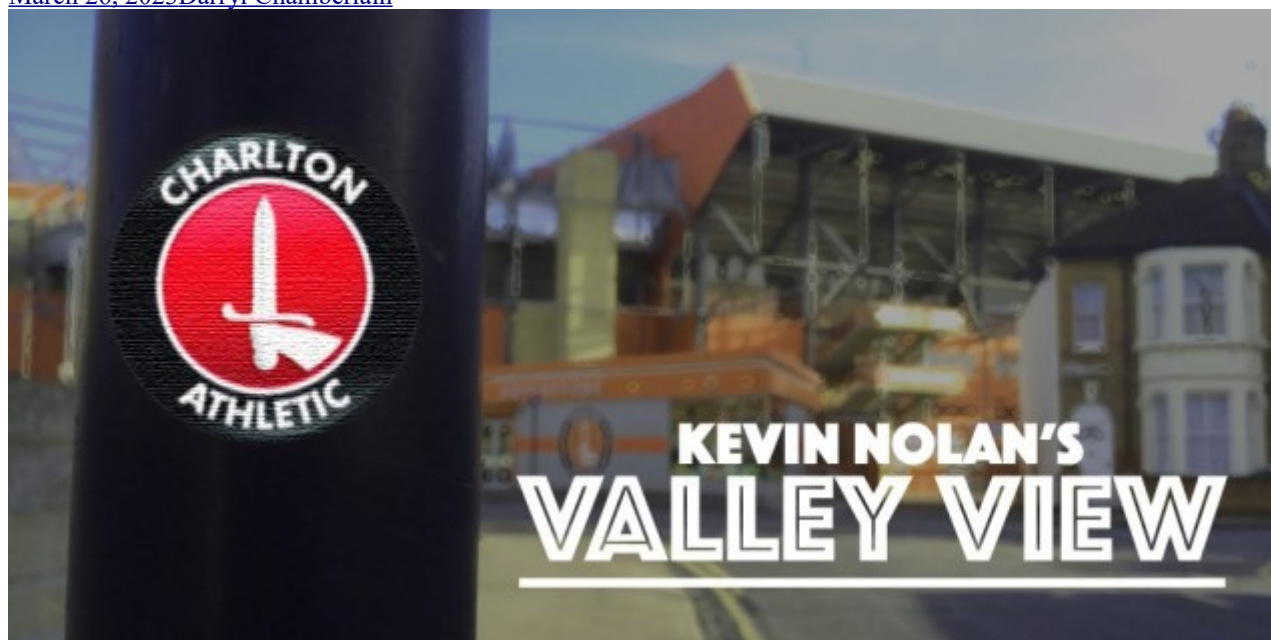


Kevin Nolan's Valley View: Charlton Athletic 1-1 Wycombe Wanderers

[March 26, 2023](#)[Darryl Chamberlain](#)



The Addicks settled into mid-table mediocrity by drawing with Wycombe Wanderers at The Valley on Saturday. KEVIN NOLAN is already thinking of next season...

After wading through clashes with three of League One's desperate basement dwellers, Charlton moved up the food chain to take on unfancied promotion aspirants Wycombe Wanderers at The Valley on Saturday. To nobody's great surprise, a tetchy physical encounter ended in a 1-1 stalemate, as its predecessor had at Adams Park some seven months ago.

Obligated to complete a campaign of disappointing mid-table stodge, the result meant rather less to the Addicks than it did to the Chairboys, who arrived just four points and two places outside the play-off positions.

Their relative success serves as a reminder to the likes of Charlton what can be achieved by well-organised clubs on limited budgets. Tucked away in one of football's sleepier alcoves, they have defied the odds and, whatever its outcome, can look back on this season as a step in the right direction.

Deprived of several first-teamers, among them stalwart veteran Garath McCleary, so often a thorn in Charlton's side, the outsiders from Buckinghamshire papered over the cracks, weathered a rocky start and were good value for their share of the spoils. As were, to be fair, Dean Holden's chaps, who showed every intention of seeing things through to the bitter end of a largely forgettable season.

Having made their usual desultory opening, the Addicks settled down and controlled most of the first half, from which they emerged with a deserved lead.

Albie Morgan had already squandered an opportunity when scuffing Tyreece Campbell's sharp cutback wide before redeeming himself by setting up Miles Leaburn's third goal in as many games. Morgan's hard drive fortuitously rebounded to his feet but was instantly drilled low to the far post, where Leaburn tapped home simply, but efficiently.

Leaburn Jr has been a bright spark during the doldrums, a chip off an old beloved block but one destined to make a name for himself. This ninth goal of an emergent season was as easy to score as miss but was all about movement and anticipation. The same could be said about his deceptively routine strike [at Cambridge](#), where he drifted off the shoulder of an unwary defender to convert Jesurun Rak-Sakyi's cutback.

Capable of spectacular efforts, the 18-year old prodigy promises to become a rare handful for defences, probably at a higher level. He does show a worrying susceptibility to injury, but this will be managed as he develops.

Thrown off course by the setback, meanwhile, the visitors briefly buckled and Rak-Sakyi created a good chance for Leaburn to force a smart save from Max Stryjek.

But Wanderers gradually gained a foothold and Chem Campbell's improvised overhead effort drew a similarly impressive response from Ashley Maynard-Brewer. The young Aussie had earned the break he received when Campbell fired the rebound wide. He was just as happy to see Joe Jacobson's free-kick skim the bar, after Michael Hector decked ex-Addick Brandan Hanlan. Skipper Jacobson's setpiece skills would be heard from again before the end of this competitive encounter.

Clearly needing to score again – as any of their fans would confirm – Charlton came close early in the second session. Cutting in from the right in trademark style, Rak-Sakyi unleashed a vicious strike from his favoured left foot but Stryjek, at full length, tipped away brilliantly. Two further saves from the imposing Pole which denied Morgan and the irrepressible Tyreece Campbell provided the platform for Wycombe's increasingly likely equaliser.

Midfielder David Wheeler's volley narrowly cleared the bar as the Chairboys took over but Charlton were weakening. An exception was the outstanding Maynard-Brewer. His response to a blistering drive from substitute Nick Freeman, who turned sharply on to Lewis Wing's pass, was exemplary. Sadly for the defiant keeper, the resultant left-wing corner was swung out by Jacobson and bulleted home unstoppably by hefty centre-back Chris Forino.

As tempers frayed, there were chances at both ends. Scott Fraser fired Charlton's last effort wide but it was Hanlan who came closer to stealing the points so coveted by the ambitious visitors. His cleverly curled shot was heading for the bottom right corner until Maynard-Brewer made horizontal contact to his left and magnificently turned aside what had seemed to be Wycombe's last minute match-winner.

Next up for the Addicks as they see out their obligations is next Saturday's visit of Shrewsbury Town, who still entertain faint hopes of crashing the play-offs but, more realistically, are also destined for mid-table mediocrity.

It's to Holden's credit that his under-achievers are, at least, making it clear that they are no pushovers. This 13th draw of the season was bitterly earned against opponents with greater incentive and made it four games unbeaten since they pushed the self-destruct button [at Plymouth](#) in early March. There's pride still at stake, without which there's little point in turning up. The 2023-24 season might be said to begin here...