

observer SPORT

Gridiron stars clash in American Bowl '88

GETTING ready for their head to head confrontation at Wembley Stadium on Sunday July 31 are Troy Stradford (left) of the Miami Dolphins and Rogers Craig of the San Francisco 49ers.

The two star running backs will be among the plethora of gridiron stars who will be in action at Wembley when the Dolphins and the 49ers clash in American Bowl '88, including two of the National Football League's top quarterbacks, in Joe Montana of the 49ers and Dan Marino of the Dolphins.

Stradford and Craig were at Wembley to try out the Wembley turf before the match, which is expected to be a sell out. But the Observer has three pairs of tickets for the game and next week will be offering readers a chance to win them.



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Rider ready to stay at Edgware



● Brian Rider - staying at Edgware.

EDGWARE Town manager Brian Rider has pledged he will take the club into the new season even though their appeal for entry to the Vauxhall-Opel League looks certain to fail.

"I think I have got to stay at the moment because it would leave the club in the lurch otherwise. I am still with Edgware and will start pre-season training and see how it goes."

His statement came after chairman John Cook had asked him to make his position clear.

Earlier, the manager who took Wares to the Spartan League and Cup double last season, had said he was going to consider quitting the White Lion Ground because of the Vauxhall-Opel League's refusal to promote Edgware.

Now, although he knows the club's appeal is unlikely to be successful, Rider is committing himself to try and keep the majority of his double-winning squad together.

Already top scorer Ronnie Tully has left to re-join Harrow Borough and full back Paul Smith has gone to Finchley.



BY AARON GRANSEY

Former Southall, Harrow Borough and Harfield goalkeeper Kenny Lavender has expressed an interest in joining Wares and could become Brian Rider's first new signing to challenge Phil Whelan for his place.

Skipper John Walsh, full back Gary Allen and striker Martin Kidd all look certain to stay. But there is doubt over midfielders Kevin Charalambous and Vince Deritis. Deritis has already been approached several times by Boreham Wood.

Player of the year Ray Mangan had said he will not play Spartan League football again, and looks set to leave. His brother John could stay though and Rider is hoping to persuade his own son, Lee, that his future also lies at the White Lion Ground.

One man who could be on his way to Edgware is forward Leroy Rhodes, who was previously with Boreham Wood and Hornchurch in the Vauxhall-Opel League. He played for Wares in the Middlesex Show six-a-side tournament on Sunday.

Regardless of who he has with him, Rider says winning the Spartan League next season will be more difficult than it was last time around.

The manager of promotion challengers Brimsdown Rovers has joined another of last season's top teams Cheshunt and is expected to take his best players there to make an assault on the title. They have the facilities to gain admission to the Vauxhall-Opel League.

And Abingdon Town have switched from the Hellenic League to the Spartan to try and get into the Vauxhall-Opel themselves. Last season Abingdon were runners-up in the Hellenic League and were champions the year before.

Rayners Lane boss Don Durkin, whose side have faced Abingdon over the past few seasons says he expects them to pip Edgware. "They are a very good side and have the facilities. I would think they will be favourites and would expect them to win it. I can't see anyone stopping them."

With 20 teams now competing in the Spartan premier division, Edgware will have a programme of 38 league games to get through in their quest to retain the championship.

Gold glory for gymnast Leila



● London and Kent Champion Leila Brown.

BROWN turned to gold in the London and Kent Individual Gymnastics Championships at Hillingdon on Sunday when Harrow schoolgirl Leila Brown took the senior gold medal.

Over 100 gymnasts competed in the various age groups at the championships and 16 year old Leila, a pupil of Bentley Wood High School, came out top in the seniors with an overall score of 35.65.

Her best discipline was the vault which scored 9.15 while her floor exercise netted 9.0. She scored 8.9 on the bars and 8.6 on the beam to finish with a total .3 of a mark ahead of her nearest rival, Emma Gore of the Hillingdon School of Gymnastics.

Taking gold is fast becoming a habit for Leila, of Hibbert Road, Harrow, who is a member of the Heathrow Gyns Club. In the last three years she has won successive gold medals as a member of the Heathrow team which has triumphed in the British Team Championships. She has also won gold in the British Schools Team Championships.

This latest success means that Leila will now go on to represent the London and Kent region in the British Championships which will take place at Crawley in October.

Home start

WEALDSTONE begin their campaign to get back to the G6 Vauxhall Conference at the first attempt with a home match against Moor Green in the Bazaar Homes League on Saturday August 20.

Stones' manager Tony Jennings has continued his rebuilding programme with the signing of Steve Brown, a 24 year old midfielder.

Brown impressed Jennings during the Middlesex six-a-side tournament on Sunday. He was formerly with Charlton Athletic for four seasons and has also played for Grays.

Soccer coaching

SOCCER stars of the future have a chance to get some expert coaching on a course run by the Middlesex County FA at John Billam sports ground in Preston Road.

The course runs from July 25-29 for children aged 8-14. It is run by fully-qualified coaches and all participants will get a free football, t-shirt and various other FA memorabilia. The total cost of the course is £30.

If you would like to enrol or find out further details, contact Gordon Bartlett on 0753 42940 or write to him at 7, Saxon Close, Langley, Berks.

Keeper signs on

HARROW Borough manager Keith Chamberlin has signed goalkeeper Lee Hunter as cover for Stuart MacKenzie.

Hunter, 24, has previously been with Hendon and West Ham, and played in Edgware's reserves last season.

Stones turn down Wembley chance

WEALDSTONE have spurned the chance of Wembley glory by declining an invitation to enter next season's Russell Grant Middlesex Charity Cup.

Stones are one of only two senior Middlesex clubs not to enter the competition, which gained new prestige last season through Russell Grant's enthusiastic sponsorship and the final being played at Wembley Stadium. Enfield are the other club.

Wealdstone secretary Peter Braxton said the decision was due to the amount of fixtures the club will have to play next season.

"We have 42 Bazaar Homes League games, 24 Capital League games plus all the other cup competitions and we

just felt we had to be realistic and say we could not enter, much as we would have liked to have done."

With the Westgate Insurance Cup (the Bazaar Homes League cup) being played on a two-legged knockout basis this season, Stones could play 12 games if they were to reach the final, plus replays.

They have also entered the FA Cup, in which they must start in the first qualifying round having lost their exemption, and the FA Trophy.

In addition, they have to enter the Middlesex Senior Cup and the Inter Premier Cup, formerly known as the GMAC Cup.

Mr Braxton said: "If we entered

everything we would just be playing too much football. It also costs money to travel to away matches and stage home games, not to mention the wear on the kit and the pitch. It is also unfair to ask supporters to fork out to watch games three or four times a week."

Even if Stones go out of each cup competition at the first stage, Tony Jennings' team will play a minimum of 72 games next season.

Stones have been drawn against Ruislip in the first round of the Westgate Insurance Cup, the first leg to be played away, and away to Hendon in the first round of the Middlesex Senior Cup.

They have retained their exemption

in the FA Trophy and do not begin their campaign until the first round proper.

Meanwhile, the Russell Grant Middlesex Charity Cup goes from strength to strength without Stones. 35 clubs are entering next season's competition, an increase of 15 on last season.

The Football League clubs involved are Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur, Queens Park Rangers and Brentford. Middlesex FA secretary Peter Clayton said: "We are very disappointed that Wealdstone have decided not to enter although we understand their reasons and we hope they will reconsider next time."

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