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MORLEY LEAVES TOP OF TABLE WANDERERS

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HUNT FOR MILLIONAIRE LOTTO WINNERS: PAGE 7

12 years jail for 'predator' who abused two girls

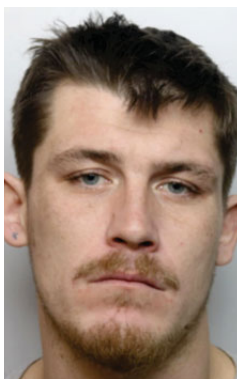
30-year-old guilty of 11 offences

A 'PREDATORY and dangerous' paedophile who abused two girls in High Wycombe has been jailed for 12 years. Kenneth Davies, also known as 'Popeye', was jailed for 12 years at Aylesbury Crown Court on Monday, December 23.

By Timothy Edgley

The court heard how the 30-year-old, of no fixed address, abused two girls in High Wycombe.

Full story: Page 5



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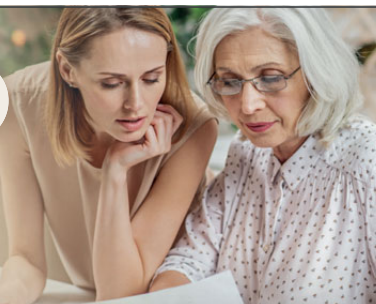


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Sport

FOOTBALL

Flackwell Heath ease past North Leigh

A rotated Flackwell Heath side eased past relegation threatened North Leigh at Wilks Park in front of another impressive home crowd, setting the Heathens up well for Wednesday's visit of Aylesbury United.

Although the visitors didn't offer Flackwell any late Christmas presents on the pitch, it was a game in which keeper Carl Dennison remained largely untroubled, but for a few half chances. Flackwell took the lead midway through the first half, as an assist from

Cory Hathaway allowed the popular Jack Shakespeare to slot home his first league goal of the season. Hathaway's free kick a few minutes later struck the frame of the goal, as the Heathens increasingly took control but couldn't expand the lead.

The second half continued the trend that developed through the first half, with Jeffrey Fordjour's curling effort in the 48th minute doubling the home side's lead. Various chance and half chances came and

went for the home side, before the dependable Michael Harding rounded Monty Marriott in the North Leigh goal to tap home just after the hour mark.

After the third and final goal of the afternoon, the game fizzled out to its conclusion, with the Heathens deserving winners. An honourable mention is certainly worthy for North Leigh keeper Marriott - but for some of his impressive saves, the scoreline could and perhaps should have been greater.



Dennison during Saturday's encounter. Picture: Glenn Alcock

Kone and Lubala star at Stevenage

Festive joy at the Lamex as Wanderers cruise to victory

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has described his side's 3-0 win at Stevenage as 'professional'.

a first-half brace from Richard Kone and a second-half Beryly Lubala header secured the chairboys' 14th league win from their 21 matches played so far, as they also made it 19 fixtures without defeat in League One.

It is also the 21st time in 30 matches this season that Wanderers have scored two or more goals in a single game.

Despite this, Bloomfield, who said he was 'full of pride' after the victory at the Lamex, admitted that he wanted to keep the 'realism' for what the rest of the season lies ahead.

He said: "I thought it was a very professional performance from us - the boys were excellent.

"We gave them yesterday [Christmas Day] off, so they could spend it with their families as I thought it was the right thing to do, and I asked them to turn up today [December 26] and pick up from where we were.

"We played some very good stuff against Bolton and we wanted to do the same again today, and we were excellent.

"You can only go off the evidence presented to you and so far this season, the work the boys have put in, as well as the way they have gone about their work, gives me no choice but to trust them.

"They have my trust.

"The big characters in the squad were at it today as they drove everyone else on, and I thought we were professional."

His comments in Hertfordshire come one year to the day that the club lost 1-0 away at Exeter City.

