Sport

Stones' chairman bows to pressure

'I QUIT' SAYS MORRITT

BY AARON GRANSBY

DAVID Morritt's controversial seven-year reign as Wealdstone FC chairman came to an astonishing end with his shock resignation on Monday night.

Just seconds before an extraordinary general meeting of club members was due to begin, Mr Morritt's sister, Barbara Vane, handed a letter to club secretary Peter Braxton, who was chairing the meeting.

The typed letter, just four paragraphs long, on Morritt Homes Limited headed notepaper, announced the resignations of David Morritt and all but one of the board of directors.

Mr Morritt said in his letter: "I realise that the club is bigger than any one individual and because the club members have made it clear they want a change at the top, I hereby tender my resignation as chairman of Wealdstone Football Club Limited."

It was signed, simply, "David."

On Tuesday morning, the two portraits of Mr Morritt, which hung in the boardroom and the vice presidents' lounge, were taken down.

Mr Morritt's final demise had seemed inevitable since the announcement three weeks ago that his vice chairman Alan Clifton was to challenge him for his position.

Since then, he has suffered a humiliating 36-1 vote of no-confidence from the supporters' club and side-stepped a planned similar vote from the vice presidents last week by turning up late to their meeting.

He was also unhappy after a pitch demonstration against him by 150 fans during the recent home match with Altrincham.

But he had always said he would not resign. Just two weeks ago, he told the Observer: "I will be chairman of Wealdstone until the day I die."

But he had clearly underestimated the strength of feeling against him. He was said to be "Deeply upset" at taking the decision to quit and flew off to America immediately after the announcement.

George Morritt, the club president and David Morritt's father, has also resigned, along with his mother Frances Morritt, who was a director.

Solicitor David Clarke, another board member, has also handed in his resignation, leaving Alan Clifton as the only remaining director, to take over as acting chairman.

Mr Clifton said: "His decision to resign comes as a shock and I am disappointed he did not put in an appearance at the meeting to explain his reasons.

"I think in view of the members' opinion, he has done the honourable thing by resigning."

Mr Clifton confirmed that he will definitely still be standing for the chairmanship. No other challengers are anticipated.

One of his first tasks will be to repay the club's debts.

Wealdstone owe a total of £622,000. Some £452,000 is owed to David Morritt or his companies for money he has put into Wealdstone during his period in charge.

The remainder of the money is owed to a bank and a brewery, all of which has been underwritten by David Morritt.

Alan Clifton says he has £700,000 available now to pay off all the club's debts as soon as he becomes chairman.

But that will not happen for more than a month. David Morritt's resignation does not become effective for one calendar month, due to a clause in the Wealdstone Memorandum and Articles of Association.

"We will arrange an extraordinary meeting of shareholders of the club as soon as possible after one month has elapsed," confirmed Alan Clifton.

In the meantime, a football club committee, which was elected at the meeting on Monday, will control the club's affairs.

The committee is chaired by Alan Clifton and the other elected members of it are: former director Bill Emerson; company secretary Toby Jackson; club secretary Peter Braxton; vice presidents' chairman Eric Fletcher; supporters club chairman Ray Kemp; supporters' club secretary Nick DuGard.

Its first meeting is tonight (Thursday) when it hopes to set a date for a shareholders' meeting. Its usual purpose will be to make representations to the board of directors on behalf of the football club members, rather than just the shareholders.

● QUIT: Morritt

● IN: Clifton

Club to sue over car park

OUTGOING chairman David Morritt is to be sued by Wealdstone over the sale of the Lower Mead car park.

Alan Clifton received a mandate from club members at Monday's meeting to proceed with the legal action. A writ was being served to David Morritt's offices on Tuesday.

David Morritt bought the car park from EMI Cinemas for £52,000 on behalf of Wealdstone two years ago.

But he put the lease, which has another 45 years to run, in the name of Level Oak Developments Limited, one of his companies.

Now Wealdstone are demanding it is returned to them, as their hands are tied in selling the ground for development without it.

Alan Clifton's solicitors wrote to Mr Morritt on March 15, asking him to take steps to return the car park to the club by close of business on March 28.

No such moves were made and the members of Wealdstone agreed to back Mr Clifton with legal action.

Alan Clifton said: "Morritt can hold up the sale of this ground and can stop the club getting itself out of financial trouble by owning that car park.

