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FOOTBALL: Maynard's men ease past Eastleigh



Micah Obiero scores for Wealdstone against Eastleigh. Pic: Jon Taffel

Wealdstone into play-off places to delight of fans

BEING in the National League play-off places after 25 games, having beaten fellow play-off chasers Eastleigh in comfortable fashion, is simply beyond most Wealdstone fans' wildest dreams.

The 3-1 win saw Stones - who topped the table early in the season - bounce back from conceding inside just a minute and that resilience and character has Stuart Maynard's side punching well above their weight in the fifth tier.

"Going 1-0 down early was something we talked about in the team talk, but we tweaked it tactically after 10 minutes and the lads took the info on board and what a performance," said Maynard.

"We were the better team by a country mile and the lads showed it and I'm delighted for Micah [Obiero] because he showed his quality."

by Will Bewsey

Micah Obiero had a day he won't forget for all sorts of reasons.

An excellent man of the match performance was capped off by a superb individual goal with 10 minutes to go, a fine strike arrowed in the bottom corner.

But he received a second yellow card in added time for a foul and was dismissed. Despite this, Maynard was delighted with how Obiero 'took one for the team'.

"He took the foul for the team, and although he's been sent off, it's helped us get three points," added Maynard.

"And when you do it in the right way like he has, he's helped the team get three points, which is massive and it's

a massive three points for us, because the lads deserved the rewards and they deserve that reward now to go into seventh, because it's some achievement.

"Earlier in the season when we went top after five games, that can happen, but the consistency in this group is outstanding. We had to put a performance in. We said to the lads, they owe the fans a performance, they owe us a performance, and they've put one in, we can't ask any more of them."

Obiero, who joined Stones in October, has impressed and developed under the management of Maynard, and he is enjoying being part of a winning team.

"You saw after the win in the changing room, [we're] all together and I think that's important in a team, the unity, everyone gets along with each

other from management to the players, we have something good going on," said Obiero.

"And you see in the results, we're in the playoffs now as a part time team, so it says a lot about us.

"We're just taking every game as it comes, not getting too excited, we're just working on things, improving on things in training and just taking everything step by step."

Tuesday's home game with Chesterfield postponed, but Stones host former Premier League side Oldham Athletic on Tuesday (January 17), and having just hit 1200 season tickets, should be backed by good home support.

Tickets are £17 for adults, £12 concessions, £10 for 18-23 year olds and £7 for U18s.

Harrow's handbrake off - Baker

HARROW Borough boss Steve Baker insists his side will play with the handbrake off as Halifax Town visit for an FA Trophy fourth-round tie on Saturday. Seventh-tier Harrow will be fierce underdogs against the National League side but Baker is adamant his team will play without fear. Baker has already steered Boro to the FA Cup first round proper twice since taking over as manager in 2015 - and is hoping for more cup magic.

"We play extremely attacking football, which is the way I coach and manage and that won't change," said Baker.

"We might have to tweak a couple of bits because of the opposition we're playing against, and we might have to be a little more cautious, but we will always try to win.

"I'm not really a manager that likes to try and sit in and soak up. We've got goals in us, we've got good attacking players, and we will certainly have a go against them. "I enjoy these games because you go into them with no pressure on you. I'd rather be at home to Halifax then away to a step four team because the pressure isn't on you and the players, you're expected to lose the game.

"There will be an upset somewhere, hopefully it's us."

Harrow booked their place in the last 32 after coming from a goal behind to triumph 2-1 over fellow step three side, Swindon Supermarine.

And Baker, who has masterminded the club's best showing in the competition for over two decades, added: "I'd like to say it's been some tactical masterclass, but it hasn't been at all.

"Sometimes in football you get a feeling in certain competitions that things are going right. You could look back at every game so far and say, 'yes, that went for us.' When you are on a bad run, those breaks tend to go the other way."

Harrow are one of over 200 Trident League clubs financially supported by Southern League partners Pitching In, who recently launched a Volunteer Hub to advertise opportunities for members of the community to help out their local club.

And Baker hopes the Reds can repay all the volunteers who help the club thrive on and off the field with another cup upset.

"I know it means so much to people at the club to get to this stage in the cups," he said.

"Financially, it's been great, especially as we exited the FA Cup in our first game.

"We see this as an opportunity to boost the profile of the club. It'll be tough, a great challenge. Hopefully, it will be another day to remember."

"Ladbroke's, with the support of owner Entain, has launched a multi-million-pound investment programme, Pitching In, to support and promote grassroots sports. See: <https://entaingroup.com/sustainability/pitching-in>.