

Sport

HEADING FOR THE BIG DROP

By **Aaron Cranby**

WEALDSTONE are staring relegation in the face in what is now officially recognised as their worst season ever.

Never before in their 87 year history have Stones made such a bad start to a league campaign, and at the half-way point in 1987-88, they already look doomed to the drop.

Last Saturday's home defeat by Weymouth marked their longest-ever sequence of league games without a win — 14. It was also the longest-ever amount of home league games without a win — eight.

Wealdstone have played 21 GM Vauxhall Conference matches and won just one of them. They have drawn nine, lost eleven, earning twelve points.

It means that if Stones are to avoid relegation to either the Beazer Homes

(Southern) League or the Vauxhall-Opel (Isthmian) League, they will have to win half of their remaining games. Even this will only guarantee them the same amount of points they earned last season — and then they finished just one place above the relegation spots.

Wealdstone's previous worst start to a season was way back in 1933-34, when the club's fans had to wait until the 15th Athenian League match to see their team's second win. That season, Stones finished second bottom.

Their worst start since turning professional in 1971 was season 1980-81 when they won their second vic-

Relegation now real threat in Stones' worst ever season

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE										
The Danger Zone										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Dagenham	22	4	6	12	23	47	18			
Wycombe	22	4	6	12	23	50	18			
Barn	19	3	4	12	17	36	13			
Northwich	8	2	6	7	11	24	12			
Wealdstone	21	1	9	11	16	40	12			

tory in their tenth Alliance Premier League outing. That season, they were relegated.

And this week, club statistician Roy Couch confirmed the sad news for Stones fans. "This is definitely our worst start to a season ever — it is getting desperate," he said.

Stones are bottom of the GM Vauxhall Conference and a gap is already emerging between the bottom few

clubs and the rest of the league.

To avoid relegation, Wealdstone have to look for a realistic total of at least 40 points — and that figure is ten league wins away. Only 21 games remain.

Wealdstone vice-chairman Alan Clifton is still confident that the club will not be relegated at the end of the season though.

"After 21 games last season we had 15 points and had won three games, so in comparison to last season we are only three points adrift.

"If we got out of trouble last season, we can get out of trouble this season. I

don't feel personally that we are in quite as terrible a position as everybody seems to think. I am 100 per cent confident that we will climb the table, stay up and then progress."

Others are not so confident. Speaking at last month's Annual General Meeting, Supporters Club secretary Nick DuGard said: "Relegation is staring us in the face. We have to face the fact that we will almost certainly go down."

There was widespread agreement with his prophecy at the meeting. The chairman of the supporters club, Ray Kemp, said: "There is no way we can escape this time."

But he is now offering a unique incentive to the club's players if they can keep Wealdstone up. "I am prepared to put £650 of my own money into a pool that the players can distribute between them if we avoid relegation," he said.

"It is the only way I can think of doing something



● Nick Dugard — "We will almost certainly go down."

positive about the situation short of going out there and playing myself."

He and Nick DuGard are now hoping that others will also pledge financial support to the battle to keep Stones up.

Wealdstone's hopes of survival depend entirely on a series of games with fellow strugglers in the months to come — and by the end of January their fate may already have been virtually sealed.

They visit Dagenham, now managerless, on Boxing Day and then entertain Fisher Athletic and Wycombe Wanderers in their opening games of 1988.

The bad news is that the end of the season run-in is full of games that could be crucial to their opponents.

Keith on spying mission

HARROW Borough boss Keith Chamberlin misses his side's home game with Hendon on Saturday to go spying on Weymouth — Boro's opponents in the GMAC Cup on Tuesday.

Chamberlin has a full squad to choose from — with the exception of Steve Scott who is due to see a specialist about his groin injury which now seems likely to keep him out until after Christmas.

Wealdstone visit FA Cup giant-killers Sutton on Saturday with caretaker boss Arnie Reed hopeful of a shock result after Tuesday's cup debacle at Yeading.

"There'll be some changes," he said "and who knows, perhaps we'll catch them on a bad day."

Robin Wainwright returns after missing the Yeading game with a cold but there are doubts about Mick Ferguson (back injury) and Mick Perry (pulled abdominal muscle).

Wealdstone's Saturday match with Marlow has been called off as their opponents are involved in their county cup. On Tuesday the Lions visit Barking in the GMAC Cup.

Kingsbury Town have signed a new striker who will be in contention for Saturday's home Vauxhall-Opel League match with Billericay.

He is Mark Lincoln, formerly at Stevenage Borough who was also with manager Terry Dyson at Boreham Wood. But Dyson will be without centre back Neil Redding who misses the game because of work commitments.

