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SPORT

Eze-ly the best at Adams Park



Ebe Eze (Anita Ross Marshall)

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has named who he thinks has been the best player to play under him at Adams Park.

Speaking on the best player he's managed, Ainsworth said: "That would be Eberechi Eze.

"I had also signed someone else from QPR that season [Jack Williams] but I was told to have a look at him [Eze].

"I had to really convinced his agent to allow him to come here because he thought he was better than League Two, but he hadn't played anywhere else.

"And when I saw him in training I could see the agent's point.

"Wow, and I mean wow.

"He was a phenomenal talent for us in the games, in training and those two goals against Cambridge...just wow.

"He's a great man, a humble person and it's great to see him do so well."

Eze is now at Crystal Palace in the Premier League.

Wild Thing, Poch and Fergie

SEVERAL big names in the world of football have sent Wycombe Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth their well wishes following his 10th anniversary in charge of the club.

The 49-year-old is the first Chairboys boss to be in the role for more than a decade, in which he has won 206 of his 527 games in charge.

He said: "I have had some really nice messages come through from the likes of Mauricio Pochettino and Sir Alex Ferguson sending their congratulations and it's when you get messages like that to make it a really nice occasion.

"Winning trophies is not what you're in it for [management], it's being remembered as a guy who was enjoyable, fair, and honest to play under.

"But we will dust ourselves off and get ready for Plymouth."

Ainsworth reflecting on a decade as boss

By James Richings

A RARE milestone took place at Hillsborough Stadium on September 24, as Gareth Ainsworth celebrated his 10th anniversary in charge of Wycombe Wanderers.

Unique for a manager in this day and charge due to the heavy demands from football owners for instant success, the 49-year-old's longevity at Adams Park has seen him change the culture of the club.

Focusing on performance and the ability to adapt, it has been no surprise that numerous successes have come his way in the decade he has had at the helm.

Play-off final appearances for Wanderers in 2015, 2020 and 2022, an automatic promotion in 2018, nearly knocking Tottenham Hotspur out of the FA Cup in 2017, taking the lead at reigning champions and League Cup holders Manchester City in 2021 are just some achievements Ainsworth can put on his managerial CV.

But why did he make the move from Queens Park Rangers to Wycombe in 2009 as a player?

His decision to move to Buckinghamshire 13 years ago ultimately led him to become the club's most successful manager in its history.

Speaking to the press ahead of Wycombe's match at Sheffield Wednesday on September 24, Ainsworth said: "I was coming at the end of my time at QPR.

"Being 36-years-old so I wasn't getting a lot of game time as they were bringing in bigger and better players.

"Garry Waddock [Ainsworth's manager at QPR in 2006] gave me a call and asked me to come here and from the start it has just been so special.

"In a way, it was nice to come back to where I had started.

"I had started my career Preston North End, then Cambridge United, then Lincoln City.

"So it was nice to really feel that again."

Ironically, Waddock, who made Ainsworth one of his first signings when he took over the role in 2009, was replaced by the winger three years later as manager.



Gareth Ainsworth (pictured during the League One final loss against Sunderland) spoke on his time at Wycombe (PA)

The move was considered a gamble as Ainsworth's only experience in managing was a brief period as a caretaker at QPR in the 2008/09 season, where he won three matches in his 11 games in charge across two spells that campaign.

It's fair to say that his first two years at the helm at Wycombe were experimental with the club nearly going down to the Non League in 2014.

He continued: "When my playing days came to an end and the management career started, it was really fractured.

"I really didn't know anything about management and it was hard.

"I had a brief spell at QPR but that was almost steering the ship in the right direction.

"It wasn't really getting stuck into things and if I am honest, that really put

me on the back foot because I was so steering the ship in the right direction at Wycombe, only for a huge tidal wave just around the corner as we nearly went down to the Non League.

"That was the biggest learning curve I could ever have.

"We have had a few sticky years but it has been a great journey to be part of it, never mind be at the top of it."



Bill Turnbull will be remembered ahead of Wycombe's match against Plymouth

Remembering the late Bill Turnbull

BILL Turnbull will be remembered ahead of Wycombe Wanderers' home fixture against Plymouth Argyle this weekend.

The 66-year-old passed away on August 31 this year after bravely battling prostate cancer since 2017.

He was due to be honoured prior to the Chairboys' match against Port Vale on September 10, but this fixture, along with all the games across the country that day, were postponed due to the death of Queen Elizabeth II on September 8.

