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Bucks Free Press

Friday, April 15, 2022

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Darius Charles retires

WYCOMBE Wanderers cult hero Darius Charles has announced his retirement from professional football.

The 34-year-old, who enjoyed a three year stay with the Chairboys between 2018 and 2021, announced that he had hung up his boots for the final time on April 11 in a lengthy Instagram post.

During his time at Adams Park, he featured 43 times and scored twice, and was in the starting line up for when Wanderers gained promotion to the Championship following their 2-1 win over Oxford United in the League One play-off final, where he played the full 90 minutes.

His first goal for the club, which came in a 1-0 win over Sunderland in October 2019, saw him coin the 'Our House' phrase, which has been synonymous with the Chairboys.

In his social media post that was shared earlier on today, the ever popular Charles said: "After long deliberation (five minutes in a cold shower) I've decided it's time to hang my boots up for good.

"I've spent 24 years devoting my life to playing, eight years trying to become what I'd always dreamed to be and a further 16 years living it.

"Helen Keller said, 'life is a daring adventure OR nothing' and this journey has been just that a daring adventure with pitfalls, pain and hard times but it has also been the same thing that has created the most amazing times of my life.

"Not only have I succeed in becoming the thing I wanted to be but I've surpassed it, winning promotions playing at stadiums I grew up seeing on TV and along the way creating bonds with people that will be my brothers for



Darius Charles (pictured against Brentford in September 2020) played for the Chairboys across three years (PA)

life.

"So what next, well I'm glad you ask because the job at hand now is to be the man I needed when I was a young aspiring footballer, or the person I needed when I was out injured for a year or told I would never play again or when I let complacency set in.

"The job now is to create successful cultures where players & clubs can thrive and become more than they ever imagined possible.

"If a boy from a council estate

born to a 16-year-old old mum can do it then so too can you and I'm here to not only tell you it's possible but show you the way.

"Cheers to retirement and a new chapter in life that will prove to be even more successful than the previous one."

During his professional career which began in 1998, Charles made his professional debut whilst at Brentford in the 2004/05 season, going onto make 42 appearances whilst scoring once during four seasons in the first

time.

In that time, he also had six separate loan spells in the Non League for Thurrock (2005/06), Yeading (2005/06), Staines Town (2006/07), Crawley Town (2006/07), Sutton United (2007/08) and Ebbsfleet United (2007/08).

He would then join the latter on a permanent basis for the 2008/09 season, staying at the Kent-based team for two seasons.

Charles would move clubs again, this time to Stevenage in 2010, spending five years with

the Hertfordshire outfit where he achieved a promotion into League One.

A move to Burton Albion followed in the 2015/16 season but he didn't play a single game for the Brewers, which eventually led him to join AFC Wimbledon on loan for the remainder of the season.

It was during this six-month spell he became teammates with Adebayo Akinfenwa, as the two enjoyed promotion into League One at the end of that season.

Non League games this weekend



What Non League games are on this weekend?

THE Easter weekend is always a busy one in football, and that's no different this time around for non-league clubs across Buckinghamshire.

The action starts on Friday when Penn & Tylers Green host Amersham Town in a Spartan South Midlands League Division One derby. That one's a 7:30 kick-off at French School Meadows.

Also on Friday, albeit just over the border in Berkshire, is the National League action at York Road, where Maidenhead United take on relegation-threatened Weymouth.

Keeping with tradition, Saturday is the most action-packed day, with six games of note in Bucks.

Two of them come in the Southern League Premier Division South, where Beaconsfield Town play Merthyr Town and Chesham United welcome Gosport Borough.

The Rams are comfortably in mid-table going into their final three games of the campaign, whereas Chesham know that a play-off spot is in their hands.

The Generals are one point behind Weston-super-Mare with a game in hand, but have to go to Hayes & Yeading United on Monday, who were the league leaders at the time of writing.

There is one game in the eighth tier in Bucks on Saturday, and it takes place at Mill Meadow where Chalfont St Peter host Northwood in the Isthmian League Division One South Central.

Risborough Rangers have already secured promotion to that level of the pyramid, but are still chasing the title, and take on Holmer Green at Windsors in a local clash on Saturday.

In north Bucks, Winslow United welcome Kidlington Reserves to Elmfields Gate, while not far from there, there's another derby as Leighton Town play host to Milton Keynes Irish.

Also on Saturday, London Tigers take on Thame Rangers at Amersham's Spratleys Meadow, and over in Oxfordshire, Thame United play Ware.

There are also a smattering on games on Monday as Marlow entertain Thatcham Town and Aylesbury United host Berkhamsted at The Meadow, both in the eighth tier.

