

DONS COLUMN



James Reeve posts his Cowshed Commentaries blog on our website. You can get involved at onemk.co.uk

MILTON Keynes Dons suffered a disappointing 3-1 defeat to Championship bottom-dwellers Bolton Wanderers on Saturday, with a number of their regular first-team players out through injury or suspension.

Kyle McFadzean missed the match through suspension, Rob Hall was ineligible to play due to Bolton being his parent company and Nicky Maynard, Carl Baker and Matthew Upson missed the match through injuries.

One of the most impactful absences, however, was that of Maynard. Maynard is the Dons' best striker and is the player most likely to find the net when provided adequate supply, with Simon Church once again showing that he is not a striker that flourishes alone.

Church is more of a supporting/defensive-style striker, capable of holding the ball up well for a team's target man, but he struggles to find the net and is less likely to score when he is playing as the team's lone striker.

The Dons have found themselves 2 points above the relegation zone for a long time, a place that they both want and don't want to be in.

Come the end of the season, finishing 2 points above relegation will be delightful for all involved with the club, but at the half-way point it is still a nervous position to be in.

With the Dons losing so many important and influential players, the need for support becomes more urgent.

Loan signings Jake Forster-Caskey and Jonny Williams were the best performers for the Dons, showing that manager Karl Robinson has a keen eye for bringing in players capable of having the positive impact the team needs.

But the Dons are largely lacking in one of the most important areas of a team: striker.

Nicky Maynard and Simon Church are the club's only two first-team quality strikers, with Tom Hitchcock having yet to show if he can break into the starting XI, and the need for another striker should be at the top of Robinson's wish list.

Rumours and reports suggested that Robinson attempted to bring Liverpool's young striker Jerome Sinclair to the club on loan but, with Sinclair's contract with the Reds expiring in the summer, the Premier League outfit unfortunately declined.

With the transfer window closing next week, Robinson will be working tirelessly in the coming days to ensure the club gets the right players in to secure their Championship future while also ensuring it is set up financially for next season.

Dons fans are very understanding regarding the financial situation and will wait patiently for the club to announce any new players, keeping hopes that a new striker is on the way.

Is there a striker the Dons should target in particular? What other areas does the club need to bolster? Let us know your thoughts!

MK DONS

'We'll go into the game full of hope'

BY CHRIS KNIGHT
editor@mk-news.co.uk

MK Dons boss Karl Robinson believes his side have 'no right' to win their FA Cup Fourth Round clash with Chelsea, but insists bigger shocks have happened.

Tickets for the much-anticipated game at stadiummk - which will be live on BBC 1 this Sunday - sold out before being released on general sale.

Robinson labelled the match the 'tie of a lifetime' for the club, and says his side will be ready to go toe-to-toe with the Premier League champions.

He said: "We don't know what team Chelsea will put out, but with no midweek game I expect them to go as strong as they possibly can. Some of the world's greatest players will be in our tunnel walking out to 'Welcome to the Jungle!'"

"We know Chelsea should blow us off the park with the quality they have, but we will all go into the game full of hope."

"We all know how difficult it is going to be, but we have always acquitted ourselves well against



Praying for a miracle: MK Dons boss Karl Robinson

the bigger teams at stadiummk.

"We have no right to, but we will go toe-to-toe with Chelsea and this is the FA Cup - it wouldn't be the biggest shock in the competition's history."

Guus Hiddink's side will arrive at stadiummk on the back of a 1-0 win at title-chasers Arsenal, after Diego Costa scored the winner.

The controversial Spaniard is considered an injury doubt for the tie, but Robinson thinks his defenders will relish the battle if the forward is selected.

He added: "Our two centre-backs will have to commit themselves to the game 100 per cent, and be aggressive, clever and thoughtful in the way they play."

ICE HOCKEY

Lightning leave it late to win

TWO quickfire goals in the space of a minute secured a 5-3 win for MK Lightning against Sheffield Steeldogs at MK Arena on Saturday.

Lightning looked set to lose at one stage but late goals from Jordan Cownie and Frankie Bakrlik ensured a victory over seventh-placed Steeldogs.

The crucial moment came when Steeldogs' Steve Duncombe was thrown out on a match penalty for boarding Markku Tahinen behind the visitors goal line with 6mins 20secs remaining.

Tahinen lay on the ice for more than a minute after the challenge and played no further part in the action.

The dismissal of Duncombe gave Lightning a five minute powerplay from which they not only edged ahead but sealed the points with a fifth goal.

Michael Farn was awarded with the man of the match award. Lightning's next game is against Manchester Phoenix on January 30.

FORMULA ONE

Cool runnings for F1 Red Bull

HAVE you ever wondered what the Red Bull Racing team get up to in the closed season?

