

walking in a wealdstone wonderland

BY TIM PARKS



Everybody says that pre-season friendlies are meaningless, but after narrow defeats to Chesham and Notts County, and a draw at Walton & Hersham it was gratifying to see the fruits of progress against a young Millwall side here on Saturday.

Yeah, yeah, it was only a warm-up match but that last-kick-of-the-game winner from Trae Cook-Appiah was due reward for a team gradually evolving into the sort of front-foot, pressing team to which we aspire.

As assistant boss Paul Hughes said in an interview with Will Beaman afterwards: "We had to change certain areas and introduce personality into our play - we're big on that. To be braver on the ball and increase the ball speed. It meant we created all the chances in the second half and quite rightly won the game."

Micah Obiero struck his first goal of the season from the edge of the box to level the scores at half time after the powerful Chin Okoli had headed the Lions' under-21s into an early lead. Then the lively Todd Miller made it 2-1 after a mix-up between the Millwall keeper and defender (pictured at the top of the page) only for an excellent finish from a trialist to level again at 2-2. The crowd were settling for an entertaining draw when the exciting Cook-Appiah saw his 91st-minute effort deflect into the the Holywell End net for the winner.

"To be honest we're about where I expected us to be in



Picture: MIKE RENNY

pre-season" said Hughes. "We are improving in every game with the players getting more familiar with each other and gaining more cohesion. "There is such a good culture at this club, a spirit of togetherness that is refreshing for both myself and Matt, the way the players care about each other. It's now all about enhancing that and getting us to the place we want to be by August 10th".

There was further good news with the announcements of the signings of new contracts for Alex Dyer and Jaydn Mundle-Smith.

There is no doubt that Alex is the heartbeat of the changing room and the picture of him on the cover of this programme last week, marauding through the Chesham defence, obviously made the difference! And putting together a feature for the Sutton United visit in a few weeks saw his name pop up, having scored twice at Gander Green Lane against United 14 years ago. Yes, the same Alex but he can only have been a teenager :)

And what a coup by retaining 'Mundles' for another year! He was the epitome of consistency last season, playing every game until a horror injury against Eastleigh in the closing weeks. And if you were wondering what else he could add to his game, try 'fatherhood'!

Baby Josiah only arrived four months ago but is already very clued up on the game (see picture left). A big thanks, of course, goes to the respective managers of our friendly **Contd overpage >>**

Gaffer Matty meets Jaydn Mundle-Smith's partner Jewel & their 4-month-old baby Josiah



Probably best to revert to a flat back four once Daddy's fit again

Thanks Josiah, I'll bear that in mind

Picture: Jon TAFFEL

Continued from page 2
opposition Crawley Town and MK Dons. We've met both clubs before of course, as pages 4 & 5 of this issue will confirm but it is a pleasure to be facing the full might of their EFL squads.

It's quite a remarkable coincidence that our opponents for this pair of pre-season friendlies are the two sides that met over two legs in a League Two play-off semi-final only last May. MK Dons won't want to be reminded of the result as Crawley won 8-1 on aggregate: 3-0 in the first leg at their Broadfield Stadium (a game originally postponed for 24 hours because of a cloudburst) and then a remarkable 5-1 at Stadium MK four days later. Striker Danilo Orsi, who we remember from his prolific scoring days at Hampton & Richmond and also Maidenhead, scored a hat-trick in that game to put the tie way beyond MK Dons' reach.

Crawley then beat Crewe Alexandra in the play-off final at Wembley - having sneaked into the play-offs in seventh place on the final day of the regular season - to regain their place in League One. Since then they have signed our outstanding centre-back from last season, Charlie Barker. Manager Scott Lindsey has done a great job to get the Sussex club promoted and, interestingly enough, Charlie's dad Richie Barker was manager of the Reds when they made their debut as a third flight club back in 2012.

It's also good to meet MK Dons again in pre-season - we faced the League Two side last July and surprised them with a 2-1 win. Under former Gateshead manager Mike Williams, appointed last October, the Dons nevertheless managed to finish fourth before the horror of those semi-finals.

