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FOOTBALL: Club announce new manager



Incoming - New Wealdstone boss Matt Taylor during his time at Shrewsbury.

Image: PA

Taylor made for role as Wealdstone boss

WEALDSTONE have announced the appointment of former West Ham United player Matt Taylor as their new manager ahead of the 2024/25 season.

Taylor, 42, joins the Stones after spells in charge of Swindon Town, Walsall and Shrewsbury Town, while as a versatile midfielder in his playing days, he spent three years with the Hammers, winning promotion back to the Premier League in 2012.

"We are thrilled to welcome Matt to Wealdstone," said chairman Rory Fitzgerald.

"His experience at the top levels of football, both as a player and a coach, will be invaluable as we strive to develop our club to achieve our long-term ambitions."

By Tom Norton
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"Matt's vision for the team, his clear principles for how he wants us to play and his track record of developing young talent are exactly what we need."

Taylor also coached at Under-18 level for Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur and holds a reputable track record for nurturing young talent and monitoring the development of the north London club's academy.

"I am excited to join Wealdstone," he told the club website. "We have a great opportunity to build something special here, and I'm looking forward to the challenge."

Former Chelsea and Luton midfielder Paul Hughes joins Taylor at Grosvenor Vale as assistant head coach.

He made 22 appearances for the Blues before making the permanent move to Southampton but didn't make a senior appearance for the club.

Hughes then went on to make 79 appearances for the Hatters, scoring seven goals before retiring in May 2006 to pursue a career in management.

Spells with Kings Langley and Hayes & Yeading United followed before being announced alongside Taylor with the Stones last week.

Sam Cox, who steered Stones away from relegation danger in the Na-

tional League as interim boss last season following the sacking of former manager David Noble, has left the club.

"The board and everyone connected with the club extend heartfelt thanks to Sam for his dedication and leadership in very difficult circumstances," said a club statement.

"Under his guidance in the last five games of last season, the club successfully maintained its position in the National League for a fifth consecutive year, and we are deeply grateful for his contributions. We wish Sam the very best in his future career."

The club website also confirmed further coaching additions will be made in the coming week.

Sarries get praise for Bristol win

MCCALL HAILS DEFENSIVE EFFORT IN LATEST PREMIERSHIP TRIUMPH



Happy - Rotimi Segun celebrates a try for Saracens. Image: PA

SARACENS director of rugby Mark McCall hailed his side's defensive efforts as they produced a stand-out performance in a 41-20 win over Bristol at Ashton Gate. The bonus-point victory boosted Saracens' chances of an end-of-season play-off spot, but they still face a tough finish to their regular campaign with a home fixture against a resurgent Sale on Saturday.

In contrast, Bristol's defeat with no league points was a huge knock-back to their play-off chances, but they are still alive and will need to win at Harlequins in their final fixture if they are to have any chance of progressing.

It was not all plain sailing for Saracens as they had to overcome an early 10-0 deficit and second-half yellow cards for key forwards Ben Earl and Maro Itoje.

Itoje scored two of Saracens' tries while Romiti Segun and Juan-Martin Gonzalez were also on the try-scoring sheet, with man-of-the-match Elliot Daly converting two and kicking four penalties. Owen Farrell added a penalty and a conversion. McCall said: "We didn't start the game very well and I'm really proud of the way we fought back to wrestle the momentum away from them."

"We handled the 13-man period exceptionally by making a lot of smart decisions during the period. "They are a real handful in attack and that defensive performance was as good as any I can remember."

"Owen's (Farrell) groin tightened up so Elliot (Daly) took over and away he went. It's remarkable really as he never practises his goal-kicking." Saracens skipper Farrell added: "We had to play a different way to win at Bath but we wanted to play heads-up rugby on a nice, dry pitch."

"Against a running side like Bristol, there are loads of decisions to be made and we took our opportunities really well."