

SPORT

Read the latest sports news at
harrowtimes.co.uk/sport

FOOTBALL: Home win improves hopes of survival



Wealdstone's Alex Reid scores from the penalty spot against Forest Green Rovers

Image: Jon Taffel

Stones boss praises 'unbelievable result'

WEALDSTONE manager Neil Gibson lauded the collective performance of his side as they took a step closer to National League safety with a 2-1 win over Forest Green Rovers.

After going behind early to Jordon Garrick's opener, top scorer Alex Reid converted a penalty on the stroke of half-time before adding a late second to secure an important win for the Stones.

"Unbelievable result. Unbelievable performance from all the players. Everyone played a part. We wanted the fans to get behind us, and it was difficult in the first half into the wind, up the slope," Gibson told the club website.

"A huge amount of resources at Forest Green that Steve Cotterill's got to work with, so we understand they're gonna cause us problems at times.

By TOM NORTON
londoncommunity@newsquest.co.uk

"But we knew we had to weather that storm in the first half. We grew into the half as it went. We started trying to play a little bit more of the way we wanted to try and play, and the goal come at a really good time for us, before half-time, which gives us the confidence to push on and try and win in the second half."

Goalscoring hero Reid extended his tally for the season to 16 goals from just 27 starts. The Oldham Athletic loanee has been a key figure for the Stones in difficult periods and will need to keep firing ahead of the final stretch in the club's pursuit of survival.

Gibson added: "We know what Reid's capable of. The thing I am always really pleased to see with Reidy is he embraces everything we do at Wealdstone. The players love him, and he loves being here with us. The fans love him, and he loves playing for the fans.

"A lot of players work extremely hard, and he works extremely hard. There was a moment on Tuesday when we were ahead in the game and the ball goes into the channel, he chases it, and it goes back to the keeper. "He chases it; it goes to the centre-half; he chases it. It's a bare minimum requirement of everybody, but the fact Reidy buys into it then his goals become a bonus that we're asking for and we're looking for. I don't like singling people out, but I thought Reidy was fantastic."

The Stones make the short trip to

leaders and London rivals Barnet this weekend, after Dean Brennan's side lost 2-1 at Braintree last weekend.

"No one needs me to tell me how important this game is to our fans and our supporters," said Gibson.

"Barnet are far and away currently proved the best team in our league and will have eyes on that promotion and trying to wrap it up as soon as possible, but obviously we need our own points for our own reasons.

"We'll be looking to try and build on what's happened in these last two games. We feel, at our very best, we're capable of beating anybody.

"I feel we thrive on confidence. The last two games will hopefully give us that level of confidence to take into Saturday."

McCall: So much to be proud about

UNDERSTRENGTH SARACENS EXIT CHAMPIONS CUP AT TOULON



Mark McCall

Image: PA

SARACENS boss Mark McCall hailed his team's bravery after a remarkable Investec Champions Cup clash against Toulon saw them lose 72-42 in France. McCall rested his entire England contingent after choosing to prioritise the Gallagher Premiership, with Maro Itoje and Tom Willis the latest players to complete their mandatory post-Six Nations stand-down week, while Jamie George, Ben Earl and Elliot Daly were also absent.

But for most of the first half Saracens defied the odds as they raced into a commanding lead with tries from Juan Martin Gonzalez (two), Nick Tompkins, Olly Hartley and Ivan van Zyl, as Fergus Burke kicked five conversions.

Toulon then scored 40 unanswered points and pulled away in a game of 16 tries.

"It is funny feeling proud when you concede 70 points, but then you have got to check yourself, and with 12 minutes to go I think it was an 11-point game," McCall told Premier Sports, with his side set to return to Gallagher Premiership action against Gloucester at StoneX Stadium on April 19 (5.30pm).

"We did some magnificent stuff in the first half, but second half we just couldn't get our hands on the ball. They spent a lot of time in our 22, and they are a big side and are hard to stop.

"The commitment of our playing group from start to finish was superb. We will learn a lot from it, but what an experience for a group of young players.

"We were brave. To come away to somewhere like this and not play within ourselves was really important. We gave it a go in a good way for a long time. "There is a lot to like, a lot to learn and a lot to be proud of."

Substitute hooker James Hadfield added a sixth Saracens try that Burke again converted late on, but there was no way back in an extraordinary contest.