

Bucks Free Press

Friday, August 27, 2021

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Concern for star midfielder



Wycombe Wanderers' Nick Freeman during the Sky Bet Championship match at the Vitality Stadium, Bournemouth (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has revealed that Nick Freeman has picked up a 'nasty' knee injury in the Chairboys' 1-0 win over Lincoln City.

The 25-year-old, who made his first league start for the club since December 2020 in the victory against the Imps, came off just before the hour mark following a heavy challenge.

He received treatment on the

pitch and was assisted off the field of play by the club's medical staff.

Freeman became the forgotten man at the club last season, as the former Histon player spent the second half of last season on loan at Leyton Orient in League Two.

Speaking after the win, Ainsworth said: "Our defence seems to be cursed at the moment, and now, Nick Freeman

picked up a nasty injury.

"He could be out for a while.

"We'll have to assess it.

"Me and Nick have had some real one-to-ones in the office, and I am really pleased with where he is.

"He's put his money where his mouth is so to speak, and I've given him the chance to prove to me that it was the right choice, and he was outstanding.

"The wingbacks really made

the system work and I'm proud."

The manager also revealed that Ryan Tafazolli, David Wheeler, Dom Gape and Jason McCarthy are all 'very close' to returning in the not to distance future.

Since joining Wanderers in the summer of 2016, Freeman has played 129 matches for the club and has scored five goals.

Gareth Ainsworth will be hoping he is not set for a long absence after a good start this season.

Praise for Lincoln

GARETH Ainsworth praised his former side as the Chairboys defeated Lincoln City 1-0 at Adams Park.

The 48-year-old, who spent two-and-a-bit seasons as a player with the Imps, was impressed with how Michael Appleton's team played, and believes they'll be in the hunt for promotion to the Championship this campaign.

Last season, the red and whites lost the League One play-off final to Blackpool.

The Wanderers boss is confident that they will continue their rise up the EFL in the coming seasons after a meteoric rise in recent seasons.

Ainsworth said: "We put a tactical approach in place and it was really nice to see it come off, against a dominate and possession based

team like Lincoln.

"They have got some good players, Michael is a good manager and they've got players that can keep possession.

"Some of the goals they have scored already this season have been great goals, but we're different as we're got our own way of playing and I was so proud of the boys' efforts.

"The energy they put in was not easy to play like that.

"Lincoln are a fantastic club and they'll forever be in my heart.

"They're the club that launched my career as a player and I hope they can be up there with us at the end of the season."

Ainsworth was at Lincoln between 1995 and 1997 and scored 41 goals in 97 matches for the club, before leaving for Port Vale.

New men key in home triumph for Wycombe over visiting Imps



Wycombe Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth was full of praise for two of his new signings following the Chairboys' 1-0 win over Lincoln City on Saturday.

The home side won 1-0 thanks to an early Sam Vokes header - his first at Adams Park, in what was a hard fought battle in Bucks.

Despite dominating the opening 10 minutes, the Imps got back into the game and had several chances to pull level, most notably through Anthony Scully and Hakeem Adelakun, along with substitutes Dan N'Lundulu and Teddy Bishop.

But the performances of the new boys in Vokes and Josh Scowen really caught Ainsworth's eye, as Wycombe continue their great start to the season.

The Chairboys are now unbeaten in seven matches (dating back to May), and are unbeaten in six games against Lincoln.

On Scowen, Ainsworth said: "He is an unbelievable signing for this football club. "People know that the first thing I did when I got

the job here was get Josh Scowen back on loan from Eastbourne and put him in the team.

"I still remember the phone call to Tommy Widdrington at the time, and he reluctantly picked up and said, 'oh no, he is my best player'.

"He's a dream to work with, he is back home and he's part of the team that really believes that they can achieve this year."

On Vokes, he said: "I love having him."

"He's a real weapon as he puts in a lot of fear in defences.

"He's got a heck of a scoring rate, and I felt that Jordan Obita's cross was superb [the assist] but let's not discount what Garath McCleary did, as he opened the space up with a 30-yard overlap, which we work on, which enabled Jordan to pick out Sam."

Overall, it was a brilliant performance in what was a difficult match for the Chairboys.

Michael Appleton's men showed in front of a 5,000 plus crowd at Adams Park why they got to the League One play-off final last season, and Lincoln could have

found themselves unlucky, if it wasn't for the brilliant defensive displays of Obita, Joe Jacobson, Anthony Stewart and Jack Grimmer, with Curtis Thompson and Nick Freeman sitting in the midfield.

David Stockdale also produced an incredible save from point blank range in the dying embers of the game, to keep all three points for Wycombe.

Ainsworth continued: "I'm just glad we got the three points.

