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NATIONAL League



Alfie Massey on the ball Image: Jonathan Taffel

Stones fall to narrow defeat to Morecambe

WEALDSTONE fell to a narrow defeat against Morecambe at the Mazuma Mobile Stadium, despite mounting a determined comeback from three goals down in an agonising 4-3 loss.

Stones boss Sam Cox made four changes from the 2-2 draw with Gateshead, recalling the likes of club captain Jack Cook, Omar Mussa and Max Kretzschmar, while summer signing Sak Hassan was brought into the starting line-up for his first league start.

Despite the match beginning in scrappy fashion as both sides struggled in the rain, the hosts took the lead early on as Jack Nolan curled a stunning effort into the top corner after five minutes. The Stones looked to level the scoreline with several half-chances from Enzo Boldewijn,

By TOM NORTON

Philip Chinedu and Deon Woodman, but Morecambe took advantage of the wet conditions to slickly move the ball through the Wealdstone press.

Sam Cox's side then found themselves two behind when Morecambe's Elijah Dixon-Bonner finished a flowing team move in the 34th minute to double the hosts' lead, before Admiral Muskwe calmly added a third to make it 3-0 on the stroke of half-time.

The Stones were handed a lifeline seconds before the break when talisman Max Kretzschmar capitalised on a poor clearance and delicately chipped over Morecambe goalkeeper

Archie Mair to reduce the deficit.

The second half saw the hosts continue their pressuring approach, with Stones keeper Dante Baptiste forced into several key saves to keep the score at 3-1. However, Cox's side managed to gain a foothold in the game as substitute Micah Obiero came on to make a significant impact when Jack Cook's long-range strike deflected off Obiero and fortuitously flew past Mair in the 67th minute to bring it back to 3-2.

The visitors' persistence then paid off in the 81st minute when Alfie Massey unleashed an outstanding strike in the bottom corner to complete what had looked like an unlikely comeback.

Determined not to settle for a disappointing draw given the circumstances, the hosts were able to have

the final say in the 86th minute when Morecambe's Emerson Sutton came off the bench and found space in the Wealdstone box to seal a dramatic 4-3 victory.

Despite a valiant comeback from three goals down, the Stones were ultimately undone by a combination of a late lapse in concentration and Morecambe's relentlessness as the hosts snatched the points in the dying embers.

The performance will no doubt provide Cox with encouragement heading into Wednesday's trip to Tamworth, but another defeat on the road will raise concerns about the sustainability of the team's patchy form dating back to the start of the National League campaign.

'A lot of heart, a lot of passion'

WOMEN'S RUGBY WORLD CUP 2025



England's Megan Jones uring the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025

ELLIE Kildunne may have provided the magic as England dispatched France to reach the World Cup final but Megan Jones insists defence will be the most effective weapon against Canada.

Kildunne produced two electrifying finishes in the 35-17 semi-final victory but it was without the ball that the Red Roses truly excelled, defying a French onslaught by making 200 tackles compared to their opponents' 88.

Canada's stunning upset of New Zealand has set-up an intriguing main event at Allianz Stadium on Saturday, but Jones says they will face a defence that has been energised by limiting Les Bleues to three tries.

"That defensive shift sums us up because we've got so much heart and desire in this team. The number of tackles shows how much we want to put our bodies on the line," said England's outside centre and vice captain

"I asked one thing from the girls and that was to choose how hard you're going to hit and choose how you're going to inspire the person next to you. That's always important to us.

"Some of the tackles we were putting in were outstanding from the girls. We were relentless and that is exactly what we want to show.

"We have got a lot of heart, a lot of passion and we want to wear our heart on our sleeve as much as possible.

"We can take a lot of confidence from our defensive sets because I think defence is going to win us championships.

"We are going to retain the ball as much as we can."