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Homecoming master orchestrated almost the perfect away day

FOOTBALL

By sports reporter

THE homecoming master orchestrated almost the perfect away day at his former home, as Gary Waddock snatched a vital victory against his young apprentice.

Wealdstone held strong for a third clean sheet of the season but a fourth consecutive defeat, and another toothless display for the Shots left Waddock's former midfielder Scott Davies pondering the balance of his young squad.

"We showed both sides of the game today. We moved the ball well at times and then at the back end of the game defended really well to get the result," explained Waddock.

"We had to play the conditions as well and it worked for us. Everyone to a man contributed today."

The excellent Ronan Maher went close to scoring another fine curling effort in just the fifth minute, but clear chances were scarce in an attritional first-half.

Brody Peart headed weakly at Sam Long as Aldershot struggled against both the wind in their faces and a resolute Stones defence.

At the other end, Luke Norris battled to meet Maher's clipped cross, as the ball hit the post and then ricocheted across the face of goal. Soon, he saw his 35-yard free-kick easily saved, and then his angled shot to the bottom corner was blocked by Ollie Harfield.

"We had good chances in the first-half, we just needed to be more ruthless or we could have come in at half-time in a good position," admitted Waddock.

Hakeem Sandah arrived to give the hosts greater width down the left for the second-half but, just 75 seconds after the restart, it was the Stones who were rolling. From Aaron Henry's corner, Olufela Olomola stepped in front of Peart to guide in a header from three yards, with Nick Hayes punching thin air behind them.



Wealdstone's Olufela Olomola scores against Aldershot.

A flurry of corners suggested that Aldershot Town may rouse themselves, but they continued to be blighted by a poor final ball. Peart powered a free header wide, and Norris nearly punished them further with a precise effort well w saved by Ha H feet.

Sandah's 75th-minute shot, deflected wide, and an inadvertent goalbound header from Dion D Conroy from the corner, were the height of their resurgence.

Two efforts on target was scant reward for their endeavour, and illustrated the lack of creativity and thrust from Davies' men.

"We huffed and we puffed but we didn't create enough chances," he admitted. "The final pass, the end product eluded us. Today was the first time that I thought we missed a natural No 10. We need to rejig and reshape the squad – a couple of players will be departing, and we need to liven it up."

Marcus Smith inspires Harlequins to derby win

RUGBY

MARCUS Smith marked his 200th Harlequins appearance by inspiring his side to their first Premiership victory of the season with a convincing London derby win over Saracens.

The England fly-half opened the scoring inside three minutes, darting through following quick handling before converting his own try.

Seb Driscoll added Quins' second after 15 minutes before Rotimi Segun responded for Saracens.

The hosts were awarded a penalty try when a rolling maul was brought down on the line, with Ben Earl sent to the sin-bin.

Saracens thought Max Malins had scored another, only for Smith to knock the ball away before he could ground it.

Fergus Burke then became the visitors' second player to be yellow-carded and Quins quickly capitalised, Cadan Murley crossing in the corner to secure the bonus point.

Theo Dan scored from a rolling maul before half-time to keep Saracens in contention.



Quins' Dun wins the line out

Quins extended their advantage after the break when Will Porter pounced on a loose ball and powered over, with Smith converting.

Nick Tompkins responded for Saracens, but Quins' defence held firm to secure a third consecutive home Premiership victory over their London rivals.

Harrow Borough battle through atrocious conditions

FOOTBALL

HARROW Borough battled through atrocious conditions to secure victory over AFC Stoneham thanks to a spectacular second-half strike from Alex Nolan.

Storm Austen brought driving rain, strong winds and thunder to the Rogers Family Stadium, making life difficult for both sides as they sought to improve on runs of just one victory from their previous five games.

The difficult conditions contributed to a scrappy opening, with both teams frequently going long and struggling to retain possession.

Stoneham made the brighter start and tested Harrow early following a defensive misunderstanding, although goalkeeper Trent Carter-Rodgers dealt well with the resulting pressure.

James Johnson threatened with a header as the visitors enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges, while Harrow had to wait until around the 20-minute mark for their first effort on target.

The hosts gradually settled and began creating opportunities of their own. Adam Kolli saw an effort deflected before going close again shortly before half-time when he found himself one-on-one with goalkeeper Callum Lee, but his low effort lacked the power to trouble the keeper.

Harrow also picked up three first-half bookings, with Reuben Collins, Jeremy Stewart and Prince Mbengui all shown yellow cards before the sides went into the interval goalless.

The hosts emerged with greater intensity after the break and increasingly put Stoneham under pressure.

Mbengui lifted an effort narrowly over the bar before Nolan delivered an inviting cross which Will Bailey narrowly failed to convert with a diving attempt.

Bailey then came agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock with a spectacular bicycle kick which crashed against the crossbar.

Kolli was brought down just outside the penalty area as Harrow continued to push for the breakthrough, with the resulting free-kick punched clear by Lee. Collins quickly regained possession and delivered the ball back into a crowded penalty area as the pressure continued.

The decisive moment finally arrived in stunning fashion after 75 minutes.

Nolan collected possession around 30 yards from goal, advanced a couple of paces and unleashed a superb right-footed strike which flew into the top corner beyond Lee to spark celebrations around the ground.

Harrow continued searching for a second during the closing stages as Quaye Vine, Bola Okewoye and Robbie Bunn came off the bench to make their debuts.

Stoneham prevented further damage, but Nolan's moment of individual quality proved enough for Harrow to claim victory after a hard-fought afternoon in testing conditions.

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