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## FOOTBALL: Maynard's men draw positives



Wealdstone attack at Maidenhead. Pic: Jon Taffel

# Improving Wealdstone keep making their point

WEALDSTONE fans will remember 2022 fondly after finishing the year within touching distance of the National League play-off places, writes Will Bewsey.

In their second season back in the top flight of non-league football, the Stones recorded an impressive 16th-placed finish under Stuart Maynard's guidance and impressed many across the division considering their part-time status.

With clubs such as Wrexham and Notts County spending money on transfer fees beyond the Stones' wildest dreams, the recent introduction of streaming to the National League has many accepting this is almost a fully professional division.

Starting the new year with a hard-fought 0-0 draw at Maidenhead United

on Sunday shows the resilience of Maynard's side.

After conceding 18 goals in four games in a horrible October plagued by injuries, the Stones have lost just one of their last eight league games, accumulating 15 points and helping them stay near the upper echelons of the table.

"It's a great point, this is one of the toughest places to go in this league. You see them turn over the big clubs in this league, Dev [Alan Devonshire] has them set up really well," said Maynard.

Already this season, the Stones have recorded famous wins against former Football League opposition, including a memorable night in August at Oldham Athletic, and a dramatic 2-1 win at York City in November thanks to a 94th-minute winner from captain Jack Cook,

who was also the National League player of the month for November.

With no less than six more league games in a jam-packed January, including the visits of former EFL stalwarts Chesterfield on Tuesday (January 10) and once-Premier League Oldham Athletic on Tuesday January 17 to Grosvenor Vale, Maynard and the Stones are hoping they can see crowds close to the record-breaking 2817 that watched an impressive 0-0 draw with Wrexham in November.

Next up at Grosvenor Vale is the visit of Eastleigh, who currently occupy the last play-off spot, on Saturday and the Stones boss is looking forward to playing in front of the home fans for the first time in 2023.

"We love playing in front of the fans.

The fans have been absolutely outstanding this season, so every time we get the opportunity to play at home we relish it and look forward to it," said Maynard.

"The lads are performing to a very high level. It's a credit to them to even be talked about getting into the play-offs in this division with the clubs that you look are in it. It's a huge credit to the lads, their mentality has been excellent this year, but we'll carry on one game at a time."

Overall, crowds have increased by 20 per cent this season at Grosvenor Vale, with efforts to improve the ground and get it up to National League standard reciprocated by efforts onto the pitch.

Wealdstone are firmly in the mix for an unlikely play-off place as they look to upset the odds again in 2023.

## Harrow are hit by late Hayes goal

HARROW were denied a win in the 90th minute at Hayes & Yeading, as their first Southern League Premier South match of 2023 ended in a 2-2 draw.

Borough began without George Moore and Shaun Preddie, the latter having to withdraw minutes before kick-off, as Jaden Sharman started in the number 16 shirt he was expecting to wear as a substitute.

And when the game kicked off, Harrow looked like a team that had seen some late changes to its line-up as Adam Liddle's low cross flashed across the visiting goalmouth before Amos Nasha fired over.

Charlie Wassmer headed a free-kick just wide, before setting up Sanmi Odelusi to fire just over and Moses Emmanuel shot past the near post and flashed a header across goal.

Cameron Green shot over when Ahmet Biler gave the ball away, before Harrow threatened Rhys Byrne's goal as Billy Leonard's crossfield ball found Kai Omoko Brosnan to cut in from the left and hit a fierce shot that was turned into the side-netting.

The hosts could only half clear the corner and Leonard crossed again to Brosnan just beyond the far post to poke past Byrne despite a defender's desperate attempt to hack the ball away. Hayes skipper Wassmer was booked for his protests and Nasha was shown yellow for a nasty tackle on Johnny Allotey as the game restarted.

Harrow started the second half with a super run from Leonard, who picked out Johnny Allotey whose shot was blocked, with Biler firing the follow-up over. And they doubled their lead in the 54th minute with a wonderful solo effort by Allotey, cutting in from the left and leaving two defenders on the deck as he twisted both ways, before shooting low past Byrne and celebrating with a full back-flip.

Byrne denied Allotey another from Brosnan's deep cross, with Allotey shooting wide after Leonard's break and Brosnan only stopped by a wonderful tackle by Green.

The barest of touches by Wassmer was enough to stop Isiah Noel-Williams's cross reaching Brosnan and Montel Brown's drive was saved by Byrne, before Wassmer's cross was headed on by Liddle for Emmanuel to score at the far post on 69 minutes.

Jalloh sent Miles through to fire just wide, before Kamon-Sherell Assidjo saw a shot deflected just wide.

Liddle then broke through but young Harrow keeper Jacob Knightbridge responded with a superb tackle.

However, another free-kick was launched towards the Harrow box and Danny Green rammed home a late leveller. Leaders Weston-super-Mare visit The Rogers Family Stadium on Saturday.