A Sonny Cox strike, compounded with a Luke Leahy missed penalty deep into injury-time, cemented Wanderers' 11th straight league game without a win, as they fell from just outside the play-offs to near the relegation zone in two months.

Many supporters were calling for Bloomfield's exit as manager after the difficult defeat in Devon, but 12 months

By James Richings

on, he has won three Manager of the Month awards, has taken Wycombe to Wembley, as well as into the League One automatic places.

He previously described Boxing Day 2023 as 'one of the lowest' moments in the sport, but said he had 'resilience' to help him get through.

Speaking after the win against Stevenage, he added: "A bit of a difference from this time last year.

"Being a player is one thing, but being a manager is completely different.

"I never realised until I went to Colchester quite how much it would influence and inflict pain on your life, but the utopia when you win.

"I never knew those feelings would be so far apart.

"One thing I learnt is that I truly believe in what I am trying to do, I'm hungry for success, and you never know how strong you are until you need to find out.

"That's my character - I will keep driving and working to do what is best."

When asked about the progress Wycombe have made in the last year, he continued: "I would be an absolute liar if I said I knew it was going to go this well.

"Of course not - we had lots of tough moments last season, but I think it was that deep resilience [which helped].

"Wigan away was tough, Exeter away was tough both personally and professionally, but the data and stats showed me that there were good times to come.

"We were well prepared for the January window as I thought the business we did was excellent, so I knew we were on for better things.

"But to stand here a year later [sitting second], is beyond my wildest dreams. We shouldn't be where we are right now, as I want to keep that realism about us, but not to be defeatist. I believe we can carry on with what we are doing."



Matt Bloomfield was in a buoyant mood after Wycombe's win at Stevenage on Boxing Day which saw them sit second (PA)

FOOTBALL

Rams are defeated in Boxing Day Bucks derby

FLACKWELL Heath defeated Beaconsfield Town 2-1 in a tightly fought Boxing Day encounter at Holloways Park, writes Arran White.

A bumper crowd of 394 turned up to Holloways Park for the Boxing Day clash between Beaconsfield Town & Flackwell Heath. Flackwell Heath started on the front foot, seeing a lot of the ball and going close early on.

It was only four minutes into the match when Flackwell Heath took the lead with a good header scored by Callum Mapley, after an excellent cross.

Beaconsfield had some a chance to level, with Ben Tricker going close to equalising as he headed wide from a corner.

The first half largely belonged to Flackwell Heath, as the created chances and dominated in midfield.

Beaconsfield's Ben Tricker made an excellent block to prevent the scoreline being doubled as half time approached. Akiel Raffie went close for Beaconsfield with a well taken free kick, but the Flackwell Heath took the 1-0 lead into the interval.

Beaconsfield looked a far better team after the restart. Josh Marcon was inches away from levelling the scoreline when his corner almost went straight in only to be denied by a fingertip form Flackwell's Carl Dennison in goal.

The score should have been levelled when Cheyce Grant found himself one on one with the goalkeeper inside the box.

Hesitation from Grant and a good save Dennison kept the score at 0-1.

Flackwell Heath extended their lead when Beaconsfield seemed to freeze in midfield, allowing the ball to be passed through the middle of the park, before being smashed home by Jack Shakespeare to make it 0-2.

Debutant Usman Lalustani had only been on the pitch a matter of minutes when he halved the deficit to make the score 1-2.

Beaconsfield's Joe Lawal did the hard work, squeezing his way through in the box before cutting the ball back across the face of goal, the ball pushed wide only to be tapped in by Lalustani inside the six-yard box.

A late effort from substitute Avto Akhsiasvili sailed just over the bar before Beaconsfield had a penalty appeal waved away as the game drew to a close.

Flackwell Heath hanging on to win 2-1 and take local bragging rights back down the road.

