

News briefly

London Division win for Harrow

HARROW RFC won the London Division of the National Junior Vase after beating London Exiles 33-20. Juri Sihalohe scored the first try before Gary Conroy crossed the line. Winger Sean Rinn grabbed two tries and Adam West sealed the victory. Harrow's reward is a home Vase semi-final against South West champions Brockworth from on Easter Saturday.

Sarries return to action at Sharks

SARACENS will resume their Premiership title defence at Sale Sharks tomorrow night [Friday] after a three-week break. The Men in Black have not played since they defeated Northampton Saints at the start of the month. Sarries could be boosted by the return of their England internationals after they helped them finish second in the Six Nations.

Reds boost Ryman survival hopes

HARROW BOROUGH boosted their chances of avoiding the drop after a 2-1 Ryman Premier win over Met Police on Saturday. Danny Buckle headed the hosts in front before Eddie Smith netted the visitors' equaliser. The winning goal came late on from substitute Simeon Akinola.

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Stones target play-off push after FA Trophy semi exit

by SIMON MAIL

WEALDSTONE manager Gordon Bartlett has challenged his side to reach the Ryman Premier play-offs after their heroic FA Trophy run ended in semi-final disappointment.

The Stones were unable to break down Newport County in their second leg at Grosvenor Vale on Saturday as the Conference outfit sealed a 3-1 aggregate win. But Bartlett was right to pick out the positives from a remarkable run which saw the rank outsiders upset the odds with wins over Cambridge United, Barrow and Dartford.

Bartlett said: "We're bitterly disappointed but I'm putting on a brave face. The bottom line is the boys have done fantastic to get here. It was disappointing to lose the third goal at their place and maybe that was just one goal too many.

"You need a little bit of good fortune and we needed to score the first goal. We've played six games against sides supposedly better than us [higher league] and we've only lost one. I think they've got to take a lot of positives out of this. I'm not looking at the negatives at all.

"It's been a fantastic run for the club and the players. But the players are obviously absolutely gutted because it's a dream. Going to Wembley and playing there is what they all hoped for. The thing is we've got to respond positively to this now and make sure we get in the play-offs."

Wealdstone had several opportunities to score against Newport in front of a record crowd of 2,092 at Grosvenor Vale. Richard Jolly nearly opened the scoring with a shot

which was turned round the post by visiting goalkeeper Glyn Thompson.

But Stones stopper Jonathan North was the pick of the home side as he made a number of excellent saves which denied Newport. His best save came from a first-half free-kick by Sam Foley.

Bartlett added: "Where we have come in the last four years since we've been at Ruislip is incredible and just shows the fighting qualities of this football club. We intend to build on it and keep it going in a forward direction.

"Anybody in the Ryman League who gets to the FA Trophy semi final is one hell of an achievement and a major surprise. All we'll do is next season set out exactly the same way and try and achieve as much as we possibly can in every competition. But this season isn't over yet so I'm focusing on the last two months of that."

Wealdstone's target of reaching the play-offs was boosted after a vital 1-0 home win over Met Police on Monday night. The winning goal came after 54 minutes when Kurtney Brooks played a ball over the top and Jolly lashed an effort into the net.

Bartlett, whose side will be favourites to beat East Thurrock United at home this weekend, said: "What we've got to do is make sure we remain focused and we achieve what we set out to at the start of the season.

"This has been a bonus [Trophy run]. We want to do well in cup competitions. We reached the FA Trophy semi-final and a County Cup final so I think we've achieved that but we also set out to be in the play-offs and we've got that to do."



Wealdstone boss Gordon Bartlett applauds the record crowd after their FA Trophy run came to an end. Picture: STEVE FOSTER/WEALDSTONE FC

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