With the Blues out of the play-offs by just three points, their double header of games this weekend against Binfield then Thatcham will be crucial.



Both days will be busy at Adams Park (PA)

Big crowds at home

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that they have sold out the away end for their final two home league fixtures for the season.

The Chairboys take on Plymouth Argyle and Sheffield Wednesday on April 15 and April 23 respectively, as they continue to push for promotion to the Championship.

Both sides are currently higher than Wycombe in the table.

Other fixtures at Adams Park this season that have brought a huge away following were the home defeats to Ipswich Town, Portsmouth and Milton Keynes, the draw against Sunderland and the victories over Charlton Athletic, Bolton Wanderers and Oxford United.

The latter is currently Wycombe's highest attended match this season with 8,005 people. Go to www.wyfc.com for more.

Bright future ahead for Wanderers' Jack Young

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth believes the signing of Jack Young from Newcastle United is 'fantastic' for the club.

Young joined the Chairboys on loan during the January Transfer Window until the end of the season, but the two sides agreed a deal that would see the centre midfielder join up permanently at the conclusion of his current deal.

Since being at Adams Park, the 21-year-old has played four times for Wycombe, scoring once.

His only goal so far was in the Berks & Bucks Cup match away at Long Crenon in February, which happened to be his debut.

Out of those four appearances, only one has come at Adams Park.

Ainsworth said: "I can't thank Newcastle enough for



Jack Young now plays his football at Adams Park

allowing them to have one of their young stars and again, turn Jack into fantastic asset for this football club.

"I've seen Jack and he's got all the attributes to be a brilliant player.

"He's got some top players in front of him with the likes of Josh Scowen, Lewis

Wing, Dom Gape and Curtis Thompson.

"That's a great group to learn from and I can't wait to see Jack playing his stuff at this club."

Prior to joining Wycombe, Young spent some time on loan at Tranmere Rovers last season.

NOSTALGIA

Saying thank you to Mr Wycombe



(Sarah Hambling)

GOOD Friday's home fixture against Plymouth Argyle will be important for many reasons.

Wycombe take on the Pilgrims who sit five points ahead and three places above the Chairboys, but a win for Wanderers on April 15 could see them move back into the sixth with three games to go.

The on-pitch rivalry between the two clubs is well known and there will be no love lost between the two sides.

But away from the match, the clash between the two sides will see one of Wycombe's greatest-ever servants be celebrated at Adams Park.

Matt Bloomfield, who spent 19 seasons as a contracted player at the club, will have the game dedicated to him after he confirmed his retirement earlier this

year due to injury.

In total, Blooms played 558 competitive fixtures between 2003 and 2021 where he scored 42 goals.

During that time, he achieved four promotions from League Two to the Championship (2009, 2011, 2018 & 2020), whilst also suffering four relegations with the club (2004, 2010, 2012 & 2021).

His playing time was significantly reduced since the start of the 2020/21 season as he took up a coaching role, with his last game for the club coming in August 2021, when Wycombe defeated Exeter City in the League Cup.

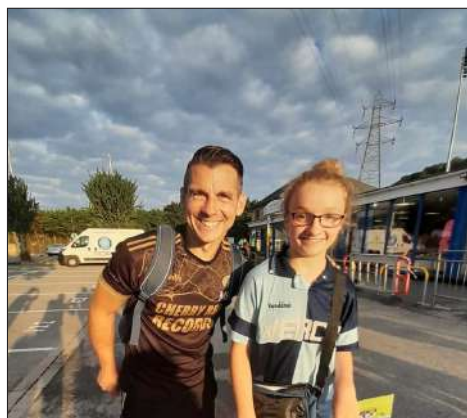
He has taken a role as a coach at the club, and is part of the development department, along with being an integral member of Gareth



(Kristján Sturluson: Came over from Iceland for a game in 2014)

Ainsworth's backroom staff.

So to celebrate Mr Wycombe's career with the Adams Park outfit, here is a selection of photos of the former captain with fans over the years.



(Rachel Slatter)



(Neil Surman: Matty and my boy)



(Rachel Ellis)

More of your photographs with the Wycombe Wanderers legend and hero Matt Bloomfield



(Rachel Tillman)



(Thomas Davidson)

THE captain will be celebrated in Wanderers' home match against Plymouth Argyle today [Good Friday], and he announced his retirement from the game in February following the advice of medical experts.

Out of the 558 games he played for Wanderers, 434 were starts whilst 487 game in the league.

