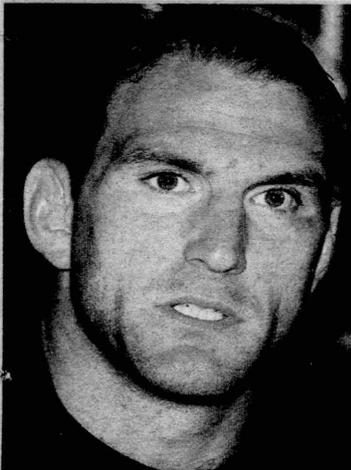


SPORT



RFU investigate allegations made in 'sting' on Wasps ace

Dallaglio waits to hear his fate



Beleaguered Wasp, Lawrence Dallaglio.

THE fate of Wasps star Lawrence Dallaglio is in the hands of an inquiry panel, led by High Court judge St John Kay, which was convened by the Rugby Union in the wake of allegations of drug dealing and drug taking made in last Sunday's News of the World, which have been categorically denied by the player.

Wasps are standing firmly behind the beleaguered Dallaglio.

The 26 year old flanker met with club coach Nigel Melville and Simon Crane, the chief executive of Loftus Road plc on Monday and gave a detailed account of his meetings with people he believed to be representatives of toiletries manufacturer, Gillette UK.

In fact they were undercover reporters who alleged that Dallaglio admitted to having been involved in drug dealing as a teenager and had taken cocaine and ecstasy during the 1997 British Lions tour of South Africa.

Wasps later said in a statement: "The club has no reason to disbelieve Lawrence's account of these meetings. The only other account of these meetings that the club is aware of is the article published in last Sunday's News of the World."

"At this difficult time the club wishes to make it known that Lawrence, Alice (his girlfriend Alice Corbett) and their two children have the 100% support of Wasps RFC."

Dallaglio's meeting with club officials followed soon after a showdown with Rugby Union officials in Wolverhampton after which his resignation as England captain was announced. He also withdrew from the England squad which was flying to Australia last night (Wednesday) for a month long training camp in preparation for the World Cup.

In a statement issued by the RFU, Dallaglio said he had fabricated the entire story to impress people he believed were Gillette representatives who were offering a sponsorship deal.

He said he categorically denied having dealt in illegal drugs in any way whatsoever, had never used illegal drugs, whether on the 1997 Lions tour of South Africa or at any other time during his rugby career, and that he had no knowledge of any teammates using illegal drugs during the 1997 Lions tour of South Africa or at any other time.

"The circumstances in which the supposed admissions were obtained amounted to an elaborate set up by the writers of the News of the World article (by their own admission) to which I naively fell victim."

He said he had "played along" with conversations about use of illegal drugs to impress them. "By pandering to the whims of these people, I appreciate that I made an error of judgement which stems from naivety and foolishness on my part."

Dallaglio made his first public appearance since the story broke at a press conference at Twickenham on Tuesday at which he repeated his drug taking denials. It was revealed that he had experimented with drugs in his teens but was passionately anti-drugs.

He said he had lied to reporters but that "there was no sensible explanation for why I did that. I have not lied to my family, the RFU or Wasps. I bitterly regret I ever experimented with drugs - no one should."

Despite receiving the backing of Wasps and being given the "total support" of England coach Clive Woodward, Dallaglio's future now hangs in the balance as he awaits the inquiry's findings.

Stanmore hit rock bottom



Julian Makin bowling for Stanmore against Winchmore Hill on Saturday.

STANMORE'S unhappy start to the season in the Middlesex County Cricket League continued on Saturday when they went down by six wickets at home to Winchmore Hill. They batted first and never fully recovered from losing their first two wickets for only six runs. Despite good knocks from skipper Alastair Fraser (47), Graham Leggett (29) and Mehul Kamdar (30) they were eventually dismissed for 155.

With Carlos Remy hitting an unbeaten 50, Winchmore Hill made the required runs for the loss of just four wickets.

