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A family in High Wycombe is creating extra festive fizz by making a Coca-Cola Christmas Truck for their annual lights display. • Page 20



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Love Island Will on his true love

Pub plan anger



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Coming soon... but film fans wary about arrival of new cinema



The big movie out this week is Wonka
Image: Warner Bros/Jaap Buitendijk

FILM lovers say they have mixed feelings about a new cinema chain arriving in High Wycombe this week, with some branding it 'good news' and others concerned that without low prices, it could struggle to survive. Omnibox Cinema Group, an Irish firm

with 38 locations, has announced the purchase of the former Empire Cinema in Crest Road as one of its first sites in Britain. The plan is to open this Sunday. The Empire ceased operations only a few days ago.

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Farrell set for return after huge decision



OWEN Farrell (right) is due to play for Saracens in Pretoria.

OWEN Farrell will make his first appearance since his decision to step away from Test rugby was announced when Saracens launch their Investec Champions Cup campaign on Saturday.

England captain Farrell will not play in next year's Six Nations after choosing to take a break from the international game to prioritise his and his family's mental well-being.

He then missed Saracens' Gallagher Premiership defeat against Northampton due to a knee problem.

But Saracens rugby director Mark McCall has confirmed the 32-year-old fly-half will face leading South African challengers the Bulls in Pretoria.

"He's available and he is going to play this weekend," McCall said. "He has trained fully over the last two days.

"He has enjoyed being with his team-mates, and it is a great opportunity for us all to spend a bit of time together away from the British winter.

"I don't know how many European Cup games he has played - him and Alex Goode have probably played in more than anybody at the club.

"He is our captain, he is our leader, someone who is respected by everyone at the club. To have him on the field, of course, is an enormous benefit.

"Not just to have him on the field, but to have him in the team-room and in the meetings. His contribution is enormous and it is great to have him here with us."

Saracens have won the European Cup three times, more than any other English club, although they made a quarter-final exit last term to eventual champions La Rochelle.



F1 Academy managing director Susie Wolff has been accused of sharing private information with husband Toto Wolff.

Wolff hits back in confidentiality row

F1 Academy managing director Susie Wolff has rejected allegations that she and husband Toto Wolff, Mercedes' team principal, have shared confidential information.

A report in Business F1 magazine said there is concern among other Formula One team principals that Toto Wolff has accessed private information, via his wife, that he is using to his benefit.

In her role at the all-female F1 academy, Susie Wolff reports directly to F1 president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali.

The FIA announced on Tuesday that its compliance department was "looking in to the matter".

Susie Wolff said on social media: "I am deeply insulted but sadly unsurprised by the public allegations that have been made.

"It is disheartening that my integrity is being called into question, especially when it seems to be rooted in intimidation and misogyny, and focused on my marital status rather than my abilities.

"Throughout my career, I have overcome numerous obstacles and I refuse to let these baseless allegations overshadow my dedication and passion for F1 Academy."

Everton not writing off promoted trio

By Carl Markham

Press Association Sport

EVERTON manager Sean Dyche insists he cannot afford to buy into the widely held assumption that his team will survive this season because there are three worse sides in the Premier League.

A 10-point deduction for breaching financial regulations has left the Toffees 18th, sandwiched between newly promoted sides Luton, two points ahead, and Burnley and Sheffield United below.

The outcome of an appeal against that sanction could improve Everton's fortunes but their form this season has left most observers with the view they will not be threatened by relegation for a third successive campaign.

However, Dyche has urged his players to earn their Premier League status, with that point arguably reinforced further by Burnley's 5-0 win at the weekend



EVERTON had a key win on Saturday.

and Luton's last-gasp 4-3 defeat to leaders Arsenal on Tuesday night.

He said: "It's not as easy as that. I think that people are referring to the fact the teams who have come up, everyone thinks are likely to have a tough season.

"I don't think, 'ah well, we are OK because these teams are deemed by everyone else to be struggling'. I don't see it like that.

"They are three teams who have earned the right to be in the Pre-

mier League so we have to earn the right to be above those three teams as a minimum.

"The 10 points has changed the situation quite obviously, the idea of an appeal and whether we get some of those points back is in no-man's land, so it's back to us to figure out ways of winning games.