The most games he played in one season was in the 2006/07 campaign, as he featured in 51 of the Chairboys' 57 matches that year, scoring four goals.

His last league outing was against Middlesbrough in May 2021 at the Riverside Stadium.



(Fred Kirby)

SPORT

Rare starts for the fringe players?



Could Hanlan get a start? (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth believes that some of his players that have been absent from recent matchday squads will have their part to play before the season is over.

Prior to the fixture against Cambridge United on April 5, the Chairboys were unchanged for five matches.

The boss also kept the same starting 11 from the win over the Amber Army for their visit to Kent four days later, but following Anis Mehmeti's injury after 10 minutes and Lewis Wing's red card, Ainsworth will be needed to change up his team for the Good Friday match against Plymouth Argyle at Adams Park.

Speaking after the draw, he said: "That's just football as you're going to get injuries and suspensions.

"But what I'll say is, the likes of Sullay Kaikai and Dom Gape have been so patient along with the likes of Jack Grimmer and Jordan Obita.

"I can't thank them enough and they will get their chance to make or break something at Wycombe Wanderers."

Pushing for the play-offs

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth believes that securing a play-off place is in his side's hands.

And even though they still have to play Plymouth Argyle and Sheffield Wednesday at home who sit above Wanderers in the table, Ainsworth firmly believes Wycombe are in charge of their own destiny.

The boss also revealed that despite the top of League One being incredibly tight, his players are not checking any of the scores during half-time breaks.

He said: "There's no during the game or half-time shouts or anything like that.

"We're totally focused on our job.

"It's in our hands.

"There are four games to go and I'm sure if we win all four, we will be in the play-offs and that's the aim."

Ten-man Wanderers held at Gillingham

By James Richings

WYCOMBE dropped out of the play-off places following a 1-1 draw away at Gillingham.

The Chairboys dominated the opening half and even though it might not have been the greatest of spectacles, Wanderers were controlling the game and didn't give the hosts a sniff when they entered their final third.

However, on 10 minutes, Wycombe were forced into a change as Anis Mehmeti, who has scored three times in his last seven games, signalled to the bench that he needed to be replaced.

This was after the young Albanian had taken two heavy blows when weaving into the Gillingham box.

His replacement in Brandon Hanlan, who had a two-year spell with the Gills between 2018 and 2020, would play a very important role in Wanderers' opener nine minutes later.

Despite the injury blow, Wycombe controlled the half as Garath McCleary forced Aaron Champman into a low save from 20-yards.

But on 20 minutes, Wycombe took the lead through their man of the moment.

Sam Vokes, on what was his 550th career club appearance, smashed home his 15th goal of the season in what ended a brilliant move for the Chairboys.

Josh Scowen found McCleary, McCleary found Hanlan, Hanlan's brilliant pass carved open the Gillingham defence, Vokes held his run and buried the ball beyond a hapless Chapman.

That's three goals in two games for the Welshman.

Wycombe continued to dictate play as Daryl Horgan saw his thunderous shot from range be palmed away by Chapman before Joe Jacobson's first-time volley flew over the target.

All in all, it was a very good half of football for the boys from Bucks.

The second half saw Gillingham get in Wanderers' face, as they looked for a goal to help them in their quest



Wycombe boss Gareth Ainsworth questioned the decision of Lewis Wing's red card in the latter stages of the second half as they drew at Gillingham on Saturday, April 9. They are now seventh in the table (PA)

to avoid relegation back into League Two.

They hustled and bustled but couldn't find anything, as the centre back pairing of Chris Forino and Ryan Tafazolli halted any attacks in the final third of Wanderers' half.

However, things turned drastically in the final 20 minutes.

Gillingham had the wind in their

sails and bided their time to find their equaliser, which duly came on 77 minutes.

Jack Tucker, who has spent his entire career with the Gills, smashed home a brilliant volley to bring the game level.

It was his first goal since August.

Things were made harder for Wycombe when Lewis Wing was shown a

straight red in the final few moments following a late tackle on Olly Lee.

The home side then thought they had won it when Vadine Olivier's shot was blocked off the line.

The draw means Wycombe drop out of the play-offs following Sunderland's win at Oxford.

Up next for Wanderers is Plymouth Argyle on Good Friday.



Wycombe manager Gareth Ainsworth (PA)

The boss' message ahead of the run in

WYCOMBE manager Gareth Ainsworth has revealed that the message to his players has stayed the same since August, as Wanderers continue to push for a play-off place.

The Chairboys currently sit in sixth position in the League One table following their brilliant win away at Cambridge United on April 5, which was their seventh in a row without defeat.

