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FOOTBALL: Boss pleased by latest performance



Wealdstone's Sean Adarkwa in action at Northwood

Image: Jon Taffel

Cox happy with Stones structure in friendly win

WEALDSTONE boss Sam Cox praised his side's ability to implement his philosophy after a 4-1 pre-season friendly win at Northwood on Saturday.

A pair of trialists each struck before the 15-minute mark to give the visitors an early lead before Dan Kearney pulled one back from the spot on 35 minutes.

The Stones restored their two-goal advantage through Dylan Kadji's superb long-range effort before the break.

And another trialist grabbed the only goal of the second half, slotting calmly into the bottom corner in the 74th minute to secure an opening pre-season win for Cox's side.

"I think the practice served its purpose. The boys applied themselves as well as they could have," Cox told the club website.

By TOM NORTON
londoncommunity@newsquest.co.uk

"We made an importance of what we'd worked on during the week. Just getting used to the structure, new voices, a new system, and a new style of play for a lot of these players.

"Obviously, the boys I had before first time around, they know the way I want to work. But, for those new bodies and trialists just to get to grips with the structure and a different style of playing, I thought we got the outcomes we needed, and we're slowly building to where we need to be."

As a group of fresh faces took to the pitch at Skyline Stadium, Cox looked for his side to replicate what they had

worked on during the week after a win in the first match of pre-season.

He added: "It's a bit of a false moment. We understand that and know how false pre-season can be. We do know the boys got physical outcomes. We're really conscious of what they're doing on the GPS and their loadings just to ensure this season we try and eliminate as many injuries as possible.

"We know pre-season is building blocks. We've done three 11v11s in training. Each player played 45 today, so we're slowly building. It's going to be a completely different challenge next week when we play Milton Keynes, so we're going to work on some bits in training and continue to build our methodology and work towards that."

The Stones were hampered by in-

juries under Neil Gibson last season and Cox is determined to avoid history repeating itself in the 25/26 National League campaign.

He said: "It's going to be so important for us just to ensure when we get time on the grass and in training we are working to our optimum, and we're very blessed we train at Brunel University, where there's some quality facilities for us to work in the gym.

"Unfortunately, we lost Wayne (Andrews), but we're getting two S&Cs (strength and conditioning coaches) in across pre-season. We've got to make sure we don't neglect that out-of-possession phase and we're fit enough to deal with the National League."

Stones host MK Dons on Saturday and Charlton on Wednesday (6.30pm).

Call-ups to help Lions says Itoje

CAPTAIN WELCOMES ADDITION OF SIX NEW FACES AHEAD OF SERIES



Maro Itoje in Brisbane Image: PA

MARO Itoje insists the new arrivals on the British & Irish Lions' tour of Australia will be treated differently to the controversial 'Geography Six' in 2017.

Scotland trio Rory Sutherland, Ewan Ashman and Darcy Graham joined up with Andy Farrell's men this week, swelling the size of the squad to 44 in the wake of Jamie Osborne, Jamie George and Tom Clarkson also being added. The fresh faces have been brought in to provide cover and prevent key personnel from playing in the Test series while backing up in next Tuesday's match against a First Nations and Pasifika XV. Farrell's decision to turn to those from Scotland's tour of nearby New Zealand has evoked memories of eight years ago when Finn Russell, Allan Dell, Kristian Dacey, Tomas Francis, Cory Hill and Gareth Davie joined Warren Gatland's Lions.

Picked because of geographical location with their national sides and not on merit, they were shunned by some squad members and Gatland later revealed internal concern over "devaluing the jersey" forced him to not deploy them. Itoje's Lions will take a different approach with their captain declaring "we are all in this together".

"I have no doubt they will be welcomed in," said Itoje ahead of Saturday's first Test in Brisbane.

"The boss has called them in because he believes they will help the Lions to achieve their goal of winning a Test series. "All of the players who have been called in are quality players. They are players, like everyone else in the team, have a high level of experience and have achieved things in their career.

"We are all in this together. It's not us and them. It doesn't matter if there's a late call-up. We've seen in the past how late call-ups have had huge impact on the tour in positive ways."