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PAGES 71-72



New era dawns as billionaire buys Wycombe Wanderers

Five pages of unrivalled sports coverage

Major plans for Stoke Park



PAGE 14

Pedal-cars for adults all the rage



PAGE 42

Shock death of 'lovely man'

Street shrine to community character



HUNDREDS of tributes have poured in for a High Wycombe man who suddenly died over the Bank Holiday Weekend.

Edward 'Eddie' McDonald, 57, who has been described as a 'lovely chap who always said hello' passed away on Sunday.

The football fan, who had a keen interest in Wycombe Wanderers

By James Richings

and Chelsea, could be regularly spotted outside the town's Iceland branch on the High Street.

Eddie lived at the Old Tea Warehouse, a homeless shelter on Amersham Hill.

A friend said he was "absolutely devastated" by the news and felt

that Eddie had been "let down" by those who were supposed to be looking after him.

Floral tributes and a Wycombe Wanderers scarf have been left outside the spot Eddie would often be seen.

Full story: Page 3

Murderous dealer who left Karl to die is jailed

PAGE 2

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News

Marvellous Marlow promoted

By James Richings

james.richings@newsquest.co.uk

IT WAS a day to remember for Marlow FC as they secured the Isthmian League South Central play-off final.

The Blues, who are managed by Mark Bartley, defeated Leatherhead 3-1 at Oak Tree Road in front 1,589 people one of the largest crowds in the club's recent history.

After a goalless first 45 minutes, strikes from Jordi Ndozid, Louis Rogers, and Dawid Rogalski in a 10-minute second-half spell from corners sent the Marlow fans wild.

The opponents did respond with a consolation in the dying embers, but the day belonged to the South Buckinghamshire team.

The result means they will play in Step 3 of the Non League pyramid, just three divisions away from the EFL.

Boss Bartley said: "What I know is that clubs, teams, and squads don't get promoted, families do.

"What we have created at Marlow is a huge family.

"From the volunteers, to the board, the sponsors, the players, my management team, and, of course, our loyal supporters.

"Sunday was a great day, but we have the final next week to properly bring the curtain down on our season. A huge thank you to everyone who backed us this year.

"Those that didn't and tried to put obstacles in our way, thanks for providing the rocket fuel we needed to be successful."

Marlow hope that the triumph on May 5 will be coupled with another cup, as they take on Reading in the Berks & Bucks final on May 15.



The Blues are the third most successful team in the competition with 13 triumphs, but their last victory in the final two came in 1994.

For the Royals, they have the cup on four occasions - the most recent being only two years ago when they beat Ascot United 4-0 in the 2022 final.

All photographs taken by Mubarak Bashir (Instagram:MBINHOEDITS)





Sport

FOOTBALL: BLOOMFIELD WINS AWARD

Mr Wycombe ends the season on a high

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Matt Bloomfield has been named the League One Manager of the Month for April.

The 40-year-old, who completed his first full season in charge of the Chairboys following his appointment in February 2023, guided the Adams Park side to a 10th place finish in the league – the sixth-highest in the club's history.

And during the fourth month of the calendar year, he helped mastermind a seven-game unbeaten run in the

league as Wycombe picked up 15 points from a possible 21.

It's his second MOTM prize after winning the award in January 2023 when at Colchester United.

Speaking on his accolade, he said: "I'm so proud to win because it rewards all the hard work that the players and staff put in during probably our busiest month.

"To play seven games – and an EFL Trophy final – and collect four wins and four clean sheets speaks volumes for everyone's

efforts and commitment.

"I think we travelled more than 1,700 miles in April and came up against two teams who were battling for promotion and three who were fighting against relegation, but we gave a really strong account of ourselves in every game and managed to carry on the excellent form."

Since replacing Gareth Ainsworth a little over one year ago, Bloomfield has taken charge of 73 Wycombe games, winning 30, drawing 18 and losing 25.



This is Bloomfield's second Manager of the Month award (PA)

WHY THE POLE IN THE GOAL IS DEPARTING

Max Stryjek's departure explained as keeper leaves

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield admitted this stage of the season 'is a difficult time to make decisions' as player's contracts come to their expiration date.

It was announced on May 2 that the Chairboys will not renew deals for six players, which include Max Stryjek and Kane Vincent-Young.

The Polish national was the club's number-one keeper following his arrival at Adams Park in August 2022, but lost his place after being sent off against Stevenage in February this year.

His deputy, Franco Ravizzoli, has now claimed the position as his own, with Stryjek being loaned out to Crewe Alexandra in the middle of April.

Bloomfield said: "It's a difficult time to make decisions to let players go and I'd like to thank them for all their hard work for this club during their time here.