Speaking to the press on Thursday, he said: "The message

from me now is the same to at the start of the season.

"Be the best you can possibly be and always give your all and that'll always be my message.

"With the application and energy they bring, to the tactical messages I bring, the boys are driving us at the moment.

"We're in a good place and the momentum is coming from that group of men on a Saturday through their work on the weekday.

"It's great to see and you can

actually feel they want to work hard for each other.

"They want to finish the season with the bang.

"I haven't got one person who is out of the team that is trying to swim against the tide or try and upset everyone.

"All the players want to see Wycombe Wanderers in the Championship, and that's fantastic and it's great I've got the chance to achieve this with a brilliant football club."

A day out at Adams Park?

A SURVEY has determined how cheap a day out at Wycombe Wanderers has been this season.

Conducted by Liberty Games, the study has revealed that out of the 24 teams in League One, the Chairboys have been ranked as 11th in the table with an average cost of £31.30.

The total amount is based on the average price for a ticket, pint of beer, pie and programme at each ground in the third tier. *

According to the study, the average price for a ticket at Wycombe is £21, £3.50 for a pint, £3.30 for a pie and £3.50 for a programme.

Wanderers stopped selling the latter in November 2021 due to a lack of sales.

Topping the table are Wanderers' promotion rivals in Milton Keynes with an average price of £27.30.

Stuart Kerr, Technical Director at Liberty Games, said: "We know that having a pie and a pint comes with the territory of being a football fan, so we wanted to compare the prices of each team within League One to highlight the differing costs between each stadium, and reveal which are the cheapest to visit, as well as the most expensive. With the cost of living rising as of this week, football fans may have to budget to visit their favourite football team. Knowing the expected price of visiting each stadium could help fans plan ahead their home and away days, so they can go to as many games as possible."



Where do Wycombe rank in the table in terms of how cheap a day out at Adams Park is amongst the other League One teams? (PA)

Gareth Ainsworth on the Easter run in



Gareth Ainsworth and the Beast

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has admitted that he 'can't wait' for his side's Good Friday home fixture against Plymouth Argyle.

The Pilgrims travel to Buckinghamshire over the Easter period three places and five points ahead of the Chairboys, winning three of the last five fixtures.

The Light and Dark Blue Army have also won three of their last five but drew with struggling Gillingham on Saturday.

Speaking ahead of the match, Ainsworth said: "This is why we are in the game as these are the fixtures we look forward to."

"I'm really pleased with where we are in the league and with the fixtures we've got left as we've got a right chance for these play-offs."

"I won't be leaving any stone unturned in my preparation as I want my boys to be fired up in what will be a fantastic Good Friday occasion."

"I can't wait - bring it on."

Saluting the away support for Wanderers

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth believes that the fans have played their part in the Chairboys' promotion-pushing season.

Around 500 supporters made the trip from Buckinghamshire to Cambridgeshire on Tuesday night, as they witnessed the Light and Dark Blue Army smash Cambridge 4-1 at the Abbey Stadium.

It was the first time since November 2014 that they had scored four goals away from home in a league fixture.

He said: "The fans were brilliant as they made so much noise on Tuesday night and I'd say their enabled the players' performances with all the noise that they made, but, it's chicken and egg syndrome."

"We need them and they need a performance and they were brilliant."

Concerns following injury and red card



Anis Mehmeti (pictured in February 2021) came off after 10 minutes following two heavy tackles against Gillingham (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has admitted that Anis Mehmeti's injury has 'worried' him, following the Chairboys' 1-1 draw at Gillingham.

The Albanian Under 21 international came off just 10 minutes into the match at Priestfield after being on the receiving end of two robust challenges.

After initially getting treatment from the first tackle, Mehmeti was challenged again moments later.

He then immediately signalled to the bench to be substituted.

Brandon Hanlan was brought to replace the outgoing Mehmeti and assisted Sam Vokes' 15th goal of the season to give Wanderers the lead on 20 minutes.

Jack Tucker then equalised for the Gills in the second half before Lewis Wing was sent off for a foul on Olly Lee.

Wing's red card (if not rescinded) will mean he will be absent for Wycombe's next three games which are against Plymouth Argyle, AFC Wimbledon and Sheffield Wednesday.

When asked if Mehmeti's early departure had caused disruption to his game plan, Ainsworth said: "Of course it did."

"You plan for something and after 10 minutes you need to change it up, so it was a disruption and Brandon is more of a centre forward."

"Anis coming off has worried us as no player just wants to come off, so we will have to look at that and with Wing's red card, he'll

By James Richings

miss the next three games so we are going to have to use all of our resources in the squad.

