

SPORT

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WEALDSTONE: Last-gasp equaliser at the Vale Ten-man Stones battle back for valuable point

WEALDSTONE demonstrated they have left the days of a soft underbelly behind with a creditable 1-1 draw with local rivals Hemel Hempstead on Saturday, despite playing for most of the game with 10 men.

A 5-1 humbling at Eastbourne the previous week may have still been in the Stones' players' minds as they fell behind to Kyle Connolly's tap-in shortly after the quarter-hour mark.

Within moments Aryan Tajbakhsh had been sent off, for the second time in four games, followed an off-the-ball incident which manager Gordon Bartlett interpreted as treading on the back of Charlie Sheringham - and will not be appealed.

Despite their man disadvantage Wealdstone controlled much of the game from this point - although the game was devoid of any meaningful action until it was levelled up in the final 20 minutes, when Callum Driver was shown a straight red card for kicking Ryan Sellers.

It looked as though it wasn't to be for the Stones despite their dominance when Joe White, on as a late substitute, missed a sitter with time ticking away - but in the final 90 sec-

By Ron Walker

onds, Danny Green wriggled free before finding the back of the net from the edge of the box to ensure a share of the spoils.

Despite falling 12 points from fifth-placed Poole Town, in the final play-off spot, manager Gordon Bartlett does not believe his players have nothing left to fight for this season with four games remaining.

"The current circumstances mean we just want to finish as high as possible," he said. "It's down to other people then. If we can finish in the top eight, great, but the top seven would give us a chance of the play-offs if other teams don't do their work."

"It was disappointing to go behind against Hemel and the incident with Aryan was frustrating. It was a little tussle, but whether his momentum or whatever brought him into the kid I don't know, or if he kicked the lad when he was on the floor."

"We backed him when he got sent off before but looking at the video, I don't think there's much we can do."

"But the attitude of the players, when we were a man down, was



Danny Green celebrates his late equaliser which earned Wealdstone a draw with Hemel Hempstead on Saturday.
Picture: ALAN PALMER

fantastic in a must-win game for the play-offs; and I've got to give full credit to the side who left everything they had out on the pitch."

On Saturday, Wealdstone will travel to Hampton and Richmond - who sit a place ahead of them in seventh - as they seek a first win in three, and hold off the challenge of Bath City.

Then on Easter Monday, rock-bottom Bishop's Stortford, who have already shipped some 93 goals this season, travel to Grosvenor Vale.

Wealdstone: North; Brown, Osodi, Hamblin (Benyon 77), Sellers; Tajbakhsh, Wellard (Wright 36), Cox, Whichelow, Green; Fitchett (White 84).

Not used: Godfrey, Parker.

Boro close in on league survival

VALUABLE POINT AT LEISTON MOVES
HARROW FIVE CLEAR OF THE DROP

HARROW looked like they could still be dragged into the Ryman Premier League relegation dogfight after a woeful performance at Burgess Hill on Saturday.

But they allayed fears with a point at promotion-chasing Leiston on Tuesday night, with a much-changed side earning a deserved 2-2 draw in Suffolk.

Their five-point gap to the bottom four, with just three games to play, will likely see them over the line for next season - but having taken a half-time lead at Victory Road, they could have all-but secured safety had they held on.

Marc Charles-Smith made and scored the opener only seven minutes in when his high pressing forced Tom Bullard into a mistake, and the visiting striker ran through to slot home.

Harrow and Leiston exchanged decent efforts at either end before the break, but Niko Muir levelled up just after the interval when he turned and fired beyond Brendan Hazlett, chosen over regular first-choice goalkeeper Luke Williams.

Just before the hour mark Gareth Heath turned the game on its head, finishing off after Shaun Preddie had been caught in possession.

But with 12 minutes to go Harrow got a deserved equaliser thanks to an unfamiliar source.

Left-back Andy Lomas restored parity from Michael Bryan's fine cross to earn the Borough a point, ahead of a trip to Needham Market on Saturday and a home game with Hendon on Monday.

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