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## SPORT

## Making a name for himself



Anis Mehmeti (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has heaped praise onto Anis Mehmeti after his performance against Charlton Athletic.

The 21-year-old scored his third goal in six league games against the Addicks to put the Chairboys 1-0 up inside 12 minutes.

However, not even 60 seconds later, the South London side equalized through Jesurun Rak-Sakyi, who is on loan from Crystal Palace.

Speaking on his showing in front of Wycombe's biggest crowd of the season so far, Ainsworth said: "Anis is going to be playing plenty of football here and he's a fantastic talent."

"It was a great finish, and we are working with him every day in training."

"I'm really proud that we have created another fantastic player at this level, and we can watch and listen to other clubs being interested in him."

"But at this moment, he is a Wycombe player and I am pleased with that."

Since joining Wanderers in 2020, Mehmeti has played 75 times and has scored 13 goals for the club.

## Dominating display at Adams Park

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has reflected on his side's 1-1 draw against Charlton Athletic at Adams Park.

He said: "This was a great advert for League One football."

"We gave it away just one too many times in the final third, they then broke on us, we won it back, then we would do the same."

"That was the story of the game and they really didn't trouble Max [Stryjek] at all, but they are a good side and Ben [Garner] has got a style that they are sticking to, so fair play to them."

"The boys did try as we were brilliant, and I am sure Charlton were thinking what hit them during the opening period."

"We dominated the first-half and that is where we should have won the game."

## Two goals scored in less than a minute

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers' stuttering start to the season continued as they drew 1-1 at home against Charlton Athletic.

In what was a pulsating opening 45 minutes, the away side nearly took the lead on 12 minutes through Jesurun Rak-Sakyi, but the on-loan Crystal Palace player could only fire his shot from 10-yards into the side-netting.

From the resulting goal kick, the ball managed to find its way to Garath McCleary who fired in a brilliant low cross, and there was Anis Mehmeti to smash home past Joe Wollacott from 10 yards.

It's his third of the league season in what was his sixth match of the campaign.

However, the lead lasted for no longer than 60 seconds as the Addicks equalised through Rak-Sakyi's second of the season.

Charlie Kirk did brilliantly to fire in a teasing ball from the right-hand side which evaded everyone in the box wearing red and blue, apart from the tricky winger.

All the 19-year-old needed was one touch before launching it past Max Stryjek, who was making his home debut.

A blistering start at Adams Park.

Despite conceding so soon after taking the lead, Wanderers had the wind in their sales and were peppering Wollacott with shots.

First, he denied Lewis Wing and McCleary in quick succession, before Mehmeti, Joe Jacobson and Josh Scowen all tried their luck but to no avail.

Charlton didn't offer much when entering the final third but you could see that they were a threat going forward as both



Anis Mehmeti scored his third goal in six matches this season to give Wycombe the lead, before Jesurun Rak-Sakyi equalised less than a minute later. It was the latter's second of the campaign (PA)

teams went into the break all square.

The second period saw the intensity drop quite considerably with the only main chance of the half falling to the Chairboys, but Mehmeti's half-volley was brilliantly tipped over by Wollacott.

The result means Wycombe are now 12th in the table.

Their next league game is away at Fleetwood Town on September 3.

**Wycombe Wanderers' starting XI**

Stryjek, Grimmer, Jacobson (McCarthy), Forino, Mawson, Gape (Horgan), Wheeler (Freeman), Scowen, Wing, Mehmeti (Al-Hamadi), and McCleary.

Unused subs: Dickinson, Tafazolli and Pattenden.

**Charlton Athletics' starting XI**

Wollacott, O'Connell, Inniss (Lavelle), Dobson, Morgan (Payne), Kirk (Leaburn), Rak-Sakyi, Fraser, Clare, Stockley and Clayden.

Unsued subs: MacGillivray, Ness, Jaiyesimi and Henry



Gareth Ainsworth was feeling positive after the draw against Charlton (PA)

## Bittersweet feeling for Wycombe's boss

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has admitted that his side have 'got to take their chances' following their 1-1 home draw against Charlton Athletic.

Wanderers dominated the opening period and could have easily been out of sight, but due to the heroic defending from the Addicks backline, on top of some brilliant saves from Joe Wollacott, the game ended all square.

In all, the Chairboys had 20 attempts at goal with eight being on target. They also had eight corners and

caused several issues for the Athletic backline, but they could not find that decisive winner in front of 6,139 spectators, which is the highest crowd at Adams Park so far this season.

Speaking on the draw, Ainsworth said: "There were many positives to take going into the next game but I just wanted to put it to bed in the first-half today."

"That would have been nice as we dominated them."

"It was very much even during the second but you were always going to

get that.

"Charlton are a huge club, their fans were brilliant today and historically, a 1-1 draw against them is a brilliant result."

"But it shows how far we have come as we are disappointed to not win the game."

