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## FOOTBALL: Striker reflects on pre-season loss



Wealdstone's Olufela Olomola in action against AFC Wimbledon. Image: Jon Taffel

# Stones get a wake-up call for league opener

WEALDSTONE begin the 2023-24 National League campaign with York City the visitors to Grosvenor Vale on Saturday.

Stuart Maynard's men secured the club's highest league finish for 35 years last season and will be looking to improve further.

And striker Olufela Olomola felt their final pre-season friendly against AFC Wimbledon was good preparation for the start of their competitive schedule.

Omar Bugiel and Ali Al-Hamadi netted in each half for the visitors and Olomola told the club website: "It's been good to play against teams from higher leagues, they play with a high intensity which is what we want to come up against

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throughout the season.

"It's been a good test for us, a good wake-up call, and it's definitely highlighted areas we need to work on come next week."

Bugiel's looping header beat Jed Ward to open the scoring, but he was booked for a collision with Luke Dreher just before half-time, which left the Wealdstone newcomer with a suspected broken arm.

Charles Clayden and Corie Andrews had chances to level, before Al-Hamadi hammered home from close range to seal a 2-0 win for the Dons.

And Olomola, 25, knows Stones need to improve, adding: "I think we started slow, we took far too long to work out how to beat their press and get hold of the game.

"Second half we came out better, raised the intensity and showed a bit more fight, but all in all, it wasn't good enough.

"All the teams have been pretty much similar to what we've played in the league.

"Wycombe, Charlton and Wimbledon, I feel they had good intensity in their pressing.

"First and foremost, before we want to play any football, we have to match that. Today we didn't, especially in the first half, we didn't match that well enough.

"It's something we have to make sure that, come next week, we match and better the other team's intensity."

Teammate Jaydn Mundle-Smith echoed those sentiments and was clear about the team's goals for the season.

"We started off kind of slow, kind of lethargic, but as we got into the game patterns of play started to show," said the defender.

"We've been coming up against good league sides, League One, League Two, and I think we've done well.

"We want to get in the play-offs, that's the main thing, but I say just start well leading up to Christmas and just keep it going."

## Borough boss Berry ready for first test

### SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH CAMPAIGN SET FOR START

HARROW Borough begin the Southern League Premier South season with a visit from AFC Totton on Saturday. And new manager Jordan Berry was pleased to end their pre-season campaign with a 2-1 win over Barton Rovers last weekend.

"We've had to create a new squad and rebuild a whole new spine, so satisfied and happy with where we're at right now," he told the club website. "I think between 18-20 would be the preference on the squad size, it's hard to keep any more than that.

"That's where the club is at. We haven't got the budget to go and get the most experienced ones but we can maybe get the ones we feel are coachable and can learn and improve on that aspect.

"If people watched us in pre-season, you might not see who is going to be in the line-up. There might be trialists, people playing in different systems, so it's tricky to find too much information on pre-season.

"That's the beauty of the opening day, it's a bit of an unknown, especially with a team coming up from a different league. They're probably thinking the same about us as well.

"So, not easy to research but it's more about us doing the right things and doing the jobs properly rather than worrying too much about the opposition."

"Harrow has announced a one-year sponsorship deal with Skoda, with the branding of the Czech car company on their shirts for the upcoming season. The club and Skoda cars already have a long association, through the involvement of South Ruislip Skoda dealer Willis Motor Company, the biggest Skoda dealer in West London.

Owner Dennis Willis is on the Harrow Borough board, as are two other Willis employees, Mark Weir and Peter Thompson.

Dennis is a lifelong Brentford fan, but knows from his experience at The Rogers Family Stadium that life doesn't begin and end with the riches of the Premier League.

He sees the Skoda sponsorship as an extension of the already tight links between the car dealership and club, noting there is probably a higher proportion of Skoda ownership among followers of Harrow Borough than there is among any other demographic group. Knowing the club have had the good fortune to be reprieved from relegation, Dennis is looking forward with enthusiasm to the new season, with the first team under the control of newly-appointed manager Berry.