

# STONES

## Sterling service.. and boy could he TACKLE!

For the first in this season's look back at former Wealdstone stars, **ROGER SLATER** catches up with a star from the mid-90s, **Dominic Sterling**... a defender who would have slotted into great Stones sides of ANY era

**Married or single?** Unlike some Married men I can say I'm happily married with two boys aged two and four.

**What's the day job?** Very proud to say I'm in a small percentage of people who actually enjoys waking up every day for a very rewarding job. I work as a Project Manager for a Charity which contracts out specialised employment based CBT support to Talking Therapy services (IAPT: Improving Access to Psychological Therapy).

**What was the career before Wealdstone?** Before I joined Wealdstone I was a Data analyst for a Market research company by day and bit part amateur footballer by night. However I always knew which bit of my career I would have traded in for more success.

**Did you know anyone at the club or anything about us?** I only person I literally knew when I arrived at the club was Gordon Bartlett. This wasn't as much a surprise to me as the world of

WEALDSTONE v CHELMSFORD  
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**THE BIG INTERVIEW**

It's our returning hero.. after a dozen years away

**DOMINIC STERLING**

Interview: Tim Parks... with some extra questions from the fans

**ON THE BIG STAGE** Dom (left) pits his wits against Millwall winger Lewis Grabbin in the FA Cup 2nd round replay for Staines at the New Den in 2009. Staines held the Lions 1-1 in the first game but lost the replay 4-0

**H** Dominic. Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions and let me start by saying how great it is you have to back in a Stones shirt! Amazing though to think that it's a dozen years since you left to find fame and fortune away from the Stones.

To start at the very beginning, fan Clive Leaper asks if it's true that you actually started your career at Ruislip Manor?  
It is true. I did start my non-league

**Stones that first time?**  
To cut a long story short I was playing for Pitshanger FC where I was spotted by a Wimbledon (not AFC Wimbledon) scout. Whilst on an unsuccessful three week trial I played a game against Wealdstone after which Del Boy (Gordon) told me to come down if it didn't work out....The rest is history!!!

**Peter-John Baptiste asks if you made your Stones debut on the same day as Simon Garner, at Hertford Town in February 1997. And what you remember about the game (I believe you scored on your debut with Lee**

was really surprised when he signed for the Stones having seen him so many times on television as a kid.

**That season ended with us winning the Ryman Div Three title. Nick DuGar wonders what you recall of those days and the other players you performed alongside (and any memorable goals- you got a few)?**  
I recall scoring a few decent goals... One that comes to mind is a 30 yard run which culminated in rasping 30 yarder (ok 25 yarder) which came off both posts before nestling in the back off the net. Ask Gordon... he seems to

BY ROGER SLATER



We've interviewed him before... this was the Stones programme five years ago, when he returned for a couple of cameo displays

semi-professional football was

**You joined a side with great expectations of a successful season in 1996. Was it difficult initially to fit in or were you welcomed by the squad?** No not at all, I fitted in with relative ease. I was made to feel quite welcome. It's kind of like my school years when I got protected by all the cool and more notorious pupils because I had talent that made me popularish. I was made welcome by everyone at the club and in the squad, even Fergie (who I would go on to dethrone from his lofty position in the team).

**You soon established yourself in the XI, and rumour has it, it was as hard for Stones players in training to get past you as opponents on the field. Is that the Dom Sterling way?** I guess it's a trait I've picked up from growing up with two older brothers and their friends who never let me have anything easy on the pitch, which in turn made me grow up fast and more

competitive on the pitch.

**A couple of people have said that you'd take a touch to give an opponent a chance, just to make sure you could then tackle them.....?** I Reeeaaaallly enjoyed tackling. It actually felt like I was scoring a goal every time I won a challenge. I guess you'll understand my psyche to say some of my favourite players to watch growing up was Stuart Pearce, Roy Keane, David Batty, Patrick Viera and some of the naughtier players around...

