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FOOTBALL: Bank Holiday weekend woes for Cox



Micah Obiero celebrates scoring Wealdstone's goal at Boston

Image: Jon Taffel

Double defeat brings Stones down to earth

WEALDSTONE suffered back-to-back National League defeats as Gregory Sloggett's late winner snatched a 2-1 win for Boston United on Bank Holiday Monday.

The Stones began their National League campaign in promising fashion, winning three out of three to give Sam Cox a dream start as permanent boss.

But Saturday's 1-0 home setback to Carlisle United brought Cox back down to earth, as Luke Armstrong's 18th-minute strike secured the points for the Blues.

Cox told the club website: "I'm absolutely gutted. The boys tried ever so hard. Especially first half, I thought we showed some really good bits and tried to dominate the game in possession.

"To be undone by one set-piece, that's

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the ultimate goal that wins them the game, but the boys should be very proud of themselves. To a man, we've shown the depth, encouragement and attitude with the boys that have come on the pitch. Just overall, I'm really gutted."

Wealdstone were up against a team who many expect to challenge for the title this season and showed a gritty and determined face to match Carlisle throughout the 90 minutes.

Armstrong's goal was an early setback for Cox's side, but their commitment didn't waver as they probed for an equaliser.

A less inspiring second-half display

failed to match the intensity of the first, however, as Mark Hughes' side left with the points.

Just 48 hours later, the Stones endured their second successive National League defeat to Graham Coughlan's Boston United.

Cox made several changes, with Philip Chinedu, Micah Obiero, Nathan Tshikuna and Omar Mussa starting.

Stones looked threatening early on, as summer addition Tshikuna shifted the ball onto his left foot and dinked a shot off the crossbar.

Boston goalkeeper Rhys Lovett was then called into action when Tshikuna fired a low effort towards goal and made a good save to keep the scoreline blank.

Despite the Stones' first-half dominance, the hosts struck first after 48

minutes when Lenell John-Lewis tapped home Kieran Donnelly's excellent low-driven cross.

Substitute Daniel Nkumarah nearly made an instant impact just seconds after coming on as he rifled his shot narrowly wide of Lovett's goal.

The pressure would ultimately tell for Cox's side as Micah Obiero headed across goal and into the far corner to level.

But 10 minutes later, Wealdstone succumbed to a second set-piece concession in the space of two days as Sloggett poked home from close range to secure the win.

Stones return to Grosvenor Vale to host Rochdale on Saturday (3pm) as Cox looks to repair the damage done by the Bank Holiday weekend double defeat.

Middlesex storm into last eight

LANCASHIRE BEATEN IN ONE-DAY CUP THRILLER



Nathan Fernandes hits out

Image: George Franks

NATHAN Fernandes' brilliant 92 off 79 balls helped Middlesex conjure an extraordinary one-wicket over Lancashire in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup to qualify for the quarter-finals.

Coming to the wicket with his side 105-5 and needing another 186 runs, Fernandes put on 126 for the seventh wicket with Seb Morgan and, despite being caught on the boundary in the final over, saw Noah Cornwell clinch victory.

Part-time off-spinner Harry Singh had earlier taken a career-best 4-27 and it seemed the visitors' chances were gone at 127-6, despite a Josh de Caires 50. But their hopes were raised in dramatic fashion by Fernandes and Morgan, whose fearless batting inspired a wonderful win.

Having reached his maiden List A fifty, Morgan was caught on the boundary off George Balderson for 61, but Fernandes went on to make his best List A score and the tailenders did the rest.

Skipper Marcus Harris made 64 for the home side but the main acceleration towards a defensible total of 291-8 came late in the innings from youngsters Arav Shetty and Joe Moores before Jack Blatherwick clubbed an alarmingly violent 48 in 20 balls.

Fernandes said: "I'm feeling excited. We were going into this game not knowing if we could qualify for the quarters but all we had to do was win this match and the rest was out of our control.

"I'm ecstatic and over the moon to have helped my side to win. At the start of our partnership Seb and I were determined not to look too far ahead but instead we had to think about our boundary options and how to combat the spinning ball. "Walking out under immense pressure and still needing a lot of runs to win but once I started batting and the runs kept coming. I thought we can actually do it here."