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## SPORT

## Oli is on the move again

A FORMER Wycombe Wanderers midfielder has joined a new club just months after penning a contract with a Non League side.

Oliver Pendlebury, who spent the 2021/22 season with the Chairboys, has signed a six-month contract with National League outfit, Aldershot Town, after spending the first-half of the campaign at the National League South club, Farnborough.

He joins the shots after playing 17 times for the Hampshire club, where he scored three goals two of which were free-kicks.

His time at Adams Park was a brief affair, but he still managed to get on the scoresheet three times in 10 matches.

This included scoring a brace against Cheltenham Town in a 3-1 victory on only his second outing for the club in August 2021.

Pendlebury later joined Non League Woking for the latter half of last season, where he made just four appearances.

His new club, Aldershot, are just outside the relegation places in the National League.

He began his career at Reading in the Championship.

## Wycombe transfer update

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has remained coy over who could potentially join the club this transfer window.

The Chairboys are yet to sign any new faces so far this month, whilst Daryl Horgan has joined League Two promotion favourites Stevenage on loan for the remainder of the season, with Connor Parsons penning a permanent deal with the Irish club, Waterford.

Speaking on whether he hopes to add more names to his arsenal before the end of the window, Ainsworth said: "I'm happy with what I have got but if I find the right player, at the right price, and at the right time, then I'll look into it."

"But at the moment, we're in a good place."

"Hopefully it'll be a good window as there might be one or two [coming in], but Rob [Coughig] is backing me."

"I'll never Wycombe in danger by going overboard as some clubs have done in the past."

"We'll do things the right way."

# Should Ikpeazu return to Bucks?



Could Uche Ikpeazu (pictured squaring up to Michal Helik of then, Barnsley, in March 2021), re-join Wycombe this month?



Daryl Horgan (in action against his former club, Preston North End in March 2021), has joined Stevenage on loan until June (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers will no doubt be looking at players to sign this January to increase their chances of securing Championship football.

As it stands, the Chairboys sit in seventh place and are just two points off the top-six after winning three of their last four games.

However, with Daryl Horgan now at Stevenage on loan for the rest of the season, and with Anis Mehmeti potentially moving on, Wanderers will need to secure the services of an attacking player (winger or striker), if they want to boost their promotion hopes.

And one player who I think they should re-sign is Uche Ikpeazu.

**Could Uche return to the UK?**

Seven months ago, I wrote an article similar to this about how the Ugandan striker should return to Adams Park.

This was off the back of a difficult season for the forward, who had been made a free agent after having his contract cancelled by Middlesbrough.

**So what happened?**

During the 2020/21 season, which is Wycombe's only season in the Championship to date, Ikpeazu scored six goals in 33 matches, but it was his work rate that endeared him to the Wycombe faithful.

After six substitute appearances for the club between September and December 2020 due to numerous injury setbacks, the striker began a solid run in the Chairboys team at the end of that calendar year.

Goals against Middlesbrough, Brentford, Derby County, Barnsley, Bristol City, and Bournemouth soon followed, but it was all in vain as Wanderers were relegated on the final day of that season by a solitary point.

His performances however caught

### Opinion By James Richings

the eye of Middlesbrough who signed the striker for an undisclosed fee in the summer of 2021, but after three goals in 22 games, in which only eight were starts, he was loaned out to Cardiff City for the remainder of the 2022 season.

He scored three times for the Bluebirds but only started once in 13 matches, as he returned to Boro at the end of the campaign to have his contract terminated by mutual consent.

Now playing for Konyaspor in Turkey, Ikpeazu has failed to start any of his 10 appearances, he has been yellow-carded in his last four games, and was even sent off after coming on as a substitute against Trabzonspor in November.

**Could he move back to Wycombe?**

Wycombe love re-signing a player, and with Ikpeazu knowing Gareth Ainsworth and the club's identity, a move back to Adams Park could get his career back on track.

The Chairboys have already got a like-to-like striker in Sam Vokes on their books, with Brandon Hanlan also playing up top, as well as a winger.

He is a hardworking, bustling, strong centre-forward who can also play as a second striker, along with being the main man up top.

And with several tap-ins and screamers on his goal highlights, this isn't a bad weapon to have in your arsenal.

Finally, his stint at Wanderers took place during the Covid-19 pandemic when no fans were able to see him live in the flesh (apart from three matches).

## Horgan moves to Stevenage on loan until June

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that winger Daryl Horgan has joined League Two Stevenage on loan for the remainder of the season.

The 30-year-old has been out of favour in recent weeks at the Adams Park club, where he has featured in just three of Wanderers' fixtures since the start of November.

Collectively, the Irishman has featured in 17 matches and has scored once so far this campaign.

His solitary strike, which was only the third he has scored for the club since joining in 2020,

was against Peterborough United in a Football League Trophy fixture back in October.

