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FEATURE SPECIAL

Akinfenwa's life at Wycombe in photos



The day Akinfenwa signed for the club in July 2016, where he received a standing ovation from those present at Adams Park

SATURDAY'S match against Doncaster will celebrate the career of Wycombe Wanderers legend, Adebayo Akinfenwa.

The popular 39-year-old is retiring at the end of the season and has spent the last six years in the light and dark blue quarters at Adams Park, achieving many team and individual accolades.

These range from winning the club's Player of the Year award twice, to gaining two promotions.

His enthusiasm, energy, positivity and smile will be missed when he says goodbye to the Adams Park faithful this spring, but the memories will live on.

So, to remember 'the big man' as,

manager Gareth Ainsworth calls him, here are just some photos that have captured what the last six years have been like for the former Northampton Town, Gillingham, and AFC Wimbledon striker.

At the time of writing, he has scored 60 goals in 242 appearances and in 2020, in what was Wanderers' final game before the pandemic began, the striker became the club's all-time EFL goal scorer with 54 goals.

Coincidentally, this was against Doncaster Rovers – the team he scored his first EFL goal for back in 2004, and they just happen to be Wanderers' opponents this



The greatest day in Wanderers' history? (PA)

weekend.

And a win in the game that has been dedicated to Bayo could see Wycombe go back into the play-offs going into the final few matches.



Akinfenwa with two of his fans following an FA Cup match against Tottenham in January 2021 (PA)



When promotion to League One was secured on THAT day against Chesterfield in 2018



When Bayo scored his first and only Championship goal with a final second penalty against Bristol City to seal a 2-1 win in April 2021 (PA)

Pictures that will last a lifetime thanks to a free signing from AFC Wimbledon back in 2016



What a day that was at Wembley (PA)



An iconic duo (PA)

DURING his brilliant and long career, Akinfenwa played for 14 different clubs, playing nearly 800 career games.

After starting out at Watford, he moved to FK Atlantas in Lithuania in 2001, before returning to the UK a year later with Barry Town in Wales.

Brief stints at Boston United, Leyton Orient, Rushden & Diamonds and Doncaster Rovers followed, before his breakout move to Torquay United in 2004 came.

He then enjoyed spells at Swansea, Millwall, Northampton Town and Gillingham (twice), AFC Wimbledon and then, of course, Wycombe Wanderers.



Always leading by example (PA)

SPORT

Work first for Wycombe



Adebayo Akinfenwa (PA)

WYCOMBE striker Adebayo Akinfenwa has hinted that Saturday's match against Doncaster is about 'work', despite the game being dedicated to his career.

The popular player is retiring at the end of the season and the club have decided to make the fixture against the League One strugglers a day for the outgoing striker.

Akinfenwa scored the first of his near 200 EFL goals for Donny way back in 2004.

However, despite the occasion, he wants the win and will not put occasion over the match itself.

Wycombe and Doncaster have faced each other 10 times in all competitions, with Wanderers winning four of those contests.

He said: "Saturday is all about work. It's so important that we get three points.

"Of course I'll acknowledge the moments before the game because I know it will be special.

"But after that, it's all work. "Winning is the main thing."

Old friends reunited on Twitter

NORTHAMPTON Town have sent their well-wishes to Wycombe's Adebayo Akinfenwa ahead of Wanderers' league fixture against Doncaster Rovers, which has been dedicated to the striker.

The 39-year-old, who is hanging up his boots at the end of this season, spent five years at the Cobblers across two spells, scoring 74 goals in 188 games.

The League Two side said: "Wishing Adebayo Akinfenwa a fantastic day on Saturday.

"It was an honour and a privilege having you at Sixfields for two spells Bayo, and thank you for all you have done for the club, the EFL and football in general.

"Enjoy Saturday and go well in whatever you do next."

Looking forward to the Doncaster game

By James Richings

AFTER a weekend off due to the international break, Wycombe Wanderers are back in action against a struggling Doncaster Rovers side this Saturday at Adams Park.

Prior to their break, the Chairboys are unbeaten in five matches, picking up three wins, two draws and four clean sheets, as they continue to push for promotion to the Championship.