The broadcaster and journalist was a popular figure around the club due to commentaries and community work that focused on Wanderers, and following his death at the end of August, Wycombe decided to rename its gantry after the late supporter.

Being present at Adams Park this weekend will be his family, close friends along with his former colleagues at the BBC.

Ahead of kick-off, there will be a toast to Bill in the Caledonian Suite, a venue he enjoyed visiting after many

home games, along with a minute's applause.

Prostate Cancer UK Chief Executive Laura Kerby said: "Bill Turnbull was a huge part of the Prostate Cancer UK family.

"Since he shared his experience in 2018, Bill defied his own diagnosis to inspire thousands of men at risk of, or affected by, prostate cancer.

"His influence on our campaigning work, our appeals and on fundraising events was selfless and - make no mistake about it - life-saving."

History for the ladies

FOR the first time in the club's history, Wycombe Wanderers Women will play at Adams Park.

The Chairgirls will take to the South Buckinghamshire pitch when they take on Sport London e Benfica in this year's Vitality FA Cup second qualifying round on Sunday, October 2.

It will take place one day after the first team play Plymouth Argyle.

Manager Carl Simon said: "It's a big moment for us and we're extremely grateful to the club for allowing us to use pitch and stadium facilities to host an FA Cup game.

"I know it's an occasion that all the girls will relish, and

we're urging all Wycombe fans to come along and see what we're all about.

"Women's football is growing at a rapid rate in this country and the success of the Lionesses in the summer showcased what a great time this is for all football fans to embrace the sport and develop their support for their local women's team."

This fixture is open to all supporters to come and show their support to the Women's section.

Tickets for adults are £5 and children, whilst it's £2.50 for anyone under 16.

Visit www.wwfc.com/tickets for more information.

Alan Parry on Wycombe facing Plymouth



Can we get three points? (PA)

THE visit of league leaders Plymouth Argyle on Saturday, October 1 looks like the worst possible fixture for a Wycombe team in poor form, but could it be the perfect opportunity to get their season back on track?

In recent years Wanderers have become Plymouth's bogey team with an unbeaten run of seven games against them and just one defeat in the last ten. Last season they did the double over their West Country rivals without conceding a goal, winning 3-0 away and 2-0 at home.

However, despite this impressive record even the most optimistic Chairboys fans will be fearing the worst ahead of Saturday's clash at Adams Park.

Wanderers have plummeted down the League One table after successive defeats away to Derby County and Sheffield Wednesday and they are now only three points above the relegation places.

In all competitions they have managed only one win over 90 minutes in their last eight games, a scrappy 1-0 victory over Accrington Stanley.

They conceded 13 goals in that spell whilst scoring only six themselves.

A normally watertight defence has looked worryingly uncertain, letting in three goals in cup ties against Bristol City and Stevenage and last week's league defeat at Sheffield Wednesday.

In marked contrast, Plymouth are in sparkling form.

They went top of the table last week when they became the first team this season to beat previous leaders Ipswich Town to move on to 22 points, exactly double Wycombe's current tally.

So, the task for Wanderers couldn't be much tougher and their schedule in October doesn't get any easier with away games against Oxford United and MK Dons plus a home match against Peterborough United.

This campaign is becoming one of the most challenging Gareth Ainsworth has faced in his ten years as Wycombe's manager.

By his own admission he has the most talented squad in his decade at the helm, and expectation levels were high amongst the fans after reaching the play off final and amassing a club EFL record 83 points last season.

Fortunately, it's still early in the season with plenty of games to turn things around, but he needs all the help and support he can get during this difficult period.



The match will take place on October 2 at Adams Park in what will be a moment of history for the ladies team at Wycombe Wanderers (PA)

Reflecting after the anniversary defeat



Joe Jacobson scored an own goal after just 38 seconds to give Sheffield Wednesday the lead against Wycombe Wanderers at Hillsborough (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has admitted he 'cannot accept' two of the three Sheffield Wednesday goals in their recent defeat at Hillsborough.

The Chairboys lost 3-1 away at the South Yorkshire side on what was the manager's 10th anniversary in charge of the club, as well as the club's 135th year in existence.

A first-minute own goal from Joe Jacobson, a Barry Bannan strike, and a Calum Paterson finish succumbed Wanderers to their fifth league loss in 10 matches this season.

Speaking on the defeat, Ainsworth said: "We gambled at the end as we had five up front but for the first two goals, I just can't accept them.

"They were terrible goals to concede and their second came from our free-kick.

"We were 10-yards outside of their box and 10 seconds later, the ball ends up in our net and that is just not good enough.

