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FOOTBALL



Stones Micah Obiero in action against Whitstable Image: Jon Taffel

Cup win can be platform for more league success

SAM Cox believes that the 5-1 FA Cup win over Whitstable Town can serve as a platform for National League success in the coming weeks as Wealdstone confirmed their place in the first round proper of English football's oldest cup competition.

Widely expected to overcome the step five minnows, the Stones raced into a five-goal lead before half-time as Micah Obiero and Olufela Olofela both grabbed a brace either side of Omar Mussa's tidy finish.

Whitstable then responded shortly after the break with a consolation, but Cox felt his side gave the best account of themselves in the first 45 minutes.

"We set the boys the task to do it

By Tom Norton

in a professional manner, to keep our standards high. I thought, especially in the first half, I think we were excellent," the Stones boss told the club website after the 5-1 win.

"I think we created an awful lot of opportunities from the structure and running off the back. Two really good finishes from Micah Obiero, and it was great to see Fela on the scoresheet again with two neat finishes.

"Going into half-time 5-0 up, we were very pleased with the performance, the way we moved the ball with a tempo and a purpose, and

everybody really on it - no complacency setting in.

"Second half, they frustrated us by dropping in, and we probably didn't apply ourselves to the standard that we would have asked for, and they frustrated us quite a bit, to be honest, but credit to them."

Having featured in all but one of the Stones' 15 domestic fixtures this season, Obiero struck twice early on to set Cox's side on their way to a comfortable victory.

And the Wealdstone manager praised the timing of Obiero's contribution with a brace inside 22 first-half minutes.

He said: "On paper, a step one side against a step five side, everybody's expecting us to win the game

of football. I think the experience of this competition - and everybody knows that there's no guarantees - and the FA Cup, which provides so many upsets, at times, favours the underdog. There always was that thought.

"But you get two early goals in the first half, which settles everybody's nerves. The crowd was behind us once again, and we were able to play our style and the way we were asking them to. I thought they did that really well, so credit to the lads."

Anthony Georgiou hobbled off early in the first half with a suspected Achilles injury, and Cox confirmed that the midfielder had been suffering with an issue prior to the match.

Saracens lose out to Harlequins

RUGBY UNION



Saracens' Jack Bracken and Harlequins' Tyrone Green battle

SARACENS director of rugby Mark McCall admitted he was dissatisfied with the way his side performed against cross-capital rivals Harlequins at Twickenham Stoop last Sunday.

After recording heavy early season victories over Newcastle Red Bulls (39-17) and Bristol Bears (50-17), the Hendon-based outfit conceded their unbeaten start to 2025/26 Gallagher PREM Rugby after slipping to a 20-14 defeat in this tactical but very feisty London derby affair.

Sarries points came from two well constructive tries from Fergus Burke and Ben Earl in which former England captain Owen Farrell both converted.

However that was not enough as 26-year-old England fly half Marcus Smith celebrated his first appearance of the season for Harlequins by scoring 15 of their 20 points.

In a tense last 15 minutes Saracens, who this season are officially branded 'The Original Club of North London' due to their 150th year in operation, were pushing for points however in injury time a penalty by Smith secured victory for the hosts.

"Marcus kicked beautifully and put us under pressure," McCall said. "We probably didn't prepare the team in the way we should have for what came and that's obviously my fault.

"I'd say we got what we deserved but we didn't because we got a losing bonus point. We were lucky to get that but Harlequins were by far the better team. "They dominated territory and had a very strong kicking game, and we didn't cope well with it. That affected the rest of our game and the rest of our energy and intent.

"But we expect the playing group to react better to that than we did. We then lost intent in all the important things. It's not a performance we can be proud of."