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FOOTBALL



Wealdstone manager Sam Cox on the touchline. Image: Jon Taffel

Cox: We need to get back on the horse

WEALDSTONE manager Sam Cox was once again disappointed with his side's defending as the Stones' miserable National League form continued with a 2-0 defeat to Carlisle United.

After back-to-back hammerings to Boreham Wood and Aldershot Town over the festive period, the onus was on Cox's Stones team to respond to a dreadful domestic run, but goals from Luke Armstrong and Aaron Hayden either side of half-time condemned the National League strugglers to another damaging defeat.

Speaking to the club website post-match, a dejected Cox said: "We knew going into a fixture with them potentially looking at being

Tom Norton

top of the league that it was going to be tough. With the last couple of games that haven't gone our way and the goals that we've conceded, we set up to be a little bit harder to break down and a bit more resilient.

"I thought the boys, in general, did that. It's just really disappointing that the two goals that we have conceded – they are preventable ones. The set piece in the second half – I'll need to watch it back, but it should have been dealt with, and the first one looked a bit soft.

"Other than those two moments,

I don't recall them really cutting us open too many times. They've got quality in all areas of the pitch, and it is a massive football club for the division. They're top of the league for a reason, and we understand that."

Besides a pair of half chances for Nathan Tshikuna, Wealdstone failed to create any real threat themselves and were guilty of a lapse in concentration for both of Carlisle's goals.

"It was difficult on the balance of the game. When we did have those moments, it didn't quite drop for us," said Cox. "The front line worked really hard, and I think [Micah] Obiero worked really hard. [Nathan] Tshikuna has created a

couple of half chances off the back of a bit of brilliance.

"But in general, not enough to go and get something out of the game. I think if we had walked away with a draw, we would have been happy with that. I think out of possession, we tried really hard to implement the strategy, and we didn't quite get the result with the two goals we conceded."

Looking ahead to the FA Trophy clash with National League South side Dagenham and Redbridge, Cox was keen to offer his players a clean slate going into a match against the side who were relegated from the fifth tier last season, saving Wealdstone from suffering the same fate in the process.

Sarries boss: 'We were second best'

RUGBY



Saracens against Leicester

Image: PA Images

DESPITE securing a bonus point, Saracens' director of rugby Mark McCall was hugely critical of his side's effort at Leicester.

Tigers were in total control for most of the match to lead 26-7 at one stage. But Saracens showed spirit to come away with a losing bonus point from a 36-28 defeat, even though they were comfortably second best on the day. Wing Adam Radwan and Billy Searle were Leicester's stand-out performers, with the former scoring two explosive tries in a man-of-the-match display and Searle kicking four conversions and a penalty.

Olly Cracknell, Freddie Steward and Joe Heyes also scored tries for the home side while Theo McFarland, Rhys Carre, Juan Martin Gonzalez and Charlie Bracken scored Saracens' tries. Fergus Burke converted all four.

McCall said: "Although a losing bonus point may be important at the end of the season, it's of little consolation today.

"You can't turn up at a place like this and play with that attitude for the first 15 or 20 minutes as only one team had any fight for the physical battle.

"We were second best and I wish I knew what it was as we haven't been able to win back-to-back games since rounds one and two.

"Some aspects of our second half were good but although they played well in the first half, we allowed them to run at us far too easily."

Saracens are set to turn their attentions back to Europe this weekend as they welcome Toulouse in the Investec Champions Cup.

Having beaten Clermont Auvergne 47-10 in their opening home fixture, before losing 28-23 to Durban Sharks in South Africa, McCall's men will face their next pool one rivals on Sunday (5.30pm).