

News briefly

**Shah dropped from squad**

OWAIS SHAH has been left out of England's squad for the first Test against the West Indies next month. The Middlesex batsman struggled for form during the recent tour of the West Indies. But Andrew Strauss, who hit 150 for Middlesex against Leicestershire on Tuesday, will lead England.

**Town lose final warm-up**

NORTHWOOD TOWN lost to Cockfosters by five wickets in their last friendly before the side get their Saracens Division Seven campaign underway. Phil Costard struck 41 in their total of 194 for six. But Wood were unable to bowl Cockfosters out. Town's first match is at Kings Langley on Saturday.

**Ex-skipper lands national cap**

FORMER Parkfield and Headstone CC captain Chris Emmott made his international debut for Chile this month in their South American championship match with Brazil after moving to Santiago last year. Emmott scored 19 with the bat as he helped them win by four wickets. He will return to Headstone for a special match in June.

**News immediately: [harrowtimes.co.uk](http://harrowtimes.co.uk)**

## Bartlett: This is the best group I've had

by ALEX HILL  
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"A BRIDGE too far" was how Gordon Bartlett described Wealdstone's failed push to make it to the play-offs before hailing his squad as the "best" he has ever worked with.

The Ryman Premier side were in contention to book their play-off place with two weeks of the season remaining, until they lost 3-1 to runaway champions Dover Athletic.

Greg Ngoyi's tenth goal in just 15 appearances, against Hastings United on Saturday, sealed a 1-0 victory for Bartlett's young side, which finished just five points outside the play-offs in seventh.

Bartlett said: "We aimed for a top-half finish, which we achieved comfortably in the end.

"I just wanted to finish as high as we can, but it was a bridge too far in the end. To have that opportunity with two games to go is testament to how well they have done.

"The spirit in the camp is tremendous. I have said it before that this is the best group I have worked with at the club and hope to keep them together next season."

To that end, the Stones have launched a scheme called 100:400, aimed at raising £40,000 towards the playing budget by getting 100 fans to invest £400, with cash prizes on offer.

Bartlett said after just a matter of weeks the club was nearing the target it hopes to reach by the club's presentation evening, on Saturday, May 9.

"I have put my own £400 in because I believe in the players," he said. "It is worth it to me if I can keep them all.

He added: "The fans appreciate what they are going to get for it.

"Before they had to trust me and back my judgement on players I was bringing in, but now we have got a good group of young players committed to the club, which the fans appreciate.

"We would like to add one or two but the first priority is to keep them all with us."



Acrobatic: Wealdstone goalscorer Greg Ngoyi lashes in an effort during their 1-0 win over Hastings United.

Picture: STEVE FOSTER/WEALDSTONE FC

## 'Story of our season'

DAVID HOWELL's hopes of a top-ten Ryman Premier finish were ended with a 1-0 defeat at Horsham, which the Harrow Borough boss said typified the season.

"If we had won there we would have done it, but we didn't, and that is the story of our season," he said, adding that the 12 drawn games had more to do with the 14th place attained by Boro in a season that at one point had them facing the prospect of relegation.

Howell said: "There was a good half of the drawn games we should have won and that would take us near the play-offs. I am sure other managers will be saying the same thing, but we were one of the favourites to be relegated. The point being we have progressed, but really should have finished in the top ten."

Horsham's Darren Budd ended Howell's ambition for his side this season with a 59th minute strike on Saturday.

However, Howell says the club should be in a stronger position next season, with improved finances, than at the start of the last term.

He said: "I am hoping I will be able to get players in early, whereas before I didn't know what the budget was and that should make a difference."

Despite the improved finances, Howell admitted the club was still not in the market to chase the big names.

"When players get turned down by one or two clubs we can make them an offer. We are not going to go straight in there for them," he said.

"We are looking to give any young players the opportunity, particularly local players, to have a trial in the summer and look to see if they have got what it takes to be a non-league footballer and maybe one day a professional footballer."

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