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# Finding the positives

DESPITE the defeat against Bristol City in the League Cup, manager Gareth Ainsworth has revealed the club are 'going places'.

Wanderers fell to a 3-1 loss at the hands of the Championship side at Adams Park, with there being nine changes to the starting 11 from the victory against Barnsley on Saturday.

The line-up included seven players under the age of 23 with Joe Jacobson, Daryl Horgan, Jason McCarthy and Nick Freeman being the most experienced in the squad.

The match saw Ali Al-Hamadi score his first Adams Park goal in the loss in front of the terrace end in what was his first start at the stadium.

Anis Mehmeti also showcased his abundance during the cup tie, whilst Jasper Pattenden, Jack Young, Chris Forino and Jack Wakely also performed.

Goalkeeper Tyla Dickinson also produced several important saves on the night.

Speak after the loss, Gareth Ainsworth: "I will focus on the positives.

"We had many players who were under the age of 22, three on the bench that have just signed who are 18/19 years old.

"We're going places.

"The infrastructure at this club is great, but we need to be better and that when you're playing in certain games, you have got to take the opportunity."

On the performance, Ainsworth added: "I was hoping we could have taken them to



Chris Forino and Ali Al-Hamadi after the latter scored Wycombe's equaliser against Bristol City (PA)

penalties, but I had to protect a couple of players in Anis Mehmeti and Chris Forino because they will be needed on Saturday without a doubt.

"There were some real bright sparks with Adam Leathers, Jack Wakely, Jasper Pattenden along with the experience with Daryl, Joe and Nick was needed.

"On the goals, the first is a handball and I haven't forgotten about that, but the next two we gave them.

"There are a few defending issues that we need to get better at.

"I've told the boys and they know.

"We talk about what teams thrive on and if you make silly mistakes, they will thrive on it.

"They will jump at that opportunity, especially Championship sides and unfortunately, we conceded a couple of goals that came from poor decisions."



Jasper Pattenden and Ali Al-Hamadi (PA)

## Skating all the way to High Wycombe



It will take place on August 27 and 28 in the town

HIGH Wycombe has been selected to host the Five Nations Roller Derby Back on Track Showcase on August 27 and 28.

After being on hold for the past two years due to Covid restrictions, the event will return with a #BackOnTrack tournament to celebrate the upcoming bright future of the Five Nations Roller Derby Championship in 2023 and beyond.

Roller derby is a fast paced, full-contact sport played on quad skates.

As one skater (the jammer) tries to fight their way across a pack of opponents, their teammates battle to clear their way, while restricting the opponents' jammer.

On Saturday, the action will include among others some internationally known teams such as London Roller Derby, Manchester's Rainy City Roller Derby, Leeds Roller Derby and Cardiff's Tiger Bay Brawlers.

On Sunday, the Big Bucks High Rollers will represent High Wycombe against Manchester Roller Derby, while Dublin will challenge Milton Keynes' Rebels.

## Promotion for Bucks cricket team

BUCKS cricketers are celebrating promotion following their comprehensive 299-run victory over nearest rivals Cambridgeshire at Tring Park this week.

This success completed a clean sweep of four wins which saw them top National Counties Championship Eastern Division 2 by a massive 42 points to earn promotion to Division 1 next season, when they will play Lincolnshire, Suffolk, Staffordshire and Norfolk.

Needing only three points from their final game to secure promotion, Bucks secured these on the first day when they scored 386 all out in 89.5 overs after being put in to bat.

Star of the show was AJ Woodland, who scored his second Championship century of the summer, when making 111 from 206 balls with 15 fours. He shared an opening stand of 129 with Michael Wells, who made 64. Other useful contributions came from Cameron Parsons (44), Alex Kervezee (40), Ed Bragg (32), Tom Hampton (31) and Chris Marrow (24).



(Photo from Gerrards Cross Bowls Club's website)

## Closely fought match

GERRARDS Cross took on their old rivals Bletchley Town in the Mid Bucks Cup semi-final at the weekend in an incredibly close game for players and spectators.