"I think that challenge is never-ending in the Premier League, I don't think it is just because of 10 points (being deducted).

"I'm a great believer in realities: positive realities - I believe in the positivity of what we can do and achieving things.

"There has been no excuse from me about it. This is the reality, this is the challenge. Let's crack on."

Everton's woeful record at Goodison this season - one win and just four points from seven matches - will be tested to the full again by the visit of Newcastle tonight, the Magpies buoyant after successive home wins in the league over Chelsea and Manchester United.

England left gutted after Dutch goals



ENGLAND forward Beth Mead said the team were "absolutely devastated" after a crushing double blow on Tuesday.

A dramatic evening saw England thrash Scotland 6-0, but two late goals from the Netherlands against Belgium saw the Dutch pip Sarina Wiegman's team to the summit of Nations League Group A1 on goal difference, ensuring they reached the inaugural finals, while also ending Team GB's hopes of qualifying for Paris 2024.

Making her first international start since a year-long knee injury, Mead said: "Unfortunately, it wasn't in our hands.

"Congratulations to the Dutch but we're absolutely devastated to miss out by such small margins.

"We got a late goal and thought we'd got over the line but it wasn't meant to be."

New ruling splits golf



GOLF'S governing bodies say a new rule to reduce the distance balls travel is "proportionate" and will have "minimal" impact on recreational players.

The R&A and USGA had proposed a Model Local Rule (MLR) to give elite tournaments, from 2028, the option to require the use of balls which travel around 15 yards less.

The R&A and USGA confirmed that the MLR would apply in their events, most notably the Open Championship and US Open, respectively.

Rory McIlroy (above) and Tiger Woods supported the proposal but it was opposed by the PGA Tour and Justin Thomas.

Sport

TENNIS: DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR INDOOR CENTRE

Celebration to mark 30th anniversary

THERE was a double celebration in the south of the county as the Bucks Indoor Tennis Centre recently marked its 30th anniversary, whilst it was also the centenary of the Buckinghamshire Lawn Tennis Association.

During the day there was a mixed doubles tournament where 14 clubs took part.

The winners were Gail Merrison and Joe Bixley from Princes Risborough Tennis Club and the runners-up were Di Walker and Arran Wise from Wooburn Park Tennis Club.

Additionally, Sandi Procter, President of the Lawn Tennis Association, who had been visiting clubs in the county during the weekend, presented British Tennis Awards to several club volunteers.

Joanna Hale and Jean Kelly (Little Chalfont Tennis Club) were Volunteers of the Year, the Club of the Year was Lacey Green & Loosely Row (representatives either side of Sandi Procter in the photo) and Simon Reynolds (Chesham 1879 Tennis Club) received a Lifetime Achievement award.

There was also a special award for Rosemary Badman, who is soon to retire as President of Bucks LTA, marking more than 30 years involvement with Buckinghamshire County tennis and management of the tennis centre.

Rosemary told the Free Press: "It was an amazing day.

"In the early days when we first open a four court indoor centre, many people though we'd struggle and there were times where we did, but we're proud of the fact that we're still providing brilliant facilities."



The indoor tennis centre opened on November 1, 1993

WYCOMBE WANDERERS VS SHREWSBURY TOWN

The ups and downs from the previous 10 months

IT'S fair to say that this year has been quite eventful for Matt Bloomfield.

After initially leaving Wycombe Wanderers in September 2022, which ended a near 19-year stint with the club as a player and then coach in order to take the managerial job at Colchester United, he was back at Adams Park within five months.

Gareth Ainsworth's departure from South Buckinghamshire to Queens Park Rangers in February made the managerial hotseat at HP12 vacant, and there was only one man the Couhigs wanted at the helm.

And that man was Matt Bloomfield.

He agreed to the role on February 21 and took charge of his first game in charge four days later away at Shrewsbury Town, which ended in a 2-0 loss for the Chairboys.

Fast forward 10 months, the Shrews take on Wycombe for the first time since the 39-year-old's inaugural fixture in the technical area, and he told the Free Press that 'a lot has been learnt' in that time.

He said: "Loads have happened in that time, player and staff wise which we have managed as well as we possibly can.