Onto more prosaic matters: Pete Worby and John Young have taken on the mantle of Ball donors and Kit Sponsorship this season and they

won't quieten down until you have forked out!

Seriously, it's a key part of our fundraising every season and a great way to get involved... plus it's great to see your name mentioned in despatches. Kit Sponsorship remains at £165 (but there is the option to pay £250 and receive your player's signed shirt at the end of the season) while matchball donation again costs £180 (£225+vat for businesses). This includes corporate hospitality in the Captains Lounge for four people.

Please contact Pete on 07967 698370 or John on 07874 846785.

For our final two pre-season games we switch our focus to local non-League opposition.

On Tuesday July 30 (7.30) we travel to Southern League Div One side Kings Langley and then comes the much-anticipated clash with National League South Hemel Hempstead here at the Vale on August 3rd (3pm). Hemel are, of course, now managed by our former boss Bobby Wilkinson and feature former Stones Jordy Mongoy, Dan Wishart and Michael Phillips. Could be spicy!

Stones in pre-season so far:
Sat July 7 Walton & Hsh (a) **D3-3**
Goals: O.G, Adarkwa, Hutchinson
Sat July 13 Chesham Utd (a) **L0-1**
Tues July 16 Notts Co (h) **L1-2**
Goal: Ashford
Sat July 20 Millwall U21 (h) **W3-2**
Goals: Obiero, Miller, Cook-Appiah



SERVED UP ON A TRAE: Cook-Appiah celebrates his late goal against Millwall
PICTURE: Jon Taffel

Wealdstone Vanarama National League fixtures (home games in bold type)

- Sat Aug 10 Dagenham & Redbridge
- Sat Aug 17 Oldham Athletic
- Tue Aug 20 Sutton United**
- Sat Aug 24 Hartlepool United
- Mon Aug 26 AFC Fylde, 3pm**
- Sat Aug 31 Solihull Moors
- Sat Sep 7 York City**
- Tue Sep 10 Woking
- Sat Sep 14 Forest Green Rovers
- Sat Sep 21 Barnet**
- Tue Sep 24 Southend United**
- Sat Sep 28 FC Halifax Town
- Sat Oct 5 Gateshead**
- Sat Oct 12 Emirates FA Cup 4Q**
- Sat Oct 19 Yeovil Town**
- Tue Oct 22 Braintree Town**
- Sat Oct 26 Ebbsfleet United
- Sat Nov 2 FA Cup 1st round**
- Sat Nov 9 Aldershot Town
- Sat Nov 16 Rochdale**
- Sat Nov 23 Eastleigh
- Tue Nov 26 Tamworth**
- Sat Nov 30 Altrincham**
- Sat Dec 7 Isuzu FA Trophy Rd 3**
- Sat Dec 14 Oldham Athletic
- Sat Dec 21 Dagenham & R**
- Thu Dec 26 Maidenhead U, 3pm
- Wed Jan 1 Boston Utd, 3pm**
- Sat Jan 4 Isuzu FA Trophy Rd 4**
- Sat Jan 11 Altrincham
- Tue Jan 14 Sutton United
- Sat Jan 18 Hartlepool United**
- Sat Jan 25 AFC Fylde
- Sat Feb 1 Solihull Moors**
- Sat Feb 8 Gateshead**
- Sat Feb 15 Yeovil Town
- Tue Feb 18 Braintree Town
- Sat Feb 22 Ebbsfleet United**
- Sat Mar 1 Aldershot Town**
- Tue Mar 4 Tamworth
- Sat Mar 8 Rochdale
- Sat Mar 15 Eastleigh**
- Sat Mar 22 Woking**
- Sat Mar 29 York City
- Sat Apr 5 Forest Green Rovers**
- Sat Apr 12 Barnet
- Fri Apr 18 Boston United, 3pm
- Mon Apr 21 Maidenhead U, 3pm**
- Sat Apr 26 Southend United
- Mon May 5 FC Halifax T, 3pm**

Reffing brilliant: Fingers' finest hour at Crawley

It's been too long since we faced Crawley Town!

