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FOOTBALL: Strugglers suffer another defeat



Wealdstone players trudge off after defeat against Southend. Image: Jon Taffel

Beaten Stones praised by interim boss Cox

INTERIM boss Sam Cox praised the endeavours of his confidence-shot Wealdstone squad despite falling to yet another defeat as they lost 2-1 at home to Southend United on Tuesday, writes Tom Norton.

Cox, who played for the club over a three-year period, seemed confident he had seen enough from his side to avoid relegation from the National League and recover their situation.

"If the boys show signs of that kind of performance from now until the end of the season, then these next four games - I think we're going to be okay," Cox said bullishly.

"We've got to take huge positives from the way they've reacted off the back of the [4-0] defeat on Saturday against Boreham Wood and the man-

ner in which we got beaten.

"I think it shows exactly what we spoke about: wanting a reaction, wanting to fight for this club, wanting to fight for the badge, and they've shown enough in the performance.

"It's a disappointing result, we know that. We know we need points at this point of the season, of course, but these next four games are massive for us, and I've just told them 'if you can put in the same performance of effort, grit, and determination on Thursday, we're going to be okay from now until the end of the season'."

On the relationship he has with the players available, Cox sent a clear message to the squad in response to the defeat.

"We know the situation. The amount

of time we have on the grass with these boys is difficult. That was one of the difficulties under the last tenure with David [Noble] and Neil," he added.

"It's hard to get the hours to get the structure exactly how we want it. If the boys can take on information the way they did before the game off the back of half an hour of analysis work, perform the way they did, and execute it, then I think we're going to be okay."

"We know we've got to stop conceding goals like we did and have been doing. We have to try and eliminate that, but if they perform the way they did and take on the tactical elements, which is a big part of the way I want to do things, then I'm encouraged."

With just four games to go and Stones in 20th place, a point above

Boreham Wood, Cox has a huge challenge on his hands to keep them in the division, and he was keen to emphasise the importance of staying focused on the task at hand.

"It's the most important thing. I brought the boys in a little bit earlier today and the key points were 'it's with us, and it's within this changing room,'" he said.

"It's about team spirit, who wants to fight and be on board with this, and all of them have shown a fantastic response. They all want to fight for this club. It's not the result we wanted, but we go again. We've got to pick these boys up for Thursday."

Stones host Dorking tonight (Thursday), then champions Chesterfield on Saturday and Eastleigh on Tuesday.

Successive wins keep Borough's bid alive

HARROW extended their stay in the Southern League Premier South with a come from behind 2-1 victory against Beaconsfield on Saturday - followed by a 3-1 success at Plymouth Parkway in midweek. They went into their weekend game knowing a defeat, combined with results elsewhere in the division could officially condemn them to relegation from step three. But a battling and deserved victory in a scrappy game delayed the dreaded 'R' appearing next to their name in the table.

Having conceded 14 goals in their previous three league games, Harrow reverted to a flat back four. Harry Seabrook missing his second game in a row through suspension meant James Gurteen partnered Reece Yorke in the middle with Mack Miskin returning on the left and Henry Lukombo on the right. Beaconsfield had won 5-4 at Hendon a week earlier but the first half hour was a very cagey affair with neither side able to create any real opportunities.

The game came to life with three goals in the last 12 minutes of the first half, though. Beaconsfield took the lead in the 33rd minute, with Gurteen only able to turn a cross from the left past his own keeper Tyler Tobin. But Harrow were level in the 38th minute when Reece Mitchell was fouled inside the box for a penalty - for the 12th time this season - and took the spot-kick himself, scoring to Norcott's left to take his tally for the campaign to 16.

The hosts took the lead in the 44th minute as Excellence Muhemba cut in from the right and saw his low shot blocked by Beaconsfield defender Luke Neville, with the ball ballooning up over Norcott and nestling in the far corner of the net.

The second half was all Harrow as Lonit Talla headed against the bar in the 53rd minute and Mitchell saw his 69th-minute shot crash against the inside of the post before rebounding to safety. Harlem Hale should have killed the game off in the 87th minute when clean through but his lob over the advancing keeper had too much on it.

Harrow saw out the six minutes of stoppage time with relative ease, though, and saw Talla, Muhemba and Jack Tutton net on Tuesday, before Plymouth's late consolation. Borough visit Salisbury on Saturday.