"In particular, Max was our first-choice keeper for nearly two years and was unfortunate to lose his place after his red card in February.

"But I know he's keen to explore new opportunities and we hope he can end this season on a high during his loan with Crewe in the play-offs, and find the move that's right for him this summer."

Taking to social media, Stryjek has thanked everyone at the club for the past two years, but revealed he has goals in playing in a 'higher league'.

He said: "I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude to the club and everyone involved for the past two years

By James Richings

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."

Stryjek's final game in a Wycombe shirt was the loss at Stevenage on February 24, where he was shown a straight red card.

In all, he played 82 times for the Chairboys following his move from Livingston in the summer of 2022.

After falling out of favour, he joined Crewe Alexandra on a short-term loan deal.

He has featured in four games for the North West side, in which Crewe Alex have picked up three defeats and one draw in that time.



Max Stryjek spent two years at Wycombe where he played over 80 games (PA)

SPORT: FOOTBALL

Who is staying at Adams Park?

WYCOMBE Wanderers have announced their retained list for the 2024/25 season.

The Chairboys have confirmed that players such as Kane Vincent-Young, Max Stryjek and D'Mani Mellor will leave once their contracts expire on June 30, whilst Chris Forino, Franco Ravizzoli and Garath McCleary have been offered new contracts.

Loan players such as Freddie Potts, Chem Campbell, Dale Taylor and Nigel Lonwijk will return to their respective clubs.

The list is as follows:

- Released
 - Max Stryjek
 - Joe Jacobson
 - D'Mani Mellor
 - Nathan Shepperd
 - Jack Wakely
 - Kane Vincent-Young
- Loan players returning to their parent clubs
 - Dale Taylor (Nottingham Forest)
 - Saxon Earley (Plymouth Argyle)
 - Freddie Potts (West Ham United)
 - Gideon Kodua (West Ham United)
 - Chem Campbell (Wolverhampton Wanderers)
 - Nigel Lonwijk (Wolverhampton Wanderers)

Players who have been offered a new contract

- Chris Forino
- Garath McCleary
- Franco Ravizzoli

Under contract for 2024/25

- Jack Grimmer
- Josh Scowen
- Ryan Tafazzoli
- David Wheeler
- Matt Butcher
- Sam Vokes
- Luke Leahy
- Laurie Shala
- Jack Young
- Joe Low
- Brandon Hanlan
- Kieran Sadler
- Richard Kone
- Jason McCarthy
- Beryly Lubala
- Jasper Pattenden
- Taylor Clark
- Luca Woodhouse
- Christie Ward
- Declan Skura

Manager Matt Bloomfield told the club's media channels: "I'm really pleased with the strength we've got in the squad, and our form since the turn of the year shows that we're in a good place to go forward and plan for an exciting season ahead of us.

"Continuity is important and it's great to have many of the players who've played the most minutes for us under contract for next season.

To read more about the latest Wycombe Wanderers news, following James Richings on X [Twitter] on @James_BFP.

What lies in store following the Wanderers takeover

GEORGIAN billionaire Mikheil Lomtadze has revealed what he wants to achieve after officially being named Wycombe Wanderers' new owner.

The former private equity investor and entrepreneur was officially announced as the club's proprietor after his business, Blue Ocean Partners II Limited, purchased the Couchig family's 90 per cent share of the Adams Park club.

This comes after Rob Couchig, who owned Wanderers for five seasons, announced his intention to sell the Chairboys in the summer of last year.

Speaking on his new purchase, Lomtadze, who resides in Kazakhstan and generated just short of \$3b in 2022, told the club's website: "I am very grateful to Rob and deeply honoured by the opportunity to take the club forward and to be part of Wycombe Wanderers' successful future.

"You rarely meet people when an immediate friendship is developed from the very first conversation.

"Meeting Rob in the fall of last year was one of such moments in my life.

"I would like to thank Rob for his friendship and trust, and we are very happy that he has agreed to stay as the Chairman of the Board of Directors to continue playing an important role in the Club and help with the smooth transition.

"I want to also recognise Missy and Pete Couchig's contributions and thank them for all their dedication to the club alongside Rob.

"To the Wycombe fans, I do not and will not take lightly



Mikheil Lomtadze was announced as Wycombe's new owner on May 4 after several months of discussions

the responsibility for the Club in front of its fans, staff and players.

"Our goal is to achieve long-term success both on and off the pitch whilst building a financially sustainable club.

"The football world is evolving very fast and our priority will be to integrate data analytics and technology to elevate the Club's performance to new levels.

"I am also a strong believer in youth development and it will be fundamental to the

Club's vision.

