

Analysis of Barnsley's 4-2 win at Wycombe Wanderers on Saturday. The hosts took the lead twice, but Sam Cosgrove and Donovan Pines scored equalisers before Corey O'Keeffe and Conor Grant secured the win.

REDS' REMARKABLE AWAY CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

THERE can be few more guaranteed ways to experience success and fun in English football at the moment than being a regular in Barnsley's away end.

The 822 in Buckinghamshire on Saturday were treated to another enjoyable day out - if not without its scary moments - after a three-hour journey and were loud throughout the game.

The Reds recorded their tenth away win of the season, leaving them with the joint most points on the road in League One this season, 36 from 17 games, and the most away goals with 31.

Since their only away league loss this campaign, at Derby in November, they are unbeaten in nine so are one short of equalling a club record for an unbeaten away run within one season.

They are also closing in on the club records of 12 away wins and 41 away points in a season.

Their next two scheduled away games are at clubs in very different positions in the table and on the map as they are due to travel to bottom club Carlisle United then leaders Portsmouth.

This was another very valuable visiting victory.

The teams above the fourth-placed Reds also won so they did not make any ground up in the table but they stayed within striking distance with games in hand and third-placed Bolton due at Oakwell on Tuesday.

They are six unbeaten and have lost two of their last 24 league games, winning the last three.

They have scored in 21 consecutive games for the first time since 1966/67.

THE WHEELERS COME OFF FOR HOSTS

The last two games against Wycombe had been uneventful and dull contests until the Reds scored a late goal to win 1-0.

Many expected the same this time but instead there were six goals and a red card - with four of them and the dismissal all coming within 21 second half minutes.

The wheels came off for the hosts and so did the Wheelers as, from the re-start after going 3-2 down, home substitute David Wheeler was sent off for kicking out at Corey O'Keeffe. He had been on the pitch less than a minute.

That Wycombe implosion was surprising given their recent form.

The Chairboys started the game 14th but had only lost three of their last 15 games in all competitions while they were unbeaten in nine home games. They had beaten Peterborough 5-2 and had tight games with various other promotion-chasers in recent weeks.

Wycombe's average age was 28, compared to Barnsley's 26, with five starters in their 30s and plenty of experience in League One and the Championship.

The Reds struggled early on. It may have been the loss of important players John McAtee and Nicky Cadden, their hosts' awkward direct style, that this game was sandwiched between two clashes with promotion rivals Derby and Bolton, or just the fact that they occasionally have poor first halves.

But they hung in the fight, still dominated the ball and played some decent football eventually, including a couple of fine team goals.

They completed their second double of the season, after also beating Port Vale twice, while it was a third successive win at Adams Park.

SLOPPY DEFENDING BUT ANOTHER COMEBACK

This was the first time Barnsley won a league game after being behind twice since a 3-2 success at Peterborough in October 2003.

Barnsley fell behind in the opening 20 minutes for the sixth time in nine games then did so again early in the second half but levelled with three minutes before finding two more.

They now have 22 points from losing positions - the second most in the division behind Portsmouth - while they have come from behind to win six times in 16 games across less than three months after not doing so for two years.

It is a worrying trend that they seem to start so poorly and give themselves so much to do, but the fact that they still manage to win so frequently means it is not the main topic of conversation.

They have shown extraordinary powers of recovery but surely cannot expect to come back so regularly all season, and too often take at least half an hour to settle down and begin to pass well.

Josh Earl has been excellent for Barnsley since arriving in January but was at fault for both Wycombe's goals.

The second was a particularly glaring error as he thought the ball was going out of play only for it to be kept in by veteran Garath McCleary who gave Earl a tough time before having to come off after hurting himself providing that assist.

Earl still looked exceptional on the ball often, calmly rounding attackers with great skill and striding out of defence. He also played a part in the build-up to Barnsley's first two goals.

Next to him, Donovan Pines - other than slicing a clearance against his own post at 1-0 - had another impressive game, again dominating in the air, while Mael de Gevigney was solid as we have come to expect.

Collectively the defence had some nervous and sloppy moments as they struggled to clear their lines, often put under pressure by some poor kicking by goalkeeper Liam Roberts.

Barnsley lost the ball near their goal several times late on at 4-2 but Sam

Vokes blasted over from 20 yards with Wycombe's only real chance in that period.

Collins was furious on the sidelines but hoped afterwards it was just a one-off in a strange game against ten men.

FOUR DIFFERENT SCORERS FROM NEW SOURCES

There were four different scorers with Donovan Pines and Conor Grant netting their first goals for the club while Corey O'Keeffe and Sam Cosgrove struck after being brought into the team.

John McAtee and Nicky Cadden were out through injury and illness which was frustrating after Neill Collins could pick arguably his strongest team for the first time this season last week with everyone in their right positions.

But Collins did say he would have selected Cosgrove even if McAtee had been fit, as he suited the opponents. The big striker justified that with a second goal in as many starts, and a second of the season against Wycombe - this one a lot better than the bizarre Oakwell injury-time blunder by goalkeeper Max Stryjek who was suspended for this game.

