



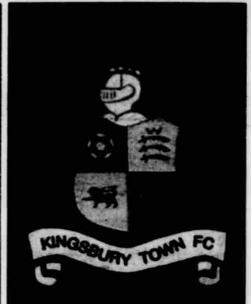
**Baptiste is spot on to give Wealdstone a draw in 'friendly'**

**Wealdstone 1 Walton & Hersham 1**  
STONES concluded their pre-season build up with a draw against Premier Division Walton in a decidedly physical encounter on Tuesday, writes John Comfort.  
Ross Pickett headed against the Wealdstone woodwork in the early stages

before the visitors took a 14th minute lead, when Lee Allen headed home.  
Carl Holmes missed two good chances for Stones before they finally drew level in the 34th minute, Rocky Baptiste firing home from the penalty spot after being pulled back in the area by defender Alan Dowson.

In an often heated second period, Wealdstone's best chance of winning the game was squandered by Lee Walker who put a free header over.  
Wealdstone: Imber, Lamb, Lyons (Smith), Boodford, Tibury, Walker, McKay, Bircham, Baptiste, Holmes (Reid/Valenti), Field (Hazholl).

# Soccer is back!



## Locals are all set for the big kick off

JUST 15 short weeks ago, Harrow Borough were contemplating a satisfactory 9th place in the Ryman Premier Division; Wealdstone had secured a third successive promotion that was destined to be denied them; Wembley were consigned to relegation for the second time in four seasons, while the shared delight of Edgware and Kingsbury was that their respective less than happy campaigns were finally concluded.



Alan Paris - wants more improvement from Borough.



By John Comfort

locals - and not necessarily in that order - and on Saturday it starts all over again when the Ryman League kicks off its 1999/2000 campaign.

Over at Earlsmead the burning question will be can Borough emulate their fine efforts of last season in the wake of losing such key players as Frank McCormack and Sean James to St Albans and Paul Adolph to a scholarship in America, while defender Aiden O'Brien has returned up north.

Coming in are midfielders Mark Jones from Aylesbury and John Hurlock, who returns to Harrow after two seasons at Chesham, as well as forwards Damien Markman from Yeading and George Fowler, signed from Spartan South Midlands League club, Islington St Marys.

Also returning to Earlsmead is striker Paul Ripley, after spells at Ruislip Manor and

Northwood. Further League improvement will again be the goal for Borough boss Alan Paris. "Basically our aim will be the same as last year, to finish higher again and have a good run in the FA Cup," he said.

"There are a lot of teams who will be pushing for honours and there's a lot of money flying about. The money situation at Harrow always makes it hard. But I've got a hard working team, we know what we want and we'll do the best we can."

Borough start with a home game against one of the big spenders, Dagenham and Redbridge, who have been installed as 4/1 favourites by bookmakers William Hill to take the Premier Division title. Borough, incidentally, are a 25/1 shot.

But for the contentious ruling of the League's management committee, Borough would be facing bitter rivals Wealdstone in

the Premier Division this season. However, Gordon Bartlett's team now have to do it all over again to secure the Division One promotion they deserved.

Having himself resisted the overtures of Aylesbury to 'give it another go,' Bartlett has been boosted by the return of all last season's squad except for Shaun Fleming, and he has added full back Joe Lyons from Edgware and centre back Dave Tibury from Molesey.

A poor pre-season run has done little to indicate Stones are capable of a repeat promotion performance but they will be mindful that it was only in the second half of last season that they hit form and embarked on the great run that secured third place.

"We haven't wanted to win pre-season matches badly enough and that's got to change," said Bartlett. "I've got no doubts about the ability of the players but they've got to be mentally tougher."

Can they gain promotion again? There are no predictions from the Wealdstone boss but to do so he knows a good start is essential to put them on track. "Realistically we have to make a positive start and do well in the first ten games and build a firm foundation. There's no way we can expect to produce the sort of finish we did last season."

Stones have a difficult start at home to newly promoted Harlow who are managed by Eddie McCluskey and are something of a bogey side.

Bartlett has problems with Phil Dicker out through suspension while Ian Waugh, Paul Benning and Chris Walton are all injured. But Dominic Sterling and Brian Jones are expected back from holidays in time to play.

Wembley's Errol Dyer won many admirers when

he took over the Vale Farm hot seat in the closing stages of last season and steered the doomed Lions on an inspired run that saw them come mightily close to beating the drop as well as earning an unexpected place in the final of the Middlesex Senior Cup - a game which they were extremely unlucky to lose.



