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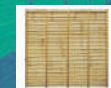
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## SPORT

Wanderers thump Non League side



Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers defeated Non League Kinetic Academy 5-0 in a practice match at Bisham Abbey on December 14.

The victory for the Chairboys saw Tjay De Barr bagged a brace, whilst Sullay Kaikai, Jack Wakely and Ali Al-Hamadi also got on the scoresheet.

Manager Gareth Ainsworth said: "It was brilliant to see the way they played on Tuesday in the practice match.

"It also gave us a chance to give minutes to players like Daryl (Horgan) and Sullay (Kaikai) who have been on the fringes lately, and although of course they'd like more time in the first team, they understand why that's been the case because we've been on a good run."

The win over Kinetic Academy was Wanderers' seventh friendly/practice match this season.

## Forino gets praise from Ainsworth

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has revealed that he now hard worries playing Chris Forino in the 2-1 win over Burton.

The youngster started the fixture on December 7 and received the man of the match award.

The boss said: "As soon as I saw him play in that game, I said let's get him training with us. "He'd been at university and pursuing his studies so he wasn't in perfect shape at first, so we got him in the gym working on his posture and strength, and a lot of credit goes to our medical team of Cian, Aly and Isaac for helping him get up to fitness.

"I was delighted for him to make his league debut, and he came up to me first thing this morning and said thank you for the opportunity. He's got that humility about him and I'm really pleased and proud of him."

# Jacobson looks back on Wimbledon draw

By James Richings

WYCOMBE left back Joe Jacobson has admitted that Wycombe lacked 'quality at the right times' following Wanderers' 2-2 draw at home to Wimbledon.

The Welshman scored an injury-time penalty to rescue the Chairboys a point, in a match that has seen Gareth Ainsworth's men drop down from second to fourth.

The draw also means that the Chairboys are winless in their last match matches against the South Londoners – a run that stretches back to October 2014.

Speaking after the match on December 11, he said: "It [the match] had everything.

"The only thing that it probably lacked from us was a bit of quality at the right times.

"We seem to have had quite a few last minute penalties over the years and I'm always going to put myself forward to take them – today [Dec 11], I really wanted it - it went in and we were able to get the point in the end.

"I think Jason [McCarthy] just gave me the ball and that was it, everyone just let me go and take it.

"They all say they want one and in training, it's easy to go and take one, but in matches, people sometimes don't want it.

Jacobson's equaliser came minutes after Jack Rudoni thought he had scored Wimbledon's winner, with an injury-time header that got past David Stockdale.

The goal was scored in front of a jubilant away end, as the Wombles thought they had won at Adams Park for the sixth time in seven visits.

However, moments later, Paul Osew pulled down Sullay Kaikai in the Wimbledon box, and up-stepped Jacobson to slot the penalty away.

It was his third goal of the season, and his first at Adams Park this campaign.



Joe Jacobson scored his first home goal of the season in the 2-2 draw against AFC Wimbledon (PA)

Jacobson continued: "It's a bit disappointing that we didn't get the next goal because we were in total control in the second half.

"I think in the first half, we weren't

at the races and we were a little bit sloppy - we got into the right areas but we were just sloppy with our final balls and passing. In the end, did we do enough to get the win?"

"Maybe, maybe not.

"We didn't take our chances, so I think a draw is a fair result."

Up next is Bolton Wanderers away on Saturday.



David Wheeler (left) has played in 19 matches so far this season (PA)

## Gareth Ainsworth on David Wheeler

WYCOMBE midfielder David Wheeler has been praised by manager Gareth Ainsworth for his versatile displays and his ability to adapt when playing in different positions.

The 31-year-old, who is in his third season with the club, has so far featured in 19 games in all competitions for the Chairboys in what has been a stop-start campaign due to niggling injuries.

However, the fan favourite has played in Wanderers' last six fixtures which has seen the club go unbeaten

in their last four games.

Originally a right winger, the former Portsmouth, MK Dons and Exeter City man has played in the centre of midfield to partner Curtis Thompson following Josh Scowen's injury in the 1-0 defeat to Hartlepool.

Speaking on his appearance in the 2-1 win over Burton on December 7, Ainsworth said: "When Wheeler came on, the game changed right in our favour, and that's the mark of the man. He's unbelievable.

"It was a tough decision to leave him

out of the starting 11 because he was phenomenal at Plymouth and Sheffield Wednesday, but as a manager you have to make these decisions. When I told Wheeler before the game that he'd be on the bench, he said it's your decision and I will back you whatever. He said if we win 5-0 and he doesn't play, he'll still be the happiest man in the changing room, and to have someone like that is incredible. We call him the Swiss Army Knife because we back him to do any job on the pitch."

