

'Derby days are always big occasions'



Harrow Borough boss Dave Anderson is excited about the derby. Picture: ACTION IMAGES

LOCAL rivals Wealdstone and Harrow Borough will go head-to-head in their traditional Boxing Day clash and both managers are looking forward to the eagerly-anticipated game, writes **Frank Smith**.

The sides are on very different runs in terms of form, with Wealdstone losing just one of their last 14 games in all competitions and Harrow losing their last four matches in the league.

Harrow boss Dave Anderson returned to the club this summer, having enjoyed several spells at Borough during his career, and he cannot wait for the contest at Grosvenor Vale.

He said: "It doesn't matter what club you are, you always look forward to derby games and the fans are always that bit more excited."

"I have been to the Celtic and Rangers derby and from the biggest derbies of them all to when I was a Sunday league manager when I first moved over here, they are always big occasions."

"Those are the games where as a football manager, you have very little to do because the players do not need motivating - if anything you need to reign them in a little bit."

"I have been involved with Harrow and Wealdstone derby games and they are always good fun."

Gordon Bartlett, who has been Wealdstone's manager for 16 years, said the fixture did have "extra spice" but he was keen to stress that, first and foremost, it was an important game.

Bartlett said: "It is a fans' day more than it is one for the players. It means an awful lot to the fans and hopefully we can continue the form we have shown in this fixture in recent years."

"It is an important match for us. I highlighted December as an important month, with the need to progress in the cup and improve our league form, and we have to look at this as just another game, although the fact it is a derby match does add extra spice."

Wealdstone's home game with Tooting and Mitcham United on Monday was postponed due to a frozen pitch and on Saturday they drew 1-1 with Leatherhead.

Richard Jolly made it eight goals in his last five games - and 23 for the season - when he scored from close range after just four minutes.

But Leatherhead equalised with seven minutes remaining and could have won it.

Wealdstone have lost just once in their last 14 games but Bartlett is still not happy with his side's recent form.

The Stones have progressed through several rounds of the FA Trophy and Middlesex Senior Cup during that run but in the league, they have won just one of their last four games.

"We have shown consistency in terms of not being beaten but I have been disappointed with some of the results," Bartlett said.

"We need to be winning these game, not drawing them. We have kept eight clean sheets and scored a lot of goals during that run but we need to win more games in 2012."

Harrow lost 4-2 to high-flying Lowestoft Town at the weekend but Anderson was pleased with his side's response in the second half, having been 4-0 down with 20 minutes remaining.

Danny Leech and Josh Thomas scored Harrow's goals but the game was memorable for Lubomir Guentchev's volley from inside his own half, after Borough's goalkeeper Will Viner slipped taking a free kick outside his area.

Anderson said: "I have to take the positives. At half time we said about having personal pride in the club, their performance and the supporters."

"I knew at half time we were not going to win the game but I told the players that they needed to give their all and the fans' response after the game showed what this club is all about."

"If you do your best for Harrow then the supporters will respect the players regardless of whether we win."

"We shouldn't really be applauded after conceding four goals at home but the supporters did because they recognised the players' efforts."

Kick off on Boxing Day is 3pm and the club house will be open. Adult tickets cost £10, concessions are £5 and kids can get in for free.



Wealdstone manager Gordon Bartlett believes games against Harrow provide "extra spice."

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