"Dominic Gape and Sullay Kai-kai are just some of those who travelled and they can't wait to be a part of this run in, and I think we've got enough depth to cover those positions."

"Anis will be a miss but we will have to see what the medical team have to say."

"But after going off 10 minutes in, it might be a nasty one."

On Wing's red card, he added: "I was more concerned about the foul that led to the goal."

"I thought we were going to get a free-kick, but for some reason, the free-kick has been given to Gillingham and that's ended up in the goal."

"I'll have to look at that as well as Lewis' tackle, yet it will be Lewis that will get punished as he will miss the next three games if it is upheld."

"We're going to have to regroup this week, get a good week of training in and get these boys recovered as they have given me everything over the last week."

"It's really important that we're right for next week for whatever happens in terms of who comes in."

"Because for all we know, Anis could be fit as we don't know what the extent of his injury is."

Wycombe are currently seventh in League One.

SPORT



Mature Mehmeti pleases Ainsworth



Anis Mehmeti (pictured scoring against Sheffield Wednesday in November 2021) has impressed throughout the season (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers manager has praised the maturity of winger Anis Mehmeti as he continues to make strides in the Chairboys' starting 11.

The Albanian has started the last seven matches for the Adams Park outfit and has scored three goals in that time, which included a brace against Cambridge United on March 1: the first game of their current seven-game unbeaten run.

His rich vein of form has come at the right time of the season as Wanderers aim for a place in the play-offs, but the 21-year-old has had to learn to improve on his maturity when playing.

Mehmeti was banned for three games at the start of the season for violent conduct in the Chairboys' 3-1 away loss at Sunderland, before he was dropped for the following four matches after his suspension.

But seven goals in 37 matches so far this season has made him a name stay in Gareth Ainsworth's starting 11.

The boss said: "He has learnt a lot and that's from life lessons.

"I always say to the boys that you're allowed to make a mistake but if it becomes a reoccurrence, then it is something I need to deal with.

"Everyone can make mistakes, I have made some but it's about learning from them and not to make the same one twice.

"I am always talking to the players, and I have had one-on-one chats with Anis, telling him how well he has done, how I think he can do better and he has matured.

"My biggest thing is the mental health of players as that's my go to when I try and recruit players.

"The mental side is enormous."

Ainsworth has also continue to sing the praises of centre back Chris Forino, following his faultless display against Cambridge.

He deputised for Anthony Stewart, who missed out altogether due to an injury.

Ainsworth added: "Chris is going to be a big asset for this club and I think he will play at a very high level.

"He is already playing at a high level but I am talking about with-

in the next two steps, as he has got a chance to make it.

"He needs to learn a bit more about the game but we're teaching him and I am sure we will have a fantastic player, just like Anis is currently and some of the other younger boys.

"It's great to see the youngsters do well and they are holding their own.

"The Couhigs have backed me as they have allowed me to bring in who I would like to bring in, and we're shaping this club for the future."

On Stewart, he added: "He is OK. "We will assess him and see where he is for the next game. "He just missed out through something he picked up on Saturday [against Doncaster]."



Plough Lane (PA)

Sold out over the Easter weekend

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that they have sold out their ticket allocation for when they travel away at AFC Wimbledon.

The Chairboys will take on the Dons at Plough Lane on Easter Monday as they continue to push towards promotion to the Championship.

In total, 1,200 tickets have been purchased against the struggling League One outfit, who haven't won in 2022.

However, fans who are hoping to take the train to watch the match may need to make alternative arrangements.

This is because there will be no trains between Aylesbury and London over the Easter period due to significant HS2 works being made within the county.

For more information, go to www.wyfc.com/news/2022/march/24/tickets-afc-wimbledon-a-18-04.

Injury ends the campaign early

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that Malachi Linton will miss the remainder of the season following leg surgery.

The 21-year-old, who has spent the current campaign on loan at King's Lynn Town in the National League, was injured just 15 minutes into the Norfolk side's 3-0 home loss against Stockport County on March 22.

In his season with the Non League outfit, he scored eight goals in 31 appearances.

In a social media post, Linton said: "Surgery yesterday [April 6] was successful, and I'm fully focused on recovering & getting better. I loved my year with King's Lynn Town working with some great people & I want to thank everybody involved, including the fans.

"I know the boys will push to the end."

Wanderers added: "Wishing a speedy recovery to Malachi Linton, who picked up an injury on loan at King's Lynn and will miss the remainder of the season."

Linton joined Wycombe at the start of the 2020/21 season.