"When I came back, I felt that the squad was at a crossroads as there were a few players who had been injured for a period, whilst others were looking to move for bigger money elsewhere.

"That led to a summer of change where there was a lot of learning.

"I wanted to move this club forward and in the last two weeks, I have learnt a lot about the squad.

"It's easy to be positive in the good times but you need to learn when things aren't going well, as

Exclusive By James Richings

that can help you move forward.

"I've learnt more about myself in the good times but more in the bad times."

Wanderers go into this weekend's fixture with no league win in seven where they have dropped from seventh to 15th in just two months.

This poor run, coupled with a huge injury list, has seen players being used out of position.

And after boos were heard following last week's FA Cup exit to League Two Morecambe, Bloomfield hopes that things will improve on Saturday against Shrewsbury Town.

He said: "This job and this club mean an incredible amount to me.

"We've had many bright lights in how we can move this place forward, but have had a lot of challenges along the way which we need to deal with the best we can.

"It's been an incredible 10 months as I've been able to take away a lot to help us move forward.

"When we have been on our game, we have been a match for anyone in the league.

"We should have taken a point at Portsmouth but a refereeing decision cost us, we should have two penalties whilst two one-on-ones were taken away from us at Charlton, we were one minute away from taking three points against Oxford, Peterborough said we were the best side that had visited this season... we've some very exciting performances along with some very disappointing ones.

"But there are things that we want to improve on and I'm judged on results so I'm focused on just getting better."



Matt Bloomfield has taken charge of 41 matches at Wycombe, winning 16, drawing eight and losing 17 (NQ)

SPORT: HOCKEY

Many frozen pitches impact play

ONLY one of 14 scheduled matches was played on Saturday.

The Marlow Men's 4th team went to Berkshire where the pitch had recovered from frost, where they would go onto beat the Slough 2-4-1.

The team, a blend of experienced players and youth, played some good hockey and scored when chances came along with three goals from Daniel Couldrake and one by Chris Kilminster.

Slough were never out of the game but missed several good opportunities.

With every other match in the league off this result puts Marlow level on points at the top of their league although their nearest rivals Abingdon 2nds have a game in hand.

On Saturday the Men's 1st and second teams are both at home. The 2nds play against Fareham2 at 1.15 followed by the 1st team playing Haslemere 1st at 3.00 pm

On Sunday, the boys and girls' under 18 teams took part at Southampton in the South Regional competition for qualification to the National Indoor finals.

The girls came through their competition but the boys lost out in a shootout with Trojans after they had drawn 2-2.

SKILLS TO LEARN

New venture for ex-manager

EX-WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has revealed he will spend time focusing on his music career.

The 50-year-old, who spent 13-and-a-bit-years at Adams between November 2009 and February 2023 as a player, and then manager, is also a member of the rock group, the Cold Blooded Hearts, who released a 10-track album in July.

And following his sacking as Queens Park Rangers' manager in October, he has decided to concentrate on improving his guitar skills.

He told the BBC: "Football is so good to me and I've loved it throughout my career but you never know.

"Somebody told me, when you've got nothing, you've got to have some focus; that focus for me is getting better at the guitar.

"I've been a football player, a football manager and then I could be touring with a rock band in America."

In 2019, the EFL celebrated Ainsworth's achievement of becoming the league's longest-serving manager by recording a version of 'Yeah, I'm a Wanderer' at Adams Park with his band.

WYCOMBE 0-2 MORECAMBE

Honest assessment after FA Cup defeat



The result means Wycombe have been knocked out of the FA Cup for the past three seasons by a League Two club at home

WYCOMBE Wanderers right back Jack Grimmer has described his side's FA Cup exit to Morecambe as 'horrendous', whilst admitting that recent performances have been 'unrecognisable'.

The Chairboys were eliminated from the competition by the League Two side following a 2-0 defeat at Adams Park, which stretched their poor run to just two victories in 10 games in all competitions.

Goals from Eli King and Tom Bloxham made it a comfortable afternoon for the North West side, as Wanderers lacked any real threat going forward, mustering up just two shots on target.

Boos were then heard at full-time following the defeat.

Speaking to the club's media team at full-time, the ex-Coventry City and Fulham defender said: "We heard the boos near the

end and what can you say?

"It [the performance] was horrendous, to be honest.

