

Sad Wasps flop out of cup

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SPORT

O'Connor spot on for crucial victory

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Stones' efforts end pointless

Gloucester 2 Wealdstone 1

DESPITE a gallant Wealdstone effort, Gloucester took the points on Tuesday to move into second place in the table, writes Steve Marshall.

The home side started in some style with Eaton hitting the bar in the 9th minute and three minutes later Freegard curled home a left foot drive after a fine run by Meacham to put Gloucester ahead.

Neil Cordice came very close to levelling after 16 minutes but his close range header from Smart's free kick struck Moss and was cleared to safety.

Mark Hopson, Stones' new signing from neighbours Harrow, made a competent debut, but was cautioned for a challenge on Noble.

Just before half time Tony Kelly's powerful header from Steve Tapley's free kick looked goalbound until Hancock headed over the bar.

Wealdstone opened the second half brightly with Hopson driving wide and Kelly firing over, but Gloucester increased the lead in controversial circumstances. Peter Bartlett sustained a head injury in making a challenge and with many players expecting the whistle, the ball broke for Eaton who slotted home from 12 yards.

Wealdstone fought back and reduced the deficit after 80 minutes when Barry Blackman's 30 yard effort bounced in front of Moss who could only palm the ball into the top corner of the net for an extraordinary goal. But despite late pressure Gloucester held on for maximum points.

Wealdstone: Coles, Howard (Gipp), Smart, Tapley, Bartlett, Donnellan, Hopson, Martin (Goyette), Kelly, Blackman, Cordice.

New dates for Stones

WEALDSTONE have rearranged their Beazer Homes League match at home to Farnborough Town for Tuesday April 9. The away game with Cambridge City will now take place on Wednesday May 1.

Clifton gets vote of confidence after EGM hears:

'Stones have a ground and future is assured'

WEALDSTONE FC members and shareholders have given their ebullient chairman Alan Clifton and his board of directors a vote of confidence over their handling of the club's relocation after being told that Stones' future is assured and that the club does have a ground to go to.

The vote came after Sunday's extraordinary general meeting at the club which was called to discuss the thorny relocation issue. About 300 attended, including a large contingent of club supporters, but, despite some searching enquiries, any expected hostility failed to materialise and the meeting was conducted with considerable decorum.

Mr Clifton, the subject of much criticism since the revelation that the club's Lower Mead ground had been sold to the Tesco supermarket chain at Christmas, poured scorn on suggestions that the deal had been done before an alternative site had been secured.

"We are not that stupid," he told the meeting. "Leaving the Wilkesden scenario to one side, although in this respect we still have an agreement in force to play there next season should we so desire, we also have ground sharing options open to us should we wish to take them up, but more importantly I also have two other firm offers of relocation on the table, one or other of which will prove to be very attractive."



BY JOHN COMFORT

"I am not prepared to divulge the locations of these sites at the present time for fear of jeopardising the closing of a contract. You will therefore have to have patience, faith in my integrity and respect my judgement."

Mr Clifton said that the club does have a new ground to go to. It will not be in the London Borough of Harrow but will be within a 6 mile radius of Lower Mead. "After one season we might be in a permanent home - we might be in a permanent home before then," he said, adding that as soon as a site was finalised members would be informed, and he expected it to be in three weeks time.

Plans for the new ground have already been drawn up by Wealdstone. It will be on the same lines as Wycombe's Adams Park Stadium and costings with several major companies suggest that an outlay of three and a half millions pounds will be required to finance the project.

With the club over £1 million in debt, and needing to constantly find funds for ground safety work required at Lower Mead in the wake of the Taylor report, Mr Clifton said that the decision to sell the ground at Christmas had been made to avoid a bankruptcy petition from the Inland Revenue when £138,000 had

to be found to clear a debt following a two year investigation into non-payment of Pay as You Earn and National Insurance contributions which took place before the current administration took over.

"Ask yourselves and consider how much longer this club could survive in such a climate," he said. "The answer is of course that it cannot. Such dire situations require drastic action to ensure our survival. That drastic action was taken with the sale of our ground to Tesco before Christmas."

