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FOOTBALL: Daggers date to start for Taylor's men



Wealdstone's Trae Cook-Appiah in pre-season action at Walton

Image: Jon Taffel

Stones facing tricky start to league season

WEALDSTONE have been handed a tricky start to their 2024/25 National League campaign as they travel to face Ben Strevens' Dagenham & Redbridge on the opening day of the season.

The Stones will make the trip across London to face The Daggers on Saturday August 10, before hosting Oldham Athletic and Sutton United on the following Saturday (August 17) and Tuesday (August 20) respectively.

New boss Matt Taylor will have his first taste of derby action on September 21, when the Stones welcome Dean Brennan's Barnet to Grosvenor Vale, with the return fixture at The Hive taking place on April 12.

The festive schedule will see Taylor's men host the Daggers on December 21 and then travel to Berkshire on Box-

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ing Day to face Maidenhead United.

A New Year's Day home game against newly promoted Boston United will complete the turbulent Christmas period, with the final game of the Stones' National League campaign coming at home to Halifax Town on Monday, May 5.

All fixtures are subject to change.

Taylor's side kicked off their pre-season campaign with a pulsating 3-3 draw away at Walton & Hersham.

Stones lined up with a side including several new faces and soon found themselves behind when Josh Tobin's bullet header beat Archie Matthews from

close range.

Wealdstone then quickly drew level as a home trialist's poor back pass rolled over the goal line to make the score 1-1.

But the hosts then regained the lead once again on the hour mark when another trialist finished calmly past Jacob Adams, who had replaced Matthews between the sticks at half time.

The Swans extended their lead again just minutes later to put themselves in a commanding position going into the latter stages, but Taylor's side hit back with a pair of excellent strikes to snatch a deserved draw.

Sean Jordan Adarkwa, who had spurned an excellent opportunity to halve the deficit earlier on, finished well with a placed header to make it 3-2 and bring the Stones back into the game.

And on 73 minutes, they completed their comeback when Dom Hutchinson was on hand to nod beyond the Walton keeper and draw the scores level on the day.

A confidence boosting performance and result will benefit Taylor's new-look squad, with just a month until the club's National League season gets underway.

They visit Chesham United for their next friendly on Saturday (1pm), then welcome former boss Stuart Maynard and his Notts County squad on Tuesday (7.45pm).

Further home games against Millwall U21s (July 20), Crawley Town (July 23) and MK Dons (July 27) follow, before a trip to Kings Langley (July 30). Stones complete preparations at home against Hemel Hempstead on August 3.

We will be prepared says George

ENGLAND RELISHING SECOND TEST AGAINST ALL BLACKS



England's Jamie George

Image: PA

SARACENS' Jamie George insists England will go into their second and final test match against New Zealand at Eden Park, Auckland on Saturday better prepared, writes Ziad Chaudry.

Two second-half penalties from Damien McKenzie helped steer the All Blacks to a narrow but thrilling 16-15 first test victory in Dunedin last weekend.

This was after England led 15-10 through tries from Saracens Maro Itoje and Immanuel Feyi-Wabaso as well as five points Marcus Smith.

"We came here to win," said England captain George, who also played alongside Saracens clubmates Ben Earl and Theo Dan.

"We came here to achieve something that no other English team have done for 21 years. We really put our hand up at times and we had control of the game for long periods, but as Steve [Borthwick] said that second half it came into an arm wrestle.

"It was always going to be a one-score game and for a young side like us there's a huge amount we can take from that and we'll be better for it next week."

Not only are the Red Roses keen to end their international season on level terms with the All Blacks but to also end an eight-match losing streak on their soil that has been continuing for 21 years.

England's last victory was back in June 2003 in Wellington when Jonny Wilkinson kicked all of the points in a 15-13 triumph. And George believes his side has a great opportunity to win this weekend.

"What an exciting opportunity we've got this week," George added.

"It's the last week of the season for us. Going to Eden Park we know the record they have there but at the same time I think we can take a lot from the game and a lot of learnings and make sure we're a better team."

Sky Sports Action will televise the match from 7.30am, with kick-off at 8am.