Skipper praises departing fan favourite after late goal

WYCOMBE Wanderers captain Jack Grimmer has praised the attitude of the existing Aaron Morley after the latter scored an injury-time winner against Exeter City to send the Chairboys top of the League One table.

Morley, who joined on loan from Bolton Wanderers in August, stepped up to take a penalty in the 94th minute of the club's New Year's Day clash against the Grecians with the score at 1-1.

Referee Scott Simpson awarded the spot-kick after Ed Francis handled the ball following a coming together with Cameron Humphreys.

Striker Beryly Lubala and midfielder Luke Leahy had been on penalty duty for the match but had both been substituted at the time the kick was given.

This allowed Morley to score his first Adams Park by smashing it in the bottom right-hand corner of Joe Whitworth's goal, but it sent Wanderers top of the table as they reached 50 points for the season.

It was confirmed at full-time that he will return to Bolton, but it is hoped that the two clubs will agree on a deal before January Transfer Window concludes.

In the match against Exeter, Luke Leahy put Wycombe ahead with a deflected free-kick on 65 minutes, before Tristan Crana equalised with five minutes left.

Speaking after the match, Grimmer, who penned a new two-year deal one day prior, said: "The first-half looked like two teams that were coming off the back of a business schedule as



Wycombe Wanderers' Aaron Morley (right) celebrates after scoring his side's second goal against Exeter City on New Year's Day (PA)

there were a few leggy performances, but these are the sweet ones to win.

"The game could have gone either way and I'm gutted (that we conceded), as I'd rather have a 1-0 than a 2-1, but to concede in the 85th minute and still win, shows the character of the side.

"To get the rewards for that was extra sweet as we

wanted to start the New Year well, and off the back of a defeat, we wanted to get the win.

"Exeter are a good side. They passed the ball well and kept the ball well, but didn't really have that punch up front.

"When Luke stepped up with his free-kick, I thought that would have been

enough [to win], as we had been quite solid.

"And very unlike us, we conceded from a corner which we haven't done much of this season."

On Morley, Grimmer added: "You start to think that it's going to be one of those games, but Cam's bit of magic wins us a penalty and Azz steps up to score it.

"If it's to be his farewell to us, then it's a massive pressure penalty.

"He hadn't taken a penalty for us as we have had a host of players take them, and to step up, take it, and score, knowing he's going back to Bolton was incredible.

"He'll be a big miss for any changing room, but we have to keep going."

CHAIRBOYS Defeat in the capital

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield said he was 'frustrated' with his side's 2-1 loss away at Charlton Athletic but could never question his players' work ethic.

The defeat at the Valley on December 29 ended the club's 19-game unbeaten league run, with it being the Chairboys' first loss in the division in four-and-a-half months.

A brace from Miles Leaburn in the opening six minutes of the second period gave Wanderers 'a mountain to climb', and even though Richard Kone scored a brilliant goal seven minutes before the end, it wasn't Wycombe's day in South London.

Speaking after the defeat, Bloomfield said: "I didn't think we were clean enough with our play as I thought we broke down a few too many times compared to recently.

"We got through the first two-thirds of the pitch well, but we didn't have that cleanliness at the top of the pitch which was frustrating.

"But we all knew that the unbeaten run was going to end at some point, but the way the lads kept going and kept probing in the last half-an-hour was very good.

"We kept on going – it is a penalty on Gideon [Kodua], and Cam [Humphreys] was fouled in the build-up to the second goal. It went against us but that's the game."

CHAIRBOYS Reaction from Jones

NATHAN Jones praised his Charlton side for the way they handled League One high-fliers Wycombe Wanderers at The Valley.

Miles Leaburn's quickfire brace at the start of the second half – taking the striker to eight goals in all competitions – earned a 2-1 victory for the hosts.

Charlton's play-off aspirations looked to be fading but three successive victories have now pulled them back into the equation.

Richard Kone's consolation strike relied more on a quality finish than Wycombe opening up the Addicks rearguard, and Jones said: "These are the top scorers in the league but we limited them to very little. It was a good performance from start to finish."