Their opponents in Doncaster have had one of their worst seasons in recent years, as the Yorkshire outfit sit second bottom in the League One table, picking up just eight league wins from their 40 matches.

So to get ready for this battle in Buckinghamshire, I spoke to Paul Goodwin from the Doncaster Free Press, to see what he thinks ahead of their visit to Adams Park this weekend.

What have you made of the season so far?

PG: "Miserable.

"It was meant to be one of consolidation after last season's horrendous collapse from February onwards but the slide has continued and, worryingly, there's very few signs of it stopping.

"Richie Wellens was tasked with a rebuilding job when he was appointed in the summer but a combination of bad luck with injuries and poor judgement with recruitment left him unable to get a tune out the squad.

"Gary McSheffrey replaced him in December and initially appeared to galvanise the squad.

"He found a way of nicking a few results away from home but things have plateaued spectacularly over recent weeks.

"Confidence looks shot and the team appear to be completely devoid of attacking ideas and inspiration.

"Rovers come into this game having failed to score in their last four matches."

Is survival realistic for Doncaster this season?

PG: "It's still mathematically possible, which is incredible given just how bad Rovers have been this season.

"But it's highly improbable.

"McSheffrey has said Rovers will have to win at least four of their last six games to stay up.

They have won five in 21 under him and haven't won back-to-back league matches all season.

When the two sides last met in October, Wycombe had the game in the bag very early on. Can you see something similar happening on Saturday?

PG: "McSheffrey's game-plan has been to try and keep things tight defensively, stay in the game and then nick a goal on the counter attack or from a set piece.

"Rovers have one of the leakiest defences in the country so he had to try and tighten things up at the back.



Gary McSheffrey has won five matches since taking over as Doncaster's manager in December 2021. In the last match between the two in October 2021, Richie Wellens was in charge but he has since been fired (PA)

"But his team are also the lowest scorers in League One - so you can see why Rovers are in big trouble!

"If Wycombe score early again it could be a very long and difficult afternoon for Doncaster.

"This team has a habit of going under when the going gets tough."

Who are the players Wycombe need to be on the lookout for?

PG: "I wouldn't worry too much.

"Tommy Rowe has been consistent and he's doing everything he can to lead by example and inspire his teammates. But there simply aren't enough senior pros like him in the squad.

"It has been too heavily weighted towards young lads who are making their way in the game.

"Saying that, one of those youngsters deserves praise.

"Midfielder Matt Smith, on loan from Arsenal, has been excellent.

"He covers every blade of grass."

As this is Akinfenwa's last dance, what are your thoughts on the striker, and what are your memories of him when he was at Donny back in 2004?

PG: "He's a great character and it's a shame he's calling it a day.

"The game needs characters like him.

"His spell at Rovers was before my time here but I know the fans have very fond memories of him and the



Anthony Stewart scored in the last minute between the two sides back in October 2021, which Wycombe won 2-0 at the Keepmoat (PA)

travelling supporters will be sure to give him a good reception on Saturday"

Your prediction?

PG: "It's hard to see anything other

than a home win, and if Wycombe re-find their shooting boots it could get messy.

"Wycombe Wanderers 3-0 Doncaster Rovers."

Old shirts up for sale



FOLLOWING on from Aylesbury Vale Dynamos' kit/clothes drive against Risborough Rangers on March 26, one bag of donations caused a bit of a stir.

An anonymous donor decided to give away 11 old Wycombe Wanderers shirt that date back to the early 1990s, whilst some are from the early 2000s.

Upon this discovery, a photo of the shirts on social media and many Chairboys fans got in touch asking if they were willing to purchase the kits.

After the interest increased, Dynamos revealed that all the Wycombe shirts that were donated would go up for sale via an auction, with the

proceeds going to the Kit Aid charity.

The shirts range from the 1990/91 home shirt to the 2001/02 away kit, with the only third shirt in the pile being from the 1995/96 year.

All the shirts are currently available to be bid on through the Wycombe Wanderers Facebook fan page, with the auction finishing at 9pm on Friday, April 1.

In total, there are 15 shirts and at the time of writing, nearly 90 bids have been made on all the kits.

To see the auction and to take part, please go to the Wycombe Wanderers Facebook fan page.

These are the Wycombe home shirts that have been made available through an online charity auction on Facebook, with the proceeds going to Kit Aid

A twist of fate over the Easter period?