Gordon Bartlett - good start from Stones essential.

On the last occasion they were relegated, Wembley got back to Division One at the first attempt and that will be Dyer's aim this time.

He has boosted his squad with five signings the most significant of which is likely to be the capture of ex Chertsey and Yeading striker, Hamed Harrak.

A good pre-season, culminating in a 3-2 win at Melksham last Saturday, has left Dyer in confident mood that the task can be achieved.

"We've strengthened the side and will be looking to bounce back straight away," he said.

"We've been working on things and it's looking good. I'm quietly confident that we can go straight back."

Wembley's season begins with a tricky away game at Leighton Town

and Dyer already has injury problems with both Gavin Lindsey and Bradley Scott likely to be sidelined.

One of Wembley's rivals in Division Two will be neighbours Edgware Town who, with new manager Gary Hand at the helm of a much revamped team, will have their sights set on mere survival, although their form in pre-season games has impressed and suggests that they could yet turn out to the dark horses of the division.

Departing manager Steve Newing has taken Lee Smart with him to his new club Ware, while Edgware's only other significant loss is that of Joe Lyons to Wealdstone.

Fabio Valenti has also been training with the Stones but seems unlikely to win a starting place.

Of last season's squad, Hand has re-signed Andy Carter, Steve Hurd, Paul Moran, Glen Parry, Marcel Davidsson, Dave Makamian, Christian Glynn and Mark Ivers and, as has added to that a significant influx of young talent.

The exceptional Virgil Matthews, a winger formerly with Beaconsfield and Wycombe, is the pick, and the others include Leon Constantine, Dale Binns, Darren Rayman, Dennis Atto and Richard Adjemom, who were all with Hand at Hendon.

Hand is pleased with his team's build up but now the real action starts with a tricky away game at Wivenhoe on Saturday.

"Our first game at Wivenhoe will be an eye opener," he said. "Either it's going to be disastrous or we're going to shock a lot of people."

"We've got to give the youngsters time to get a taste of a physical division," he said.

"I've no doubts about their ability it's just a question of whether they will be mentally and physically capable. "If we get through this season and make sure we don't go down, and if things pan out right, with that year's experience I can see us getting promoted next season."

Hand has selection problems for the Wivenhoe game. Carter will be missing through suspension, and Wares will take the field with a makeshift defence as Parry, Davidson and Adjemom are on holiday.

Kingsbury Town are also under new management, with Tony Kelly, the boss of the club's successful youth side of the early 90's, now in charge.

The Silver Jubilee Park club are no strangers to seasons of struggle in Division Three but Kelly is determined to change all that with a squad that, in similar fashion to Edgware, has been built around youth, with a blend of experience.

"The whole place has been in a sorry state. I watched a lot of their games last season and it was typical Kingsbury," said Kelly.

"But whatever has happened has happened, the



Gary Hand - looking to survive with young Edgware side.

penny has dropped and they've brought me in to steady the ship and now we're trying to restructure things."

"Basically the players weren't fit but pre-season training has gone well, there's a little bit of an atmosphere now and the vibes are good. I guarantee one thing - we won't get relegated. For us mid table this year would be as good as winning it."

Forward Brian Fitzsimons, former County schools player Mike Collins and midfielder Glen Metherral are amongst the five new young signings that Kelly has built his side around.

Graham Ash and Mark Wright have returned from Edgware, Mark Burgess is back from Wembley and keeper Lee Clark, who is on Brentford's books, has also been signed.

Kingsbury begin their campaign away to Epsom.

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### Lane want United's cup place

RAYNERS Lane have written to the FA applying to take the place of Manchester United in the FA Cup.

Chairman Richard Mitchell says in his letter: "As it is fairly obvious that Manchester United will not be entering the FA Cup this season I would like to apply for Rayners Lane FC to enter the cup at the third round stage. We enjoyed many years in the FA Cup but lost our senior county status several years ago when we failed to get planning permission to erect floodlights.

"An attractive third round tie would bring much needed revenue to finance the club through the next century and if floodlights are required I am sure that Old Trafford could be made available to us as I understand the ground will lie dormant for much of January.

"I hope you will consider our request speedily as we have to consider strengthening our squad and the negotiations of players' contracts with their agents in the light of a lengthy cup run."

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