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## FOOTBALL: New boss disappointed by defeat



Wealdstone's Jack Cook in action against Maidenhead. Image: Jon Taffel

# Not best performance by Stones says Noble

DAVID Noble spoke of his disappointment in his side's performance after tasting defeat for the first time as Wealdstone head coach in midweek.

The 10-man Stones went down 1-0 to Alan Devonshire's Maidenhead United at Grosvenor Vale on Tuesday, as Ashley Nathaniel-George's late strike secured all three points for the visitors.

But it was a National League contest short of quality and Noble wasn't too impressed by what he saw from his players on the night.

"Not the best from our point of view," Noble told the club website.

"Really sloppy start - first 25 or 30 minutes. No energy, no enthusiasm. We couldn't keep hold of the ball.

By Tom Norton

"The sending-off makes it a really difficult evening, and I think we got what we deserved in the end."

Despite the 42nd-minute dismissal of defender Jack Cook, for a second bookable offence, Noble suggested he didn't see a great deal of change in the second half, even after going down to 10 men.

"We weren't even doing it with 11. It was really unlike us just to see that there was no energy," he said when questioned about the reaction to going down a man.

"Until we went down to 10, then we really had a go. It's really diffi-

cult when you're a man short, and we didn't do badly. We nearly held out, but we've got to be better than that."

When asked about the conditions of the pitch, Noble was quick to point out that the weather had little impact on his side's performance.

"It's the same for both teams. I just felt there was a bit more energy about Maidenhead," he said.

"It was a really frustrating night, but we won together, and we lost together. We've got to keep our chins up, as there's still loads of games to go."

In a game littered with yellow cards, including one for Noble himself, the Stones boss felt referee Aaron Farmer might have man-

aged the game better.

"I don't think he had his best performance tonight. He was a bit too quick with the card, especially for us," said Noble reluctantly.

"I think Cook's second one is a bit dubious, and there was another couple. A lot of the decisions seemed to go against us."

Having claimed a last-gasp draw at local rivals Barnet last weekend, thanks to Corie Andrews, the Stones now turn their attentions to the FA Trophy on Saturday.

They play host to neighbours Hendon in the last 16, with the Greens own recent patchy form seeing them stagnate in a mid-table position in the Southern League Premier Division.

## We can win Six Nations 'if we learn'

NEW ENGLAND CAPTAIN URGES IMPROVEMENTS AFTER WIN IN ITALY



Jamie George says England can win the Six Nations. Image: PA

JAMIE George is convinced England can win the Guinness Six Nations but accepts they must learn fast after edging Italy 27-24 in Rome.

England were outscored 3-2 on tries and outplayed in the first half, trailing 17-14 before they rallied with an important Alex Mitchell try and two penalties from George Ford.

It was the closest Italy had come to beating them in 31 Tests between the rivals and even allowing for five new caps in the Red Rose ranks, it was a shaky start to post-World Cup rebuilding. While England were labouring to victory at the Stadio Olimpico, Ireland looked sensational in a crushing win over France in Marseille.

When asked if there is enough quality in the team to challenge Ireland, George said: "Absolutely. I don't want anyone to be involved in this squad if they don't genuinely believe we can go and challenge the best and win this tournament."

"Looking at Ireland, they were very impressive. Not many teams go to France and perform like that. It's a blueprint for us, and any team, to look at how they approached that game."

"For us, we're going to be learning fast and we need to make sure we learn our lessons, being very clear about what we want to go after this game."

"We've got a great opportunity to be back in front of our fans against Wales next weekend and really give them something to smile about."

England have a new defence coach in Felix Jones and at times were exposed by Italy, who took advantage of the lack of familiarity with the new system.

"I'm very pleased the players found a way to change and win the game," added head coach Steve Borthwick. "But there were plenty of areas we need to be better."