"The gaffer in his pre-match talk asked for cohesion, intensity and energy and it was one of the shortest team talks you can have but we had none of that.

"I said it to the boys directly in the changing room, and I hold myself included as I'm a senior player with a handful here, but there was no energy.

"We're letting the gaffer down, we're letting the fans down and we need to turn it around.

"We've not been at the standards that we have been earlier on in the season, where he performed well at Peterborough and Oxford where we played well.

"We may not have won but we played well.

"In recent weeks, we have been unrecognisable.

FOOTBALL

Alan Parry's Previews

WYCOMBE'S season is staggering from bad to worse and with the fans growing increasingly angry and frustrated, they desperately need a win when Shrewsbury Town visit Adams Park on Saturday, December 9.

Another insipid display saw the Chairboys turfed out of the FA Cup against Morecambe last week, and their league form has been a cause for concern for the past couple of months.

Wanderers have won only one of their last nine games in League One - a run that includes five defeats - for a meagre haul of just six points from the last 27 available.

Their home form has been particularly disappointing this season with only three wins from nine league games at Adams Park, a ground once considered a fortress but now with the drawbridge down and the gates wide open.

Manager Matt Bloomfield has been unlucky with injuries to key players, but he has admitted that he has enough talent in his squad for results to have been much better.

The rumblings of discontent in the stands and on the terrace will grow even louder if they fail to take three points on Saturday against a club that historically the fans would expect them to beat.

Since they joined the Football League 30 years ago, Wanderers have enjoyed a remarkable record of success against Shrewsbury.

In twenty-nine previous meetings in the league, they have won eleven, drawn fourteen and lost only four.

However, those four defeats all came in the last four years.

The Shropshire club won both encounters last season, a 2-1 victory at Adams Park in August 2022, and a 1-0 win on their own ground in February this year.

Before those defeats, Wanderers had lost only one of the previous 25 league games against Saturday's opponents, who have won at Adams Park only twice in fifteen previous visits in the league.

Fixtures between the two clubs have generally been low scoring affairs, except for a remarkable 7-0 victory for Shrewsbury at Adams Park in a EFL Trophy tie in 2008.

Shrewsbury striker Grant Holt scored five goals in what remains Wycombe's biggest margin of defeat in any competition since they joined the professional ranks.

EFL TROPHY: WANDERERS 3-2 FULHAM U21

The Chairboys knock out the Cottages in five-goal thriller

WYCOMBE Wanderers have progressed to the round of 16 in the EFL Trophy following a 3-2 victory over the Fulham U21s.

The Chairboys were quick out the traps and nearly took the lead on three occasions inside the opening 20 minutes, twice through Kieran Sadlier and once through Luke Leahy.

The ex-West Ham United man saw two of his crosses go just wide of the mark, whilst the latter, who was making his first appearance for the club since the 1-0

home defeat against Stevenage, fired over.

And whilst Sadlier was pulling the strings, it was Taylor who got on the scoresheet first.

His well-struck volley on 21 minutes past Steven Benda ended a run of 10 matches without a goal.

Wanderers continued to dominate as Garath McCleary's shot from range was brilliantly tipped over by the keeper before Kian Breckin and David Wheeler also tried their luck.

The second period began as a

non affair with both sides being passive, but things turned somewhat frantic in the final 15 minutes.

The Cottages started to get a foothold in the contest as Joshua King, Idris Odutayo and Devan Tanton all came close, with Franco Ravizzoli in the Wycombe goal being forced into several important saves.

It became somewhat nervous for Wycombe but with 11 minutes remaining, Chris Forino scored his second goal of the campaign to make it 3-1 to the Chairboys.

The Saint Lucian centre back smashes home his first Adams Park goal of the season on the half-volley with his left foot to give Wanderers a two-goal cushion.

But just 120 seconds, Jonathan Esenga's deflected cross flew over Ravizzoli to make it a nervy ending at Adams Park.

Wanderers will find out their next opponents on December 6, with that fixture taking place week commencing January 4.

Up next for Wycombe is Shrewsbury Town at home in the league this Saturday.