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BEACONSFIELD SIT MIDTABLE

Points shared after stalemate at Kidlington

BEACONSFIELD were held to a 0-0 draw away at Kidlington on an extremely heavy pitch, writes Arran White.

The pitch was always going to be a significant factor in the match and contributed to the game being short on efforts on goal in the first half.

Beaconsfield could have opened the scoring when new man Usman Lalustani was played through to go one on one with the Kidlington goalkeeper.

The keeper made a good save with his feet to keep the game level.

Kidlington had their chance to take the lead shortly before the break but were denied by a great block from Ben Tricker.

The interval came with the game level at 0-0, both teams would have been feeling they had a chance of

taking the points in this one.

The second half appeared to be going the same way as the first, with limited chances for both sides.

Beaconsfield's best chance came through captain Matty Harriot who volleyed an effort just wide of the post.

Beaconsfield had a spell on the front foot but could not find a clear effort on what was now a very difficult surface.

As the game drew to a close Kidlington had a claim for a penalty which was quickly waved away by the referee.

A Kidlington chance in added time was kept out by a fine save from Eddie Brearey to give Beaconsfield a point to take back home.

The result means the Rams will end the year in 13th place.



Beaconsfield play their games at Holloways Park

Sport

STEVENAGE 0-3 WYCOMBE WANDERERS

Boxing Day delight away in Hertfordshire

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield said he is 'full of pride' in seeing the club's supporters celebrate the recent 3-0 away win at Stevenage.

Just under 900 Chairboys made the trip across the border into Hertfordshire to witness Richard Kone score a brace and Beryly Lubala bag his 10th strike of the season with a second-half header.

The result means the Adams Park team stay in the automatic promotion places with 46 goals to their name in the league – the most out of any team in the 92.

The Wanderers fans were in full voice during their visit to the Lamex, as they also earned their first victory at the stadium in the league for the first time since August 2014.

He said: "I'm full of pride at the moment.

"We can't always control the result but you can control the effort and the identity that we put in, and those are the bits that we keep trying to chase.

"We knew in the summer that we needed to recruit more at the top of the pitch to compliment the boys we already had – we executed

that and the boys that have come in, have hit the ground running.

"I hope there is more to come."

He added: "There is real pride in watching our supporters backing the boys. They're enjoying coming to support us and turning up in numbers with full voice.

"Nothing can replicate that feeling at the end of the game when you share it with people that you think so much of, and we want to have more of them."

The victory was Bloomfield's 50th as Wycombe manager.



It was Wycombe's first win there in the EFL since 2014 (PA)

Leaburn brings to an end Wanderers' unbeaten run

Chairboys suffer first league loss since August at Charlton

WYCOMBE Wanderers' run of 18 league games without defeat came to an end as they lost 2-1 away at Charlton Athletic.

A second-half brace by Miles Leaburn in the space of six minutes condemned the Chairboys to only their third league loss of the season and their sixth in all competitions.

The first-half was a slow affair with Addicks keeper Ashley Maynard-Brewer not having a lot to do.

On five minutes, Beryly Lubala fired an attempt just over the bar from range, before Aaron Morley forced the shot-stopper into a routine save.

This was as good as it got for Wanderers in what was a very flat opening 45 minutes.

For Charlton, Luke Berry fluffed his lines during the midway point of the contest as his close-range attempt went straight into the hands of Franco Ravizzoli, whilst a Macaully Gillesphey cross/shot flew across the six-yard box.

The opening 45 was a non-affair, but this dynamic changed in the opening six minutes of the second period.

In the 20 seconds, a Josh Edwards cross was flicked home by Leaburn who wielded away in celebration as Charlton went 1-0 up.

It was his seventh of the season.

He then registered his eighth just moments later, after a Berry through ball found the striker, who confidently chipped it over Ravizzoli from 20-yards.