# Al-Hamadi looks ahead

WYCOMBE Wanderers' latest signing has revealed that club captain Matt Bloomfield played a huge part in his move to the club.

Ali Al-Hamadi, who has two caps for the Iraqi national team, joined the Adams Park outfit on November 20, and was an unused substitute in the Chairboys' 2-2 draw against AFC Wimbledon on December 11.

The striker has impressed manager Gareth Ainsworth in recent training sessions, but it was a chat with Mr Wycombe that initially instigated the former Swansea's man move to South Bucks.

Speaking to the club, he said: "It's been unbelievable. I have never been at a club like this before to be honest, and that is not just me saying it for the sake of it.

"Genuinely, everyone here are nice people and it was actually Blooms who was a big part of me coming here and I think a lot of people don't know that.

"We actually crossed paths over a year ago and when he found out that I was leaving Swansea, he got in contact with me."

Prior to signing for Wanderers, the 19-year-old was also on the books at Tranmere Rovers.



Ali Al-Hamadi has been with Wycombe for just over a month but has yet to make his debut for the club (screenshot from Wycombe Wanderers FC)

## Learning off the best in training for Al-Hamadi



Adams Park

ALI Al-Hamadi hopes to learn off Adebayo Akinfenwa and Sam Vokes in order to help him make his first team debut.

The youngster believes that the experience the two forwards possess will benefit his career; after he admitted that Wycombe's style of play is something he isn't used to.

He said: "I'm in dreamland right now as I have got two of the most experienced strikers in the league, maybe in the top three leagues in England. They've got their own strengths in how they play which is probably a bit different to what I am used to because at Swansea, they like to play football on the floor. But, adding parts of their game to mine should help and they have been brilliant since I have arrived. They have offered me advice and they said if there's anything I need, they are open to have a chat with me. Just seeing what they are doing is exactly why I joined this club because they believe in youth and given people chances. But, it is down to me. I need to go out and prove it which I am hopefully doing in training, and then, hopefully in games."

# Can Wycombe end their festive hoodoo?



Wycombe drew 2-2 away at Sheffield Wednesday on November 27 - their last game for 10 days before they defeated Burton at home 2-1 (PA)

WANDERERS have historically struggled for results over the festive period, and with the top of League One being so competitive, they may not be able to afford the same this year.

However, after suffering a dip in form at the start of November, Wycombe will be hoping the bad run is out of the way and they can focus on staying in touch with the likes of Rotherham, Wigan and Sunderland.

Since going six games without a win in the first half of last month, the Chairboys have picked up 11 points from five league matches to sit comfortably in the play-off places, outside of the top two on goal difference alone.

The next two fixtures give Wycombe a chance to keep that run going ahead of a very difficult run of games in the New Year. Gareth Ainsworth's team take on promotion contenders Sunderland, Oxford and MK Dons in January as well as in-form Charlton.

After beating Bolton at home less than a month ago, Wanderers make the trip to Greater Manchester to face the Trotters once again.

The former Premier League outfit weren't in the best of form heading into that game, and since then, their fortunes have continued to worsen.

They saw off a hapless Doncaster side at home, but are winless in three after that.

Since a 4-1 win at Charlton in September, Bolton have only won three league games, and all three sides they've beaten are in the bottom five in the league.

Ian Evatt's men still sit seven points above the relegation zone, but the 40-year-old's job may be in danger if results don't improve.

All that means Wycombe will be con-

By Jamie Cameron

fident of gaining three points on their second visit to the University of Bolton Stadium.

Since Bolton were relegated from the Championship, the Chairboys have met them three times, winning all three and also keeping a clean sheet on all three occasions.

On Boxing Day, Wanderers take on Cambridge United at Adams Park, another game they'll be feeling optimistic about.

The Us were one of the pre-season favourites for relegation having been promoted from League Two, but manager Mark Bonner has continued to work wonders at the Abbey Stadium.

In their first season in the third tier since 2001/02, Cambridge have already earned 26 points to put themselves 16th in the table, and have scored more goals than anyone else in the bottom half.

With the form of some of the teams at the bottom looking desperately poor, Bonner and his staff will be positive about avoiding an immediate relegation.

Joe Ironside has taken on the challenge of replacing the departed Paul Mullin, netting 11 times for Cambridge already, while Adam May has impressed of late in midfield and captain Paul Digby has been ever-present.

On paper, a Wycombe side at their best should win both of these games, but the Christmas fixtures can always throw up some strange results and that could scupper the Chairboys' hopes of being in the automatic promotion places at the turn of the year.