"We aim to re-open and build a leading high-performance academy which will become an essential part of our long-term strategy of developing a club that consistently performs at the top level.

"We are looking forward to working with the Wycombe Wanderers Supporters' Trust as we together take the club into its next chapter.

"I'm excited to get started and I look forward to seeing everyone down at Ad-

ams Park for the start of the 2024/25 season."

Wycombe ended the 2023/24 season in 10th place in League One – the sixth-highest finish in the club's history.

Additionally, during the Couchig's tenure, Wanderers reached three Wembley finals and played a season in the Championship.

Who is Wycombe's new owner?

Mikheil Lomtadze is a technology investor and entrepreneur, who founded Kaspi.kz,

the leading technology company in Central Asia with a mission to improve people's lives by developing innovative mobile products and services.

He currently serves as Chief Executive Officer and is an executive director of the company.

The 48-year-old holds an MBA degree from Harvard Business School, and is a member of Harvard Business School's Middle East & North Africa Advisory Board.

FOOTBALL

Your views on the new ownership

MANY Wycombe Wanderers have reacted to the news that the club is now under new ownership.

It was confirmed in the evening of May 4 that billionaire Mikheil Lomtadze had purchased the Couchig family's 90 per cent stake of the Adams Park side, subject to clearance from the EFL.

The takeover has been in the works since the autumn, after ex-CEO Rob Couchig announced his intention to sell Wanderers in the summer of last year.

Both Couchig and Lomtadze have remained in contact with the former telling Wanderers' media channels that he at the 48-year-old self-made billionaire 'shared similar values', which played a key role in the sale going through.

He said: "I came to understand that his goals for the Club were similar to mine.

"Important to me, although often separated by a 12-hour time difference, we became friends.

"The logical conclusion to those discussions culminated today [May 4] with the transfer of Feliciano EFL Limited to his company.

"The Board of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club will have three new directors, Mikheil, Eduard Vyshnyakov, and Daniel Rice.

"The Board has asked me to convey its and the Wanderers family's appreciation for the great work that Missy Couchig and Pete Couchig have done for the Club and community since June 2019.

"As for me, Mikheil has asked and I have agreed to continue as Chairman during the transition of ownership."

The news of the sale has led many to thank the Couchig family for their support, with the Americans being in charge of the club since 2019.

During the last five years, they have helped Wanderers achieve three Wembley finals, secure a year in the Championship, and facilitate the first managerial change in over a decade.

This was after Gareth Ainsworth suddenly departed to Queens Park Rangers in February 2023, allowing Matt Bloomfield to be hired whilst the latter was at Colchester United.

Taking to Facebook, some fans had their say.

Dave Meredith said: "Couchigs have done a great job. The new owner has a LOT to live up to

Chris Perrin added: "At least Mr Couchig is still the chairman of Wycombe Wanderers, may that continue

Jey Bartlett said: "Massive shout out to Rob for everything he has done.

"I dread to think where our club would be without him.

"Thank you so much for everything the Couchigs have done.

"I hope the new owners will have the same passion and commitment to the club."

NEW FACES AT ADAMS PARK

Old owner has his say on Lomtadze's arrival

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers owner Rob Couchig has revealed he and Mikheil Lomtadze 'shared similar values' ahead of the latter's eventual takeover of the club.

It was announced on May 4 that the Georgian billionaire Lomtadze, who resides in Kazakhstan, had purchased the Couchig's family 90 per cent share of the club.

It ends the American's five-year spell as Wycombe's owners, in which they achieved promotion to the Championship, three Wembley final appearances, and most importantly, financial security.

And despite the lawyer and businessman no longer being the club's owner, he will remain on the board as chairman.

He said: "I am excited for the future of Wycombe Wanderers.

"Last year, I announced that I had begun looking at a possible succession plan for our ownership.

"Since then, I met with a significant number

of well-qualified people.

"Last fall, Mikheil and I met and decided to explore his potential role with the club.

"It was apparent from that first meeting that Mikheil and I shared similar values of speaking directly and honestly with each other.

"I came to understand that his goals for the Club were similar to mine.

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Rob Couchig was the owner of Wycombe for five years (PA)

SPORT

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Ex-defender announces his retirement aged 37



Richard Keogh had two spells at Wycombe Wanderers (PA)

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers defender Richard Keogh has officially announced his retirement from professional football.

The 37-year-old, who had two spells with the Chairboys nearly 20 years apart, confirmed the news via his X [Twitter] page on May 3.

It comes after he was relegated with Forest Green Rovers to the National League.

The ex-Republic of Ireland international had a brief spell with Wanderers on loan from Bristol City during the 2005/06 season, where he

played three times in the autumn.