The defeat leaves Stanmore propping up the Division One table with only two points from three games played. "We've got to lift ourselves" said Fraser. "Now we'll see what the boys are made of." Stanmore visit Eastcote in the League this Saturday and are at Wycombe House in the Gillette Cup on Monday. Stanmore 2nds were dismissed for 121 at Ealing on Saturday and despite the excellent bowling of Ross Chiese (6-27), the home side made the runs for the loss of eight wickets.

Wealdstone lose appeal but it's not over yet

WEALDSTONE'S hopes of promotion to the Premier Division of the Ryman League are not yet dead and buried.

Their appeal against the League's decision to prevent them going up because work required at the White Lion for the A grading necessary for Premier Division status was not completed by the April 1 deadline, was turned down by the Football Association joint appeals committee, but the club could take their case further.

The club's board is meeting later this week to consider four possible options.

The first is to accept the verdict and do nothing, the second is the

BY JOHN COMFORT

possibility of an arbitration hearing. The third is a legal challenge to the decision, which could be expensive, and the fourth is to examine ways around the ground grading rule which could possibly involve ground sharing elsewhere with a club already in possession of an A grading.

"We are actively considering all our options but must make a decision soon," said club director Graham Sharpe.

The last option is the most interesting. The League has indicated it would not support it but might

have to stand bending their seemingly inflexible rules in that respect if faced with having to make a ruling on Premier Division Enfield, who are said to be leaving Southbury Road to ground share with Cheshunt whose ground only has a G grading.

Enfield would need considerable time to bring the ground up to an A grading but will be clearly past the April 1 deadline.

"Even the Ryman League could be so insensitive as to permit that," said Mr Sharpe.

Although obviously disappointed at the failure to get their appeal upheld by the FA, Mr Sharpe said that the club had no complaints

about the hearing. Despite being led to believe they had been given extra time to complete work and had also quoted instances where the League had interpreted rules inconsistently, the FA ruled against Wealdstone.

"We believed we had a good case and we had a fair hearing from the appeals committee, but we lost," said Mr Sharpe.

Stones boss Gordon Bartlett, said he was "bitterly disappointed" at the outcome.

"I geared myself up for disappointment because I didn't believe we would win but when it came through it hit me more than I expected. It's a devastating blow."

Reflecting on what might have been, he added: "There's a bit of difference between going to the likes of Aldershot, Slough and Aylesbury as opposed to Harlow, Whyteleafe and Croxson."

"We had 17 wins from our last 19 games but the biggest result of the season went against us."

Bartlett meets the club board this week and will be looking for positive signs from them for next season.

"We can either feel sorry for ourselves, lay down and die or get up and fight and make sure we achieve the same if not better next season," he said. "It's the Wealdstone way to do the latter."



Devastated - Stones boss Gordon Bartlett

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Dyer is confirmed as Wembley's manager

ERROL Dyer, whose superb managerial efforts came so close to saving Wembley from relegation, was confirmed as the Vale Farm club's boss for next season at their presentation evening on Saturday.

With assistant Roger Linton, Dyer will lead Lions' bid to bounce back to the Ryman Division One at the first attempt.

Davis Haule was the recipient of the first team Players' Player of the Year trophy, narrowly pipping Wayne Walters for the honour. However, Walters gained some consolation by winning the Supporters' Player of the Year award. Young centre back Danny Norris, promoted from the youth team to establish himself in the first team, won the Most Improved Player title.

Defender Ben Flynn collected the reserve Team Player of the Year award, while youth team honours went to Edmond Protain, who won both the Player of the Year and Players' Player of the Year trophies, and goalkeeper James Hannington, voted the youth team's Most Improved footballer. The main award for the under-13s was won by top scorer Aston Edwards.

However, the biggest cheer was received by Wembley Hill Ladies, winners of the South East Combination Championship with an impressive record of played 22, won 21, drawn 1, to win promotion into the National League next season.

Skipper Karen Hills won the Player of the Year title, while top scorer Maria Jenkins collected the Players' Player of the Year award.

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