

SPORT

Read the latest sports news at
harrowtimes.co.uk/sport

FOOTBALL: Stones boss says side 'better team'



Wealdstone captain Enzo Boldewijn is dismissed for a second bookable offence following a late challenge on York's Ollie Pearce

Image: Jon Taffel

Boldewijn red 'changed the complexity' of defeat

SAM Cox insists that Wealdstone were the "better team" for most of the 3-0 defeat to York City, blaming captain Enzo Boldewijn's second half sending-off as the key turning point in the match.

The Stones gave a good account of themselves against former boss Stuart Maynard's title-chasing side, creating some promising chances to open the scoring throughout the first 45 minutes.

But veteran Boldewijn's 56th-minute dismissal allowed York to take control of the contest as Morgan Williams, Zak Johnson and Daniel Batty all struck late to leave Grosvenor Vale with all three points.

"I'd say for 60 minutes of that game, I'd say we were the better side.

By TOM NORTON

Unfortunately, the red cards changed the whole scheme of the game and just flipped it on its head really," Cox told the club website after the defeat.

"If you go 10 men against a team like York City, they will punish you, and that's exactly what they did. I thought for 60, 65 minutes of the game, I thought we were arguably the better team that created the better chances.

"It's really frustrating, but I couldn't be any prouder of these players and their efforts. Even going down to 10 men, I think they worked incredibly hard, and I think they took the

game plan onto the pitch today with stuff that we've been working on.

"We've created chances today, and I think we've shown that we can go toe-to-toe with anyone in this league, but it's just about the fine margins. When you go up against a team like York with ten men, they're going to punish you. It's a difficult one to take," he added.

Boldewijn's red card seemed to irk Cox after the club captain went in for a fifty-fifty challenge with York skipper Ollie Pearce, claiming that the contact wasn't enough for Pearce to react the way he did.

"I think it shows where the game is at the moment. I didn't think there was much contact; it was late. Whether or not there was as much contact

as the player going down in the pain that he showed, I'm not sure," said the Wealdstone boss.

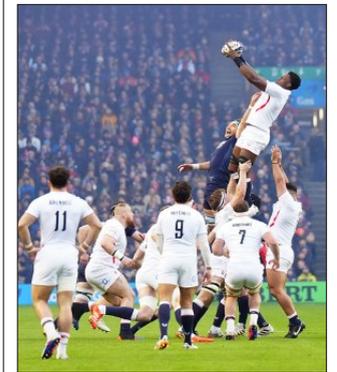
"Unfortunately, we've given the referee a decision to make, and it's always tough when you're on a yellow card. Nobody means to intentionally get sent off, and Enzo's been ever-present for us. I thought he was excellent in the first half.

"I think the referee's decision has changed the whole complexity of the game."

Wealdstone travel to Sutton United this weekend looking to respond to back-to-back National League defeats for the first time since mid-December after Tuesday's scheduled home clash with Hartlepool United was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Itoje backs England to bounce back

RUGBY



Maro Itoje wins a line out for England against Scotland Image: PA

SARACENS' Maro Itoje is keen on England to come back stronger against Ireland at Twickenham's Allianz Stadium this Saturday (February 21, kick-off 2.10pm, live in ITV1) following their devastating 31-20 Guinness Six Nations Championship defeat to Scotland. Sarries Ben Earl, Henry Arundell and George Ford all contributed to England's 20-point tally at Murrayfield but that was not enough to closed down the hosts who already built up a sizable 24-10 half time lead.

For Scotland, this was a perfect response to get their Six Nations title aspirations back on track following their surprise 18-15 loss to Italy in the opening round of fixtures.

"It was a tough day at the office," Itoje told BBC 5 Live "We didn't get firing in the way we wanted to but that is the nature of the beast.

"We have to learn our lesson and move forward. We didn't start well, we were not as accurate and precise as we wanted to do be, in the scrum especially, so all of those areas need to be better. But we'll learn from it, re-assess and come back stronger next week."

Ireland, who are coached by former Saracens player Andy Farrell, will visit Twickenham fresh from their thrilling 20-13 victory over Italy 20-13 in Dublin last Saturday.

It is a fixture that ex-Sarries and England head coach Steve Borthwick is looking forward to.

"We're expecting a huge contest at Allianz Stadium and we're excited for it," Borthwick said.

Borthwick has made three amendments to the starting 15 that faced Scotland last weekend with Ollie Lawrence, Tom Curry and test debutant Henry Pollock all coming in while Jack van Poortvliet and Marcus Smith are named among the replacements on a 6-2 split bench.