He would later rejoin the Chairboys in the summer of 2023, becoming Matt Bloomfield's first signing at the club.

Keogh spent seven months at Adams Park, where he played 25 times in all competitions before being released in January.

As well as two spells with Wycombe, he is best known for spending seven years at Derby County where he played over 300 games.

He also had stints with Stoke City, Huddersfield Town, Carlisle United, Cheltenham Town, Coventry City,

Milton Keynes, Blackpool and Ipswich Town.

Internationally, he featured 26 times for Ireland, scoring once.

Keogh was also part of the country's Euro 2016 squad when they reached the round of 16, losing to the host national and runners up, France.

Announcing the news on X [Twitter], he said: "After 786 appearances and 20 years, I am announcing my retirement from playing.

"My career surpassed all my expectations, full of unforgettable moments that not only made me a

better player but also a better person.

"I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to my family, friends, agent Cos and advisors.

"Their love, support, sacrifice and guidance made it possible for me to live out my dream.

"I have been extremely fortunate and feel privileged to have played for and captained incredible clubs.

"I want to extend my appreciation to all my past teammates, managers and coaches – the pleasure was mine and I am honoured to call many of you friends for life."

A new era as billionaire purchases the Chairboys

By James Richings

A TECHNOLOGY investor and entrepreneur is now the official owner of Wycombe Wanderers, the club have confirmed.

In the evening of Saturday, May 4, one week after the league season ended, the Adams Park side released an official statement confirming that Mikheil Lomtadze's company, Blue Ocean Partners, owns 90 per cent of the club.

The Georgian joins the club's board alongside Eduard Vyshnyakov and Dan Rice.

Wanderers' previous owners, the Couhig family, had been with the Buckinghamshire-based team since 2019 before officially taking over in February 2020.

In that time, they helped Wycombe reach three Wembley finals, secure a season in the Championship, and provide a development system which was produced names such as Anis Mehmeti, Chris Forino and Ali Al-Hamadi.

Rob Couhig, the club's CEO, announced his intention to sell the club in the summer of 2023, with the move being confirmed tonight [May 4].

The American businessman and lawyer told the club's website: "I am excited for the future of Wycombe Wanderers.

"Last year, I announced that I had begun looking at a possible succession plan for our ownership.

"Since then, I met with a significant number of well-qualified people.

"Last fall, Mikheil and I met and decided to explore his potential role with the club.

"It was apparent from that first meeting that Mikheil

and I shared similar values of speaking directly and honestly with each other.

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"The Board of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club will have three new directors, Mikheil, Eduard Vyshnyakov, and Daniel Rice.

"The Board has asked me to convey its and the Wanderers family's appreciation for the great work that Missy Couhig and Pete Couhig have done for the Club and community since June 2019.

"As for me, Mikheil has asked and I have agreed to continue as Chairman during the transition of ownership.

"Please join me in welcoming Mikheil, Eduard and Dan to the Club."

Lomtadze, Vyshnyakov and Rice have all been appointed as directors of the club, whilst Couhig will be continuing as a Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Specifically, Vyshnyakov will 'help the board with financial controls and planning of the club', whilst Rice will take up the position of Chief Football Officer, 'reporting directly to the Club's Board of Directors.'



Mikheil Lomtadze is now officially Wycombe's new owner (Image: YouTube)

Wanderers to aid released player back to fitness

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has revealed that the club will 'help' Kane Vincent-Young 'get back to full fitness' after it was revealed the latter will not be staying with the Chairboys next season.

The left-wing back signed a one-year deal with the Adams Park side 12 months ago from Ipswich Town, playing 21 times during the 2023/24 campaign.

However, his solitary year in Buckinghamshire was hit with two lengthy spells on the sidelines.

The ex-Colchester United man played the first seven league games of the season but missed three months of the campaign between September and December with a quadriceps injury.

He returned to the squad just before Christmas and regularly featured until he suffered a recurrence of his previous injury in the 1-0 loss away at Stevenage at the end of February.

His setback occurred just half-an-hour into the contest.

Speaking on Vincent-Young's time at Adams Park, Bloomfield said: "Kane has been really unfortunate with injuries, but he looked a really promising player for us when he stepped on the pitch.

"So we're looking forward to helping him get back to full fitness and seeing what opportunities open up for him at that point."

Vincent-Young is one of six people to leave Wycombe once their contract expires at the end of June, whilst six loan players will return to their parent clubs.

With 12 faces leaving Adams Park, the manager admitted that the hunt to look at new players is already underway.

He added: "My staff and I are already making good progress with recruitment plans for the new season and the hard work never stops because I am passionate about building on what we've achieved so far and delivering."