**You're in the bath with..... Rubber ducks, Boats, submarines or.....?** Omar Williams... his rubber duck lives long in the memory! Wasn't very good on the pitch but left a lasting impression on the players in the changing room. I believe he went on to find his position in the 'entertainment industry'.

**Looking around the Dressing**

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## WEALDSTONE v CHELMSFORD WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**Room in that first spell at The Stones, who are the characters? Who stands out, and why?** Semtex – Brian Jones – brilliant player but who would explode at any given time. Great character who I'm still in contact with. Lee Walker – Great sense of humour with a touch of class on the pitch Fergie – Another player with a great sense of humour (didn't really get on the pitch once I got into the starting select..but again a great person to have in the changing room and around the club.

**What was the squad/club like off the field – was there much socialising outside of match-days and training?** Gordon instilled a strong unit on the pitch and we always shared a few pints after the games whether we won or lost. With the added ingredient of the fans meant you weren't going anywhere fast even if you did want to dash off.

**Division 3 Champions and a Cup Final in your first season, promoted in third place in your second season and an extraordinary run to a (denied) promotion in your third season. What does that do to the mindset?** I actually think that decision nearly killed the club. You felt the club lost its direction and momentum after that. Personally it demoralised me and solidified my thoughts around taking football more seriously which ultimately led me to leaving the club. I sometimes think about what might have been and far that group of players could have gone, although I had a really successful career at semi professional level.

**Is there one game that sticks in the memory?** Too many to choose just one game. Maybe one sticks out in your mind. One memory that does stand in the mind though is bursting the ball in a 50-50 challenge. Very proud of that feat.

**What followed Wealdstone and why did you move on?** After Wealdstone I joined

Hayes FC. I simply moved while my stock was valuable. I feel the season we were denied promotion when my appetite for bigger and better opportunities on the pitch. At the time the Stones were going through a period of transition which had rocked the foundations of the club and needless to mention, took over a decade to return to a resemblance of its old self.

**Are you still involved in the game? Any thoughts of Coaching, Management at any level?** I'm not directly involved in the game but have provided talking therapy to a number of players needing help dealing with life as a footballer and some who have found transition after football quite difficult.

I probably will return to the fold soon and have a few ideas up my sleeve.

**You came back for a short spell to a very different club in 2012. A side on a run in the FA Trophy (and you were cup-tied). Was it more difficult to be part of that?** No not at all



**Dom Sterling  
pictured in action  
for Conference  
National side  
Aldershot Town**

I felt part of the family again and was welcomed back with open arms. I think one of my only regrets in football was then leaving to join a club closer to home for family reasons in that second spell at the club.

**The Stones fans lauded you as a player and respected you (on occasion) as an opponent. As one of our own or an opponent, how aware were you of the fans as a player?** Thank God I was on the right side of the fans because they can really make your 90 plus minutes on the pitch very difficult. To be honest the Stones fans are real die-hards, a dying breed of fans who love their team and hate having their pants pulled down by people or players who don't give 100% like them.

**The table is set for dinner. Five chairs. Who are your four guests and why (anyone dead or alive, real or fantasy), and what are you serving?** J Edgar Hoover – Key part in decisions that have shaped the world.

Bob Marley – For some light entertainment and his views on life. Naomi Campbell – Something to feast my eyes on instead of the food (Love you Mrs Sterling)

Micky Flanagan – Guaranteed fun, frivolity and he's definitely a bit of a lad.

Everybody loves a bit of Thai every once in a while!!!

**Does a mention of "Wealdstone" or "The Stones Fans" put a smile on your face, and would you do it all again (given the chance)?** Wealdstone will always be dear to my heart. Had some great times at an age where I could afford to take life less seriously.

Like I said, I'd rather have the stones fans behind me then against me. I definitely salute the fans and club for the opportunity and chance to represent the club.

**Anything else you want to tell us?** Hope to see you guys in the football league before I'm old, bald and grey.....So you've only got a few years to achieve it.....