"It wasn't comfortable in the slightest, as they had one that flashed across the goal and Stockdale has made an unbelievable save, but I thought we could have one or two more.

"We had several shots but they blocked it well, had a few go over the bar, a few set pieces, and I think we had a huge shout for a penalty but the referee was letting a lot go.

"It was a brilliant way to start the game and for the first 10 minutes, I thought we really set the scene and stepped onto Lincoln.

"They're a good side and I expect them to be up and around it this season, but I am pleased we got the win."

SPORT



Chairboys draw City in Carabao Cup tie



Manager Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

De Barr the star for boss

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth was full of admiration for his striker Tjay De Barr after the youngster stole the show in their second round Carabao Cup tie victory at Stevenage.

Deep into injury-time and with Wanderers 2-1 down at the Lamex Stadium, De Barr knocked in Wanderers' equaliser with a flying header in front of the Chairboys fans to take the match into a penalty shoot-out.

The 21-year-old then took the final spot-kick and scored to send Wycombe through 5-3 on penalties, into the third round of the competition for the first time since 2018/19, on what was an incredible debut in English football for Wanderers' new signing.

Speaking after the match, Wycombe's manager Ainsworth told the media: "I gave three first team debuts tonight.

"Max Ram had never played a game before tonight.

"He started to cramp up but he has learned a lot and what it'll take to play professionally and get into the first team, Adam Przybek didn't much do wrong and he'll be an asset for us and Tjay, what a debut that is.

"He's young, never played in the English leagues, but scored the equaliser and got the winning penalty.

"We criticise agents in the game a fair bit, but I played with Tjay's agent at Cambridge.

"He gave me a call and said, 'I've got a wildcard for you'.

"No-one had heard of him, so I passed it onto Sam Grace, and he deserves some credit again, like with Anis, Max and Andre as Sam said 'he looks pretty decent'.

"He's played several times for Gibraltar, but he's never been tested at club level.

"Bringing him in is a learning process, and in training, he has been in the right places, and where he got his goal is probably in an area where half a dozen strikers may not even be. "He wants to score.

"The lads have called him the Gibraltar Tevez because of how he looks and plays.

"If he gets anywhere near Tevez, I'll be happy."



Pep Guardiola and Gareth Ainsworth (PA Media)

WYCOMBE Wanderers will face Manchester City in the next round of the Carabao Cup after the draw on Wednesday night.

A tie against the reigning Premier League champions and current holders of the Carabao Cup will see Gareth Ainsworth's side become massive underdogs.

Pep Guardiola's City have won the cup four times in the last four seasons and are aiming to become the first side to win the competition five times in a row.

To earn the draw, the Chairboys progressed into the third round of the competition winning away on penalties at Stevenage after they drew 2-2 on the night.

It is only the third time that Wycombe have got to this stage of the League Cup with previous runs ending in a semi-final in 2007 against Chelsea and in 2018/19 falling at home to Norwich City.

By James Richings

The second-round win came after youngster Tjay De Barr scored the equaliser for Wanderers in the 94th minute in front of the travelling fans.

The 21-year-old then took the final spot-kick and scored to send Wycombe through 5-3 on penalties on what was an incredible debut in English football for the new signing.

Wycombe started the match the better of the two sides in North Hertfordshire as they took an early lead through Adebayo Akinfenwa.

The 39-year-old slotted in past Joseph Anang in the Stevenage goal to register his first of the campaign and his first since April.

However, Stevenage came out for the second period all guns blazing,

and levelled up through Elliott List, before Jamie Reid got Stevenage's second.

The Chairboys also progressed through the first-round against Exeter on penalties with the game finishing a goalless draw.

David Stockdale's heroic performance saw him deny three of the home sides penalties whilst also scoring a penalty himself, as Wycombe came out 4-3 winners.

Manchester City have yet to play in the competition this season with the seven English teams that compete in Europe every season earning a bye to the third round.

Ainsworth will go face to face with Guardiola, the two-time Champions League-winning manager at Barcelona.

The Spaniard has since led City to three Premier League titles but this week announced that he will leave the club when his contract expires

in 2023.

This comes at the same time as Harry Kane, a long-term target for City this summer, took to social media to let fans know he will be staying at Tottenham Hotspur this season.

However, Guardiola will still have the likes of Kevin De Bruyne, Jack Grealish and Raheem Sterling to call upon.

The tie will be played in a month's time in the week commencing September 20 at the Etihad Stadium.

The two sides have met each other four times in all competitions, with Wycombe winning twice and City once.

This will be the third fixture between the two sides in the League Cup, and the first since the 1995/96 season, where the sides drew 0-0 at Adams Park, before City going on to win 4-0 at Maine Road in the second leg.