steve Smith said: "Our goal at Sitting Bucks is not just to achieve fantastic results in our domestic league but to contribute meaningfully to the growth of the sport in the UK."

"Our new partnership with Guidant Global is an exciting milestone and provides us with a platform to drive awareness and bring the sport to a much wider audience. Guidant is a recognised leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workforce solutions space and I cannot think of a better fit for us and the sport!"

## NO WINNER AT ADAM'S PARK

# A point shared in the Thames Valley derby



The result means Wycombe are unbeaten in their last seven against Oxford United (PA)

A strong performance from goalkeeper Jamie Cumming helped Oxford consolidate their position in the League One play-off places as they earned a 0-0 draw at Wycombe.

The U's are now three points clear of seventh-placed Stevenage in the table, although they rode their luck at times against a Chairboys side who missed out on a third league win in four matches.

Wycombe had the game's first big chance after 12 minutes when Beryly Lubala's ball over the top put Dale Taylor through but his shot was repelled by the foot of Cumming.

Just before the half-hour, the U's stopper pushed out Kieran Sadlier's cross before recovering quickly in keeping out another effort from

Taylor.

The chances kept coming for the Chairboys and they should have been ahead in first-half stoppage time when Lubala somehow steered Sadlier's ball across the six-yard box wide.

Oxford finally improved in the closing stages and came close to snatching a winner when captain Cameron Brannagan had a shot pushed around the post by Wycombe keeper Max Stryjek.

The result means Oxford stay in the play-offs whilst Wanderers remain in midtable.

It also means Wycombe are now unbeaten in their last seven against their Thames Valley rivals, with their last loss coming in December 2019.

## FOOTBALL

### Alan Parry's previews

AFTER three successive games against teams in the top six of League One, Wycombe face another side chasing promotion when they make the short trip to Stevenage on Saturday, February 24.

The four points gained by the Chairboys in matches against Peterborough United, Bolton Wanderers and Oxford United has put some daylight between themselves and the teams in the relegation battle, but they could have had even more.

Wanderers were lethal in front of goal in the 5-2 demolition of Peterborough, but a plethora of missed chances against Bolton and Oxford meant they took only one point from games they could easily have won.

However, the improvement is there for all to see, and Wanderers looked the equal of three of the best teams in the division, something that was unimaginable just a few weeks ago.

The gap between the Chairboys and the relegation places is still narrow, but their current form suggests they are on course for a mid-table finish.

The next challenge is a visit to Stevenage who have done remarkably well in their first season in League One for ten years. They have been in and around the play-off places for most of the campaign and beat Wycombe 1-0 at Adams Park last November.

It was a feisty clash that saw two Wycombe players taken to hospital and some ill-chosen words by Stevenage manager Steve Evans after the game.

He accused Wanderers of trying to get the match abandoned after Luke Leahy suffered a serious concussion, a charge Wanderers boss Matt Bloomfield vehemently denied.

Earlier in the game, Brandon Hanlan was stretched off with a season-ending knee injury after a tackle the referee remarkably saw as a foul by the Wycombe player. Cool heads and a strong match official will be needed when the teams meet again on Saturday.

Stevenage dropped out of the top six following defeats in three of their last six matches, but their home form is formidable. They have lost only three times in fifteen league games at the Lamex Stadium where Wycombe expect to have a large following for what promises to be another eventful afternoon.

## SHARING THE SPOILS: WYCOMBE 0-0 OXFORD

# Positive display against the M40 neighbours at home

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Bloomfield said: "We created more than enough chances to win the game, I believe, and it's slightly disappointing not to come away with more than what we've got.

"But at the same time, I think I have to be pleased with the resilience because if you're not going to score make sure that you don't concede. "Oxford had a couple of chances where we've made real big blocks, the back four were really brave in how they defended.

"I spoke before the game to the boys about this being one for our supporters.

"It's something I was disappointed to not get all three points [from] earlier in the season and we really wanted to do that for our supporters."