The format is slightly different with one point being awarded per discipline with the first to win three of the 5 disciplines going through.

As the morning wore on it became apparent that the result could go either way as first

Bletchley won the pairs game by the closest of margins and then the triples, making the overall score 2-2.

The fours rink the game was as close as any game with the scores with one end to play being 19-19.

The last few bowls played in a friendly yet competitive spirit saw Gerrards Cross win the final end by one shot and therefore progress to the final in September.

## Why do Wycombe keep injury news on the quiet?

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has explained why information regarding injuries and contract deals is not shared with fans.

So far this season, several important figures to the Chairboys' starting 11 have been absent, which includes the likes of Sam Vokes, Ryan Tafazolli, Jason McCarthy, Sullay Kaikai, and Brandon Hanlan.

Little knowledge on their omissions has been shared with supporters, but speaking in a public Q and A alongside the club's owner Rob Couhig ahead of their 3-1 home loss against Bristol City on August 24, the 49-year-old revealed this the reason why.

He also reiterated this point when speaking to the press after the cup defeat.

Ainsworth said: "If I tell everyone everything about the injuries that we have, then everyone that we're facing will be able to use that against us.



Gareth Ainsworth spoke to the fans before kick-off (PA)

"Will Sam Vokes be back for Saturday? We will wait and see but if he is not, then I will not tell anyone how long he is out for, because the teams that we're playing will know he is not involved.

"I know that people love information, but trust me, we keep things to ourselves for a reason such as contract situations, in-

juries...these are powers that I need to have.

"We don't want everyone knowing what our injuries are and what everyone's contracts are like. Come and watch the boys whatever the team as that is important.

"We do have one or two coming back which is positive."

## SPORT

## Maintaining standards at Wycombe



Another game for Gapey (PA)

DOM Gape has revealed that Wycombe have 'standard that we can't drop below', following last week's 3-0 win over Barnsley.

The 27-year-old scored his first goal in nearly four years in the victory against the Tykes at Oakwell, with his strike coming from around 50-yards out.

On top of his incredible finish, Anis Mehmeti and Nick Freeman also bagged impressive finishes as Wanderers ended their three match losing run in the league with the brilliant victory.

The performance was something that had been missing from the Chairboys squad in some of their games this season, but Gape hopes that the club are now back on track.

He said: "We needed [that performance] after the back of Tuesday night [against Exeter] and we will all admit that we haven't been at the standard we expect of ourselves, but today [August 20] was a marker of a standard that we can't drop below."

"This was a real Gareth Ainsworth Wycombe performance and we have proven that we can play."

Stryjek  
WOWS  
Wanderers

NEW goalkeeper Max Stryjek impressed in Wanderers victory over Barnsley last week, as he made numerous saves in which he kept a clean sheet.

This was after joining from Livingston just 48 hours beforehand.

Midfielder Dom Gape said: "I thought he was brilliant."

"I hadn't seen that much of him to be honest, he has only been in since Thursday but what I have seen is really promising, and it shows what type of character he has to only be in the building for a few days and put in a performance like that."

Stryjek had spent the last two years in Scotland ahead of his move to Adams Park.

## Sensational strikes in Wycombe's win

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers scored three incredible strikes as they registered a 3-0 win over Barnsley.

Anis Mehmeti, Dom Gape and Nick Freeman all got themselves on the scoresheet as the Chairboys ended a run of three straight league defeats, in what was their first-ever victory at Oakwell.

The first real chance of the match fell to centre back Robbie Cundy who save his looping header and forced new goalkeeper Max Stryjek into a fantastic save.

The defender's attempt looked like it was heading into the top left-hand corner, but the Polish shot-stopper was on hand to acrobatically tip it over the crossbar.

An incredible stop.

Wanderers' new number one was kept busy throughout the opening half as he was on duty to Luca Connell, along with Jack Aitchison, Liam Kitching and Devante Cole.

By the end of the first-half, Stryjek had made five saves from the eight shots he faced.

The South Yorkshire side were the better team, but they fell a goal behind thanks to a stunning strike from Mehmeti.

