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WEALDSTONE scrape past Wingate and Finchley in FA Trophy



Wealdstone manager Gordon Bartlett applauds his side following their dramatic win. Picture: ALAN PALMER

Stones through after long night in north London

WEALDSTONE edged into the second round of the FA Trophy on Tuesday night but needed an extratime win in their replay with local rivals Wingate and Finchley to get through.

Following a 2-2 draw at Grosvenor Vale on Saturday, where they had fallen behind to Rob Laney's firsthalf header, they were again the first to concede at the Harry Abrahams Stadium in midweek. As they had done in the original

As they had done in the original tie, they battled back; Elliot Benyon's close-range finish levelled things up with 10 minutes to go but if that drama had seemed late, it was nothing on the 30 minutes of extra time which would follow.

Danny Green, an often-maligned figure with the Stones at times this season, went one better after making Benyon's goal by adding one of his own with the clock ticking into its 120th minute.

His superb free-kick was fired beyond Shane Gore, and sealed

By Ron Walker

the Stones' progression to travel to Southport in round two.

In Saturday's original tie, a Benyon penalty and an own goal from Laney had seen Gordon Bartlett's side come from behind, before Steve Wales scored a late spot kick of his own with four minutes to go to seal the replay.

Bartlett made four changes from that draw for Tuesday night's game, including the demotion of Green to the bench and the rare inclusion of 42-year-old Scott McGleish in the starting line-up.

Only four minutes in they found themselves behind, when Wingate's in-form Reece Beckles-Richards was given space to shoot beyond Jonathan North for the opener.

The hosts started the brighter but Matt Whichelow nearly levelled proceedings with a low free-kick 20 minutes in, before Benyon too went close Two changes at the break, including the introduction of Ricky Wellard, sparked the visitors into life, although their ability to carve out clear-cut chances took a while to improve.

A feeling of deja vu set over the tie as Benyon was bundled over in the box and given the chance to level from the spot for the second time in four days, but crashed his effort against the post.

But he was not to be denied with 10 minutes remaining, firing home after Green's header had beaten Gore to take the game into extra time.

The dreaded penalty shoot-out was looming large for both sides with the clock ticking down on a long night in north London, but Wealdstone were not quite finished. Benyon was upended on the edge

of the home team's box, and Green's free-kick nestled perfectly in the corner.

Wealdstone travel to Poole Town on Saturday.

