



Exeter City Website

Match Report

The Grecians suffered New Year's Day heartbreak at Adams Park as a late penalty saw Wycombe claim all three points.

After an uneventful first half, the hosts took the lead mid-way through the second half with a cruel deflected free-kick, but City responded how they do best, with a set-piece. Tristan Crama rose highest to equalise with four minutes to go, but deep in added time an unfortunate handball won the Chairboys a late penalty.

Gary Caldwell's protests earned him a red card, and then Aaron Morely stepped up and sent Whitworth the wrong way, condemning the Grecians to defeat on January 1st.

For the Grecians' first game of 2025, Gary Caldwell made two changes to the side that [clawed back a dramatic point against Crawley](#). After scoring three goals in three games, Millenic Alli dropped out of the squad completely with injury, to be replaced by another goalscorer on Sunday, Vincent Harper. Caleb Watts also started, while Johnly Yefko returned to the bench, his first appearance in the squad since late October.

First half

In wet and blustery conditions at Adams Park, the early stages saw both sides grappling to gain control. Wycombe looked more threatening initially, with Cameron Humphreys testing Joe Whitworth with a turn-and-shot that the City keeper comfortably held.

Then, Caleb Watts provided City's first spark, firing a powerful first-time strike from distance that flashed wide before seeing another effort blocked after a surging run. As the half progressed, the game settled into a midfield battle, with Wycombe pressing high but the Grecians showing composure to play through their hosts.

City thought they had broken the deadlock in the 35th minute when Ilmari Niskanen headed Ed Francis' inswinging corner into the net at the back post. However, the referee ruled it out for a foul, judging Josh Magennis to have been holding his marker in the build-up.

As a largely uneventful first half neared its conclusion, Wycombe tried to assert themselves but could only muster a tame header from Kone, which Whitworth easily gathered.

Second half

A fantastic run down the left wing from Jake Richards got City's second half going moments after the restart, as he beat two Wanderers men before earning a corner, though the resulting set piece was cleared.

All of Wycombe's outfield team had scored a goal so far this season apart from their skipper Jack Grimmer, and he was next to try his luck after finding a pocket of space 30 yards from goal. His central shot did dip, but not soon enough and sailed over the bar.

Shooting towards an away end that hadn't stopped singing all match, City again went close in the 53rd minute with another Niskanen header. Watts and Richards combined well before the former sent in a cross to the back post, but the Finn's header went over.

The breakthrough came for Wycombe in the 66th minute under somewhat fortunate circumstances. After Woods conceded a central free-kick 25 yards from goal, Luke Leahy stepped up to take it. His effort took a cruel deflection, wrong-footing Whitworth and nestling in the back of the net to give the hosts a 1-0 lead.

City had a golden chance to equalise moments later. Watts unleashed a powerful shot that the Wycombe keeper could only parry into the path of Vince Harper. However, under pressure and facing a difficult angle, Harper couldn't keep his effort on target, and it drifted wide.

The match opened up in the closing stages, with opportunities emerging for both sides. Wycombe's Kone fired narrowly wide before City substitute Pat Jones won a corner on the right flank.

Woods delivered an inviting cross, and Tristan Crama—continuing his fine form in aerial battles this season—timed his leap perfectly to meet the ball. Rising above the Wycombe defense, the towering Frenchman powered his header into the net, sending the City fans into raptures and levelling the score at 1-1 with just four minutes of normal time remaining.

There was still time for late drama, but unfortunately for City, it wasn't in their favor. In the 93rd minute, with the ball ricocheting around the Grecians' penalty area, the referee pointed to the spot for a handball against an Exeter player.

Tempers flared as Gary Caldwell protested the decision and was subsequently shown a red card, leaving the City manager to watch the final moments from the changing rooms. Aaron Morley stepped up and calmly sent Whitworth the wrong way, sealing all three points for the league leaders.

It was a cruel end to a battling performance from the Grecians, who had fought valiantly against the odds but ultimately returned to Devon empty-handed.

The Grecians return to St James Park on Saturday, hosting Bolton Wanderers during a special Brazilian celebration day.