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## NOSTALGIA



The boss will mark his 10th year in charge away at Sheff Wed on Sep 24 (Here he is pictured at Hillsborough in November 2021) (PA)



Relief. Wycombe avoid relegation in the Non League away at Torquay in May 2014 (Anita Ross Marshall)

## Ten and not out for Gareth Ainsworth

A VERY special anniversary will be marked on Saturday, September 24, in the history of Wycombe Wanderers.

The date not only marks the 135th anniversary of the club's existence but it also celebrates the 10th year of Gareth Ainsworth's time in charge of the Chairboys.

In doing so, he becomes the first manager since the end of the Second World War to be at the helm for a decade, and despite Wycombe's somewhat stuttering start to the current campaign, he revealed that his 'proud' of his current tenure and hopes more positive memories will follow.

This morning I've come to interview an EFL manager, who drives to work in this amazing car, any idea who it might be pic.twitter.com/WLvT50Samw

However, despite his achievements which includes two promotions and reaching three play-off finals, he admitted that he didn't think he would be in the job for as long as he has.

Ainsworth said: "You don't think like that as a football manager.

"It's very consuming without a doubt and you don't plan to be in a job for 10 years.

"Any manager who does that is very naïve.

"It's something that just happens and it's going to happen on Saturday which is brilliant.

"The luck I have had over the years and the people I've had with their relationships has been fantastic and I have really proud of the achievements which have come up with over the last 10

years."

From losing his first match in charge away at Dagenham & Redbridge on September 29, 2012, to giving the club its best home run in 2021, the 49-year-old has given Wycombe some of its best moments in Wanderers' history.

But, there is one moment that will stand out in the manager's list of achievements.

Ainsworth explained: "The best moment would have to be getting Wycombe into the Championship.

"That was an incredible feeling knowing that in 133 years of existence, this club was just one of the few that would be playing in the second tier of English football.

"What a night that was and I'm not a social media person, but even I saw a video that really gets me choked up.

"It was seeing all the houses with Wycombe flags and shirts out, and people celebrating at the final whistles in their homes.

"This was during Covid so nobody was at the ground and you couldn't be in the pub watching it with your mates.

"It gets me choked up seeing that as that's how we all felt at Wembley that day.

"That moment is my finest hour at Wycombe Wanderers.

"Survival at Torquay is up there because the relief was incredible and the learning I got off that was so important.

"But to take this club to the Championship was special and hopefully it won't be the last time."

He walked through the Adams Park doors as a Wanderers player

for the first time in 2009, and he explained how and why he decided to move to Bucks 13 years ago.

Ainsworth explained: "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.

"It was nice to really feel that again.

"So 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."

So far, Ainsworth has won 206 games from his 526 matches in charge, and here's hoping he can record the club's first-ever victory away at Sheffield Wednesday this Saturday.



The greatest-ever day in the history of Wycombe Wanderers, as the Chairboys gained promotion to the Championship in July 2020 (PA)



There have been many ups and downs since he took over the role a decade ago (Pictured during a 2-1 away loss at Cardiff City in April 2021) (PA)



Rob Couhig (left) and Gareth Ainsworth (right) celebrate reaching the play-off final this year (PA)



Matt Bloomfield, Gareth Ainsworth and the late Bill Turnbull at Adams Park in 2016

# Message from Mike Dewey

DEAR readers,  
 For the next two or three months I shall be taking a rest from preparing the weekly Nostalgia articles. I have an article planned for October and another in November.  
 I will also be preparing a monthly Wycombe War Timeline.  
 In my absence the Nostalgia pages will be in the capable hands of reporter James Richings.

All the best,  
Mike Dewey

## SPORT

## Ainsworth's reaction to Rams defeat



Max Stryjek in action (PA)

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has remained positive despite his side's recent 2-1 defeat at Derby County.

Anis Mehmeti gave the Chairboys between the lead before two goals from Conor Hourihane gave the Rams the win.

He said: "We got at them early and could have been ahead by a couple of goals, went a goal up and we tried to hold on but it didn't happen.

"Sometimes you have got to say fair play to Derby County, they are a top team with some great players and their quality showed."

On the two goals that Hourihane scored, the boss added: "The finishing is the difference.

"He [Hourihane] is of Premier League quality and that's a Premier League finish.