"It's just not. "We have got to make sure that our set pieces are better.

"They started the game really well and they caught us out which isn't us at all."

One of the positives from the loss at Hillsborough was that Wycombe equalised just nine minutes after going behind.

Anis Mehmeti's quick feet on the right byline took three defenders out of the game, and he assisted Sam Vokes for what was his first goal of the season.

It was his first strike in any ca-

By James Richings

capacity since scoring in the play-off semi-final first leg win over Milton Keynes in May 8.

His last away goal for the club was on the final day victory against Burton Albion back in April.

Ainsworth continued: "It was brilliant to respond so quickly as we work on that, but its tough to take that second goal.

"The character is always there from the boys and they will 'never say die' under me.

"We looked a threat in the second half but we didn't make any of our chances count.

"Unfortunately, we leave with nothing but it was a decent performance.

"It was a crazy start because we had trained well all week and it's a ball that's flashed across the box and it's gone in and sometimes that happens.

"But Anis Mehmeti was fantastic again today and Sam Vokes scored a well-taken goal.

"Max made some very good saves even though they are ones that he is expected to make, Stocko [David Stockdale] made a couple from Anis and Dom, but the second goal for me is the killer.

"I think there was an offside in there too which upsets me, but they are not going to get everything right.

"The better team won." Wycombe are now 17th in the League One table.

SPORT



'We have been in much, much worse'



Ali Al-Hamadi scored twice (PA)

Al-Hamadi at the double

WYCOMBE Wanderers defeated the Norwich City U23s 2-1 in a practice match at Adams Park.

A double from Ali Al-Hamadi gave the Chairboys their victory over the Norfolk, as they fielded several first-team players.

Chris Forino, Garath McCleary, Sullay Kaikai and Jordan Obita were just some of the main players on show, with Tyla Dickinson, Jack Young, Jack Wakely, Adam Leathers, Jasper Pattenden and Antoine Makoli all starting.

Wanderers do not have a competitive match this midweek, as they prepare for a home game against Plymouth Argyle on October 1.

The match was the 11th friendly the club have had so far this season, which the Chairboys winning of those fixtures. They have lost four and drawn the remaining three.

Fixture moved due to the World Cup

WYCOMBE Wanderers' home match against Portsmouth has been moved to a new date in order to avoid clashing with England's World Cup fixtures.

The Chairboys match against Portsmouth, which was due to be played on Saturday, December 3 at 3pm, has now been moved to a 7.45pm kick-off on Friday, December 2.

Portsmouth defeated Wycombe 1-0 in this fixture last season back in November 2021.

The decision has been made to evade a potential clash with an England World Cup fixture on the Saturday.

By that date, all of the Three Lions' group matches against Iran, the USA and Wales would have been played.

This is a measure on the basis Gareth Southgate's side progress into the knockout stages.

The World Cup in Qatar (the first to be held in an Arab world and only the second-ever to take place in Asia), will begin on Thursday, November 20 and it will conclude on Sunday, December 18.



Gareth Ainsworth was feeling relaxed ahead of Wycombe's match against Plymouth on Saturday at Adams Park (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has insisted that he is 'proud' of where the Chairboys currently air in the table despite his side's sticky start to the season.

The Adams Park club are in 17th place in the League One after losing five of their opening 10 games of this domestic season.

This includes falling to back-to-back defeats against Derby County and Sheffield Wednesday respectively in the previous two weeks.

But when Garath McCleary back from suspension and the likes of D'Mani Mellor and Brandon Hanlan expected to return soon, the

49-year-old believes that there is still plenty of time for Wanderers to recover and push for a promotion spot come May.

Speaking to the press ahead of this weekend's match against Plymouth Argyle at Adams Park, he said: "We have been here before.

"March this year, everyone was saying that we were done for the season and that the wheels had come off after our winless run, but we ended up at Wembley final in May.

"So, we just need to stay patient as one or two games do not make a season.

"I'm proud of where we are. "We're Wycombe Wanderers, we're six points off the play-offs with two thirds of the league to

play still.

"It's not a bad place to be as we've been in much, much worse."

The visit of top-of-the-table Plymouth could potentially be the worst fixture for the Chairboys to have at this present moment, but they do boast a very good record over the Devon-based club.

Wanderers are unbeaten in their last seven games against the Pilgrims, in which they won four and drawn three.

This includes defeating the club in their last three games with an aggregate score of 6-0.

He continued: "I'm super confident as it has been proven that anyone could beat anyone in this league.

"We want to be competitive against them.