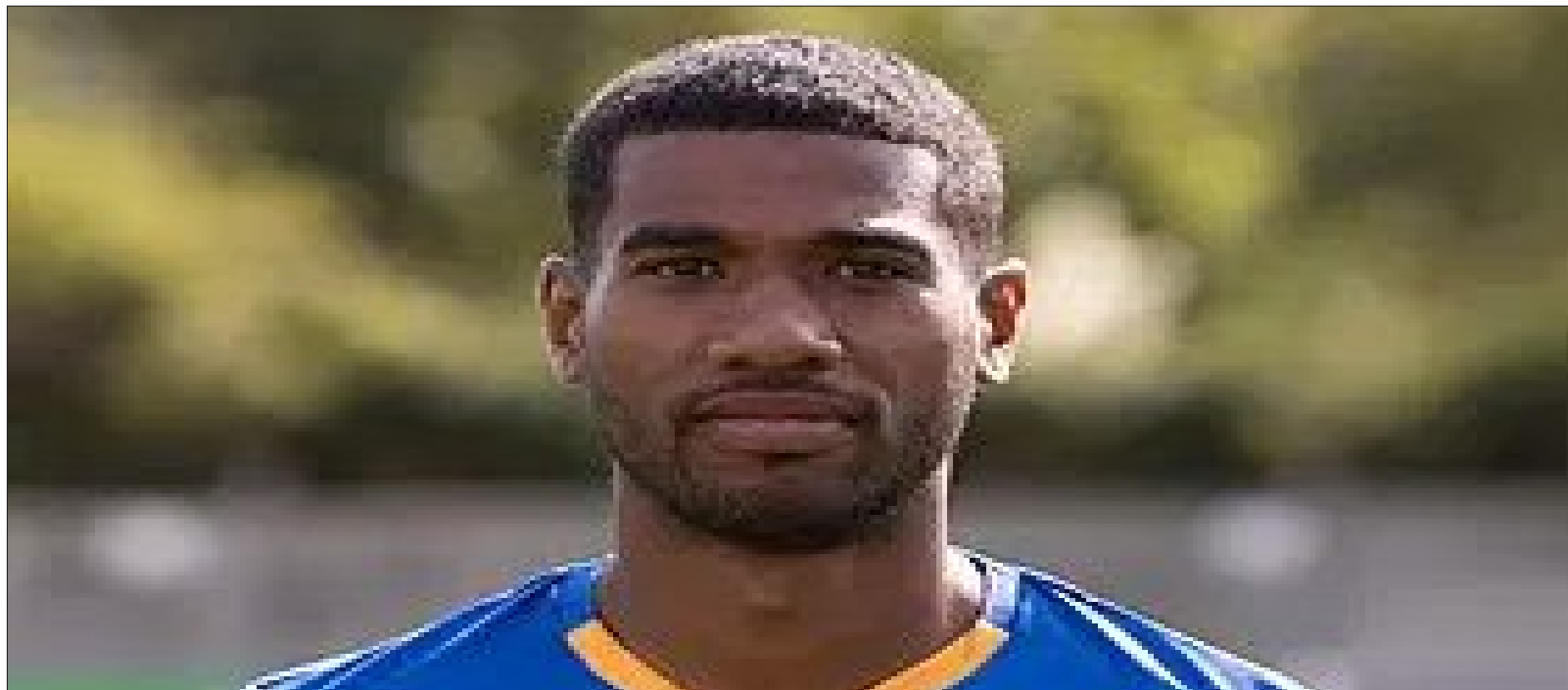


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## FOOTBALL Pre-season fixture ends 1-1 as goalkeepers impress



Jerome Okimo was on target for Stones

Photo: Wealdstone FC

# Saints keep Stones at bay in friendly

By Robert Collins

JEROME Okimo opened the scoring as Wealdstone got their pre-season campaign underway with a 1-1 draw away to St Albans City.

But the National League South side - a division below the Stones - equalised with a penalty 12 minutes from full time.

The match at St Albans' Clarence Park took place as a heatwave hit the country, with the weather even after a 7.45pm kick-off affecting the pace of play.

Apart from the goalkeeper Trialist A, Wealdstone's starting XI included ten first-team players, among them new signings Jack Cook, Andrew Eleftheriou, Matt Buse and Josh Umerah making their debuts.

Wealdstone had a triallist in goal and he was needed early as Saints winger Romeo Akinola took the initiative.

But Wealdstone put together some intricate passing, taking the lead after 40 minutes.

An Alex Dyer corner kick was not cleared by the City defence and found Okimo on the penalty spot, where he

lashed an effort into the top corner.

There were wholesale changes at half-time by Stones boss Stuart Maynard, with only another triallist remaining on the pitch after replacing the injured Ashley Charles midway through the first half.

St Albans did not let Wealdstone have things their way, and the Stones' second triallist goalkeeper had to react fast to keep a shot by the Saints' David Noble on the hour mark.

The sub triallist goalkeeper then had to make another great stop to deny Liam Sole from a 25-yard free-kick.

St Albans continued to assert themselves, and minutes later Sole did get a shot past the keeper but hit the post.

The home team finally equalised 12 minutes from the end after Jeffers was brought down in the box, converting the penalty himself.

Stones almost restored the lead with a

strong counter-attacking move from one of the triallists but St Albans substitute keeper Guathier managed to tip his effort round the post.

The visitors kept the pressure on, and the young home keeper had to pull off another great save to keep a shot from Fasanmade out in the final moments of the game.

The 1-1 draw compares favourably to last season's friendly, which City won 4-0, while Wealdstone won the last competitive match between the two 1-0 at Grosvenor Vale in 2019, with Dennon Lewis scoring the winner.

For St Albans, this was their fourth pre-season match so far following fixtures against Arlesey Town, Stevenage and Kings Langley, winning two and losing one.

Despite a scheduled game away to Rayners Lane being postponed, the Stones won a training ground friendly away to Hayes & Yeading United on Saturday 2-1.



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