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SPORT

Boss on the Pompey celebrations



Pompey's Danny Cowley (PA)

GARETH Ainsworth has revealed that Portsmouth 'celebrated like they've been promoted', after the South Coast side defeated Wycombe 1-0 at Adams Park.

Marcus Harness got the only goal of the contest as Danny Cowley's men won away at Wycombe for the first time since April 2019.

It's only their second league win away from home this season, and their first since the opening weekend.

He said: "For a club like Portsmouth to come here and do that to us, shows how much respect we've got. They've celebrated in their dressing room like they've been promoted, never mind winning 1-0 today, and that's all respect to Wycombe Wanderers so fair play to them."

"They've come here and did a job, even though I thought we were better in spells."

"Sometimes you have got to take that on the chin and give credit to Danny and Nicky."

"There are teams in this league that are tough, but, we will win games and score goals."

"We just need to take our chances."

'Tough' fixture list for Blues

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has admitted that 'it's been tough to prepare in the right way' due to Wanderers' heavy fixture list.

The Chairboys will play four straight games at Adams Park from November 9 to November 20, a rarity for the South Bucks club, as they have played 14 of their 25 fixtures of this season away from home.

And with injuries to key players along with a loss of form, the boss hopes things can improve before the festive fixtures come around next month.

He said: "It's tough to prepare in the right way with all the games coming up."

"Training is minimal so it is important to get your message across to the boys."

"There is a lot going on and we know that we can play in any condition."

Portsmouth take the points at Adams Park

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers lost for a third consecutive game at home after they fell to a 1-0 defeat at the hands of Portsmouth.

The light and dark blue army dominated the opening 45 minutes and had the game's first chance after 90 seconds, but Sam Vokes' effort spooned over Alex Bass' goal from an Anis Mehmeti cross.

Four minutes later, the home side had a brilliant chance to take the lead through an unlikely source.

Jordan Obita, who has yet to score for the Chairboys following his move from Oxford United at the start of this calendar year, crashed his shot from 12-yards onto the post after being laid off by Jason McCarthy.

With the way Wanderers started, you wouldn't have thought they were on a run of four games without a win.

Wycombe continued to get in Portsmouth's faces as Mehmeti again caused problems.

His mazy runs and delicious dribbles tied the Seasiders in knots, as his creative play found Brandon Hanlan, but the ex-Bristol Rovers man could only fire his effort wide.

Only 15 minutes had gone and Portsmouth were on the ropes.

Obita again tried his luck but his shot from inside the box was easily saved by Bass after 16 minutes, before a McCarthy half-volley flew over the goal.

Portsmouth just didn't get going in the opening 45 as George Hirst had their first effort of the contest, but his shot from 20-yards trickled by past David Stockdale's goal.

Then, following their brilliant all-round display, Wycombe were given a golden chance to take the lead as they were awarded a penalty on 25 minutes. Mehmeti, who was making his first league start since the 3-1 away loss against Sunderland in August, was bundled over by Sean Raggett and referee Neil Hair had no option but to point to the spot.

However, Joe Jacobson's kick was easily saved by Bass, as the Welshman fired



Sam Vokes looks dejected after he missed a great chance in the final few seconds of Wycombe's 1-0 home loss against Portsmouth on November 13. The Welshman has had an inconsistent time in front goal (PA)

the set-piece straight at the deputising goalkeeper.

This seemed to kick Portsmouth to life as the tide turned in the second period.

Portsmouth got the game at the scruff of its neck, as they nearly took the lead twice inside the opening five minutes, but David Stockdale produced a great save to deny Marcus Harness before Raggett headed over the bar on 49 minutes.

And on 73 minutes, they took the lead after some poor defending from the Chairboys.

A long ball over the top found Hirst who had the freedom of the Wycombe half.

He ran a short distance and played a low cross into the box which was tapped in by the onrushing Harness.

His sixth league goal of the season

caused chaotic scenes in the away end, as Portsmouth took a deserved lead.

Wycombe continued to find that goal but McCarthy hit the post, and Vokes had a header brilliant saved by Bass in the final stages, meaning it wasn't their day at Adams Park.

This was Wycombe's fifth game without a win, whilst Portsmouth picked up three points on the road since August.



Gareth Ainsworth is still feeling positive despite Wycombe's recent blip (PA)

Boss on 'competitive' battles in League One

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth believes League One is a 'fantastically competitive division.'

There are only 14 points separating first place Plymouth Argyle and 12th place Cambridge United in England's third tier, with Wanderers currently sitting fourth on 31 points.

However, the Chairboys have hit a bit of a slump in recent weeks, as they have not won any of their last three league games, whilst only picking up one victory in the

previous five league victories.

And despite the positive display against Portsmouth in their most recent fixture, Wanderers lost 1-0.

