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WEALDSTONE sign off with final-day stalemate

Stones finish eighth with Sussex point

By Ron Walker

WEALDSTONE signed off their league season with a 1-1 draw at East Thurrock United, days after their play-off hopes had been cut short by legislation.

The Stones went into the game already knowing their faint hope of promotion had been extinguished, after a league ruling found the 700 covered seats they had installed in case of a play-off campaign had missed a National League deadline of March 31.

In what was effectively left as a dead rubber, with only seventh place up for grabs, the Stones continued their incredible run since mid-February, to end the league campaign with one defeat in 17.

Such form earlier in the season would have given them a realistic shot of promotion, but it has taken time for Gordon Bartlett to find a winning formula, possibly keeping himself in the job he has held for more than two decades in the process.

Joe White's return to Dagenham and Redbridge will be with a heavy heart for Stones fans after the youngster netted his sixth goal in 15 starts on Saturday, to cancel out Kye Ruel's opener for East Thurrock.

Jonathan North had been called into action early on before the interval to tip Sam Higgins' shot wide, but White and Ciaran Brown replied for the visitors only to be denied.

Thurrock went ahead following a quick free-kick which was worked to Puel, who was left with a simple finish.

White levelled before the interval following a lovely Sam Cox through-ball, and should have doubled his money after the break from the penalty spot when Dan Fitchett was fouled, only to see his spot-kick saved.

The Stones held on for a draw to keep them eighth, but were left disappointed in the Middlesex Senior Charity Cup final on Monday, losing 2-1 to Ashford Town despite Ricky Wellard's goal.



Joe White (centre) added his sixth goal for Wealdstone in his last appearance - and could have had another but missed a penalty. Picture: ALAN PALMER

Boro boss sorry for relegation

HARROW MANAGER STEVE BAKER PENS OPEN LETTER TO CLUB'S FANS

HARROW Borough manager Steve Baker has issued an apology to the club's fans following their relegation from the Ryman Premier League.

Baker admitted the final weeks of the season had been "not good enough", with a nine-game winless streak sealing their fate with a 2-0 defeat to Lowestoft Town on the final day.

The Boro had been playing catch-up for much of the first half of the season with a superb run to the first round of the FA Cup, but having escaped what appeared the final clutches of relegation with an excellent spell of form, their end-of-season demise culminated in a first spell outside the seventh tier in 38 years.

Baker wrote: "Up till three weeks ago it seemed we were on course for a very good season but the last six games we were not good enough.

"I could offer lots of reasons or excuses such as form, players' commitment and injuries but as manager of the club I take full responsibility.

"The targets I set at the start of the year were a good run in the FA Cup and a minimum of 50 points. We achieved both but the latter was not enough?"

Harrow did become the first club relegated from the Ryman Premier with more than 50 points since the 1970s - but it will provide scant consolation when the new season kicks off.

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The Harrow Times is published by Newsquest (London) Ltd, Observer House, Caxton Court, Caxton Way, Watford, Herts WD18 8RJ part of the Newsquest Media Group Ltd, Loudwater Mill, Station Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP10 9TY, a Gannett Company. Printed by Newsquest Oxfordshire, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0EJ. Newspaper Support Recycling - The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2014 was 80.6%.