It was a terrific finish.

Nathan Jones' men should have really wrapped the game up as Thierry Small, Tyreece Campbell and Karoy Anderson all tried

By James Richings

their luck, as Wycombe looked to be on the ropes.

However, with six minutes remaining, Richard Kone scored his 15th of the campaign to give the Chairboys hope.

Wanderers threw the kitchen sink at the Addicks keeper Jow low, Fred Onyedimma and Josh Scowen went close, but the day belonged to Charlton, who inflicted Wanderers' 12th defeat in 2024 from 58 games.

SPEAKING on the loss, Bloomfield said: "Both goals were soft which is disappointing – we knew that we had to defend a lot of balls into our box.

"I thought we did that apart from the one [which they scored from], and with the second one, it's a foul on Cam but we needed to react quicker and it's a soft goal.

"We knew it would be a messy game, and coming so soon after Boxing Day, we knew that having the legs later on in the game would help and that worked.

"I thought the game was too much in the middle of the pitch, as we needed to use the wings more, and with seven minutes to go, plus with the seven minutes added on, the boys kept on going but they just couldn't find that final touch.

"The positives from today were that the boys kept fighting, more minutes for Joshy and Gids and the passing at the top of the pitch was fantastic.

"It was frustrating to concede the goals we did just after half-time but I can never doubt the work ethic of these boys."



Miles Leaburn scored a brace in Charlton's win over Wycombe on December 29 – it's the third season in a row he has scored against Wanderers (PA)

WANDERERS

Returning at the right time for the Chairboys

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has spoken about the return of Gideon Kodua and Josh Scowen to the team following their recent injury lay-offs.

The duo hadn't played since November but both made their comeback in the recent 3-0 away win at Stevenage on Boxing Day.

They would also appear in the 2-1 loss at Charlton Athletic three days later at the Valley.

Speaking on their return, as well as their performances in the latter Bloomfield said: "I thought they both looked sharp – Gids looked sharp and he should have had a penalty.

"He looked creative and there was a bit of a buzz about him.

"And with Joshy, we all know he's top and we're just building him up to play as much football as we can."

His comments came after the Addicks defeated the Chairboys in the club's final game of 2024.

It ended Wycombe's 19-unbeaten streak in League One, as they will begin 2025 in third place, two points off Birmingham City who sit top.

Wycombe had been in the automatic places since beating Leyton Orient 3-0 at the end of October.

He added: "It's about retaining your realism of where we have been, and hopefully where we are heading.

"It shows that football is about momentum, doing your best and believing in what you want to do and it has been some turnaround, but it's all about the players.

"Not just this group, but the boys that did it at the back of last season too.

"I'm proud of what we have done during this calendar year, but we're hungry for more.

"If you said in July and August that after losing the first two league games, it would take until Charlton away [at the end of December] to lose again, you would have snapped your hand off.

"The positives from today were that the boys kept fighting, more minutes for Joshy and Gids and the passing at the top of the pitch was fantastic."

Finally, Bloomfield has confirmed that Brandon Hanlan is not injured.

The 27-year-old returned after being on the sidelines with an ACL injury in the FA Cup win against York City at the start of November, but has not featured since the EFL Trophy loss versus Swindon on December 10.

He started the defeat but was taken off with 11 minutes remaining.

Bloomfield said: "Brandon is fine.

"We have the four wide players at the moment along with Dan Udoh and Rich [Kone] who can play down the middle.

"But he is looking to contribute as much as we can, and he is fine.

Winger has been out with a hernia Sadlier could return from injury 'soon'



Wycombe Wanderers's Kieran Sadlier has not played for the club since the start of October (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has provided an injury update on winger Kieran Sadlier.

The 30-year-old had featured in 11 of the Chairboys' matches this season but has not played since the 1-0 home win against Crawley Town on October 5, where he came on as a last-minute substitute.