David Wheeler, who was playing as a centre forward, found Gareth McCleary who gave it to the young Albanian.

The 21-year-old then managed to beat three Barnsley players before unleashing a rocket from inside the box, past Collins, and into the net.

It was his second goal of the campaign and his 12th for the club since joining in 2020.

Wycombe had only lost one of those games he had scored in, which was against Luton Town in April 2021.

The second-half started as the



Dom Gape (pictured against MK in May 2022,) scored his first goal for Wycombe in 1,400 days when he lobbed Brad Collins in the Barnsley goal at Oakwell. It was only his fourth strike for the club (PA)

first ended, with Wanderers on the attack as McCleary hit the post, with Mehmeti smashing the rebound from a yard out.

The shocking miss was soon forgotten though as Gape scored his first Wanderers goal for 1,400 days, as he managed to lob Brad Collins from 60-yards with a first-time shot.

It was his first strike since scoring in a 3-2 win over Scunthorpe United in October 2018.

A stunned silence soon fell in and around South Yorkshire as the shire audacity to attempt the shot caught everyone off guard, and this worked in Wanderers' favour as they rounded off the match in the final 10 minutes.

This time, it was Freeman to get onto the scoresheet as he smashed in a first-time effort from 25-yards past Collins.

His previous goal for the club was in January 2020 in a 2-1 victory over Blackpool.

Up next for Wycombe Wanderers in the league is a home match against Bristol City on August 27.



Gape scored from near the half-way line in the 3-0 win over the Tykes (PA)

## Gape speaks about his great goal at Barnsley

WYCOMBE Wanderers midfielder Dominic Gape has revealed why he decided to shoot from near the half-way line which led to his incredible goal in the Chairboys' recent 3-0 win over Barnsley.

Gape, along with Anis Mehmeti and Nick Freeman, each scored a stunning strike in the victory at Oakwell which ended a run of three consecutive defeats for Gareth Ainsworth's men.

All three goals were sensational in their own right, but the

27-year-old's lob from more than 60-yards was the moment of the game, and the midfielder explained that the attempt was premeditated.

Gape, whose last goal for Wanderers scored in October 2018, explained to BBC Three Counties Radio: "I had a little scan up just before Jordy [Jordan Obita] took the throw in."

"It was something that we noted on before the game that the keeper [Brad Collins] likes a high

line, so it came to Wheeler [David Wheeler], and I asked him to set me up and he set me up nicely.

"I then thought I will have a go at this, and thankfully I hit it perfectly and it hit the back of the net."

"Watching it back, he (Collins) wasn't in that bad of a position but when I scanned up before, he was a couple of steps higher."

"I had a look, had a go and if you don't buy a ticket, you don't win the raffle."

# Charles joins City

**FORMER** Wycombe Wanderers player and cult hero Darius Charles has taken up a new job at Manchester City.

The 34-year-old, who spent three seasons with the Chairboys between 2018 and 2021, will work with the reigning Premier League champions as a leadership mentor, executive mindset coach and elite development mentor.

He confirmed the news via his official Twitter and Instagram accounts which he said: "New roles, new goals."

"Looking forward to caring for and mentoring some of the world's most talented young athletes."

Despite only playing 43 games

during his time at the Adams Park club, Charles was a fan favourite where he regularly partook in numerous community projects.

On the pitch, he played a big part in Wanderers' promotion to the Championship, playing the full 90 minutes in the Chairboys' League One playoff final win over Oxford United in 2020.

After leaving Wycombe in the summer of 2021, he re-joined his previous team, AFC Wimbledon.

He would play just two games for the Dons before being appointed as the club's caretaker manager following the dismissal of Mark Robinson, but was replaced after just one day for Mark Bowen.



Darius Charles (pictured playing for Wycombe in September 2020) featured 43 times for the Chairboys between 2018 and 2021, scoring two goals (PA)

## Parry's preview ahead of Charlton



Wanderers host Charlton (PA)

WYCOMBE'S superb performance in their 3-0 win at Barnsley has lifted the spirits of Wanderers fans now eagerly awaiting the visit of Charlton Athletic to Adams Park on Saturday (August 27).