The draw meant Wycombe are now unbeaten in seven against Oxford

### THE LINE UP VERSUS THE U'S

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>1. Stryjek</b>    | <b>20. Taylor</b>      |
| <b>2. Grimmer</b>    | <b>23. Sadlier</b>     |
| <b>6. Tafazolli</b>  | <b>30. Lubala</b>      |
| <b>17. Low</b>       | <b>SUBS USED:</b>      |
| <b>44. V-Young</b>   | <b>W'ler, Butcher,</b> |
| <b>4. Scowen</b>     | <b>Leahy,</b>          |
| <b>19. Potts</b>     | <b>Campbell,</b>       |
| <b>12. McClearly</b> | <b>Kone</b>            |

## Bradford boss 'couldn't see Wycombe scoring'

BRADFORD City boss Graham Alexander has admitted he 'didn't see Wycombe scoring' in his side's 1-0 EFL Trophy semi-final loss at Valley Parade.

The Bantams dominated for large periods of the contest but suffered a last-minute strike from Matt Butcher to send the Chairboys to Wembley for the third time in five seasons.

It was cruel on the ex-Premier League team, who registered 10

more shots on goal than Wanderers.

In fact, Wycombe's goal in the 91st minute was only their second attempt on target in the entire fixture.

Their first was midway through the opening half.

Alexander said: "It's a cruel sport sometimes and there's nothing crueler than conceding a last-minute winner when you've been so on top in a cup semi-final.

"It was a devastating blow for us. "We certainly deserve better than what we got but that's sometimes how football goes.

"There were a couple of others where I felt we could have been a bit more clinical. But that would be picking little bits out of a performance that was absolutely top-notch.

"I didn't see them scoring.

"I didn't think they had any pressure around our goal.

"But you've got to give the Wycombe defenders and goalkeeper a lot of credit because they made a couple of really good blocks and some fantastic saves."

"I was really proud of the players and I'm devastated for them."

Wycombe also defeated Bradford at Valley Parade in the FA Cup back in November, but by a 2-1 scoreline.

Killian Phillips, who departed in January, scored Wanderers' opener.

# SPORT

0963-2336



## Butcher breaks Bradford's hearts with winning strike



Matt Butcher scored the winner in the final minute (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers midfielder Matt Butcher has thanked the fans who 'arrived in numbers' as his winner against Bradford City sent the Chairboys into the EFL Trophy final.

The former Plymouth Argyle man came on as a second-half substitute for Josh Scowen in the cup tie at Valley Parade on February 21, when he tucked away his first strike for the club in the 91st minute of the contest.

His goal, which was very much against the run of play, has booked Wanderers' place in the Wembley showpiece which will be against

Peterborough United on April 7. It will be Wycombe's first-ever appearance in the final in their history.

Butcher, who joined the Adams Park side last month said: "I couldn't have picked a better moment to score my first goal for the club, as sending us to Wembley is a massive achievement for all of us.

"The final will be a massive opportunity for all of us to get together, as it'll be a day out at one of, if not, the best place to play football in England.

"The celebrations will make our journey home a lot quicker."

Despite the victory, Bradford were the better team on the night and would have felt aggrieved to have not taken the lead.

They dominated possession, registered 19 shots compared to Wanderers' nine, and had more touches in the opposition box.

But Wycombe were clinical on the night, as Butcher's strike in front of the travelling 286 Chairboys fans sent them into raptures.

He added: "Bradford had a lot of

chances but we defended well as Max made some brilliant saves so when that happens, you're going to have a chance and I was able to take that.

"We got the job done.

"To get your first goal for your new club is always a great feeling, but in a semi-final is brilliant, and we want to keep our momentum going after several good results in the league.

"Hopefully that'll help with Peterborough in the final too."

The goal came in his fifth appearance for Wycombe.

# Wycombe to wander down Wembley Way

By James Richings

A 90th minute from Matt Butcher has sent Wycombe Wanderers into their first-ever EFL Trophy final after they defeated Bradford City 1-0 at Valley Parade.