He has since confirmed via social media that he underwent a hernia operation on November 25, and it was anticipated he would return 'within a couple of weeks'. However, he has yet to recover from his injury.

Speaking after the 2-1 victory against Exeter City on New Year's Day, Bloomfield said: "Sads is back out on the grass which is very good.

"Give it a couple of weeks, we are hoping to have him in and around the group.

"It has been longer that what we have hoped for as we're missing him.

"But, he has been terrific since joining us and we hope to have him back in the group soon."

His comments came after the club left it late to beat Exeter in the league for the first time since 2016, as they returned to the top of the League One table.

Wycombe have now played 23 matches this season, half the 46 fixtures they need to play, and have scored 49 goals in that time, achieving 50 points.

When asked about what his target was for the opening half of the campaign, Bloomfield added: "Second half of last season we got 40 so I wanted to beat that, but I don't really set goals as I don't really believe in that.

"I just want to go about my business everyday and see where it takes you."

WANDERERS

Not happy with late red card

EXETER'S assistant manager Kevin Nicholson blamed referee Scott Simpson for their club's 2-1 loss against Wycombe on New Year's Day.

Aaron Morley scored an injury-time penalty to secure a 2-1 win for Wanderers, which ended the Grecians' eight-match unbeaten run versus the Chairboys.

Referee Scott Simpson awarded the spot-kick after Ed Francis handled in the area.

Manager Gary Caldwell was incensed with the decision and made his feelings known to the fourth official.

However, his protest was deemed to be too aggressive, and he was given a red card for his remonstrations.

The results mean Wycombe have defeated Exeter for the first time in the league since 2016.

Nicholson said: "The players have come here during a busy schedule and did everything that was asked.

"But when you come to a place like this you're going to be under a little bit and I hate excuses, but I believe the referee has made several decisions, one in particular, that went against us and it led to the manager being sent off.

"It was very frustrating because we had done well."

WANDERERS

Midfielder 'ready to go' after six week injury lay-off

WYCOMBE Wanderers midfielder Josh Scowen is 'ready to go' for the rest of the season after returning from his recent injury lay-off.

The 31-year-old was hurt in the 2-1 EFL Trophy win over Crawley Town on November 12, which resulted in him missing eight games in all competitions.

He made his comeback as a second-half substitute in the 3-0 win against Stevenage on Boxing Day, and thanked the sports scientists for their help in his return.

He said: "It's been a long six weeks but I have applied myself and have done as needed to be done and I'm grateful to be back.

"I was given programmes to follow and thankfully, everything has been alright and I'm ready to go.

"All the sports scientists and physios know what they are talking about so it's so important to follow what they say, as we don't know as much.

"I did everything they told me to do whether I liked it or not and it has got me back quicker than expected.

"Until you step back out, you don't really know how fit you are."

WANDERERS FAN FAVOURITE SIGNS NEW DEAL

Captain Jack wants to stay to lead the Wycombe ship

WYCOMBE Wanderers captain Jack Grimmer has revealed he will 'absolutely' love to see out his career at the club if given the opportunity.

The 31-year-old, who recently penned a new deal with the Chairboys that will last until 2027, has become an important figure for the Adams Park side since joining from Coventry City in 2019.

The right-back has been part of two League One play-off campaigns in 2020 and 2022 and also played a huge role in Wycombe's run to the EFL Trophy final in 2024.

His stint in Buckinghamshire has seen the Scotsman play just under 200 times for the club, and he's hoping to contribute more to the team in the next two years.

Speaking after the Chairboys' 2-1 victory over Exeter City on January 1, he said: "It is nice to finally get it finished, finalised and signed so it's not on my mind anymore.

"I'm very happy to be here

- this is my sixth season and my new contract will take me up to seasons seven and eight.

"I'm interested to see where the club is going.

"I want to be part of it as I've had chats with the gaffer, Dan [Rice], Tom Holder and the new owner.

