

# SPORT

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**STONES** still in with late shout of promotion

## Wealdstone set up final-day play-off showdown

THE league season may run out just too early for Wealdstone - but that hasn't stopped them keeping the most tenuous of play-off runs alive into the last week of the campaign.

At the time of going to press, Poole Town and Hungerford are still awaiting their appeal hearings against bans from the end-of-season play-offs, with their stadia deemed unfit to host the games by the Football League Conference.

If that judgement is upheld, a Wealdstone win at East Thurrock on Saturday coupled with a draw or defeat for Hampton and Richmond at home to Concord Rangers, would see the Stones catapulted into the last play-off place.

Given the mid-season woes of Gordon Bartlett's side, who were in danger of looking over their shoulders towards the start of the year, to even stand a chance via such a fortunate path going into the last game is testament to an impressive run of form which now stretches to one defeat in 19, in all competitions, following a thumping 3-0 win over Hungerford at Grosvenor Vale.

It proved one in the eye for the sixth-placed visitors, which could be made two should Wealdstone

By Ron Walker

take up that final play-off berth, and the result could have been more emphatic had visiting keeper Lewis Ward not been in such fine form.

Dan Fitchett kept up his fine run since joining in March with a third goal from six starts - and the Stones doubled their advantage thanks to a cruel own goal from Matt Day.

Nine minutes after half-time the game was won, when Joe White added a third - and the hosts passed up several chances to inflict real pain on their visitors in the final half-hour.

Manager Gordon Bartlett was left reflecting on what he considered one of the club's best all-round performances of the season - and is urging his players to see where victory this weekend can take them.

"To come away 3-0 against a side going for that promotion place, still, was very satisfying," he said. "We want to finish the season on a high, and we could've won more. We kept a clean sheet and had almost 800 in the ground, so it's a good day.

"It's still highly unlikely with three teams in a better position than us that we will make it. I can't



Dan Fitchett grabbed a third goal from six starts since moving from Sutton United last month against Hungerford Town. Picture: ALAN PALMER

legislate if other clubs haven't got their ground work done, and Hampton have more points than us.

"The application from the lads against Hungerford was great and we have got the ability to win games when it's like that.

"I wish I could take a chunk of the season out and replace it with what we've been doing recently, but you

can't. In life, things go wrong.

"But it's not about that, it's about how you deal with it, and we've come out fighting."

**Wealdstone:** North, Oshodi, Brown, Hamblin, Sellers; Green, Wright (Wellard 78), Cox, Whichelow (Mavila 83); Fitchett (Benyon 85), White.

**Not used:** Hunt, Godfrey.

## Borough relegated with defeat

**HARROW PLUNGE INTO DROP ZONE ON FINAL DAY WITH LOWESTOFT LOSS**

HARROW Borough could blame no-one but themselves as a nine-game winless streak ended with relegation from the Ryman Premier League, following a spirited - but ultimately fatal - 2-0 defeat at Lowestoft Town.

In truth it was not this final game which is the reason behind Harrow's demise, but their dreadful form, including defeats to relegation rivals, in the two months prior.

They fell behind to Dominic Docherty's goal from a corner half an hour in, a strike which would plunge them into relegation trouble for the first time in weeks.

Harrow's reaction was strong, with Marc Charles-Smith and Harry Newman both missing headers, before Newman was thwarted when one-on-one after the break.

But their pressure would be to no avail and Jamie Forshaw doubled the hosts' advantage after 56 minutes, profiting from Harrow's inability to stop a counter from a corner of their own.

Harrow continued to plug away, desperately needing a breakthrough to give them a foothold in the game, but it was not forthcoming, and the dejected players instead slumped to the floor as one at full-time as they were relegated to the eighth tier.

No team has been relegated (barring financial issues) with 50 points or more since 1971 in the Ryman Premier League - but Harrow could seek little sympathy given their woeful form in recent weeks.

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