"We'll take a leaf out of that and find these corners when we get these chances, but, I'm not taking the work rate away from my boys.

"The subs were great, the starting 11 were great, the fans were great and thank you to them, but we will go again against Sheffield Wednesday."

## Gape goal up for nomination

A GOAL scored by Wycombe Wanderers' Dominic Gape has been nominated for the August League One Goal of the Month award.

The 28-year-old produced a moment of brilliance in the Chairboys' recent 3-0 win over Barnsley on August 20, where he managed to lob Bradley Collins from more than 40-yards with a first time effort.

The strike put Wanderers 2-0 up in the match, in what was his first goal for the club in nearly four years.

This comes in the week that Wycombe keeper Max Stryjek was named in the recent Midweek Team of the Week.

The Polish shot-stopper made several saves in Wanderers' recent 1-0 home victory over Accrington Stanley on September 13.

## Could Bloomfield be a boss one day?

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers legend and coach Matt Bloomfield has revealed that he would like to one day become a manager.

The 38-year-old is currently in his first full season as a member of Gareth Ainsworth's backroom staff, following his retirement from the game in February this year.

And even though he was forced to hang up his boots following a series of concussions, he admits that he is 'loving' his new role, and that becoming a manager of a club could be on the cards.

However, he was quick to point out that this wouldn't be any time soon.

Speaking ahead of Wycombe's trip to Derby on September 17, Bloomfield told the Bucks Free Press: "I would love to [go into management] at some stage in my life.

"It's a progression that I would like to take but I am not in any rush that's for sure.

"I'm learning the ropes still as I have got lots to learn, and I couldn't have two better teachers in the gaffer and Dobbo.

"They couldn't be more different, two completely different characters in terms of their leadership and coaching backgrounds.

"But they have got so many positives that I am trying to get and utilise from them.

"And one day I would like to do that but it's no time soon and I am happier with what I am doing."

On swapping the pitch to the tactics room, Blooms continued: "I'm really enjoying my new role and modern football is very tactical.

"We use a lot of analysis for our preparation in games, and also in



Matt Bloomfield spoke about how he would consider becoming a manager one day (PA)

our debriefings too.

"It's really important to go over several formations.

"The gaffer needs to make a decision and as the coaching staff, we need to know what is best for each individual game.

"You need to be adaptable during the match.

"I'm still involved at the same

football club and doing the same drive in, but instead of getting out onto the pitch, I'm off it, and I'm loving it."

Wycombe's next match is at Sheffield Wednesday - venue which Bloomfield only played on game at.

This was in 2-0 victory for the Owls in May 2012, which promot-

ed the Owls into the Championship whilst relegating Wanderers into League Two after one season away from the division.

To read more of the latest Wycombe Wanderers news, go to the Bucks Free Press website or you can visit either the following Twitter accounts @bucksfreepress/@James\_BFP).



Max Stryjek made over 10 saves in the match that ended 2-1 at Pride Park (PA)

## Wanderers fall to a defeat away at Derby

CONOR Hourihane scored a 13-minute brace as Wycombe Wanderers lost 2-1 away at Derby County.

Prior to kick-off, both sets of fans observed a minute's silence following Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's passing on September 8, before everyone inside Pride Park beautifully sang the National Anthem.

Anis Mehmeti put the Chairboys ahead with his fifth goal in nine League One games.

It was the third away league match

in a row he had scored in, and it was his fifth strike in nine League One games this season, but this was the best it got for Wanderers as Derby started to take control.

Max Stryjek was called into action to deny David McGoldrick on two occasions, before the Polish keeper pushed away an Eiran Cashin strike from range.

His best stop of the day fell on the hour mark when he managed to claw Nathaniel Mendez-Laing's left-footed effort from just inside the Wanderers

box.

Goal bound, the 26-year-old tipped the shot onto the crossbar to the disbelief of all of the Rams fans inside the ground, who thought they had scored.

However, with 72 minutes on the clock, Derby finally got their goal which was richly deserved with Conor Hourihane smashing home the equaliser, before the Irishmen then scored his second of the match with a fierce left-foot finish with five minutes remaining.