Darius Charles played (PA)

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers defender Darius Charles has been put in 'temporary control' of AFC Wimbledon, and could be in the dugout when the two teams meet next month.

The 34-year-old, who spent three seasons with the Chairboys between 2018 and 2021, re-joined the Dons last summer but has only featured in two EFL Trophy fixtures for the South West London outfit so far this campaign.

However, following the departure of manager Mark Robinson, Charles has been put in charge of the club, as they aim to avoid relegation back to League Two.

No definitive timescale has been given for Charles' reign as Dons' manager, and if no permanent opponent is made before the end of the season, the Wanderers cult hero could be in charge when Wycombe travel to Plough Lane on Easter Monday.

AFC Wimbledon are currently winless in 20 league games.

He said: "There are still 21 points to play for and nobody will be throwing in the towel.

Youngster goes out on loan to Maidenhead

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that defender Jack Wakely has joined Non League Maidenhead United on loan until the end of the season.

The youngster, who signed for the Chairboys at the start of the season, penned a deal with the Magpies on March 25 and made his debut a day later in their 2-1 home loss against Barnet at York Road.

His only appearance in a Wycombe shirt so far this season against in the 5-0 loss against Burton Albion in the EFL Trophy at Adams Park back in November, where he came on as a second-half substitute.

Wakely started his career with Premier League outfit, Chelsea.

Saying goodbye to a true gentleman



Akinfenwa celebrates scoring against Fleetwood Town in a 3-3 draw back in October 2021 at Highbury Stadium (PA)

CAMERAS at the ready.

Curtain drawn and out he stepped baying in the applause of the Caledonian suite.

Beginning his Chairboys career as the showman and ultimately, he will exit that way. A glorified 'PR stunt' turned out to be one of Wycombe Wanderers' greatest-ever sons, Adebayo Akinfenwa bids his farewell.

A guard of honour, perhaps the size of one goal to the other, will create the walkway for 'Bayo' to soak in the adulation from those that have been fortunate enough to witness his legendary aura.

Akinfenwa has been the presence in the blue-quartered shirt throughout my teenage life. The ilk of Tony Horseman, Dave Carroll, Keith Ryan and Jason Cousins are mere names plucked from my dad's time on the terraces.

For the generation that has only known the glory years, 'The Beast' is our flag-bearer. Known all over the world but understood by Wycombe Wanderers. Large in stature, larger in our hearts.

His on-field accomplishments will be carved into the Chairboys history books for all to see. Leading EFL goal-scorer; 2x Player of the Year and 99 goal contributions in over 240 appearances.

Those achievements can never be erased, but the memories of the man will not fade either.

Win, lose or draw he paraded around Adams Park taking every photo and signing every autograph. The cries of 'Beast' from the terrace would always produce a cheek-to-cheek smile and the Shaka.

There is no greater picture than Gareth Ainsworth having his skull crushed by the striker following pro-

By Taylor Toney-Green

motion to League One in 2018. Such is the relationship between manager and player, a bond has formed that will go beyond their time at the club.

Ainsworth said: "Football has brought us together, but life will keep us together. I've met somebody that will be in my life forever.

"He will rank amongst the legends of this place. This club would not have made the Championship without him.

"He has to be up there (Ainsworth's greatest-ever signings). I'll be honest he has surprised me. I knew we were getting something special but not like this."

It is difficult to fathom that a 34-year-old, who many thought would just sell kits and bring in Twitter followers, would deadlift a club from mid-table in League Two to the Championship for the very first time.

Saturday is when we got to see only half of what Akinfenwa brought to the club. Tussling with the opposing centre-halves, his precision heading, a superglue first touch, quick-feet that would make you question physics and his shirt that was always on the edge of being ripped off his body.

As supporters, we have been lucky enough to enjoy that. However, Marlow Road and the dressing room tucked underneath the PreSonus stand is where the other half of his magic has been displayed.

An awe-inspiring figure that has been Wycombe Wanderers' added pulse since his arrival in the summer of 2016. The Chairboys will beat on without him, but there will no doubt be a huge void to fill. Thank you, Adebayo Akinfenwa.

