

Wealdstone's boss Waddock vows the Stones will improve

FOOTBALL

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Sports correspondent

WEALDSTONE boss Gary Waddock vowed his side would not rest on their laurels and fight for a successful campaign, after the Stones' National League season opener with AFC Fylde ended in a 2-2 draw.

Summer loan signing Luke Norris grabbed a deserved equaliser for Waddock's team after Fylde defender Adam Lewis had put his side ahead deep into the second half, before Olufela Olomola cancelled out Jack Morris's late strike to give Wealdstone a valuable point to start the season.

"The performance wasn't what we wanted in the first half. I thought the impact of the subs that came on gave us some energy. We were then on the front foot, and that was a bit more like us," said Waddock.

"Dante (Baptiste) kept us in the game in the first half. I thought he was magnificent. If it weren't for him, the game would have been out of sight for us.

"Overall, I'm pleased with the point, but there's more to come from us."

Waddock's team were guilty of allowing the hosts too much time on the ball and sloppily giving up possession throughout the game, leaving Baptiste to keep his team in the game with several outstanding stops.

Speaking to the club website post-match, Waddock said: "They're a good side. I said to the lads beforehand that they (Fylde) are a good side. They're a possession-based side, and they run very well.

"But during the course of the second half, we had spells there for 20 minutes, towards the end of the game, where we were on the front foot and we had chances. We got a point, so a point on the road is always a good result.

After back-to-back disap-



Wealdstone boss Gary Waddock. Image: Jon Taffel

pointing National League campaigns and three managers later, Waddock is hoping to deliver a better season for the fans to get behind but acknowledges that his team must be better in the opening exchanges.

"We still have to be better than what we were in the first half. I wasn't pleased with that, and the players weren't pleased with it either. There's a lot of work to be done, but work to be done on the back of a good point on the road."

Wealdstone have both languished in mid-table and fought relegation from the Na-

tional League in the last couple of seasons but find themselves in a strong position having delivered several summer signings.

Experienced defenders Dion Conroy, Aidan Francis-Clarke, Kyle Smith, Joe Newton, Jadynd Mundle-Smith and Joshua Mullins have all arrived at Grosvenor Vale, while midfielders Dan Chesters, Aaron Henry and Jayden Harris have joined too.

The Stones face Harrogate Town this weekend in the club's first home fixture of the 2026/2027 National League season.

Caroline Dubois targeting big win as unified champion

BOXING

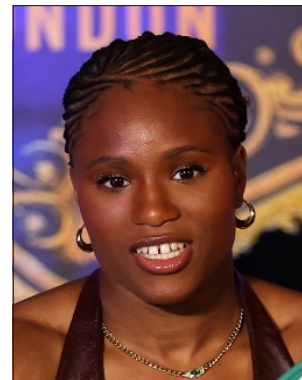
FORMER Ladbroke Grove-based Dale Youth amateur Caroline Dubois is confident she can produce a big victory over Amelia Moore on August 29 at BP Pulse Arena, Solihull.

After successfully unifying the WBO women's world lightweight crown with her WBC mantle against fellow British rival Terri Harper in April at London Olympia, the southpaw specialist, unbeaten in 14 outings and promoted by Jake Paul's Most Valuable Promotions, is excited to defend her titles on home soil.

Her opponent Amelia Moore, 36, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, and unbeaten in four contests, earned her shot at Dubois, 25, after defeating Canada's Bonnie Hunter for the vacant North American Boxing Federation women's lightweight title in March.

"I'm excited to be fighting in the UK at home again," Dubois, younger sister of current WBO world heavyweight champion Daniel Dubois, told Sky Sports News.

"The crowd in London last time



Caroline Dubois. Image: Most Valuable Promotions, LLC)

were incredible. I'm looking forward to representing the UK and defending my unified titles.

"The goal is to fight for more belts at the end of the year, so I need to focus and take care of business with a big win in Birmingham.

"Forever blessed and happy that Most Valuable Promotions are keeping me active. It's going to be an exciting fight, I hope."

New rules on pitchside walls following Billy Vigar death

FOOTBALL

CLUBS in the National League System must remove brick or concrete walls around pitches or use padding to cover them, after a safety review prompted by the death of Chichester City forward Billy Vigar.

Former Arsenal youth striker Vigar, 21, died in September last year after suffering a brain injury when he collided with a concrete barrier trying to keep a ball in play during a match at Wingate and Finchley.

After a safety review, the Football Association has published new pitch perimeter criteria no longer permitting "solid brick, breeze block or concrete barriers around pitches" for clubs competing in the National League System for men (steps 1-6) and the Women's National League (tiers 3-4).

"Any existing solid brick, breeze block or concrete barriers must be removed as soon as reasonably practicable, or covered with suitable protection if they cannot be removed for structural reasons," the FA said.

"We have informed the clubs at this level that will be required to take action.

"Matches may continue to be played at affected grounds; however, clubs should assess the safety of their pitch perimeter barriers on an ongoing basis, and where alterations to these structures have been recommended during this review, they should develop a plan to complete any such alterations within a reasonable timeframe."

Press Association Sport understands of the approximately 900 clubs at the relevant levels, around 160 have been contacted regarding at least one element of their stadium which must be modified.

The FA and Premier League will

provide funding to carry out the work, with money distributed by the Premier League Stadium Fund.

"The initial phase of the programme is under way, and we will continue to provide full support to clubs involved in this process," the FA said.

The Professional Footballers Association had pushed for the safety review to take place prior to Vigar's death, after Bath City's Alex Fletcher was left in a coma in 2022.

In June 2023, the PFA and then Sports Minister Stuart Andrew wrote to the FA, the Premier League, the EFL and the National League calling on them to proactively review pitch perimeter safety.

A PFA spokesperson said: "Following the tragic death of Billy Vigar last year, we again highlighted these concerns and made clear our view that the lack of progress and leadership on this issue had been unacceptable.

"As part of working groups set up by the FA following Billy's death, we pushed for the FA's Stadium Accreditation criteria to be amended to ban these types of walls so there is a clear and centralised policy for clubs to follow.

"It's a welcome step that the FA's regulations have now been changed to reflect that position. However, it will now be important for progress on the removal of such walls – and effective mitigation of risks ahead of their removal – to be properly monitored, and for clubs to be given the support they need so these changes can happen as soon as possible. Player safety must always come first."