Brilliant goals by Anis Mehmeti, Dom Gape, and Nick Freeman sealed an impressive win against a Barnsley team that had not lost a home game in League One for six years.

Apart from the goals, the most pleasing aspect of the Chairboys first away win of the season in the league was the display of new goalkeeper Max Stryjek.

The Polish keeper pulled off three outstanding saves with the score at 0-0 and looked assured and confident throughout. A repeat performance against a strong Charlton side would make him an instant hit with Wanderers fans.

The Addicks have lost only one of their opening five league games and that was away to promotion contenders Sheffield Wednesday.

At home, they have beaten Derby County and thrashed Plymouth Argyle 5-1 before last week's 1-1 draw against Cambridge United.

They finished a disappointing 13th last season, seven places and twenty-four points behind Wycombe who beat them home and away.

Two goals from Garath McCleary gave the Chairboys a 2-1 victory at Adams Park in September while Sam Vokes scored the winner at The Valley on New Year's Day.

Charlton's goal on their last visit to Bucks was a header by Sam Lavelle from a corner and conceding goals from set pieces has been a problem for Wycombe this season. They dealt with them much better at Barnsley but will need to be equally resilient against Charlton.

They are a big, powerful side with several players over six feet tall including centre backs Ryan Inniss (6'5") and Eoghan O'Connell (6'2"), and striker Jayden Stockley (6'2").

Gareth Ainsworth will be hoping that Ryan Tafazzoli is fit and back to his commanding best for this one.

The return of last season's top scorer Vokes would also be a major boost.

Saturday's clash - like so many games in modern football - could well be decided by who excels at set pieces, but with confidence high again and key players returning from injury I back Ainsworth's men to come out on top.

# 'Disappointed at big club' - Ainsworth



Gareth Ainsworth was not happy with a 'big club' after a signing fell through (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has criticized a 'big club' after a potential signing fell through.

The Chairboys were rumoured to have secured the services of Manchester United goalkeeper Nathan Bishop on a season-long loan, with the deal expected to be completed before the start of the campaign.

However, no deal was ever confirmed which meant rookie shot-stopper Tyla Dickinson started the club's five matches of the league and cup this term.

Gareth: "I feel for Lee Harrison. "We were a long way down the line with a keeper and we were let down, and disappointed by how it was handled. But we've got a really good keeper here in Max."

"I think we've found a diamond who can play at a higher level."

"Tyla did a fantastic job." Wanderers have since signed Polish keeper Max Stryjek from Livingston on a permanent contract, with the 26-year-old making his debut in the club's 3-0 win over Barnsley on August 20.

He made numerous saves, which included a stunning stop to dent Robbie Cundy a looping header in the opening stages of the match.

Ainsworth said: "Max came in and I think he had a fantastic game."

"We had a [goalkeeper from a] big club and I am very disappointed with the way that went."

"It didn't happen, but I think that has turned into our favour fate-wise because we have landed

By James Richings

on an unknown.

"He's a fantastic talent with lots to learn still, but he was brilliant in the first-half and we had a sense of security around the back."

"We were solid, energetic and we were like warriors today."

"I can't say that about every game, but the lads know where the standard is now."

The manager made three changes to the side that lost against Exeter City on August 16, as Joe Jacobson, Daryl Horgan, and Tyla Dickinson were dropped for Jordan Obita, Dom Gape, and Stryjek.

The moves worked wonders as Wanderers bossed the game for large periods, and fully deserved all three points.

He also praised the performance of Alfie Mawson, as he started his second consecutive match for the club since re-signing.

Ainsworth continued: "Certain players fit certain clubs at certain times, and if Alfie can produce what he did for us in the first-half, we have got one hell of a player."

"They were all outstanding, even Joe Jacobson and Daryl Horgan who didn't play today."

"I left them out of the team yet the only thing they wanted was a win."

"It's not often you get that at a football team."

"This is a brilliant place to be, and I saw things today that I recognized for years."