As for suggestions that the club was going under, Mr Clifton said: "Let me make it abundantly clear that this club is not, contrary to the misguided opinions of some, heading for oblivion. Quite the opposite is in fact the case. The club, under my direction is on course and will go from strength to strength in the early future."

"This club will again be a force to reckon with, this club will return to the GM Vauxhall Conference and ultimately gain entrance to the Football League. This club will have a stadium to be proud of, fully paid for and with all necessary safety standards, with a considerable amount of money wisely invested for future growth."

There was some concern from members that club sponsors, the Harrovian group,

were to receive a half share of the total £12 million being paid by Tesco for the joint sale of the 4 acres ground site and the smaller site of 1.6 acres of properties and land in Hindes Road, bought by Harrovian for access purposes, the deal for which is due for completion on June 30.

But Mr Clifton paid tribute to the part played in the relocation plans by Harrovian. "Without them we would have gone bust two years ago," said Mr Clifton who revealed that Harrovian had agreed to continue their sponsorship of the club for the next five years to the tune of a bumper £120,000 per year - one of the biggest sponsorship deals in non-league history.

In closing Mr Clifton said that over the past 10 years his personal commitment to the club had never faltered. "I have striven diligently and hard on this club's behalf and will continue to do so in the future."

"You may not have always liked or indeed agreed with some of my policies and decisions, however, I stand by my decisions for I have never wavered from the cause and whether you like me or my motives or not, I do produce results. The results of these labours, which we will all shortly benefit from, are just around the corner."

"I have no doubt that I will see this task through to its final conclusion and put this club firmly back on the map."

The Wealdstone Supporters Club are delaying comment on the outcome of the meeting, said secretary Layne Pater-son: "We were delighted by the turn out at the meeting and will be meeting shortly to formulate an official statement."

Belcourt retains top swimmer award



Duncan Belcourt with his magnificent trophy.

HARROW and Wealdstone's Duncan Belcourt is the most outstanding age group swimmer in Middlesex for the second year running.

Duncan, 17, retained the "Top Swimmer" award he first won last year at the final session of the County Age Group competition at Gurnell Pool, Ealing, over the weekend.

He was presented with the Wilkinson Sword Trophy on Sunday after amassing more points in individual races than any other swimmer competing in the competition. Harrow swimmers have now won the trophy three times in the past four years.

Duncan won three titles at the weekend, the 1500m free (16.55.32), 200m free (1.58.18) and the 400m IM (4.52.67) as well as taking second places in the 100m back (1.02.87) and 100m free (54.91). Altogether he won seven of the 12 events in his age group and took silver or bronze in the remaining five.

Club coach Bob Pay said: "Duncan has trained very hard this year, working on all events and distances. It's a great personal achievement to retain this award."

All set for Mini-Marathon

THE re-arranged Harrow Mini Marathon takes place on Sunday at Harrow Recreation Ground. All entries received for the original date have been held over and runners are asked to collect their numbers at least 30 minutes before their event.

There are events in six age categories for both males and females and all runners aged from 8 to 80 are welcome to take part.

There are special awards for six males and females in each category (three for veterans)

and the leading Harrow runners in the 11-18 age groups will earn selection for the ADT London Mini-Marathon on Sunday April 21.

Entries will be taken on the day. The fee is £2 for young athletes and £2.50 for seniors and vets. Registration is at the Harrow St Marys pavilion close to the Pinner Road entrance to Harrow Recreation Ground.

Race timetable: 2.15pm under-11s; 2.45pm under-14s; 3.20pm under-16 and under-18s; 4pm seniors and vets.

Harrow winners were: Helen Williamson, 100m free 60.14; Hazel Alder, 100m breast 74.38, inflicting a rare defeat on National Champion, Lorraine Coombes of Southampton; Guy Bulpitt, 100m free 52.71.

Seconds went to Hazel Alder, 50m breast 34.44; Helen Williamson, 50m free 27.82; Guy Bulpitt, 50m free 24.20.