He joins the Hertfordshire-based team who currently sit second in England's fourth tier.

Additionally, Jasper Pattenden is back with the Wycombe after his loan with Dorking Wanderers came to an end, whilst Ben Kaninda's loan at Hanwell Town has also expired.

Meanwhile, Luca Woodhouse's loan deal with Slough Town has been extended until the end of January.



When will we next see Dom Gape (left) and Tjay De Barr (right) back in action for Wycombe Wanderers? (PA)

## Update on missing duo

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has provided an injury update on Dom Gape and Tjay De Barr ahead of this weekend's match against Sheffield Wednesday.

Gape had only missed one league match for the club between July and September, but has featured in just two fixtures since October, playing a total of just 29 minutes.

He has since been absent from Wycombe's last three games. Additionally, striker De Barr has been resting following his collapse at the end of Wycombe's 1-0 away loss at Plymouth Argyle on December 29.

The 22-year-old was stretchered off and taken to a hospital in Devon, before being discharged several

hours later.

Speaking on both players, Ainsworth said: "Dom has had two years of injury hell and I know how he feels as I have been there myself.

"We're protective of Dom as he has a big part to play at this football club."

On De Barr, Ainsworth continued: "It could be as soon as Saturday.

"We have a great medical team who cover every base, especially with what has happened over in the US with the NFL player (Damar Hamlin).

"They were similar circumstances as they took blows to the chest, but thankfully, Tjay didn't have a cardiac arrest.

"But hopefully he'll get the all-clear soon."

## Alan Parry's Previews: Owls fly to Wycombe



The two teams in action (PA)

WYCOMBE'S first home game of the new year presents arguably the toughest test of their promotion credentials when they host a Sheffield Wednesday team that won more points in the calendar year 2022 than any of the 72 clubs in the EFL.

Wednesday arrive at Adams Park on Saturday, January 14, with a formidable record over the last two campaigns. Like Wycombe, they reached the playoffs last season, losing in the semi-finals to Sunderland, and they look bang on course for automatic promotion this season.

They boast one of the best away records in League One with seven wins from twelve games, and their defensive record is second to none, conceding just seven goals on their travels.

Wednesday is a club steeped in history, formed 156 years ago they are one of the oldest football clubs in the world. In the past they have won four top division titles and appeared in nine FA Cup finals, winning the trophy three times.

They have spent most of their history in England's top division and were founder members of the Premier League spending eight seasons there until relegation in 2000.

With a distinguished history and huge support, the Owls are a Championship club in the making and they had a decade in the second tier before dropping into League One two seasons ago.

The Owls are managed by Darren Moore, one of the game's true gentlemen, a description rarely used about the last manager to bring his team to Adams Park.

The comments made by Joey Barton after Bristol Rovers lost to Wanderers in their last home game were typical of a man who has a chequered history both on and off the field.

Criticism of Wycombe's team - 'I would not swap for any of their players. I would not swap for their style of football' - and suggestions that Gareth Ainsworth has failed to get a job with a bigger club because of his dress sense - 'red skin boots and leather jacket' - were uncalled for.

He might not like Ainsworth's team or his clothes, but he could learn a lot from the Wycombe boss when it comes to showing class and dignity in defeat.

# Fan favourite hangs up his football boots



Mackail-Smith singed for Wycombe following his departure from Luton in the summer of 2017. He scored 13 goals in 68 games (PA)

FOLLOWING the news that former Wycombe Wanderers striker and cult hero Craig Mackail-Smith has retired from the sport, many Chairboys fans have come together to reminisce over the forward's achievements at Adams Park.

The ex-Scottish international scored 13 goals in 68 matches for the club across an 18 month period, during which he also helped Wanderers achieve promotion to League One.

This ended a six-year stay in England's fourth tier, with Mackail-Smith being recognised for his work rate, along with some important strikes.

So after the news broke, we took to social media to ask fans what their favourite memories were of the forward at Wycombe.

On Facebook, Suzanne McCloud said: "Scoring against Colchester at their ground. Priceless."

On Twitter, Dan Wickens said: "The 11-minute hat-trick against Crawley.

Staying on Twitter, Ben Stenner added: "The [last-minute] winner against Scunthorpe.

Kathy Locke on Facebook added: "Has to be the Crawley game for me and I managed to call him over for a hug at the end."

Taking to social media to confirm the news of his retirement on January 7, Mackail-Smith said: "Thank you to all my teammates, staff and fans throughout this journey.

By James Richings

"You have made it amazing through the good times and the bad.

"A big thank you to my family for being there throughout the highs and lows, putting up with me on the bad days and celebrating with me on the good ones.

"You'll finally get your weekends back!

"I will always be a fan so you may see me at a game or two.

"Here's to the excitement of what's to come in the future."