Gareth Ainsworth remained positive despite the loss, as Wycombe fell to their fourth league defeat this season after a four-game unbeaten run (PA)

# Verdict on league loss

**WYCOMBE** Wanderers manager Gareth Ainsworth has reflected on his side's 2-1 loss away at Derby County.

The Chairboys took the lead inside 15 through Anis Mehmeti's fifth goal in nine league matches this season, before a double from Conor Hourihane in the final 15 minutes gave the Rams all three points.

It ends Wanderers' four-match unbeaten run whilst Derby have picked up their second league victory in six.

The result means Wycombe are now 16th whilst Derby are propelled from 13th to seventh. Speaking after the match, Ainsworth said: "The

atmosphere was brilliant from both sets of fans and it was a really good game, but I am gutted that we didn't anything out of it.

"They are a good side with former Premier League players so fair play to them.

"My boys are gutted as they worked hard and we should have hit their net a couple of times.

"We just need to make sure that we're better and we practice because we didn't really test them in the second half as much as the first, but I saw some really good performances from our players and we go again next Saturday."

# Alan Parry Previews Sheffield Wed away



Mehmeti scoring at SW (PA)

AFTER last week's defeat at Derby County, Wycombe's daunting schedule continues when they face another of the 'giants' of League One with the long trip to Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday, September 24.

Gareth Ainsworth must have winced when the fixtures for the new campaign were announced, as September and October could not have provided his Wanderers team with a more difficult challenge to get their season up and running.

They were pitted against the three teams relegated from the Championship last season plus five of the top eight finishers from League One.

To make matters worse, Ainsworth then lost three key players before a ball had been kicked.

The void left by the departures of David Stockdale, Anthony Stewart and Bayo Akinfenwa was always going to be difficult to fill, even before injuries ruled out the likes of Curtis Thompson, Brandon Hanlan and Sullay Kai-kai before the season had started.

Further injuries to last season's top scorer Sam Vokes and defender Ryan Tafazolli, plus the absence of Josh Scowen at Derby, mean Ainsworth has yet to have the luxury of fielding a settled starting eleven.

To add to the manager's problems, it is well known that beaten play off finalists traditionally start the following campaign slowly, so it is hardly surprising that Wanderers have been inconsistent in the first two months of the season.

They will need to be at their best to take anything from Saturday's trip to Sheffield Wednesday.

Darren Moore's team finished fourth last season but lost their play-off semi-final against Sunderland, who went on to gain promotion by beating the Chairboys in the final.

The Owls are currently fourth in League One with five wins from nine games and their only home defeat came against Yorkshire rivals Barnsley.

Wednesday also boast some of the top players in the division including Ex-Wanderers goalkeeper Stockdale, Scotland international midfielder Barry Bannan, and last season's top scorer Lee Gregory.

Wanderers took four points off Wednesday last season with Jordan Obita scoring in both games; a 2-2 draw at Hillsborough and a 1-0 win at Adams Park. A repeat performance on Saturday is just what Ainsworth's men need at this tough time.

# Bloomfield on his new role as a coach



Matt Bloomfield (pictured playing against Coventry in 2020) retired from the game in February 2022 following a concussion against Exeter (PA)

**FORMER** Wycombe Wanderers midfielder and current coach Matt Bloomfield has explained that despite not being a contracted player, he is still not able to partake in contact training.

The 38-year-old hung up his boots in February this year after being advised by medical experts following a series of concussions.

His most recent head injury occurred in the Chairboys' first round League Cup win against Exeter City in August 2021.

This was off the back of suffering two separate head injuries in the 2019/20 season against Lincoln City at home, and then away at Derby County in 2020/21.

He called it a day after 558 Wanderers games and 40 goals in nearly two decades at the club, but he is enjoying his new job being part of Gareth Ainsworth's backroom team.

He said: "I would love to go out on the pitch and play, but I don't join in any contact training just in case because more concussions could cause a lot more issues.

"I've been given strict instructions not to risk anything, but I try and get my exercise elsewhere in the gym with running and the non-contacting training.

"One of the decisions I made when I retired was that I would take myself away from the training environment, as I don't want to be a footballer anymore.

"I won't lie to you, I never

By James Richings

thought I'd be comfortable about the day when I needed to retire from football.

"I was always dreading it.

"But when it came around, I was calm with it and nothing since has changed my mind.

"I want to be a coach."

On facing Derby this weekend, he added: "There are high expectations from Derby as they have signed some good players with a lot of experience and have got a really exciting manager in Liam Rosenior.