Cosgrove could have had a penalty at 1-0 down - after which he and Jack Grimmer were booked for an altercation - then won the free-kick for his goal.

Pines scored his first goal since netting at David Beckham's Inter Miami in June.

It was only the second time this season a Barnsley centre-back has scored from a set piece following Mael de Gevigney's strange goal at Cambridge when the ball was headed against him and looped in.

But the huge Pines should add a greater threat in those scenarios during the run-in.

O'Keeffe netted the eventual winner, capping a fine individual performance out of position at left wing-back. He has been up and down this season but was impressive at Shrewsbury last month before being dropped when Jordan Williams moved out of the back three to right wing-back. He was brought back in due to Cadden's illness and a lack of back-ups on the left.

Although he kept having to check back onto his right foot, O'Keeffe was a good outlet and could have won a penalty in the first half, also seeing a header tipped over, before netting his third goal of the season.

Conor Grant then secured the win with probably the goal of the game, his first since 2022. There were some eyebrows raised on deadline day last month when Barnsley brought in a midfielder who had struggled for gametime with MK Dons in League Two. But this was by far his most eye-catching

cameo so far as, along with his goal, he completed 100 per cent of his passes including some excellent touches and flicks to open up play.

MIDFIELD AND WILLIAMS PLAY KEY ROLES

Luca Connell had been ill in the build-up to the game so was taken off after just over an hour, but he certainly made an impact.

Connell has dropped down the pecking order for set pieces recently but, with fellow left-footer Cadden out, he had more opportunities and provided quality.

His free-kick hit the underside of the bar before being headed in by Cosgrove then his corner led to the second goal.

Neither will count officially as an assist so he still has no goal contributions to his name this season. But he looked much more like the set piece expert of last season.

Alongside Connell in a midfield which eventually won a tough battle, Herbie Kane was particularly good in the second half - keeping hold of the ball and dictating the game.

Adam Phillips did not grab the headlines like in previous games but played passes to Jordan Williams in the build-up to the third and fourth goal. Williams has looked a new player since moving out of the back three to right wing-back, where he is among the best in the division.

Devante Cole is now without a goal in five games, his longest such run of the season, and he often had to drift out to the left wing to get the ball. But he did play a part in the second goal.

Neill Collins praised his side for chalking up their tenth away win of the season with a 4-2 success at Wycombe Wanderers and hopes there are several more to come in the promotion chase.

The hosts took the lead twice but Sam Cosgrove and Donovan Pines levelled before Corey O'Keeffe and Conor Grant won it either side of a red card for David Wheeler.

Collins said: "I will focus on the positives because there are more of them than negatives. The resilience we showed after going behind twice was fantastic. The quality of play when we put it together caused Wycombe problems and some of our goals were excellent.

"Winning at a club that have been really good at home recently is pleasing.

"There are clearly a couple of negatives. We gave a couple of goals away then at 4-2 we gave up chances through poor choices. I don't know if we would have done at that at 11v11 because it can be awkward (playing against ten men).

"I want to be part of a team that can come from behind, can score goals away from home, play on the front foot and excite fans. We want to cut out mistakes but players haven't been guilty of that too often."

It was Barnsley's tenth away win of the season in front of 822 away fans.

Collins said: "The players have impressed me with their understanding of what's required away from home. They have done a really good job on that. Ten wins away is fantastic and we want a few more this season.

"Fantastic backing from our fans. They were so boisterous all game. We love that. I am really looking forward to the away games before the end of the season because they have a team to be proud about and sing about."

Captain Jordan Williams added: "It was whirlwind. We weren't at our best but we dug in and scored four. Credit to the lads. That shows the confidence in the group. When we go behind, we're not beaten. When we showed quality, we picked them off."

Cosgrove levelled on the stroke of half-time, having been brought back into the team.

Collins said: "When we put clips together on the game, Sam was cropping up a lot with his hold-up play and being a nuisance in the box. He was unfortunate not to play last week but we felt Macca (John McAtee) would suit Derby more. Sam was always scheduled to play today, and I am glad he got another goal."

Pines got the second equaliser with his first goal in English football. Collins said: "I am really pleased for Donovan who I thought was excellent. Coming into this climate against a tough team, he was really really good."

O'Keeffe got what proved to be the winner, playing out of position at left wing-back. Collins said: "Corey has really pushed hard in training. Jordan Williams coming back into his right wing back slot has pushed him out, maybe not deservedly but it's my decision. He's responded great and is a key part of this group. I really enjoy working with him. For him to get the important goal was really pleasing."

Substitute Grant made it 4-2 with his first goal for the club. Collins said: "Conor has done really well in training. He was excellent. He has a big role to play as all the players do. The goal was a bit of class."

Nicky Cadden missed the game through illness but could return on Tuesday at home to Bolton, while McAtee was out with a back problem. Collins said: "I don't think McAtee will be available for Tuesday but hopefully it's nothing longer than that."

Josh Earl mishit a clearance for the opener then thought the ball had gone out of play when Wycombe made it 2-1.

Collins said: "Josh Earl has been outstanding for us. He was really good in spells today but made a couple of little mistakes. We scored the goals to get him out of it. There will be other times when Josh Earl gets other people out of a jam."