



**WEALDSTONE v CHIPPENHAM
JEFFREY MONAKANA
INTERVIEW**

Jeffrey (left) takes on the Bath City defence in our 2-1 win here at the Vale last time out

JEFFREY MONAKANA had a big decision to make.

Hemel Hempstead, Havant and the Stones were all keen to sign the Welling winger before deadline day but it took all of two minutes for him to choose “the club with the most ambition - it was always going to be Wealdstone”.

“All the clubs I’ve been at, Arsenal, Preston and my loans at Aberdeen and Bristol Rovers, they’ve all been teams with something about them - a real desire to go places, and that’s what inspires me” said the 24-year-old wide man when I caught up with him for a chat after the postponed Oxford game last week.

“I know that Wealdstone have a big fan base and real desire to win games. That sounds like a basic thing but at Welling there was no real pressure; if we won we won, if we lost we lost. As soon as I signed for Wealdstone I thought: ‘This club will do well’. It’s all about the atmosphere around the place.

“The manager is very demanding, in games and in training, to be better and improve all the time. The facilities are good, as good as League clubs and I feel I can really contribute. I’m raring to go but what I really need is match fitness. The recent postponements

‘There’s a real desire here to go places... and I can help make it happen for the club’

TIM PARKS  **meets our flying winger**

haven’t helped”.

Jeffrey was part of Welling’s 12-match unbeaten run around the turn of the year, which moved the club up to third in the table. “The club was in 18th place when I joined, and everyone seemed surprised when we moved up and up. But we had a good core of players and a system that worked. Then I picked up a hamstring injury which coincided with a three-match run of defeats... I felt I was rushed back into playing which did nobody any favours. Our results were up and down

and I was just hoping that the club would release me.

“I’d played well against Wealdstone earlier in the season, even though Welling had lost, and that probably swayed them to sign me. I’m here for next season too and think it could be a good move for everyone”.

Do you think our style is to play with wingers, though, I asked him. Bobby Wilkinson has used wing backs on a few occasions?

“I think the manager bringing me in has answered that!” he laughed.

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STONES

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"He wants to play with wingers, he's very attack-minded, getting the ball forward and putting the opposition on the back foot. That's my strength, driving at people and setting up chances".

Jeffrey was born in Edmonton, just up the road from the new Spurs ground and still lives there. He is related on his late father's side to the famous Lua Lua brothers, Lomana Tresor (ex Newcastle and Portsmouth) and Kazenga (currently at Sunderland) which also makes him a relative of Everton's Yannick Bolasie - which is an impressive pedigree. I look forward to the back-flips when he scores his first Stones goal!

He spent ten years at Arsenal, from the age of eight to 18, in the same academy side at Benick Afobe (of Bournemouth, currently on loan at Wolves) and Swindon keeper Reice Charles-Cook, but his career blossomed when he joined Preston North End. The flying winger played 40 games in League One and scored four times. Then it was off to Brighton & Hove Albion for two years and a carousel of loan deals (including one at Aberdeen that gave him Europa League experience) that ended with being signed by Sut-

ton United for their first season in the Conference National, 2016-17.

"I was hit by injury that season which prevented me playing much part in our FA Cup run, which was ended by Arsenal. In fact that run was a distraction that nearly saw the club relegated. I think you saw this season with Wealdstone that the Trophy run, though it was exciting, meant the team changed week in, week out and also meant we fell behind with the league games."

So talk us through your first game against Eastbourne, Jeff. We lost, but two assists on your debut can't be bad?

"Thank you - but I also gave the ball away for one of their goals... I was so desperate to make up for that. I went into the game remembering when I played against them for Welling not long ago, and we won that

game 3-0. You naturally think you can repeat that result but we had a dreadful start, conceding really early on. My corner helped bring us level but then I lost the ball and they ended up making it 2-1. 'Oh my days' I thought... I just have to get us back in the game. Luckily my cross set up Matty Whichelow for a great finish in the second half, but we caught caught out again near the end and Eastbourne got a winner.

"I was low but we know it's not over yet. We still have an outside chance of making it to the play offs" (perhaps not by the team you read this, though! -Ed).

"Whatever happens I'm sure we'll have the players and formation to make a real go of it next season. The fans can be really important too... they're really vocal here and that's something I love. They can get on your backs when you lose, but can make you feel good too. They're never indifferent!"



*Above:
Jeffrey signs for
Aberdeen and
(right) playing
for Arsenal's
under-18s. Left:
He celebrates a
goal for Preston
against Carlisle,
and hurdles a
tackle against
Yeovil Town*