# SPORT

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## Wanderers out of the Carabao Cup



Wycombe's loss at home to Bristol City means they will now go 20 years without winning a home League Cup match inside 90 minutes (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers have been knocked out of the League Cup following a 3-1 home defeat against Bristol City.

The hosts fell behind early on thanks to a close-range strike from debutant Dylan Kadji.

The 18-year-old, who spent last season on loan at Non League Bath City, was on hand to poke home a Kal Naismith corner after seven minutes.

It was the perfect start for the visitors, but replays showed that the goal should not have stood.

This was due to a handball by Kane Wilson in the build up which was missed by the officials.

In what was a bitty first-half due

to several stoppages, Wanderers' first chance of the match fell to Ali Al-Hamadi, but the Iraqi dragged his long-range effort wide of Dan Bentley's goal.

The half fell flat but in the final few stages, Wycombe started to get at the Robins through the flanks, and nearly equalised in the final two minutes.

First, Nick Freeman, who was making his second start of the season, saw his header get accidentally blocked off the line by Al-Hamadi.

From the resulting rebound, Jason McCarthy, who was also making his first start of the season, saw his cross go just wide of the target as City led at the break.

Wanderers started the second period the better side as they managed to win three corners in the

opening stages, and this led to their equaliser.

Five minutes after the restart, Anis Mehmeti's cross was expertly met by Al-Hamadi who headed the ball into the ground and beyond a diving Bentley.

It was his second competitive goal for Wycombe, his first of the season, and his first at Adams Park.

The wind was in Wanderers' sails but against the run of play, Nigel Pearson's men nearly regained the lead through Chris Martin.

George Tanner managed to get onto a loose ball and whipped in a dangerous cross, and there was the striker to perfectly time the stooping header, but Tyla Dickinson made himself big and denied the former Fulham forward.

But with 13 minutes to go, the West

Country side scored what would be the winner as they booked themselves a place in the third round of competition.

Another Naismith cross was whipped into the box and there was Wilson who volleyed his shot beyond Dickinson inside from four yards.

City then seal the win in stoppage-time when Antonie Semenyo tapped in an open goal with seconds remaining.

Wycombe will have a lot to take from the performance as they improved during the second 45 minutes, but their long run of winning a League Cup match at Adams Park inside 90 minutes will now stretch to 20 years (August 2003), following the defeat.

Up next is Charlton Athletic at home on Saturday, August 27.



Wanderers CB Ryan Tafazolli

### Taf explains injury issues on YouTube

WYCOMBE Wanderers defender Ryan Tafazolli has explained why he has missed the club's last five matches in all competitions.

The 30-year-old has not featured since the 3-0 loss away at Bolton Wanderers on August 6 in which he played the full 90 minutes.

Tafazolli's omission from the squad had been confirmed as an injury by manager Gareth Ainsworth, but in a YouTube vlog that has been uploaded onto his channel, the centre-back explained the extent and cause of his recent setback.

Speaking in the 11-minute video, he said: "I missed the game on the weekend because I pulled a muscle in my stomach, the internal oblique.

"It was so random as I did it whipping in a ball reversing it across my body and now I am out of action.

"It's only minor as it's a grade one tear, so I will only be out of action for about a week to 10 days max, but it just sucks."

### Concentrating on the league

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has revealed that is 'all about the league' following their 3-1 home loss against Bristol City in the Carabao Cup.

The Chairboys fell behind through a Dylan Kadji strike before a header by Ali Al-Hamdi five minutes after the break gave the Adams Park side their equaliser.

However, two goals from Kane Wilson and Antoine Semenyo in the final 13 minutes secured Nigel Pearson's team into the third round.

Ainsworth said: "We go again on Saturday against Charlton which has always been the focus. That isn't meant to be disrespectful to the Carabao Cup at all, as I wanted to get through to the next round. We had Man City last season [in the third round] which was an amazing experience for the boys, but it's all about the league."

The defeat means Wycombe's wait to win a League Cup match at home within 90 minutes will stretch to 20 games and 20 years.