

News briefly

Strauss could miss next tour

ENGLAND skipper Andrew Strauss could be rested from their tour of Bangladesh next month. He is likely to miss the trip with a busy schedule this season culminating in the Ashes at the end of the year. The Middlesex captain leads his team into the final Test against South Africa which starts today in Johannesburg. The visitors only need a draw to win the series after their heroic draw last week.

Men in Black in French test

SARACENS face a crucial match against Toulon at Vicarage Road this evening. The Men in Black, who have been knocked off the top of the Guinness Premiership by Leicester, must defeat Jonny Wilkinson's side to keep their hopes of reaching the Amlin Challenge Cup quarter-finals alive. Sarries lost 31-23 to them in France back in October.

Harrow bid to extend record

HARROW RFC will try to defend their unbeaten record when they host Hayes in Herts Middlesex Four on Saturday. The match pits league leaders Harrow, boasting seven successive wins, against the bottom club who have lost all their games.

Bartlett agrees deal to stay with Wealdstone

by SIMON MAIL
smail@london.newsquest.co.uk

WEALDSTONE manager Gordon Bartlett has pledged his future to the club by agreeing a new contract until the end of next season.

The Stones manager, who has been with the side since 1995, will attempt to guide them to promotion after a superb campaign in the Ryman Premier. Wealdstone currently sit fourth in the table and have games in hand on all their rivals.

Bartlett, who will take charge of his 1000th game of the club in the coming weeks, said: "I believe we are progressing in the right way both on and off the park and I am pleased to commit myself to trying to bring Wealdstone a stable and successful long term future.

"Despite our financial limitations and being homeless for so many years, we have continued to climb back up the pyramid and I have shared some great experiences over my 15 years at the Stones.

"We have come a long way since our arrival at our new home at The Vale, have amazing support, a quality young playing squad and I am surrounded by an excellent management team, so I would be mad not to want to continue being at the helm. With more hard work from everyone involved, I honestly believe success at Wealdstone is not too far away."

Stones chairman Howard Kraiss said: "We are all absolutely delighted that Gordon has committed himself to the club in this way and allows us to solidly build on our on-field progress and the club's development strategy. Gordon is key and central to our plans."

Wealdstone have been desperately trying to clear the snow from Grosvenor Vale in order to get tonight's Middlesex Senior Cup tie against Uxbridge on. The game was originally scheduled for Tuesday night but was moved in an attempt to beat the weather. If the match fails to go ahead, their next target will be to ensure their home game with Aveley in the league on Saturday takes place.



New deal: Stones boss Gordon Bartlett will remain at Grosvenor Vale until at least the end of next season. Picture: HOLLY CANT

Clarke may have future with Boro

HARROW BOROUGH manager David Howell is willing to offer troubled striker Dewayne Clarke another chance.

Boro's top goalscorer was on the verge of leaving the Ryman Premier side following a bust-up on the pitch with team-mate James Fraser after their recent defeat at Hendon.

But an apology from the forward has led Howell to reconsider his options. Clarke, who has a knee injury, will rest for the next fortnight and sort out his personal issues before his future with Boro is decided.

Howell said: "He needs to do something about the situation he is in and get back to the smiling Dewayne Clarke that does not let anybody else affect his performance.

"When he is ready to return he will come back and we'll decide if he wants to play or move on."

Howell is determined to use the recent break from action as a way of rediscovering their form. Boro were in excellent shape until the snow came before Christmas and since then they have lost three in a row.

But Howell believes they can get back on track if the weather improves enough for them to play at second-placed Hastings on Saturday.

"Maybe it's been a good thing and allowed us to regroup," he added.

"We need to make sure we get back to being consistent again. The players have had time to rest and recuperate from any knocks and they're champing at the bit to play.

"Hastings are a decent side but they have been the surprise package this season. They fought off relegation last year but this year have been flying high.

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