



Southend United's Harry Cardwell and Wealdstone's Jack Cook in the Isuzu FA Trophy final at Wembley

Waddock hopes to build on Wealdstone run in FA Trophy

WEALDSTONE boss Gary Waddock is hoping last season's surprise run to the FA Trophy final can boost his side's belief ahead of the new campaign – and attract fresh faces to Grosvenor Vale.

The Stones – who finished 15th in the National League – beat Chesham, Dagenham & Redbridge, Forest Green, Kidderminster and Marine to seal a first trip to Wembley since the legendary double-winning campaign of 1984-85.

A 0-0 draw with Southend was followed by defeat in a penalty shoot-out, but Waddock believes his players can still ride the wave of momentum generated by their big day.

"It was disappointing to lose on penalties because we played really well on the day," said Waddock, who replaced Sam Cox at Stones in February.

"But it's a lottery, isn't it? As we've seen in the World Cup, anyone can lose that way. For me, the biggest thing was seeing the players grow along the way.

"You could see it happening – they gained belief with every round, and that then translated into some good results in the league. All of a

FOOTBALL

By CHRIS DUNLAVY

sudden you see a really confident group of players.

"That's partly why we've tried to keep that core of the group together from last year.

"If we can take that momentum into next season and get off to a good start then you never know what you can achieve."

Keeping the squad intact hasn't been easy. Wembley starters Dom Hutchinson and Anthony Georgiou have both departed this summer, whilst Junior Tiensa – who came on as a sub – has joined National League rivals Solihull Moors.

But the return of midfielder Jack Wells-Morrison, signed on a permanent contract after spending the final three months of last season at the Vale on a short-term deal, has provided welcome continuity, while left-back Joe Newton – a National League play-off finalist with Solihull Moors in 2024 – is expected to fill the void left by Georgiou.

"Anthony decided to go elsewhere

so we had to move quickly and I'm really pleased to have got Joe in," says Waddock. "He's played for teams that have competed at the top end of the table, he's got great experience, so I think he's a good fit for us.

"With Wells, he was part of that core group I spoke about. When he came in last season, you could see he'd been an academy player at Crystal Palace.

"We always wanted to re-sign him. We spoke to him throughout the summer. And the fact he's decided to come back on board is testament to the attractiveness of the club."

This, says Waddock, has been enhanced by Wealdstone's FA Trophy run.

"Yeah, I think players saw we had the cup run, got to Wembley, and all of a sudden they go, 'OK, you know Wealdstone aren't bad'. It's definitely been beneficial in talking to players."

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England rugby captain Jamie George

George urges England to bounce back against Fiji

RUGBY

SARACENS' England captain Jamie George has urged his teammates to bounce back from their heavy South Africa defeat and produce a winning performance against Fiji this Saturday (July 11, kick-off: 2.10pm, live on ITV1) at Everton FC's Hill Dickinson Stadium.

The Red Roses, head coached by former Sarries' Steve Borthwick, suffered a heavy 45-21 loss to current world champions South Africa in their opening Nations Championship fixture at Emirates Airlines Ellis Park Stadium, Johannesburg last Saturday – a result that extended England's losing streak to five matches.

"There are some clear things we need to make sure we get better," George admitted during his post-

match analysis.

"The players have to take a lot more responsibility with regards to our discipline which let us down. But outside of that, there were periods where we put the Springboks under a lot of pressure and after speaking to their guys they know they have been in a Test match.

"The overall feeling is frustration, but we were able to create some good opportunities. "If we are able to back that up, then we will be a good team off the back of it.

"This is going to be a great learning experience for us. We are gutted with the result because we genuinely believed we could come here and win."

Arsenal recruit Stanway targets more trophies

FOOTBALL

ENGLAND midfielder Georgia Stanway has joined Arsenal on a permanent deal, the Women's Super League club have announced.

The 27-year-old left Bayern Munich at the end of the season and spent four years with the Frauen-Bundesliga side, winning eight trophies and featuring 128 times.

Stanway began her career with Blackburn before joining WSL side Manchester City in summer 2015, where she made 186 appearances and scored 67 goals in seven seasons, lifting one WSL crown, three FA Cups and three League Cups.

On the international stage, the midfielder has been capped 93 times for England and was involved in both of the Lionesses' European Championship wins in 2022 and 2025. Speaking about her move

to north London, Stanway said: "It's an unbelievable feeling and I'm so proud to be joining Arsenal.

"This is a massive club that is driving the women's game forward to new levels and I want to be a part of it. I want to win trophies and grow as a player; and this is the right place to do that with the backing of an incredible fanbase."

Last season Arsenal finished second in the WSL standings, four points behind winners Manchester City, and reached the semi-finals of the Women's Champions League.

Gunners boss Renee Slegers said: "Georgia is a brilliant midfielder and we're thrilled that she is an Arsenal player."