

'I always had belief in them'

Wealdstone manager Gordon Bartlett has applauded everyone at the club for helping them climb towards safety but insists the side are not clear of danger yet.

After failing to win their first nine Conference South games this season, Wealdstone have rallied superbly and moved up to 14th after four successive league wins.

Bartlett said: "I always had belief in the group and was confident that we would turn our form around with the character we have in the squad. It's proved the case although we are not out of the woods yet.

"The whole mentality has changed now. It's not just the players that deserve credit though. It's also down to the management, the coaches, the board and fans who have all pulled together. We were going through a difficult time but we have dug deep."

Wealdstone's latest victory came on Saturday after Joe Turner fired in a 25-yard winner in the fourth minute of injury time. The 1-0 win at Bath City was their fourth clean sheet in a row.

Bartlett said: "We have lost matches in last minutes this season so to get a win so late on was a great result for us and ensured it was a good trip back home.

"The morale has been very good and everyone is buying into it. We have kept six clean sheets in seven and that's two defeats in 14 now.

"The spirit in the camp is absolutely brilliant. The defence has taken a lot of credit recently but everyone deserves praise because we have defended from the front."

The Stones boss added: "Both teams seemed to cancel each other



The Stones fans celebrated a dramatic late winner at Bath City.

Picture: STEVE FOSTER/WEALDSTONE FC

out and Jonathan North only had a few saves to make. It was a game of very few chances.

"But we had that resilient determination which our defensive record shows and that always gives you a chance in games."

The Stones will have to play the rest of this season without midfielder Tom Hickey due to a serious knee injury.

"The massive disappointment is Tom. He needs an operation on his anterior cruciate ligament which will

keep him out until next season.

"Losing him just a few weeks after Connor Calcutt suffered a broken leg is a big blow for two talented players."

Wealdstone start their hectic festive programme at home to Sutton United on Boxing Day before travelling to second-placed Bromley on Sunday.

Bartlett said: "We have real momentum going into Christmas.

"Our number one target is to get to 49 points. We are going to remain

positive and if we could win eight points from the next four that would be a good return."

The Stones boss is surprised to see Sutton languishing around the relegation zone and believes they have failed to live up to expectations this year.

"We are playing a Sutton team that has totally underachieved," Bartlett said.

They were well fancied this season and have very good players. The league table doesn't lie though and they are down there for a reason."

Reds boss eyes improvement

Harrow Borough manager Dave Anderson admits his side need to have a better second half of the season to avoid a relegation battle.

The Reds are fourth from bottom in the Ryman Premier Division with just four wins from 26 games.

Anderson accepts improvement will be necessary to avoid the drop after their poor start to the campaign.

The Boro manager said: "It's not where we want to be.

"When you have played as much as we have then you're there for a reason and I think it's because we conceded too many goals.

"We are striving to make it better and we need to have a better second half of the season."

Anderson added: "We wanted a good start to the season but didn't get this and it has meant that we are constantly under pressure."

Boro earned a 1-1 draw at home to fellow strugglers Lewes on Saturday. The hosts fell behind through Sam Crabb's tidy finish but Greg Ngoyi headed home an equaliser for the Reds.

Anderson said: "In the first half of the second period I thought our performance was as good as we've been all year.

We had chances to win the game but couldn't finish them off. But it was two teams desperately trying to win the match and it was probably a fair result."

The Reds return to action this Saturday with a trip to fifth-placed Met Police.

Anderson said: "It's always an important time of year but this time we're not playing as regularly as normally over Christmas so it almost feels like a regular week for us."

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