"I thought we did enough to score one or two more goals today."

"It's another point on the board, so we need to make sure we can keep it amongst it during the season, as we have got a fantastic squad."



Sam Vokes (pictured against Manchester City in September 2021) has not played since the 3-0 loss away at Bolton Wanderers on August 6 (PA)

# Injury list decreasing

GARETH Ainsworth has provided an injury update following Wycombe's home 1-1 draw against Charlton Athletic.

The match at Adams Park saw David Wheeler limp off after 59 minutes, but centre back Ryan Tafazolli, who has missed the last six games with a stomach injury, was an unused substitute as both sides shared the points.

Up next for Wanderers in the league is an away trip to Fleetwood on September 2.

Speaking to the press after the match, Ainsworth said: "David Wheeler ran through the pain barrier today [August 27].

"That's why he came off and I thank him for that.

"We have got the cavalry coming back with Vokes, Hanlan, Mellor, Thompson, Kaikai and Tafazolli was on the bench today.

"Those are big players so when we have got a fully fit squad, we can give it a real go.

"We're finding our feet and the three defeats really did give us a shake-up.

"It showed that we needed to play a different way."

To read more about the latest Wycombe Wanderers news, visit [www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport](http://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/sport). [August 27].

# Alan Parry focuses on Fleetwood Town



Wanderers at F'wood in (PA)

WYCOMBE'S army of travelling fans face one of their longest journeys of the season on Saturday, September 3 with a 440 mile round trip to Fleetwood Town on the Lancashire coast.

The huge distances between clubs in League One tests the loyalty of even the most dedicated supporters, especially considering the added problems of rail strikes and prohibitive cost of fuel.

Some Chairboys fans have already clocked up over one thousand miles in the past month following their team to far flung venues like Bolton, Exeter, and Barnsley, but that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Still to come are away games at Morecambe (456 miles return), Plymouth (442 miles), Accrington (422 miles) and Sheffield Wednesday (324 miles).

It makes visits to Oxford (54 miles) and MK Dons (120 miles) feel like home games, and since many Wanderers fans live outside the town, even Adams Park necessitates a long journey.

Anyone who attends every one of Wycombe's home and away games this season will clock up over 6,000 miles, the equivalent of a trans-Atlantic journey to New York and back! No oceans to cross this weekend, but still a long trek to the Victorian seaside resort of Fleetwood and a challenging fixture for Gareth Ainsworth's team.

The Cod Army as they are known have seven points from six games, the same as Wycombe.

Their only win was home to Plymouth, their only defeat at newly promoted Port Vale on the opening day.

They drew the other four games and took a point off Derby County at the Highbury Stadium, where average attendances of around 3,000 are amongst the lowest in the division.

It is the 14th meeting between the clubs with five wins for Wycombe, three for Fleetwood and five draws.

The first time they clashed was in 2011 when Fleetwood - then a non-league club - won 2-0 in a First Round FA Cup tie with a certain Jamie Vardy scoring one of their goals.

The most memorable was in 2020 when the Chairboys played brilliantly to win 4-1 win in the first leg of their League One play off semi-final.

A repeat performance this weekend would make that long journey home well worth the effort.

The match starts at 3pm.

# Wanderers receive extra point in win



1,015 people attended the game at Adams Park which included 76 Spurs fans who had made the trip from North London on August 30 (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers defeated the Tottenham Hotspur Under 21s 4-3 on penalties, following a 0-0 draw in their inaugural Football League Trophy fixture of the season at Adams Park.

It took a while for the match to get going but after 18 minutes, the Chairboys started to get a foothold of the game.

In what was the first real clear cut chance of the contest, Joe Jacobson's inswinging corner was clawed out by Josh Keeley in the Spurs net, before the Welsh left-back glanced his header wide from a Nick Freeman cross moments later.

Six minutes after having two great chances to score, Wanderers forced Keeley into another stop.

This time, Jason McCarthy's deep corner was fired towards goal by Freeman on the volley.

But again, Keeley was on hand to palm the fierce attempt away.

For large parts of the game, it was a midfield battle but the Wanderers squad, which included numerous first-team players, began to pull the strings as the half went on, and they really should have taken the lead 10 minutes before the break.

Then, Connor Parsons, who is on loan at Non League Solihull Moors but is allowed to play in Football League Trophy fixtures for the Chairboys, smashed his attempt at goal which was tipped over by the Tottenham keeper.

After sustaining the pressure, the North London club began to play their stuff as Romaine Mundle and Kallum Casey both forced saves from Max Stryjek just before half-

**By James Richings**

time.

The second half was a drab affair with Ali Al-Hamadi having the best effort of the period, but he fired his shot from just outside the box high and wide.

The attempt happened in the 89th minute and it would have won the contest.

However, 0-0 finished so it went to a penalty shootout to determine who would get the extra point.

