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FOOTBALL: Wealdstone struggle in pre-season



Todd Miller on target for a goal against Notts County

Image: Jon Taffel

Two defeats will give Stones boss some clarity

WEALDSTONE FC suffered back-to-back losses for the first time during their pre-season campaign as Chesham United beat The Stones 1-0 at The Meadow on Saturday afternoon, quickly followed up by a 2-1 home to defeat to Notts County last night.

Tasting defeat for the first time as boss against Chesham, Matt Taylor made four changes to the side that drew with Walton and Hershaw last week, with summer signing Adrian Mariappa captaining the team on the day.

The first half saw neither side create anything of note, but The Stones gained control of the match early into the second half before a goalkeeping mistake from summer addition Archie Matthews gifted the home side the opener.

With just 10 minutes played in the

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second half, Chesham forward Samson Esan robbed the Stones keeper in possession and finished calmly to give the hosts the lead. In an attempt to respond quickly, Dominic Hutchinson went through on goal for Matt Taylor's side, but an excellent last ditch block prevented the Stones forward from grabbing a deserved equaliser.

A pair of late attempts at goal looked as if Taylor's men might snatch a draw, but it wasn't meant to be as the former West Ham winger experienced defeat as Wealdstone boss for the very first time.

Former head coach Stuart Maynard arrived back at The Vale on Tuesday

evening for the first time since leaving for League Two side Notts County midway through last season. In a dominant first half display, the visitors made the perfect start as Gambian forward Alasana Jatta's double put the Magpies into a commanding lead before the break.

Wealdstone's best chance of the game came just before the half an hour mark, as last season's top scorer Sean Adarkwa went through in goal only to fire well wide of the target.

In the second half, Taylor's men raised the intensity and began to grow into the match, nearly pulling one back when substitutes Alex Dyer and Todd Miller combined for the latter to cut inside and unleash a fierce strike that whistled just over the bar.

A positive spell in possession saw

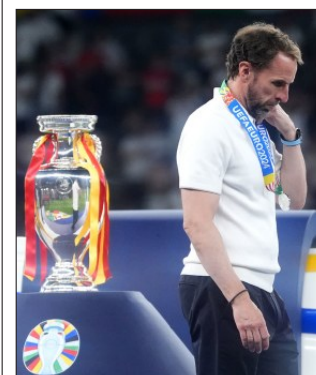
summer signing Sam Ashford reduce the deficit as he arrived late in the box to fire beyond Notts' keeper Bass to round off a fine sequence of play. The Stones then continued to push and nearly found an equaliser, with Adarkwa and the lively Dom Hutchinson both shooting narrowly wide in quick succession.

The late pressure was ultimately in vain as former boss Maynard left Grosvenor Vale with the win. The result means that Taylor's side lost their second successive match in pre-season and will offer the club's newly appointed boss further clarity on those he can rely on going in to the 2024/2025 National League season.

The Stones return to pre-season action on Saturday when they host a Millwall U21s side at Grosvenor Vale (3pm).

'It has been the honour of my life'

SOUTHGATE RESIGNS AS ENGLAND BOSS AFTER EUROS DEFEAT IN GERMANY



Gareth Southgate walks past the trophy
Image: Adam Davy/PA Wire

GARETH Southgate has stood down as England manager, saying it is time for a "new chapter" for the national team. He announced his decision to quit in a statement issued by the Football Association on Tuesday morning, following the team's defeat to Spain in the Euro 2024 final on Sunday night. "As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England. It has meant everything to me and I have given it my all," he said.

"But it's time for change and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager."

Southgate took charge in 2016, following the team's ignominious exit to Iceland in that summer's Euros and the short-lived reign of Sam Allardyce. FA chief executive Mark Bullingham paid tribute to Southgate's achievements in leading England to successive European Championship finals, as well as to the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup in his first tournament at the helm.

Bullingham indicated the process to find Southgate's successor "is now under way" and said the FA had an "interim solution in place if needed", with the team's next matches coming in the Nations League in September. Southgate himself backed his players to go on and "win the trophy we all dream of" in the future.

"I am so proud of them, and I hope we get behind the players and the team at St George's Park and the FA who strive every day to improve English football and understand the power football has to drive positive change," he said. "My special thanks go to the backroom staff who have provided the players and me with unstinting support over the last eight years."