## Several clubs before Wanderers

WYCOMBE Wanderers forward Ali Al-Hamadi has revealed that he had several trials at other clubs before eventually signing for the Chairboys.

The 19-year-old is reportedly to have had trials at several Championship clubs.

He said: "I went to a few clubs but I think everything happens for a reason and I have landed at a club that'll give me opportunities that I'm craving.

"I'm very ambitious and I want to get into the first team as soon as possible.

"I think I thrive under pressure and I like having expectation and I think what is expected from me comes from me myself and not anyone else, but, it is nice to have a big following and I don't the pressure or the expectation of it all."

# SPORT



## Fantastic Forino on future opportunities



Forino will be at AP until 2024

### New deal for young centre back

CHRIS Forino has signed a new contract with the club which will see him at Wanderers until 2024.

He has played four times for Wanderers so far this season, and received the man of the match award on his league debut in the 2-1 win against Burton Albion on December 7.

Forino's new contract comes a couple of weeks after Anis Mehmeti extended his deal to keep him at the club for the next two-and-a-half years.

Gareth Ainsworth said: "Chris was a diamond in the rough when he came to us on trial last season, and he's worked so hard to get fit, prove what he can do, and become an important part of the squad in a short time. He's another shining example of the development squad programme that we introduced only 18 months ago, and now we're seeing a number of players taking the opportunities that we're giving them."

### Gareth Ainsworth on his new star

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for Chris Forino following his league debut in midweek.

The youngster started in the 2-1 win over Burton Albion on December 7 which was his professional league debut.

Forino, who gave up a place at university to become a professional player, played the full 90 minutes in the win against the Brewers, where he was also named Man of the Match.

He deputised for Ryan Tafazolli and Anthony Stewart, who missed the match due to illness.

Ainsworth said: "You have to trust your players, and the young lads are here for a reason.

"They know they have to be ready to play at any time, and it was great for Chris to get that opportunity.

"He was alongside two great players in Jack (Grimmer) and Joe (Jacobson) - you couldn't wish to make your league debut alongside two better professionals - and they helped him a lot.

"Chris came here to make up the numbers at first, if I'm honest.

"We were short of numbers for a trialist game and Sam Grace knew of him, so brought him in."



Chris Forino spoke to Wycombe Wanderers on his recent activities at the start of the week (screenshot from Wycombe Wanderers FC)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE defender Chris Forino has revealed that he 'couldn't have dreamed to be in this scenario', following his rapid rise to the Wanderers first team.

The 21-year-old, who has played four first-team games for the club, penned a new deal that will keep him at the Adams Park outfit until 2024.

This comes after he impressed Gareth Ainsworth and his backroom staff in matches that he has started in - most notably in the 2-2 draw away at Hartlepool in November and in the 2-1 home win over Burton last week.

The former Colchester United centre back scored in the cup match versus the Pools, before being named as

the man of the match in the victory over the Brewers.

Speaking on his achievements over the last few weeks, he said: "I'm always grateful.

"I'm not knocking on the gaffer's door or anything like that.

"I know I have to bide my time and you look at Olly Pendlebury - he is two years younger than me and he got his opportunity before me, but, there wasn't any worry or panic for me as I knew what I had to do at the training ground.

"Day in, day out and on my days off as well. I do things right now.

"At the start of this year, I couldn't have dreamed to be in this scenario. I have been here seven/eight months, pretty much came in as a nobody and as the gaffer mentioned, I came here to make up numbers for a trial game

at Bisham, performed well, earned myself a trial and it's been a hard graft.

"Recovering from a knee injury for the last five months and then playing in the Papa John's games has been a great learning experience."

The last eight months has propelled Forino from a university student to a League One footballer, who has since admitted that 'the sky is the limit', following his promotion to the first team this season.

He has deputised for first choice centre-backs in Anthony Stewart and Ryan Tafazolli when the duo have been out injured, and with the former giving him tips and advice during training, he hopes to continue his good form when given his next opportunity.

Forino, who wasn't in the squad to face Wimbledon on Saturday, contin-

ued: "I have always loved to play professional football, but to do it full time, it has been amazing.

"I remember speaking to Tools (Anthony Stewart) after one training session and I was picking up so many tips and little habits. I knew after that halfway through my trial that I would stick it out, playing football, because this club has shown me that playing full time football is a pleasure."

Finally, the fan favourite revealed that he only found out he was starting his first-ever league match less than two hours before the fixture against Burton kicked off.

He said: "I think if I got told the day before, I don't think I would have slept. "I got told about an hour and 20 minutes before kick-off. So there were about 20 minutes of jitters and nerves, but I managed to sort myself out."