"These are exciting times and to see the evolution of the club from when I joined to when I leave will be incredible."

When asked if he would like to see out his career with Wycombe, Grimmer, who became club captain this season following the retirement of Joe Jacobson last season, added: "Yeah - if the club is going in the way it is, then absolutely.

"I'm happy to be here as long as I am wanted and I feel wanted around the place.

"I'm very settled here.

"I live in Marlow which is a great location, my family love coming down, and I feel I have got a great relationship with the fans."



Jack Grimmer signed his new Chairboys contract on New Year's Eve - one day before the Exeter match (PA)

Bloomfield found criticism 'tough to read'

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield admitted it was 'tough to read' the online comments about him following the club's poor run of form 12 months ago.

The club legend was under fire by a large proportion of Chairboys supporters in December 2023 as the Adams Park side endured a winless league run that lasted 12 games.

The drop in from between October to the end of the year saw Wycombe go from just outside the play-offs to flirting

with the relegation zone.

Two notorious fixtures from this spell were away at Exeter City on December 26 and Leyton Orient on December 29 respectively, which ended 1-0 to the Grecians, with the latter finishing 0-0.

Numerous fans demanded that Bloomfield leave the club in several online posts, but fast forward 12 months later, Wycombe have picked up the most points out of any team in League One.

Wanderers have accumulated 87 points from their 45 matches this year, losing

just 12 of their 58 games in all competitions in 2024.

Speaking after the 2-1 loss at Charlton Athletic on December 29, Bloomfield said: "I want to enjoy watching us with the football we're playing and enjoy wins.

"We have to keep being hungry, evolving and moving forward."

"To get 87 points in 45 games is some return considering where we started, and I was sent a couple of screenshots yesterday of what was going around last year: "It was tough to read."

When asked if the negative comments drive him on, he added: "It doesn't drive me on, as I drive myself on.

"Getting up and leaving the family home [in Felixstowe] at 4.30am and providing for my girls drives me to be successful and be the best I can be.

"That's what drives me but I want to make our fans proud.

"I have spent 21 years and a bit of my life at this football club, and I want everyone to be proud of what we are doing and be proud of their team."

SPORT



Milestone reached as Wanderers impress again



Matt Bloomfield celebrates Wycombe's win over Exeter (PA)

WYCOMBE MANAGER Matt Bloomfield has described the club reaching 50 points for the season as "incredible" following their 2-1 home win against Exeter.

A Luke Leahy free-kick and an injury-time penalty from the departing Aaron Morley gave the Chairboys all three points as the Adams Park team returned top of the League One table.

Tristan Crama put the Grecains level with five minutes left, but Morley's spot-kick with seconds remaining have put Wanderers on half a century of points. The penalty was given after Ed

Francis was deemed to have handballed it – he had assisted Crama's goal just moments before.

Bloomfield said: "We needed to bounce back [after the loss at Charlton] with an important result today and we got it.

"I enjoyed our attacking play in the second half as we had a real energy and we were on the front foot.

"But I was very disappointed to concede as there was nothing in the game and out of nowhere [they scored].

"They only had five touches in our

box all afternoon, so to us very frustrating but we kept on going to get the goal at the end was special.

"To get 50 points from 23 games this season is an incredible achievement.

"All of the lads have worked so hard since pre-season, and we're hungry for more but we need to remember where the journey started from last year.

"For us to be above several of the teams around us on New Year's Day is incredible and we just have to enjoy the moment."

However, Exeter's assistant manager Kevin Nicholson blamed referee Scott

Simpson for the defeat in South Buckinghamshire.

He believes that certain decisions "went against" the Devon-based team, which includes the penalty at the death.

Manager Gary Caldwell was incensed with the decision and made his feelings known to the fourth official.

However, his protest was deemed to be too aggressive, and he was given a red card for his remonstrations.

The results mean Wycombe have defeated Exeter for the first time in the league since 2016, ending a run of eight straight games without a win.

