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Match action. Image: Jon Taffel

Wealdstone sink as Dover well on top in FA Cup clash

FOOTBALL

WEALDSTONE limped out of The FA Cup with a whimper, offering barely any threat to hosts Dover Athletic who won through to the FA Cup Second Road more comfortably than the 2-0 scoreline suggests.

The Stones never got to grips with what was required to win an awayday cup tie, and played into the Whites' hands by passing around in front of their opposition and never properly testing the Dover goalkeeper.

Jack Bates' first-half double, a pair of fine strikes from outside the box, proved plenty good enough to defeat a lacklustre Stones.

Indeed, Wealdstone boss Gary Waddock judged his team's first 45 so insipid that he used an unprecedented 'electric shock' style move of a quadruple half-time substitution. But it had only a short-lived effect on the flow of the match as Stones slid out of the FA Cup at Crabble.

There were three changes to the starting line-up from last weekend's win over Southend United. Team captain Connor McAvoy came in for Dion Conroy, Milton Oni replaced the injured Aaron Henry and Luke Norris started instead of Fejiri Okenabirhie.

Dover took less than 15 minutes to go in front. Joe Newton was tamely dispossessed, the ball fed inside and Bates – having had a steadying touch – curled an accurate shot away from Dante Baptiste and inside the far corner.

Oni had Stones' first sight of goal a few minutes later, but shot high and wide after Joe Newton's half-cleared cross fell to him just inside the box.

Shortly after, Stones were spared by an offside flag after a melee from a set-piece saw Athletic with the ball in Baptiste's net.

But it was two to the hosts just three minutes from the interval, and there was no keeping out Bates' rasping 25-yarder. Striding onto a square pass, he left Baptiste with no chance thanks to an arrowing strike to the keeper's right.

Waddock exercised the option of using four of his eight named substitutes at the break. It was an understandable roll of the dice – and not really much of a gamble given what had gone before.

On came Conroy, Okenabirhie and two players returning from injury: Rohan Maher and Kyle Smith.

With an increase in natural width, Stones' improved intent forced some early corners and then a good chance for Okenabirhie but his shot lacked sufficient power.

That came six minutes into the second-half, but in the next attack at the other end Soares-Junior should have done better than head straight at Baptiste from a free-kick.

Soares-Junior could easily have made it three four minutes from time, but couldn't add what would have been a deserved gloss on the scoreline for the Kent club when he snatched at a good chance to blaze over.

Stones' topsy-turvy form took a downward turn in Kent and has cost them the possibility of a lucrative FA Cup Round Two tie.

They can now only make amends with better at Hartlepool United in the league next weekend, but must wait until December 12 to kick off their bid for a return trip to Wembley in The FA Trophy.



Max Radiven and Lara Benko. Image: WTT

Teenager wins table tennis bronze after beating top

TABLE TENNIS

EDGWARE teenager Max Radiven won bronze at a table tennis event after beating the top seed in the boys' singles.

The 17-year-old competed at the WTT Youth Contender Szombathely in Huntingdon, which attracted prospects from across Europe and beyond.

Radiven's medal came in the Under-19 Mixed Doubles with Croatia's Lana Benko. They began in the last 32 against Radiven's teammate Jake Davidson and Poland's Weronika Wszolek.

After going 2-0 down, Radiven and Benko fought back to win 3-2, with scores of 8-11, 11-13, 11-6, 11-3 and 11-8, then overcame Austria's Benjamin Girlinger and Elina Fuchs 3-2 in the last 16. A 3-2 win over Hungary's Lenard Szabo and Rebeka Nagy came in the quarter-finals.

The result guaranteed at least a bronze medal, but the pair were beaten 3-0 by Poland's Jan Mrugala and Aleksandra Nawrocka in the semi-finals. The match finished 12-10, 11-9 and 11-7. Radiven also produced a notable run in the Under-19 Boys' Singles. Although eighth seed, he faced top seed Nikkhil Mannath of India in the last 32.

He won 3-1, recovering from losing the opening game with scores of 7-11, 11-8, 11-7 and 11-7, but was knocked out in the last 16 by Szabo, representing the host nation.

His next assignment is this week, for England Schools at the European School Games in Croatia.

Saracens Women fall just short in thrilling cup final

RUGBY

SARACENS Women's bid for a third straight Jaecoo Next Gen Cup title fell agonisingly short at StoneX Stadium, as Trailfinders Women claimed a 22-21 win in a final that went down to the wire.

There was plenty to and fro in the first half and Saracens went in at the break 14-7 up.

After the restart Sydney Gregson finished off a move that began with a tackle, a pass and a lead down the left. Akina Gondwe then entered the fray and went straight into a scrum, helping to disrupt the Trailfinders attack.

Trailfinders scored again to cut the gap to two points, and the game took a further turn when Poppy Cleall went off injured, with Crake returning.

After a relentless period of Saracens defence, Annabel Meta slipped over for Trailfinders, followed by Brooke Bradley in the corner.

Saracens refused to go quietly. An attacking lineout in the Trailfinders 22 saw the pack drive the visitors back, and Jemima Moss was rewarded with a try under the posts. Amelia MacDougall added the extras to make it 21-22.

Saracens competed at the breakdown and won the advantage, fighting until the very last moment, but it was just not enough.

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