

# STONES

WEALDSTONE v HAVANT & W'VILLE  
5-MINUTE INTERVIEW



*Jerome Okimo scores his one-and-only goal for Stevenage - in 45 appearances over two seasons - at AFC Wimbledon in a 2-1 win. Above left, he shapes to take a freekick inside his own half... and the ball bounces once in front of Dons keeper James Shea... before rearing up over his head to end iup in the net. Jerome (below right) can't be more delighted!*

**J**erome Okimo played every minute of every game for Braintree in the National League last season - but he can't wait to get seven Vanarama South matches under his belt this month!

"I'm just so pleased to be back with the Stones" he said, the day after we'd kicked off the campaign with that solid 2-1 win over Concord Rangers. "It was all so messy and confused at Braintree: None of the players knew if they were coming or going - literally - after we were relegated and a new manager came in.

"Jamie Day brought me to the club from Stevenage; Hakan Hayrettin came in; and then he was replaced by Brad Quinton from Enfield Town.

"It was also a good few hours drive for me, for training and matches, while Wealdstone is just round the corner and we have a great set-up and stability here. And we've also got a lot of very good players, better than Braintree definitely. Already we have a good understanding at the back, with Ciaran and Josh and Eddie, and in front of me down the left is Abs Eisa - who can go on to great things. He is one for the future."

Jerome, of course, was signed by Stevenage on a full-time pro contract in the summer of 2014, on the very brink of our first season back in the Conference South. Twinkle-toed midfielder Tom Pett had already been

## Welcome 'home' Jerome!

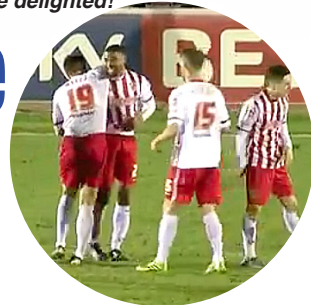
**TIM PARKS** catches up with our star re-signing

snapped up by Stevenage and it was a real blow to lose two pivotal players from the Ryman Championship-winning team.

"I had two good years there and I definitely improved as a player, both fitness wise and in my reading of the game. I've come back a better player" he said.

"They have an excellent training facility at Knebworth, not far from the ground, and I was taught how to build relationships with the players around me... at Stevenage we had Chris Whelpdale down the left while Tom played mainly on the other side, and here we have two very good wide men in Abs and Shaqs (Shaquille Hippolyte-Patrick) who will cause teams a lot of problems.

"I still like to get forward but it's all about the timing of your runs and not getting in each others' space. I'm not expecting to



get many goals!"

Jerome famously only scored one goal in his season for the Stones - on the goalline at Hornchurch in an FA Cup humiliation - so did he hit the target for his other pro clubs?

"My only goal for Stevenage in League Two was a bit of a freak" he laughed. "It was a long high freekick from my own half at AFC Wimbledon that caught the keeper out - it bounced once and ended up in the net. The winning goal in a 2-1 win. But I did score twice for Braintree last season though."

Jerome is now 29 and living in Northolt with Rachel, his partner of six years. He is also doing some coaching with the Brentford FC Community Trust, the club's football development centre which has replaced its academy.

All in all, a very sensible move to 'come home' to Wealdstone... He is widely regarded as the club's best left back since the days of Stuart Pearce and those aren't bad boots to fill!