SPORT



Thank you for the memories, Bayo



A fan favourite since 2016 (PA)

Guard of honour for the Beast

WYCOMBE Wanderers have confirmed that a guard of honour will be conducted for the departing Adebayo Akinfenwa in their home match against Doncaster Rovers.

The fixture on April 2 will see the 39-year-old say his formal goodbyes to the Adams Park faithful after six years at the club, bringing an end his 22-year career in the sport as a player at the end of the season.

During the parade prior to kick-off, Wycombe's all-time leading goalscorer, Tony Horseman, will present the fan favourite with a token of appreciation on behalf of the Ex-Players Association.

The guard of honour will start at 2.50pm, 10 minutes before the match against the League One strugglers will kick-off.

Out of his 194 EFL goals, Akinfenwa scored his first four coincidentally against Doncaster in a sixth month spell back in 2004, where he played nine times for the Yorkshire side.

The boss' kind words to Bayo

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has paid tribute to the outgoing Adebayo Akinfenwa ahead of this weekend's match against Doncaster Rovers.

The fixture against one of the Beasts' former EFL clubs is dedicated to the striker, who is retiring at the end of the season.

A guard of honour will be conducted ahead of kick-off against the Yorkshire, and Ainsworth believes that the popular 39-year-old is more than just a Wanderers legend.

Speaking to the club's media team, he said: "Akinfenwa is an incredible guy.

"Football has brought us together, but life will keep us together.

"I wouldn't be able to do what I've done here without him.

"People said it was a publicity stunt, signing him.

He's our greatest ever EFL goalscorer.

"Bayo deserves every clap and every cheer that he'll get when he steps out on Saturday and over the final games.

"Make sure you're there to give him a special ovation because he deserves it."



Wycombe Wanderers' Adebayo Akinfenwa poses for photographs after the Chairboys' 1-0 home loss against MK on January 29 (PA)

By James Richings

SATURDAY'S home match against Doncaster Rovers won't be your normal matchday at Adams Park, as the Chairboys are celebrating the career of a certain fan favourite.

Adebayo Akinfenwa, who has donned the light and dark blue quarters for the last six seasons, is hanging up his boots at the end of this season, calling an end to his 22-year-old footballing career.

From Islington to Watford to Wimbledon to Wycombe, this weekend's fixture against the Yorkshire outfit is expected to be an emotional one for everyone connected to the club, as the Beast gets ready to say his goodbyes to the Adams Park faithful.

So let's just take a moment to really sit down and analyse how Akinfenwa has impacted Wanderers during his six-year stay.

Already known as a fan favourite at nearly every EFL club he has represented, Bayo's stint with the Chairboys has been the longest his has ever been at one club, and his loyalty and dedication to Wycombe has seen him reap rewards.

In those six years, he has achieved two promotions (2018 and 2020), two Player of the Year awards (2017 and 2018), a spot in the Team of the Year (2017/18 season), played over 200 games and became the club's highest goal scorer in the EFL era with 54.

His goals and performances in the promotion winning seasons will forever be cherished, as well as his last-

minute winner against Bristol City in April 2021, which not only ended a 14 month run without a goal, but, it secured his first in the second tier of English football at the age of 38.

Therefore, becoming the eighth oldest goalscorer in the league's history following his reformation in 2004.

But away from his footballing ability and his popular online persona, Akinfenwa has done something in the last six seasons that most current footballers would shy away from, and that's talk to the fans on a personal level.

Every fan interaction with the Beast has been unique in its own way and there are hundreds, if not, thousands of stories of supporters telling tales of how Akinfenwa made their trip at Adams Park, or at an away ground, extra more special.

This could be with a chat, with a

photo, an autograph, or something out of the ordinary but whatever it was, you left feeling positive.

That's what Akinfenwa has brought to Adams Park away from football, and these are things money can't buy, as they cherished long after the final whistle is blown.

So it's very apt that his celebratory match this weekend is against the team he scored his first EFL goals for, as in a shot spell with Doncaster in 2004, he bagged four goals in nine matches.

He has scored 190 goals in the EFL since then, and whether you've been lucky enough to encounter the Beast, watch him live or watch him play for your team, he will be missed when he says goodbye to the sport he loves this spring.

Thank you for the memories, Bayo.