The spot-kicks fell into the favour of the Chairboys and despite a miss from Jason McCarthy, Wycombe won the tie thanks to Jack Young's decisive penalty.

How the shootout went:

Tottenham: Jamie Donnelly: Scored (0-1)

Wycombe: Ali Al-Hamadi: Scored (1-1)

Tottenham: Niall Johns: Scored (1-2)

Wycombe: Daryl Horgan: Scored (2-2)

Tottenham: Kallum Cesay: Missed (2-2)

Wycombe: Jason McCarthy: Missed (2-2)

Tottenham: Yago Alonso: Missed (2-2)

Wycombe: Jack Wakely: Scored (3-2)

Tottenham: Roshawn Mathurin: Scored (3-3)

Wycombe: Jack Young: Scored (4-3)

The win for Wycombe is their first in this competition since November 2019, when they defeated Milton Keynes 2-1 at Stadium MK.

# SPORT

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## Facing Fleetwood Town on the road



Can Wycombe go far? (PA)

### Another cup to focus on this season

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth wants his side 'to go far' in this year's Football League Trophy.

The Chairboys defeated the Tottenham Hotspur Under 21s at Adams Park in their inaugural fixture for this season's edition 4-3 on penalties, after a 0-0 draw.

Last year, Wanderers finished bottom of the group with zero points and conceded 10 goals in their three fixtures against the Aston Villa Under 21s, Milton Keynes and Burton Albion.

He said: "I want to go far in this competition and I will be strong on Tuesday."

"I have got a squad of 25 to 26 players who are super strong, then I have got a group of eight or nine players in the development squad that are really coming on."

"We've got a squad that is big enough to take this competition on and I would love to see how far we can get."

Wanderers reached the semi-finals of the competition in the 2016/17 season.

### Why Max started against Tottenham

THE performance of goalkeeper Max Stryjek impressed Wycombe manager Gareth Ainsworth in Wanderers' victory over Tottenham Hotspur's Under 21s in the Football League Trophy.

The 26-year-old two important stops during the 0-0 draw at Adams Park and saved in the penalty shootout after the initial 90 minutes had finished.

Wanderers won the match 4-3 via spot-kicks, which has given the Chairboys an extra point in their group, which they share with Peterborough and Stevenage respectively.

Speaking on why Stryjek, who is the club's number one, started the match ahead of Tyla Dickinson and Josh Blunkell, Ainsworth said: "I wanted him to play to get minutes so he is familiar with everything. We have got several Saturday/Tuesday matches coming up and he hasn't done that in Scotland."

"The games in the Scottish Premier League are quite stretched and far between as there are not many mid-weeks, and down here, you get so many with the cups and the various fixture build ups, so his body needs to be ready to be competitive game after game."



Wycombe Wanderers (pictured away at Fleetwood last October) travel up to the North West to take on the Cod Army this Saturday (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth believes that 'confidence will be high' going into the Fleetwood match on Saturday.

The Chairboys have a somewhat stuttering start to the 2022/23 season, as they have won three, drawn two and lost four of their nine matches so far this campaign in all competitions.

However, Wanderers edged past the Tottenham Hotspur Under 21s during the week in the Papa John's Trophy, and in their last league outing, drew 1-1 with a Charlton Athletic side who are one of the favourites to push for promotion.

Their nearly 450 mile round trip to Highbury Stadium will be the first of six matches in September, with four of these fixtures being away from home.

Speaking on his side's visit to the North West, Ainsworth said: "Confidence will be high from the game in midweek and I thought we played really well against Charlton on Saturday too."

"We have definitely got one or two of the injuries back for this week too which is fantastic, so I am looking forward to seeing how we can do against Fleetwood."

"Scott Brown has got them organised well and he is a tenacious character, so we will need to be at our best."

The match will be their fourth

away game of the season which will see the club travel over 100 miles to their destination.

Visits to Bolton, Exeter and Barnsley have all been ticked off Wanderers' list so far, and even though the club are raking up the miles, the boss revealed that they can use this to their advantage.

He continued: "We like it [traveling away on long journeys]."

"We travel really well as a group and hopefully we can get the team spirit going on the Friday on our way up there."

"And in a way, it gives me a lots of time to plan and have a look at Fleetwood's strengths and weakness."

Finally, the boss spoke about the run of fixtures over the autumn months.

The Chairboys will play 13 matches between the start of September to the end of October, but Ainsworth is feeling relaxed about the heavy load of games.

He concluded: "It's going to be quite a congestive fixture list but it eases its way out between October and November and we're looking forward to trying to get as many points on the board as possible."

"We're just short of a few members of the squad but some should be back for Saturday."

This will be Wycombe's eighth visit to Highbury Stadium since their first meeting in a FA Cup match back in November 2011.

In that time, Wanderers have two, lost two and drawn three against the Cod Army.