"Jennings is not for us" — Clifton

STONES enter the second half of the season still without a new manager. And Tony Jennings, the Dagenham boss who resigned on Monday, has been publicly discounted by vice-chairman Alan Clifton.

"There is no coincidence in Jennings' resignation as far as an appointment at Wealdstone is concerned. He is not

coming here," he said.

"We are actively pursuing enquiries to find the right man for the job. We fully realise that we are in a difficult position and we want it cleared up as quickly as possible. But we have got to get it right."

"I am talking to people and we hope to make a decision by the end of

this week. But until something is signed, sealed and settled we are not further forward."

Meanwhile, caretaker manager Arnie Reed has signed a new striker to boost the squad. He is 28-year-old former Brentford and Cambridge man Billy Stagg, who has recently been playing in Denmark.

Lacklustre Borough

Harrow Borough 0, Kingstonian 1

AFTER a month of away games, Harrow Borough disappointed a large home crowd with a lacklustre performance against Kingstonian on Tuesday.

A fine series of saves by John Power kept Borough at bay and when their chance came, Kingstonian took it well to earn three points and end Borough's ten-match unbeaten run.

Holmes headed over, Steve Emmanuel shot wide and Tate had an effort saved before Kingstonian went ahead in the 41st minute.

Cox beat Robbie Johnson to the ball and shot into the roof of the net.

Harrow Borough: MacKenzie, Payne, How, Bateman, Duffy, Emmanuel, Holmes, Tate, Morris (Evans), Adams (Loddy).

Exit Wealdstone in new cup humiliation

By **John Comfort**

Yeading 3 Wealdstone 1

YEADING completed the job they started at Lower Mead last week when they dumped Wealdstone out of the Middlesex Senior Cup with embarrassing ease on Tuesday, and now meet Harrow in the next round.

The Vauxhall Opel League underdogs handed out another footballing lesson to Stones whose miserable evening was made complete with the sending off of Steve Hatter in the 37th minute for a tirade of abuse in dispute of Yeading's second goal.

Alex Welsh was again the ace in the well worn Stones pack as Yeading set about dismantling the visitor's pedestrian defence in the first half.

Williams, Finnerty and La Croix were all denied by fine saves from the keeper in an often one-sided contest before the inevitable first goal arrived after 30

minutes, Schwartz superbly chipping down Arden's cross and half volleying past Welsh.

Arden also made the second goal six minutes later, a perfect ball finding Sam who turned and beat Welsh with a well placed low drive.

Three minutes from half time Stones had the chance to reduce the deficit when Byron Walton tumbled to a challenge from Hibbert and a penalty was awarded. But Hindmarsh was equal to English's half hearted spot kick.

Ironically after Hatter's dismissal Stones looked a better side. After Paul Bowgett had headed home a McCarthy corner a minute after the break they enjoyed their best spell of the game — though sadly failed to trouble Hindmarsh again. Yeading eventually re-

Kingsbury slip

Worthing 2 Kingsbury Town 1

KINGSBURY slipped to defeat at Worthing on Tuesday, despite once again putting up a good performance.

Luck was against Town from the start — they arrived only just in time for the game and then went behind the amazing goal after 20 minutes.

Mick McDonough was beaten by a swerving, dipping shot from 35 yards from Worthing's left back, leaving Kingsbury boss Terry Dyson reflecting: "He won't hit another shot like that for the rest of his life!"

A minute into the second half, Town drew level when Paul Goodison received the ball on the edge of this area, weaved his way through the defence and shot home.

But a goal near the end finished off Kingsbury's fight for points, leaving them dangerously near the Vauxhall-Opel first division relegation zone, although they have games in hand.

Kingsbury Town: McDonough, Hill, Silman, Atkins, Fitzgerald, Hutchinson (Coleman), Collins, Costa, Zacharia, Lincoln, Goodison.

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Soccer fixtures

Saturday December 12
GM Vauxhall Conference: Sutton Utd v Wealdstone.
Vauxhall Opel League Premier Division: Harrow Borough v Hendon (Earlismead, 3pm).
Vauxhall Opel League Division One: Kingsbury Town v Bitterley Town (Silver Jubilee Park, 3pm).
Spartan League: Barkingside v Edgware Town.

Hellenic League: Wallingford Town v Rayners Lane.
Middle Premier Cup Replay: Lucas CAV v Harrow St Mary's.
Suburban League: Faltham v Harrow Borough Reserves.

Tuesday December 15
GMAC Cup: Weymouth v Harrow Borough.
AC Delco Cup: Barking v Wembley.

Christmas deadlines

BECAUSE of revised deadlines over the Christmas holiday period, reports must reach our offices by no later than first post next Monday to ensure publication in Observer Sport next week.

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