The new signing from Plymouth Argyle smashed home a Richard Kone assist in the first minute of stoppage time, in a match where the Chairboys were second best.

It was his first goal since moving to Adams Park from Devon last month, in a match in which Wycombe were second best.

There were worries that the match wouldn't go ahead as images of the Valley Parade pitch showed it was in an awful state.

Members of the Bradford groundskeeping team were spotted laying down new grass roughly an hour and a half before kick-off, with the Wanderers players also testing the surface.

Incredibly, it passed an inspection and the game went ahead.

And seconds into the contest, the hosts nearly took the lead Tyler Smith's low shot was easily saved by Max Stryjek.

Moments later, the Bantams went close again but Clarke Odour fired wide, before he unleashed a fierce drive at goal that went just over the bar.

For Wycombe, attack was the best form of defence as it nullified any Bradford attack, and on 16 minutes, Wanderers nearly took the lead but Sam Vokes' header was easily caught by Col-in Doyle.

The Chairboys looked good despite the pitch being incredibly boggy, as Garath McCleary, Dale Taylor and Freddie Potts produced some slick moves and passing but to no avail.

In front, large parts of the

opening half saw Bradford have the ball but rarely go into the Wanderers final third.

The second half was more eventful, but not for Wanderers.

The hosts bossed possession and nearly took the lead on several occasions, but the heroics of Stryjek in the Wycombe goal kept Bradford at bay.

The Pole was on hand to deny Odour and Calum Kavanagh, whilst Kevin McDonald and substitute Liam Ridelagh went inches wide.

The Bantams were battered the boys from Bucks but Matt Bloomfield's boys were holding on as Wanderers rarely threatened.

In the final 15 minutes, Bradford started to throw the kitchen sink to book their place at Wembley, but again, Stryjek was on hand to deny Kavanagh on both occasions.

Jack Grimmer also produced a fantastic latch-ditch tackle on Smith a certain one-on-one situation.

For the Chairboys, Kane Vincent-Young and Richard Kone came on to add a bit more pace into the Wanderers attack, and it nearly paid off.

The two worked well as the ball found McCleary, but his header was saved by Doyle in the Bradford goal.

But in the final moments of the contest, Kone found Butcher on the run, and the latter fired home past Doyle to send Wanderers to Wembley for the third time in five years.

They'll play Peterborough United in the final on April 7.



Wycombe Wanderers have never played in the EFL Trophy final (PA)

## Life's a pitch but Wanderers still progress

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has revealed 'there was no doubt' about playing the EFL Trophy semi-final against Bradford City despite a last-minute pitch inspection.

Images taken by the Free Press showed the Valley Parade grass being incredibly cut up, with groundsmen and women producing their best efforts to make the surface playable around 90 minutes ahead of kick-off.

Heavy rain had badly impacted large parts of the North West, which included several locations in West and South Yorkshire.

Despite this, the game went ahead and even though Wycombe rode their luck, a last-minute Matt Butcher, his first for the club, secured Wanderers a 1-0 victory.

They'll now play Peterborough United in the Wembley showpiece on April 7.

He said "I got a call from the referee telling me that the game was in doubt because of the pitch, but I felt as the leader, there was no doubt we wanted to play.

"I didn't want to give any of my players doubts, so I told them we were ready to play but in the back of my mind, I knew there would be challenges with the pitch.

"At Adams Park, we have one of the best pitches in the league, but here, we knew gritty and messy but we got through it, even though we didn't perform to the level that I know we can be at.

"On the flip side, we showed some brilliant resilience, Max made some great saves and we got through it.

"A few of the lads have told me that they didn't play to the best of what they can do usually, but I believe in this group."

He also praised the Bantams with their performance, and described manager Graham Alexander as a 'brilliant man.'

The West Yorkshire side dominated large parts of the contest, amassing nearly 20 shots on goal of which nine were on target – that was the total of Wanderers attempts for the night.

On the Bantams, he added: "Graham Alexander is a brilliant man and I thought Bradford were fantastic.

"They were better as they played to their strengths and we rode our luck."