Chris Forino scored a stunning goal to make it 3-1 against Fulham on December 5 at Adams Park (PA)

AP'S LOWEST CROWD EVER

The result means that Wycombe are through to the next stage of the competition for the first time since 2017, but only 323 people watched the fixture at Adams Park on Tuesday evening, his means this is the lowest EVER attended fixture at the stadium since it opened in 1990.

This figure does not include the matches when no fans were able to attend during the 2020/21 season (and one match in 2019/20), due to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The draw for the for the round of 16 will be made on Friday, December 8, with Wanderers potentially facing the following clubs. They include Reading (League One), Crawley Town (League Two), West Ham United 21 (Premier League Academy), Peterborough United (League One), Oxford United (League One) and the Brighton & Hove Albion Under21 (Premier League Academy).

Speaking at full-time, striker Dale Taylor said: "I hadn't

scored in a while so it was great. It was also great to have some of the lads back like Luke [Leahy] and Joe Jacobson, and we're in the next round of the cup which is fantastic"

Matt Bloomfield then added: "I'm really pleased with the performance.

"We could've had a few more goals.

"We lost a bit of discipline near the end which was disappointing, but maybe recent events played into our minds."

It was only the third time that the two sides have ever met, with it being the second victory for the Chairboys over the young Cottages.

The last match between the two was in November 2019 at Adams Park which ended in a 2-1 win for the West London side.

Notable players from that day include Timmy Abraham, Fabio Carvalho and Matt O'Riley.

A positive performance as Wycombe progress

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Matt Bloomfield has believed the club's 3-2 win over Fulham U21 in the EFL Trophy will help with the club's confidence.

A double from Dale Taylor, which were his first strikes in 10 matches, along with a brilliant half-volley by Chris Forino, gave the Chairboys their first win in four matches as they progressed into the round of 16 stage for the first time in seven years.

The club have still only won three of their last 11, with those victories

all coming in cup competitions, but the manager believes that the win will help the club going forward.

He told the Free Press: "It was so important to get that win, especially for the group.

"As you can see, we were getting slightly edgy at the end as the boys had been desperate to get that win.

"We really wanted a positive result, and I could feel the atmosphere in the changing room before the game as the noise levels were up, and a part

of that was having the likes of Jack Grimmer, Joe Jacobson and Richard Keogh and Luke Leahy back.

"Them being back was a huge plus for us.

"There was a lot of emphasis on training on Monday after the Morecambe game, as we didn't go forward enough on Saturday - there were too many sideways passes.

"We didn't punish Morecambe when they were out of shape, so we wanted everyone to play forward against Ful-

ham which is what we did."

"There was more excitement, we really put it to Fulham as there were several flashes across the box, we had shots on goal, and I was thinking this was more like us.

"I will admit it was disappointing to concede two, albeit the second one was fortuitous being a deflection from the cross.

"We should have had a bigger cushion than what we did, as we missed some good chances."

SPORT

0963-2336



A tale of Wanderers' two Taylors in EFL Trophy win



Dale Taylor scored twice in the 3-2 win over Fulham U21s (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager has praised the performance of striker Dale Taylor following his brace in the EFL Trophy victory over Fulham U21s.

The Chairboys defeated the young Cottages 3-2 at Adams Park with the Northern Irish forward ending a goal drought that lasted 10 games.

Interestingly, the 20-year-old wasn't due to start the knockout fixture but was drafted into the first 11 just two minutes before kick-off, following an injury to

Lyle Taylor.

He said: "It's funny how football works.

"I said to Tommo [assistant manager Richard Thomas], it would be interesting to see what will happen with Dale as he wasn't supposed to play, but he goes and gets a brace.

"The plan was to give the boys who had been away on international duty a break.

"We sometimes forget that we have two weeks without a game but they go away and play two

games, so that was the plan.

"That changed with Dale playing but his confidence will be up after getting two goals.

"He is such an unselfish player, and a lot of work went into trying to get him here in the summer and he's been good for us.

"There's still more to come from him and the brace will do his confidence the world of good."

On the injury to Lyle Taylor, who could be missing from this weekend's match against

Shrewsbury Town, he said: "He picked it up in the warm-up and I didn't realise.

"I was only told about it two minutes before we kicked off the game, so it was as last minute as you can get.

"It was very disappointing for Lyle as he's desperate to do well for us, but we'll assess it and see how long it'll take."