On his time at the Chairboys, Mackail-Smith said: "I had a wonderful time at the club, met so many great people.

"It's great to see the club pushing for promotion again."

**Craig Mackail-Smith's club career:**

1999-2003: St Albans City

2003: Arlesey Town (loan)

2003/04: Arlesey Town

2004-2007: Dagenham & Redbridge

2007-2011: Peterborough United

2011-2015: Brighton & Hove Albion

2014: Peterborough United (loan)

2015-2017: Luton Town

2017: Peterborough United (loan)

2017-2020: Wycombe Wanderers

2019: Notts County (loan)

2019/20: Stevenage (loan)

2020-2023: Bedford Town

# SPORT

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The match between Wycombe and Fleetwood will take

## New date confirmed for when the Cod Army arrive at Adams Park

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that their rearranged home match against Fleetwood Town will take place on Tuesday, March 7.

The Chairboys were due to take on the Cod Army on Saturday, January 28 at 3pm, but following Scott Brown's side's progression into the next

round of the FA Cup, the fixture has been moved.

Fleetwood will take on Sheffield Wednesday on the same weekend when they were due to face Wanderers.

The match will kick-off at 7.45pm and tickets will be available in due course.

This means that out of

the seven times Fleetwood have visited Adams Park, five of those clashes have taken place on a weekday.

The two sides last met in September at Highbury Stadium with the game finishing 1-1.

Anis Mehmeti gave Wanderers the lead before Admiral Muskwe equalise

against his old club.

The match also saw Garath McCleary receive a straight red card after just 10 minutes for elbowing Drew Baker.

He would receive a suspension and missed the next three games.

McCleary apologised for his actions in the North West.

# 'One of the nicest guys in football'

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has heaped praise onto Sheffield Wednesday manager, Darren Moore, ahead of this weekend's fixture at Adams Park.

The two have faced each other five times in the dugout, with Moore having taken on Ainsworth's Chairboys side not only with the Owls, but with Doncaster Rovers respectively.

Overall, both bosses have won two games each whilst also sharing the points on a solitary occasion, and Ainsworth is looking forward to taking on the former West Bromwich Albion centre back once more.

He said: "We played against each other a fair bit when I was at Preston and he was at Torquay during the 1990s.

"We have both been privileged to play at the highest level in the Premier League and we've had similar paths.

"I can honestly say he is one of the nicest guys in football as he is a real gentleman, he really is.

"I think he's a very humble guy too and I have got nothing but good things to say about him.

"He was a tenacious character to face during our playing days, but he has gone about his management style in a respectable and honourable way.

"People like Darren Moore are great to have in football, as he is a top guy."

The fixture on Saturday is expected to be Wycombe's highest-attended home game of the season, with around 8,900 people planning to visit Adams Park.

By James Richings

Coincidentally, the club's largest crowd last season happened to be against this weekend's opposition, with 9,005 spectators cramming themselves into the Hillbottom Road venue.

And with Moore's side buoyed after eliminating Premier League high-flyers Newcastle United just a few days ago in the FA Cup, Ainsworth believes it will be a tough test against one of the favourites for promotion back to the Championship.

He added: "Hearing about the number of people who will be here on Saturday is brilliant, and I wish it was like that every week.

"It probably shows what the Championship season would have been like with fans at Adams Park.

"But we can only dream and it's up to me to make those dreams a reality.

"It'll be great to see so many people arrive on Saturday and even though I love Darren [Moore], I hope he isn't as happy as me after the game.

"Darren has got a lot of pressure at Sheffield Wednesday and I know he'll have a lot on behind the scenes too, but, he gets on with his job and he doesn't mind if he gets knocked.

"He's done a brilliant job so far at Wednesday, considering what they have been through, and I look forward to having a drink with him after the game.

"I can't wait for him to come to town."

The fixture will begin at 3pm.



Gareth Ainsworth (left) and Darren Moore (right) (PA)



Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

## Ainsworth up for an award

WYCOMBE Wanderers' Gareth Ainsworth has been nominated for the League One Manager of the Month Award for December.

The 49-year-old masterminded three wins, one draw and one defeat during the final month of 2022, as the Chairboys picked up 10 points from the 15 available.

Wanderers also kept three consecutive clean sheets during that time as they went three unbeaten against Portsmouth, Lincoln City and promotion favourites, Ipswich Town.

The judging panel's assessments can be found below.

Gareth Ainsworth (Wycombe Wanderers)

If anyone feared that the Ainsworth magic at Wycombe was on the wane after an indifferent autumn, they have been swiftly corrected by a steady climb towards the play-off places. Ten points from five games continued their rise.

Since taking over at Wycombe, Ainsworth has won five Manager of the Month awards.

They were in March 2015, November 2016, January 2018, November 2019, and April 2022 respectively.

The winner will be revealed in the morning of Friday, January 13.

To see who won, visit the BFP website.