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FOOTBALL



Fela Olomola celebrates scoring for Wealdstone against Southend. Image: Jon Taffel

‘The boys thoroughly deserved win’ - Cox

WEALDSTONE boss Sam Cox felt his side were worthy winners against Southend United.

Olufela Olomola's first-half strike saw the Stones beat the Shrimpers 1-0 in the first round of the FA Cup at Grosvenor Vale.

And Cox thought Wealdstone's performances warranted the victory.

"It's amazing," said Cox.

"The boys thoroughly deserved it and from start to finish I thought we looked the dominant side.

"They had a spell in the first 10 minutes of the game when I think they had three corners on the bounce but we weathered it.

By Chris Phillips

"It's always difficult when you have a team like Southend putting pressure on you early doors and it can be quite easy to fold.

"But we showed such maturity and it's a great achievement from the boys to do what they've done.

"They managed the game with such control and professionalism.

"I'm over the moon."

The victory was Wealdstone's second of the season against the Shrimpers in a game which saw

Kevin Maher's side reduced to 10 men early on.

Centre-back Ben Goodliffe was red-carded with only 17 minutes on the clock after bringing down Olomola when he was clean through on goal.

But Cox stressed having an extra man does not automatically mean victory will be secured.

"When you're playing 10 men it doesn't guarantee domination of the football or the game," said Cox.

"It probably inspires the opposition to go that extra yard so we knew it would be difficult.

"Credit to Southend, they didn't stop running the whole game and they're a squad full

of experienced players at this level.

"They have great squad depth and they are far more superior to us in terms of infrastructure and budget.

"But our spirit, character and personality meant we dug in deep when we needed to."

And Cox was particularly pleased with his defenders.

The back players today were outstanding," said the Stones boss.

"Defending set pieces I thought they were colossal and they put their bodies on the line when they needed to as well.

"The second round will be another great occasion now."

England want to keep building

RUGBY



Saracens' Maro Itoji says England are hungry to improve. Image: PA

SARACENS' Maro Itoji wants England to keep building on their winning momentum when they face Fiji on Saturday at Allianz Stadium, Twickenham.

The Red Rose matched their eight-match winning run from 2020 after powering past Australia 25-7 in their opening Quilter Nations Series match along with regaining the Ella-Mobbs Trophy. Their four tries came from Sarries speed master Ben Earl, Henry Pollock, Alex Mitchell and Luke Cowan-Dickie who collected his 50th England cap while George Ford kicked five points through the posts.

"We just want to keep building," said England's 31-year-old captain Itoji, who also played alongside fellow Saracens team-mates Ben Earl and Jamie George.

"Obviously we're delighted with the result and we're delighted with how the team is coming together, but I think the team is just hungry to improve, hungry to spend time together and just get better."

Camden-born Itoji, who assisted Cowan-Dickie, 32, to the fourth try through a driving maul outside the 22, gave a glowing reference to the Sale Shark's hooker 50th Red Rose appearance.

He also cheekily revealed that the try was England coach and former Saracens lock Steve Borthwick, favourite one from the victory over The Wallabies.

"I know that's probably Steve's favourite try of the game so hopefully we can do that a little more often," he continued.

"It's my absolute joy and privilege to play with Luke (Cowan-Dickie). I guess it's fair to say that he's one of the most unique people that I've ever met.

"I'm delighted that he managed to get 50 England caps and I'm even more delighted that he got a try on his 50th."

Catch all the action from England Vs Fiji from 5.40pm exclusively live on TNT Sports.