The result means Wanderers are in the round of 16 of the competition for the first time since the 2016/17 season.

Looking ahead to the visit of Shrewsbury

WYCOMBE manager Matt Bloomfield believes four players will have a 'spring in their step' this Saturday when Wanderers take on Shrewsbury Town at Adams Park.

This is due to several members of the squad spending part of their careers at the Shropshire-based team with great success.

Most notably, Luke Leahy was purchased by Wycombe from Shrewsbury this summer for a fee believed to be around £100,000.

He spent two seasons in the West where he played 101 games and scored 21 goals, whilst also being named as the club's Player of the Year in 2022 and 2023.

During his last six months at the New Meadow, he was playing alongside Killian Phillips, who played 20 times for the club whilst on loan from Crystal Palace.

He, like Leahy, would then join Wanderers in the summer.

Additionally, Jack Grimmer had three separate spells between 2014 and 2016 where he featured in 58 matches, whilst Joe Jacobson played in 119 fixtures, winning promotion with the club in 2012 into League One.

Bloomfield said: "Whenever a player is up against their former club, they are always up for it as they have a spring in their step.

"Luke, JJ, Jack and Killian all spent some time there, and it's great to have three of them back from injury.

"We're very happy to have Luke back fit in the league as he's been a huge miss.

"We were aware of Luke before he joined and I always thought he was a Wycombe type of player, so when we were up against him, he looked like someone who could do well for us.

By James Richings

"He is one of life's good guys with an infectious personality and he demands so much.

"That was one of the reasons why we wanted to sign him.

"He is one of the players that brings life and soul to the training ground, and he does it in a way that makes others follow – a real leader.

"And with Killian, I enquired about him last January when I was at Colchester.

"He ended up going to Shrewsbury, but we knew he is a boy with a lot of talent, and he played very well that afternoon against us in February.

"His physicality impressed me.

"We also can't forget that JJ (Joe Jacobson) and Jack Grimmer also played for them, so they'll be for it."

On facing the Shrews, who lie 12th in League One, three places and two points above Wycombe, Bloomfield concluded: "I have a lot of time for Matt Taylor [their manager].

"I did my B licence with him several years ago, and I think he's a good football man who knows the game and he wants his team to play in a certain way.

"Whenever we've played against Shrewsbury, they have always been organised and tough to beat.

"We'll know they will be solid and when I came up against them as a player, they were always difficult.

"They've got some very good players and we need to be ready for Saturday afternoon.

"They don't concede too many, so we need to work hard for it."



Matt Bloomfield's side have not won in seven league matches, a run that dates back to October 7 (PA)

Omission nothing too serious for new striker

AN injury update has been provided on Wycombe Wanderers striker Lyle Taylor.

The 34-year-old was due to start the club's EFL Trophy round of 32 fixture against the Fulham U21s on December 6, but was omitted from the squad just moments before kick-off.

He was replaced by Dale Taylor who would go onto score twice in a 3-2 victory for the Chairboys, as they progressed to the round of 16 for the first time in seven years.

Taylor, who is on a short-term contract at Adams Park, has featured in four matches for the club, but is yet to score for his new side.

Speaking ahead of Wanderers' home match against Shrewsbury Town on December 9, Bloomfield said: "Lyle is alright.

"He hit a shot which he caught wrong in the warm up before the game, and on assessment, he was in a bit of pain.

"When that happens so close before kick-off, it doesn't give you a lot of time to make an estimated decision on it, so we had to make a snap choice which was to take him out.

"We have to be careful with him as he has spent a long time without playing and the last thing we wanted to do was make him play injured and breakdown.

"It was the right decision and if he gets through training today, he'll be in the squad selection for Saturday."

The most pleasing thing about Tuesday was that the messages were carried out.

The Chairboys go into the contest with no wins in their last seven league matches, whilst only earning three victories in their previous 11 in all competitions.

But Bloomfield is hoping that the club's form can turn around on Saturday.

He said: "A lot has been made of our form in the league but we've won a handful of cup games in that time.

"So it was very important for us to play well against Fulham after what was a poor display against Morecambe.

"We needed a result. We didn't play with a style and an identity that I wanted last week, and that's slipped away in the last few games."