Well there is all the design work, testing and pre-season preparation but there is also time for a bit of fun.

The Tilbrook team took to the mountains of Austria as they turned Kitzbühel into the setting for a F1 showrun.

Sister team, Toro Rosso, driver Max Verstappen unleashed the power of F1 to 3,500 spectators. Speaking on how it felt to race the beast of a machine on a ski piste Verstappen said: "It was really cool and was so much fun. Keeping the car on the track was



Off-season fun: Red Bull took to the Alps

a real challenge." Red Bull's technicians made

snow chains to ensure the car could run on snow.

SPORTS SHORTS

RUGBY

OLNEY travelled to the suburbs of Leicester without skipper Jack Sutton and his recent deputy Charlie Belcher.

The host side were well drilled from the start, and inflicted on Olney their biggest defeat for some seasons.

Despite a valiant effort defensively the visitors conceded five tries, four converted in the first half, with final score ending up 87-7 to the home side.

KARTING

A STAND-OUT performance from reigning BRKC champion Ruben Boutens saw him claiming victory for the third time at the British Rental Kart Championship, which took place at Formula Fast in Bletchley at the weekend.

One of the biggest events on the karting calendar, the BRKC attracted hundreds of drivers - professional and amateur - from all over Europe.

DARTS

THE Unibet Masters is returning to ArenaMK this Saturday and Sunday, with some of the world's best darts players coming to the city.

In the opening round, world number one and pre-tournament favourite Michael van Gerwen takes on Stephen Bunting, reigning world champion Gary Anderson is in action against Vincent van der Voort, and Phil 'The Power' Taylor meets Jelle Klaasen.

ATHLETICS

THREE gold medals, a silver and a bronze were the individual highlights for Milton Keynes Athletics Club from the annual South of England Indoor Championships held at the Lee Valley Centre.

Maxwell Brown(60m), Rachel Gibbens (pole vault) and Laura Zialor(triple jump) all claimed gold, while Laura also claimed silver in the high jump. Aaron Adom won bronze in the 200m.

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

IN the Spartan South Midlands Football League Division One, New Bradwell St Peter edged a 1-0 victory at Brimsdown.

In Division Two, Old Bradwell United earned a comfortable 4-0 victory over Stony Stratford Town, while Wolverton Town slipped to a 3-0 defeat at AFC Hillgate.

FIXTURES

- SUN CHELSEA FA CUP (H)
- FEB 6 CARDIFF (A)
- FEB 13 DERBY (A)
- FEB 20 BRISTOL (H)
- FEB 23 HUDDERSFIELD (H)

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

Team	Home					Away					GD	PTS	
	P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A			
1 Hull City	28	11	2	1	30	6	3	5	15	12	27	56	
2 Middlesbrough	27	10	2	2	20	3	7	2	4	17	11	23	55
3 Burnley	28	9	3	2	29	12	5	6	3	17	13	21	51
4 Brighton	28	9	2	3	17	13	4	9	1	17	15	6	50
5 Derby County	28	7	5	2	24	12	6	5	3	15	13	14	49
6 Sheffield Wed	28	9	4	1	27	12	3	6	5	15	19	11	46
7 Birmingham	28	7	2	5	16	14	6	5	3	21	14	9	46
8 Ipswich Town	28	5	6	3	18	15	7	3	4	19	20	2	45
9 Cardiff City	28	7	6	1	21	13	3	5	6	14	18	4	41
10 Brentford	28	6	2	6	18	20	5	4	5	23	20	1	39
11 Notts Forest	28	6	5	3	20	12	3	6	5	10	13	5	38
12 Wolves	28	4	5	5	17	19	6	3	5	20	19	-1	38
13 Reading	28	6	5	3	17	10	3	3	8	15	21	1	35
14 QPR	28	4	8	2	22	17	4	3	7	13	18	0	35
15 Preston	28	4	6	4	12	13	4	5	5	13	14	-2	35
16 Leeds United	28	4	5	5	12	15	4	4	6	16	17	-4	35
17 Huddersfield	28	5	4	5	22	16	3	4	7	15	23	-2	32
18 Blackburn	27	3	7	3	12	9	3	5	6	12	15	0	30
19 Fulham	28	4	4	6	23	23	2	6	6	20	25	-5	28
20 MK Dons	28	6	1	7	13	19	1	4	9	10	22	-18	26
21 Rotherham	28	5	2	7	21	23	2	2	10	13	26	-15	25
22 Bristol City	28	3	5	6	15	22	2	4	8	9	25	-23	24
23 Charlton	28	3	6	5	15	22	1	3	10	7	32	-32	21
24 Bolton	28	3	8	3	15	15	0	3	11	9	31	-22	20

■ Table before last night's games