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BOSS hails 'real leader' after unbeaten run continues



Jack Cook, pictured earlier this season, was able to smile again after his late equaliser on Tuesday night. Image: Jon Taffel

Captain Cook secures late point for Stones

MANAGER Stuart Maynard saluted "real leader" Jack Cook after the Wealdstone captain scored a dramatic last-minute equaliser to earn a 1-1 draw at Maidstone United on Tuesday night.

The visitors looked like they were heading for defeat when Sam Corne put Maidstone in front with ten minutes remaining, but the spirit and resilience which has been central to Stones' impressive start to the National League season again came to the fore as Cook swivelled to fire home his second of the season as the clock hit 90 minutes.

"That's what a captain like Cookie does for you: he delivers when you need him, just like he did against Bromley," Maynard told the club website.

"He's a real leader for the club and

By Anthony Matthews

this group and I can see why the fans love him. He's got real respect in the dressing room and you can see that with the way everyone celebrated. It was a great strike too with his left foot."

Reflecting on the match which saw Stones remain in the top six of the table, the manager said: "To pick up a point on the road is always pleasing as this league is very tough. I thought the first half was very even and we were slightly better in the second half. We created chances, including that one for Tarryn (Allarakhia). He's been curling them in in training with this left foot, but he took it with his right and tried

to pass it in the far corner. He was unlucky. If that goal goes in then the game is dead.

"We then go one behind, but the lads have got that never-say-die mentality and we've got a point – and a deserved one. To take a point on the road is great as Maidstone are a big club in this league. We've now got 15 points which puts us in a strong position."

Regan Booty had the game's first opportunity for the hosts when his free-kick forced Sam Howes into a good save, but an opening half of few chances saw Rhys Browne go close at the other end when he headed a Sam Habergham cross narrowly over.

Stones went close to breaking the deadlock immediately after the restart when a Max Kretschmar delivery

cannoned off a defender into Yusuf Mersin's gloves, while Olufela Olomola fired wide soon after.

Maidstone winger Christie Pattison saw a cross bounce off the top of the bar before Stones had a great chance when substitute Allarakhia narrowly missed the target after a driving run.

It was the hosts who made the breakthrough when Corne tapped home after a well-worked move, but Stones battled back to take a point when a ball into the box fell for Cook and he fired home.

The draw extended Stones' unbeaten run to a sixth game and they will aim to extend that sequence on Saturday when Torquay United visit Grosvenor Vale.

Baptiste signs for Stones

FIVE FORMER WATFORD
PLAYERS ON CLUB'S BOOKS



Dante Baptiste. Image: Darren Campbell/Wealdstone FC

WEALDSTONE have signed ex-Watford Academy goalkeeper Dante Baptiste to further increase the number of former Hornets on their books.

Manager Stuart Maynard already had fellow keeper Sam Howes, Mason Barrett, Ashley Charles and Dom Hutchinson in his squad and has now recruited the 20-year-old, who was released by the Hornets at the end of last season.

Maynard, who started his playing career as an apprentice at Vicarage Road, told the club website: "Dante is a somebody we know from Watford and we'd watched him a lot."

"He's a talented young goalkeeper and he's going to be adding competition for Sam. We're delighted to get him on board and look forward to working with him."

The former Norwich City youngster moved to Vicarage Road in 2018 and played a key role in helping the Hornets' Under-18 side reach the FA Youth Cup semi-finals the following year. He made headlines again by saving four penalties in a shoot-out victory for Hendon in November 2020 and impressed during his time on loan at Farnborough last season. Baptiste spent pre-season at Grosvenor Vale and played in friendlies against Billericay and Chelmsford City.