"We've been watching them see what quality they have and they can expose us, but after our win on Tuesday night (against Accrington Stanley), we have come up with a plan to prepare ourselves."

During his near two decades as a Chairboys player, Bloomfield scored a goal in each of those seasons excluding the previous campaign.

In all, he bagged 40 times for the club with his final strike for Gareth Ainsworth's men being against Derby County in November 2020.

His last goal at Adams Park occurred on his 35th birthday in February 2020, he scored the third in a 3-1 home victory against Bristol Rovers.

Bloomfield's last Adams Park appearance was against Nottingham Forest in February 2021.

# SPORT



## Ainsworth on the numerous injuries



Wycombe Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth spoke about his club's injuries (PA)

By James Richings

WYCOMBE Wanderers boss Gareth Ainsworth has revealed that the injuries his team has received so far this season are 'killing' him, following their sputtering start to the 2022/23 season.

The Chairboys fell to a 3-0 away loss at Stevenage in the EFL Trophy in a game where they were second best throughout the contest.

A positive in the match at the Lamex Stadium was that first-time regulars in Sam Vokes and Sullay Kaikai got important minutes under their belts following lengthy absences from the Wanderers squad in this

campaign.

And with many more big names still out, Ainsworth noted that his team will be 'strong' once his reinforcements are fit and well.

He said: "Curtis Thompson is out, Brandon Hanlan is out, Sam Vokes was out, Ryan Tafazolli was out, Garath McCleary is suspended, and Josh Scowen is a big loss.

"Injuries are killing me at the moment, but I do think that we will be strong come in the second half of the season.

"But we need to make sure that the first half of the season doesn't get away from us and we need to get some players back quick.

"Today [September 20] was to

get fitness for Sam and for Sullay, and we need to get him [Kaikai] up to speed as he is a good player.

"He just needs that magic when he is on the ball and I think we will see more of that as the season progresses.

"Seeing Sullay Kaikai start and Sam Vokes get minutes were positive for me."

On the upcoming matches, Ainsworth added: "They are a strong side Stevenage and I want to progress in this tournament but the focus is now Sheffield Wednesday.

"We have got a few really tough games coming up in Sheffield Wednesday, Plymouth, Oxford, Peterborough (twice), and then MK.

"I think we need to try and get

as many points as we can before the rest come back."

On the performance at the Lamex, he said: "I am disappointed because there wasn't much football played and it was more of a physical battle.

"Stevenage deserved the win as they were the better side.

"They were better on the second balls and we played more of the football in the second half but still, we didn't really carve them up, they defended really well and they won all their headers and tackles and were really physical."

It was the second-ever meeting between the two clubs in the EFL Trophy, which was seen Stevenage win both matches without conceding.



Another loss for Wycombe (PA)

## Defeat in the EFL Trophy

WYCOMBE Wanderers lost for the second game in a row as they fell to a 3-0 away defeat at Stevenage in the Football League Trophy.

The Chairboys fell a goal behind inside four minutes through Danny Rose's brilliant strike on his left foot.

The shot flew past goalkeeper Tyla Dickinson who was motionless as the former Northampton Town man scored his third goal of the season, which was his first since the middle of August.

The game was effectively inside the first 10 minutes of the second half, as Rose got his second of the game.

He managed to get onto the end of a Kane Smith to nod the ball past Dickinson to record his fourth goal of the campaign.

Terence Vancooten then got Stevenage's third with a close-range finish with 10 minutes remaining.

It has his first professional goal in what was his 150th career appearance.

## Pendlebury pens deal with new club

FORMER Wycombe Wanderers midfielder Olly Pendlebury has signed for a new club.

The 20-year-old, who was released by the Chairboys after only one season with the Adams Park outfit this summer, has joined Non League Farnborough in the National League South.

He signed for the Hampshire club at the start of this month, and made his debut for the Yellows in their 1-0 away win at Cheshunt on September 3.

His second appearance came in the club's 2-1 away defeat at Tonbridge 10 days later.

During his time at Wanderers, Pendlebury played 10 games for the Chairboys, and scored three goals.

Two of those strikes came in an impressive 3-1 away win at Cheltenham Town in August 2021.

His final strike for the club game in February this year when he scored against Long Crendon in the Berks & Berks Cup in a 4-0 win for Wycombe at the ASM Stadium in Thame.