

CLASS OF 2008 Stones stars (from left) James Gray, Lee Chappell, Marv McCoy, Greg Ngoyi, Chris O'Leary, Ryan Ashe, Luke and Darren Locke promote the club's three strips

I came back to Wealdstone to prove a point.. but that was a bad idea!

LUKE WOODS answers a few pertinent questions

GOALKEEPER Luke first joined Wealdstone as a youngster in October 2005, making his debut in a 2-4 home defeat (at Northwood) v Burnham in the FA Cup - a result that was reversed a couple of days later in his league debut when 'Stones beat Windsor & Eton by the same score.

It was a time of change to say the least at Wealdstone, and he fought for his place against a number of more experienced 'keepers and he left the club early in the following pre-season, only to return in July 2008. In the two spells, he made 38 starts and four substitute appearances in all fixtures.

Now married with a one-year-old daughter, Luke owns his own Accounting and Payroll company, and he looks back honestly at his time with Wealdstone...

You joined Wealdstone in Octo-

BY ROGER SLATER



ber 2005 and over two spells stayed until the end of 2009.

What was the career before and after Wealdstone?

Before Wealdstone, I was with Ware and Cheshunt Youth whilst also playing for England schools, England Universities and Malta Under-21s.

I stopped playing when I left Wealdstone to focus on a career as I had reached an age where I realised I needed to earn money to live and that wasn't happening in the football world for me.

Any trophies or representative honours as a player?

No trophies worth mentioning, but playing for Malta U21 throughout a two year European qualifying campaign was my best achievement.

What or who brought you to Wealdstone originally?

Andy Leese as co-Manager initially, and I had a number of my friends - mainly Lee Chappell - also with the Stones.

First impressions?

Probably best I don't comment!

It was a time of change with 'joint managers' at the club in Gordon Bartlett and Andy Leese. Looking back, how did that work for the players?

It didn't work very well. I didn't know Gordon like I got to know him towards the end of my time with Wealdstone, but he should never have entered a joint managerial role. He is respected as the gaffer and letting another manager take control of the team was not a good idea.

I had limited time under Andy Leese's management but he knew his football and he was/is also a good manager. Although in

principle having two managers may sound like a good idea, it's really not!
As a young keeper, you were in and out of the side – in fact, between your debut and your 7th appearance two months later, five other 'keepers put on the gloves, Russell Ling, Lee Carroll, Richard Hayward, Aaron Benstead and Greg Jackson. Was that tough or were you able to learn from any of them?
 I wasn't ready to play at that time - I wasn't experienced enough and they were right to find a No.1. I certainly learned from all of them but without doubt the person who I learned most from was Russell Ling. As a young keeper you need guidance and he consistently helped me and was always positive, a great guy!
You're in the bath with..... Rubber ducks, Boats, submarines or your partner?
 My partner of course, not sure I want a submarine floating around under water.
You mentioned friends in the squad that year, with the Ches-



the goalkeeping duties with Sean Thomas, your last match was the Boxing Day derby with Harrow Borough – looking back, was Wealdstone a good or bad experience overall?

Difficult question. Playing wise, bad experience, as I mentioned above I came back to prove a point but this was a bad idea!

From a social point of view I loved my time at Wealdstone

- the players, coaches and fans, were and are great people who made me want to continue being involved for the club.

What followed?

I stopped playing football to focus on a career, I had got to an age where I realised football could only take me so far and I needed to make something of myself.

Are you still involved in the game? (Player / supporter etc..)

I support Tottenham and of course you guys, I always keep eye out for the score.

Any thoughts

hunt / Ware links – are you still in touch with them?

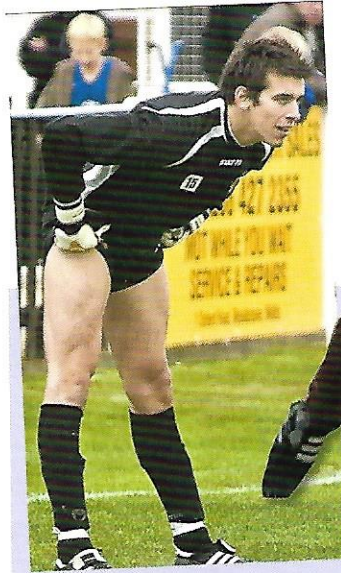
Yes I did and no, not really. I still keep in contact with Lee, just about though. After spending years and years with him I decided to give myself a break for the last decade!

After that one season and one pre-season game the next year, you moved on returning in July 2008 to a different squad and Gordon Bartlett as sole manager.

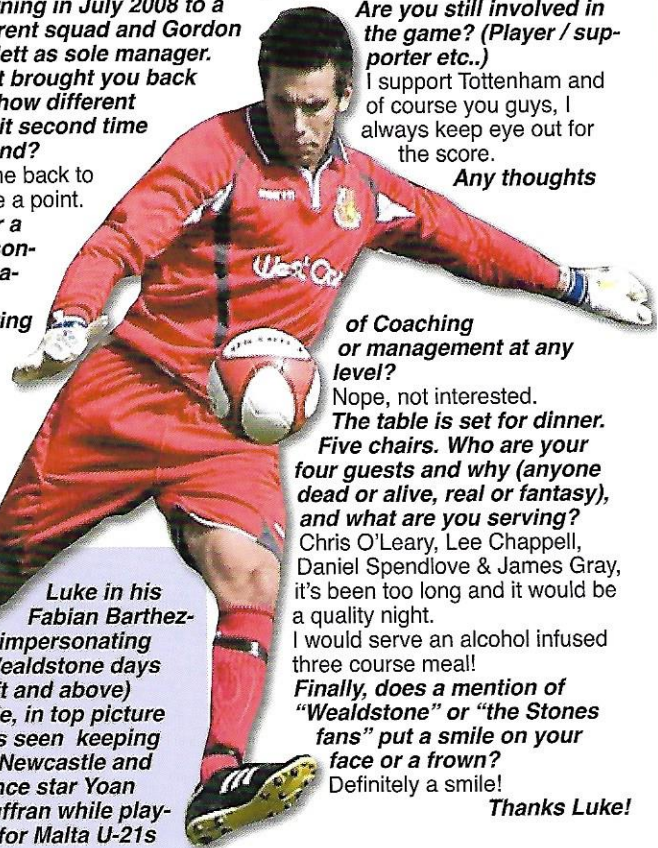
What brought you back and how different was it second time around?

I came back to prove a point.

After a season-and-a-half sharing



Luke in his Fabian Barthez-impersonating Wealdstone days (left and above) while, in top picture he is seen keeping out Newcastle and France star Yoan Gouffran while playing for Malta U-21s



of Coaching or management at any level?

Nope, not interested.

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?

Chris O'Leary, Lee Chappell, Daniel Spendlove & James Gray, it's been too long and it would be a quality night.

I would serve an alcohol infused three course meal!

Finally, does a mention of "Wealdstone" or "the Stones fans" put a smile on your face or a frown?

Definitely a smile!

Thanks Luke!