Marvellous Morley says goodbye with winner

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield said it is 'disappointing' that midfielder Aaron Morley will be leaving the club this week.

The 24-year-old will return to his parent club, Bolton Wanderers, after the Chairboys and the Trotters failed to agree on a new deal for the ex-Rochdale man.

Morley penned a loan deal with the Adams Park side in August until January, where he played 23 times in all competitions and scored two goals.

The latter came in his final appearance for the Chairboys on New Year's Day [today], with an injury-time penalty against Exeter City, to secure a 2-1 win over the Grecians.

It is hoped negotiations will continue between the two parties during the month, but at this present time, he will return to Bolton, and could even feature for them this weekend which is coincidentally against Exeter.

He said: "It's very disappointing that Aaron is returning to Bolton but he has been an absolute pleasure to have with us.

"I'm not just talking about his passing – he trains properly every day, he's low maintenance, he gets on with his work, he integrated into our team very well, and the boys welcomed in.

"He has conducted himself very well and he has been a pleasure to have.

"We saw that there were a couple of bits that he needed to improve on, and he has

taken the information with respect and he's tried to improve.

"For him to get the winner in front of the terrace was a special moment."

Striker Beryly Lubala and midfielder Luke Leahy had been the designated penalty takers for the match (Lubala being first choice and Leahy being second), but both were off the pitch at the time the spot-kick was given.

It was agreed that Morley would take it, with it being his first goal for the club at Adams Park.

Bloomfield continued: "What a good guy.

"He's low maintenance, he gets on with his job, was on in training and cares about his club.

"He felt at home which is hard to do when you're on loan, so thank you to Bolton for loaning him us, and thank you to Aaron for the way he has conducted himself.

"He has improved a lot in the time he has been here and is going back a better player.

Finally, when asked if he could return in January, Bloomfield continued: "The club knows my feelings on it, but at this time, I don't know.

"I know we have made another effort to retain him [which was rejected], and if there is a way of keeping him, then I'm sure we'll explore it."



Aaron Morley bangs the Wycombe badge after scoring the Chairboys' injury-time winner over Exeter on New Year's Day (PA)

Top of the league after late penalty

AARON Morley scored an injury-time penalty in his last game for the club, as Wycombe Wanderers left it late to beat Exeter City 2-1 at Adams Park.

A deflected Luke Leahy free-kick midway through the second period seemed to have won it for the Chairboys, before a Tristan Crama header levelled things up for the away side with five minutes remaining.

But Morley's last-minute spot-kick sent Wanderers top in a dramatic finale.

The hosts began the better of the two sides as Beryly Lubala fired wide, whilst Caleb Taylor scuffed his half-chance get saved by Joe Whitworth in the opening six minutes, but the opening 45 didn't see any keeper make a notable save.

For the Chairboys, Cameron Humphreys twice tried his luck but missed the target on both occasions.

Richard Kone, who came into the team following his brief cameo and stunning goal in the 2-1 loss at Charlton on Sunday, saw his header get easily saved by Joe Whitworth in the Exeter goal.

The second period was completely different to the first as both teams looked for the opening.

Imari Kiskanen's header just went over the bar before Watts' cheeky lob from 40-yards nearly caught Franco Ravizzoli out, but thankfully, he clawed the ball into his hands on 55 minutes.

The Chairboys eventually took the lead 10 minutes later, when Leahy's deflected free-kick flew past Whitworth, but the Grecains levelled with five minutes remaining, as Ed Francis' corner was headed in by Crama.

It looked like a point would be shared, but in injury-time, Francis handled the ball after a coming together with Humphreys, and referee Scott Simpson pointed to the spot.

This allowed Morley to step up and bury his kick into the bottom right corner to seal Wycombe the win.

This, coupled with Wrexham's loss at Barnsley and Birmingham's draw at Stockport means Matt Bloomfield's side are once again top of the league.