Speaking ahead of the Portsmouth battle, Ainsworth said: "Burton have picked up some good points, Fleetwood and Doncaster seem to be coming up now, with the only team that seems to be struggling a bit is Crewe, but, I am sure David Artell will get it together and with Scotty Kashket, if he can get him firing,

you never know what could happen."

"I'm very aware of how tight this league is."

"The Doncaster game was a tough game and they were bottom of the league, and Rotherham was also another tough game and they are near the top of the league, so it is very tight."

"It's a fantastically competitive division with some big names in there, seven of those teams once being in the Premier League."

Down but never out

GARETH Ainsworth was full of positivity despite his side's 1-0 home loss against Portsmouth.

The Chairboys accumulated over 20 shots on goal but failed to get past Alex Bass in the Pompey net, with the stand-in keeper also saving a Joe Jacobson penalty in the first-half.

Marcus Harness eventually got Portsmouth's goal to seal the points for the visitors, as Wanderers' winless league streak to three matches.

It was also their third straight home defeat, following the losses against Ipswich on Nov 2 and Burton on Nov 9.

Ainsworth said: "I am pleased with the boys and it's great to see this place full, but we need to get used

to these big games as we're a big scalp for teams and that's a real positive for me.

"I said to the boys at half-time that Portsmouth didn't have much at all during the first-half.

"We dominated the first-half with the penalty, hitting the post and we had numerous shots.

"Teams are always going to have a spell.

"I don't care who you are, you're going to have five or 10 minutes and they didn't score in that time, as they scored just after that on the counter but at the end, they were hanging on.

"It's a great performance but not a great result, and we need to stick the ball in the net if we get chances."



Gareth Ainsworth was upbeat despite the third home defeat in a row against Portsmouth on November 13. The Chairboys lost 1-0 against Pompey (PA)

Not our day against the South Coast side



Jacobson's pen was saved (PA)

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth insists that 'he's had worse runs than this' after his Wanderers side lost 1-0 at home to Portsmouth.

Marcus Harness' second-half strike gave Pompey their second away league victory of the season - their first since the season's opening day, and gave the Chairboys their fifth match without a win, despite having many chances to score.

Jordan Obita and Jason McCarthy both hit the post, Alex Bass produced several incredible saves to deny the Chairboys, and a Joe Jacobson missed penalty succumbed Ainsworth's men to their third consecutive home loss.

He said: "Performances is what I am about, and I will always be.

"We've had 21 shots on their goal, and we have never done that to Portsmouth before.

"This shows how far we have come, and we have had the better chances, but we didn't take them. We've hit the post twice and we've missed a penalty.

"Everyone will look at the result and be down, but we have created numerous chances and all we had to do was stick one in and it's a completely different game.

Getting to know the other Wanderers



Bolton's Oladapo Afolayan and Josh Sheehan celebrate the latter's goal in their 2-0 win over Crewe Alexandra on November 12 (PA)

IT'LL be the battle of the Wanderers this Saturday, as Wycombe take on Bolton at Adams Park with Gareth Ainsworth's men in desperate need of a morale boosting victory.

Wycombe have lost their last three home matches and are winless in six in all competitions, whilst the Trotters, who are in back in League One after a year out, are on a run of two wins from their last six.

So, how will it go on Saturday?

I spoke to Marc Iles from the Bolton News to get his views.

1. How happy have you been with Bolton's start of the season?

MI: "Relatively happy.

"They got off to a great start, scored plenty of goals, but things took a dip in October which maybe checked some of the more excitable folk.

"In fairness, that did coincide with a run of bad injuries, which are now clearing.

"Getting back to winning ways against Crewe was a big step.

2. The last time these two sides met, BWFC were in all sorts of trouble on and off the pitch. How far have Bolton come since then?

MI: "Goodness me, how long have you got?

"I sat having a coffee before that game and the players came out for a morning walk.

"Phil Parkinson was at the front - but I barely recognised half of the players behind him.

"The squad only had a handful of senior players and one of them had refused to climb aboard the team bus.

"Things went right to the wire.

"And a few weeks later the new owners were able to start rebuilding.

By James Richings

"It is a completely different place now, and I doubt Ian Evatt will have anything like the same pre-game issues as Parky faced back then."

3. Who are the Bolton players Wycombe need to be on the lookout for at Adams Park on Saturday?

MI: "Dapo Afolayan has been superb this season and I'm convinced he will play much higher up the league if he keeps working hard.

"He has really taken his game up a level this season and always looks a goal threat.

"I'd also pick out MJ Williams, who is very much in command of the mid-field engine room.

"Aside from getting stuck in, his range of passing is magnificent, and you can see he has had a quality football upbringing with Liverpool."

4. What are Bolton's weaknesses that Wycombe could try and exploit this weekend?

MI: "I suppose the stats would point to the fact they don't convert enough of their chances - but at time of writing they have scored seven times in their last three games.

"As a possession-based side, they have found it tougher to break down deep-lying defensive teams too.

