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## FOOTBALL: Second-half slump leads to defeat at Altrincham



Charlie Barker celebrates giving Wealdstone the lead at Altrincham, but boss David Noble (above, right) was left disappointed by their 4-1 defeat. Images: Jon Taffel



## Harrow hit for six by Hungerford

VISITING Hungerford kept their Southern League Premier South play-off hopes alive with an emphatic 6-1 victory over Harrow Borough, plunging the home team closer to relegation.

The hosts had looked brighter early on, in front of a crowd of 334 at Earlsmead, with Excellence Muhemba having two good chances in the first five minutes. Hungerford came back strongly, so it was rather against the run of play when Reece Deakin gave Harrow a 28th-minute lead from close range.

The visitors drew level in the 43rd minute with Elis Watts finding himself in acres of space midway inside the Harrow half to advance into the area and finish with style.

And the game changed in the 58th minute when a challenge by Harry Seabrook's saw him given a red card. Hungerford immediately took advantage of their extra man as Joe Shepherd scored from 10 yards and Luke Softley made it 3-1 in the 76th minute, heading in from a yard out after Jarra's header had hit the bar.

Harrow looked broken and Hungerford were not in a merciful mood as Watts scored his second from close range through the legs of Tyler Tobin in the 88th minute.

Watts completed his hat-trick in the fourth minute of stoppage time, finishing from six yards after a pinpoint cross from the left.

Hungerford hammered another nail in the Harrow relegation coffin in the sixth minute of stoppage time when substitute Elliott Dugan scored with a diving header to complete the rout. Defeat left Harrow nine points adrift of safety with only seven games remaining. They head to play-off chasing Walton & Hersham on Thursday (8pm), before welcoming champions-elect Chesham United on Bank Holiday Monday (3pm).

# Noble disappointed by Wealdstone collapse

WEALDSTONE boss David Noble expressed his disappointment as a second-half collapse saw his side plunge back into trouble after a 4-1 loss at Altrincham on Tuesday, writes Tom Norton.

Despite taking the lead through Charlie Barker and controlling large parts of the first half, the Stones seemed to lose authority and succumbed to three strikes from George Wilson, Lewis Banks, and Regan Linney, with the first coming just a couple of minutes after the second half had started.

"The first half was pretty pleasing. We took the lead and we were looking good," Noble told the club's website.

"To go in one-all was slightly

disappointing and then a bit of a collapse after half time.

"Yes, we've got tired bodies, and there's a lot of tired legs out there, but a minute into the second half - you're not tired then. There were a couple of bits that I didn't like, but it's difficult to really go too harsh on the boys because of the effort they're giving me, but I think we were just a little bit tired mentally."

Some ill-timed injuries have hampered the Stones' chances of building any real momentum going into the last few games of the season, and Noble cited the lack of key players available as a reason for their patchy, late-season form.

"You look at tonight. We need those bodies back massively," he added.

"We've missed them. Their coming back will give the boys a lift, as we are literally at our bare bones at the moment. I mean, we can see the difference in the full-time outfit tonight towards the end there."

"Not only is it the bare bones of the squad, but there's been very little training time, and it showed in that second half."

The errors leading to the goals conceded in the second half could have been put down to fatigue, but Noble eluded to the individual contributions from certain members of his playing squad.

"Not tracking runners and not

running back hard enough. It's disappointing, but it's hard to be too harsh," he said.

"We've got games coming, and we don't need people down, we need them up, and it's disappointing to see them tonight."

"You're still tired, after all, and there's still something to defend. We've got a draw at that point, and letting runners go is not good or a good sign, and it hasn't happened many times this season under me."

Stones have just three days to recover before a trip to relegated Oxford City on Good Friday, followed by a visit from promotion-chasing Solihull Moors to Grosvenor Vale on Bank Holiday Monday.