Harrow shine in GB club event

HARROW and Wealdstone Swimming Club's senior squad produced more first and seconds places than in previous years when they took on the south's best clubs in the GB Club Team Championships at Barnet on Sunday.

The men finished 3rd behind Barnet Cophall and Portsmouth Northseas and ahead of Southampton. The women only lost 3rd place to Barnet Cophall in the last two events and came 4th.

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Soccer fixtures

- Thursday February 28
 - Friendly: Mick's FA v RAF (Vale, 7.30pm).
- Saturday March 2
 - Beazer Homes League Premier Div: Wealdstone v Dorchester (Lower Mead, 3pm).
 - Vauxhall League Premier Div: Basingstoke v Harrow Borough.
 - Vauxhall League Div. One: Heybridge v Wembley.
 - Vauxhall League Div. 2N: Stevenage v Edgeware Town; Kingsbury Town v Tring (Silver Jubilee Park, 3pm).
 - Hellenic League: Rayners Lane v Shortwood (Lucas Ave, 3pm).
 - Middx Premier Cup semi-final: Wembley Res. v CAV Northall (Vale Farm, 3pm).
- Monday March 4
 - Vauxhall League Div. One: Wembley v Chalfont St Peter (Vale Farm, 7.30pm).
 - Vauxhall League Div. 2N: Kingsbury Town v Saffron Walden (Silver Jubilee Park, 7.45pm).
- Wednesday March 6
 - Capital League: Wealdstone v Aldershot (Lower Mead, 7.30pm).

Birch comes to the rescue

Kingsbury Town 1 Barton Rovers 1
LEADING scorer Troy Birch snatched a point for Kingsbury that they rarely seemed likely to achieve on Tuesday, writes John Comfort.

Barton made a lively start and after Bobby Smith lashed a 25 yarder past the helpless Mick Coffey to put them ahead after only four minutes, they threatened to overwhelm Town.

But somehow Kingsbury managed to cling on and in more positive mood in the second half they had an O'Rourke goal disallowed for

a foul on keeper Marshall before drawing level in the 58th minute.

Simpson's powerful run on the left set it up and when he slipped the ball inside, defender King's attempt to pass back to Marshall was intercepted by the alert Birch who rounded the keeper and slotted home.

Kingsbury: Coffey, Cook, Young, K. Williams, Stapleton, Surridge, O'Rourke, Dale (Mulhern), P. Williams, Birch, Simpson. Other sub: Petrou.

Borough sell Hopson to Stones

WEALDSTONE have signed midfielder Mark Hopson from neighbours Harrow Borough for a fee of £1,500.

Hopson played his first game for the club at Gloucester and makes his home debut when Stones meet Dorchester on Saturday. Mark Harrison returns after suspension but Paul Morris and Ian Fergusson are both injury doubts.

Harrow Borough travel to Basingstoke on Saturday looking to avenge a 1-0 defeat in Peter Lawrence's first match as manager back in October. Victory is again essential if Borough are to climb out of trouble and put their hosts back in it.

Wembley look to get out of relegation trouble against fellow strugglers Heybridge. Maximum points will be welcome but are hardly inevitable. Lions have failed to win in three previous meetings this season.

Knee ligaments trouble is likely to keep Peter Davey sidelined for two weeks and he will miss Edgware's

tough away game against league leaders Stevenage. Andy Ferguson is a likely replacement. He scored twice for the reserves on Saturday in his first game back after a five weeks ban. Seamus Finnerty is also doubtful with a toe injury and manager Brian Rider is likely to switch Vince Deritis to sweeper and bring Mark White in at full back.

Kingsbury will be looking to avoid giving bottom of the table Tring their first league win when they meet them on Saturday. They are likely to be without Jason Dale who suffered a recurrence of his foot injury. Town have signed defender Stuart Young from Hendon.

Rayners Lane have an attractive game against title contenders Shortwood, the only side to have beaten Lane in the last eight games when they won 5-0. Lane manager Don Durkin hopes to have Neil Kellar and Gerry Hynes back after injury and Paul Abell available after work commitments.

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