5. How do you see it going and what's your prediction?

MI: "Seems a contrast in styles and I think the game will be tight.

"This is Bolton's toughest game this month, so provided the FA Cup replay has not taken too much out of them, I'd be happy to take a point back to Lancashire."

Getting prepped for the Bolton battle

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth has stated that his side 'need to be properly on it', as they prepare for Bolton this Saturday.

The match is the last of four straight home matches for the Chairboys, but Wanderers have lost their last four fixtures at Adams Park, without scoring in the previous three.

But he hopes that a positive performance and a win are due soon.

He said: "Bolton are a very good side.

"They are very expansive and Ian Evatt has got them playing in a good way and we need to make sure that we are on it, and we need to be properly on it, because we don't want to keep losing games.

"But, you know what? How many it takes, I believe we'll be at the top end of League One at the end of the season."

SPORT

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Wycombe knocked out of the FA Cup



It happened in the cup (PA)

Boss speaks on Scowen's leg injury

GARETH Ainsworth hopes the injury Josh Scowen picked up in Wycombe's 1-0 home loss against Hartlepool in the FA Cup first round isn't too serious.

The midfielder was substituted for David Wheeler after 72 minutes when the ex-Sunderland man sat on the ground holding his leg.

He has played 20 matches so far this season following his move back to Buckinghamshire in the summer.

The gaffer said: "Josh has pulled up feeling tight and it's nothing more than that.

"I'm hoping he'll be back for Saturday because he has been one of our performers of the season so far, and if he isn't fit, then we have got several players chomping at the bit to take that place and have a go.

"That's what we are and I love it."

Eliminated by a side in League 2

WYCOMBE boss Gareth Ainsworth remained positive despite his side being knocked out of the FA Cup by League Two Hartlepool United.

Mark Cullen's first-half strike eliminated the Chairboys in the 1-0 defeat at Adams Park, which secured Pools' first win at the stadium since 2007.

The defeat means Wycombe are now out of all the domestic cups, with their remaining fixtures for the season being league matches.

The full-time whistle was met with a small chorus of boos from the home fans, but Ainsworth is remaining positive - despite his side not scoring in their last three home matches.

He said: "We created so many chances but we're not sticking it in the goal.

"I said to the boys that there are a couple of things that we can improve on without a shadow of a doubt, but it's going to come at some stage, a team is going to get a battering from us.

"These chances and opportunities will go in but I am gutted for the boys. "The only thing we can do now is focus on Bolton."



Gareth Ainsworth remained positive despite the 1-0 loss against League Two Hartlepool United on November 16 (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers were knocked out of the FA Cup by League Two Hartlepool United, as they lost 1-0 in a first round replay at Adams Park.

Mark Cullen's cool first-half strike was all that separated the sides as the Chairboys fell at the first hurdle of the world's oldest knockout competition for the second time in three seasons.

In Hartlepool's first visit to Adams Park in five seasons, the away side started on the back foot with Wycombe bombing forward in the early stages of the contest as Daryl Horgan had two attempts in the first eight minutes.

First, his cross/shot after five minutes flew past Ben Killip in the

Pools goal before the former Preston North End man forced the goalkeeper into a routine save.

The Chairboys continued to press their opponents as Brandon Hanlan fired over from 20-yards with a first-time effort on 13 minutes, but this was the best it got for the home side as the tide suddenly turned.

Tony Sweeney's men had done brilliantly to soak up the Wanderers pressure as they managed to get around Wycombe with blistering counter-attacks and this led to the away side taking the lead after 19 minutes.

Some poor defending from the Wycombe backline allowed Hartlepool to get into the Wanderers box and after David Ferguson's cross was blocked by Joe Jacobson, the loose ball found its way to Cullen,

who bent in his low effort from eight-yards around David Stockdale.

Moments later, Hartlepool nearly got a second as Cullen's flying header from a Luke Molyneux cross went inches wide.

The second-half started at a blistering pace as both sides peppered the goals with a flurry of attempts.

Just four minutes into the second period, the Pools goal was living a charmed life as a wave of Wycombe attacks went begging.

First, an Anthony Stewart header brushed the side-netting before a Sam Vokes header crashed the post... then an Adebayo Akinfenwa header went over.

After the three headed chances went begging inside the opening five minutes of the second-half, Horgan again tried his luck from range but

Killip was there to deny him before Pools' number one tipped a Jacobson free-kick wide.

However, despite Wanderers being on the front foot, Wycombe were again exposed on the counter.

By the 60th minute, Hartlepool twice could have doubled their lead, but Stockdale was on hand to deny a thunderous drive from Matty Daly, before David Ferguson fired wide despite having the whole of the Wanderers half.

Vokes hit the post again with a low drive on 72 minutes, and David Wheeler hit the post in injury-time but the magic of the FA Cup didn't sprinkle its gold dust on the Adams Park turf, as Wycombe are now winless in six.

It's also Hartlepool's first win at Wycombe since April 2007.