"I have offered to repay him the cost of the car park on behalf of Wealdstone FC if he returns the freehold to the club."

The Lower Mead Stadium and car park sites are worth in the region of £7m together, and are likely to be used for a supermarket development when Wealdstone have found themselves a new site to relocate to.

Olaleye kills off Stafford

Wealdstone 4 Stafford 2

AN amazing second half hat trick by substitute Samson Olaleye saw Stones retrieve a 2-0 half time deficit and beat Stafford on Tuesday.

Two goals from Paul Cavell saw Stafford in control at the break but Olaleye scored with his first touch in the 48th minute.

He hit another after 61 minutes and after Tom English put Stones 3-2 up he completed his hat trick in the 69th minute to round off a remarkable victory.

Wealdstone: Welsh, Davis, Bowgett, La Ronde, Harrison, McCarthy, Bailey, Zacharia, Hirst (Olaleye), English, Lynch. Other sub: Wainwright.

Long back to sink leaders

Harrow Borough 1
Bromley 0

FORMER Borough striker Steve Long came out of retirement to score the goal which saw Harrow defeat league leaders Bromley.

He headed home a Mark Adams free kick in the 14th minute of a game which Borough boss Keith Chamberlin described as "A great team performance. 'You'd have thought we were the league leaders."

Harrow Borough: MacKenzie, Duffy, Cox, Bateman, Payne, Dicker, Emmanuel, Holmes, Long (Evans), Morris, Adams.

Late goal robs Lions

Wembley 1 Uxbridge 1

A GOAL four minutes into injury time denied Lions victory on Tuesday.

Lance Cadogan's 77th minute goal seemed good enough to see Wembley home after keeper Nicholls failed to gather cleanly, but in the dying seconds Vincent scrambled home Puddifoot's cross for Uxbridge's belated equaliser.

Wembley: Fanner, Flaherty, Simpson, Murphy, Kearns, A.Smith,(Dolling), S.Smith, Brown, Williams, Cadogan, O'Connor.

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No ban, so Lions trio will make final date

WEMBLEY make their bid for a second successive Middlesex Senior Cup triumph when they take on Staines Town in the final at Lower Mead on Monday.

And they go into the match with a weight off their minds, for recently sent off players Jeff Fanner, Charlie Flaherty and Paul Janaway will all be free to play.

Fears that they might miss the final through suspension were lifted with the news that there is no automatic ban and with at least two of the players likely to appeal, any suspension will not come into force until after the big match.

Wembley boss Tony Waugh said he was 'confident' his side would beat Staines.

"If we play well on the day we can win," he said.

Adrian Smith (ligament trouble) and Paul Janaway (flu) are both expected to be fit to play. Wembley warm up for the big match with a home league game against Basildon on Saturday.

Harrow Borough go to St Albans on Saturday with a full squad looking for much needed points to steer clear of the relegation battle. On Wednesday they have a home match against Bishops Stortford.

Wealdstone, with Southern League soccer beckoning them, are away to Kidderminster and on Tuesday entertain fellow strugglers Bath at Lower Mead.

Edgware manager Brian Rider hopes to have flu victim Paul Buckner back in action for Saturday's Spartan League visit to Beckton. But he will definitely be without full back Gary Allen for Monday's visit to Redhill as he is unavailable.

Rayners Lane have injury worries for their Easter programme. Alan Williams, Jimmy Schurer and Tony Kiely are all under treatment with knee injuries.

Soccer fixtures

Saturday April 2

GM Vauxhall Conference: Kidderminster Harriers v Wealdstone.
Vauxhall Opel League Premier Division: St Albans City v Harrow Borough.
Vauxhall Opel League Division One: Wembley v Basildon (Vale Farm, 3pm); Marlow v Kingsbury Town.
Spartan League: Beckton Utd v Edgware.
Hellenic League: Rayners Lane v Yate Town (Lucas Avenue, 3pm).

Monday April 4

Middlesex Senior Cup Final: Wembley v Staines Town (Lower Mead, 3pm).
Hellenic League: Rayners Lane v Pegasus Juniors (Lucas Avenue, 11.30am).

Tuesday April 5

GM Vauxhall Conference: Wealdstone v Bath City (Lower Mead, 7.30pm).

Wednesday April 6

Vauxhall Opel League Premier Division: Harrow Borough v Bishops Stortford (Earlsmead, 7.30pm).

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