Our older fans will recall many battles in the Southern League's lower reaches back in the 1970s, when the Reds (who then played at a dilapidated Town Mead) were perennial strugglers, but it seems only yesterday that we travelled to Crawley's new Broadfield stadium in 1999 to face the Sussex side in the FA Trophy 2nd round in what was our most recent meeting.

Graham Smith's match report (above right) brought the memories of that day flooding back: the Stones were in the Isthmian Division One and were underdogs as we faced newly-minted Southern League Prem side Crawley at their impressive new home. But Wealdstone were magnificent... even if it needed the assistance of Paul (Fingers) Fruin to help us on our way. Fingers, the Stones club secretary and a qualified referee, came to the rescue soon after half time when an assistant referee suffered a hamstring injury. He quickly changed into some

Crawley Town 0 Wealdstone 2
STONES repeated July's 2-0 pre-season friendly win at Broadfield Stadium on Saturday to put Dr Martens Premier League side, Crawley, out of the FA Trophy and earn themselves a tilt at the third round.

Last week's hero at Hendon, Noel Imber, brought off a superb save from Green to deny Crawley an early lead and he was in action again when he saved well from Glasgow at the expense of a corner.

Just before the break Rocky Baptiste had a golden opportunity to put the visitors ahead when a Brian Jones header put the Stones top scorer in with just the home keeper to beat, but his poor effort was saved by Curtis.

The second half was delayed for 15 minutes due to assistant referee, Mr Shepherd from Rainham, sustaining a hamstring injury and being unable to continue. Wealdstone's Junior Stones supremo, Paul 'Fingers' Fruin, stepped out of the crowd to fill the breach and did a splendid job.

Wealdstone went ahead just 10 minutes into the second half.

By
Graham Smith

A long pass from Imber was met by Baptiste whose attempted lob was half saved by advancing keeper Curtis, but the loose ball came out to Steve Bircham who hit a glorious 25 yard shot into the net.

Nine minutes later the visitors scored again. A Dominic Sterling pass found Jones, whose pace took him past Taylor and allowed him to run on and coolly slot past Curtis.

A goaline clearance by Eddie Bosford prevented Vines from pulling a goal back for Crawley but at the other end Bircham was unlucky not to score his second goal of the game when his thunderous shot was tipped onto the bar by Curtis.

Any thoughts of a comeback by the home team were ended when Boxford's fine tackle stopped Johnson getting a clear shot on goal to ensure a comfortable win for Stones who were warmly applauded off the pitch at the final whistle by their large contingent of travelling supporters.

Wealdstone: Imber, Dicker, Murphy, Stewing, Bosford, Lavin, Oller, Auld, Dutton, Soto-Vanab, Lyons, Campbell.

tracksuit trousers and a black top and was immediately involved as our striker Rocky Baptiste (looking suspiciously offside) latched onto a long ball upfield from keeper Noel Imber. The Crawley goalie blocked the shot but it ran to Steve Bircham who blasted in irresistibly for 1-0! Nine minutes later, Brian Jones coolly converted a Dom Sterling pass (undoubtedly outside) and sealed the deal.

Our most recent league meeting (report below left) was staged at Town Mead in the 1991-92 season we were relegated from the Southern League Prem.

Groundsharing, preposterously, at Vicarage Road, our away form was often better and this was the case as a late Tony Lynch goal stole the points. Two of our best players in that unhappy spell were signed from Crawley - David Venables and Grant Gallagher - with Venables especially rising to prominence after he'd been transferred to Stevenage. He was later capped for the England C team.

Crawley's star was rising at that time, and after moving to the now-named Checkatrade Stadium they won promotion to the Conference in 2010. Next followed a 1-0 defeat at Man Utd in the FA Cup and two years later promotion to League Two! Play-off promotion last season means Crawley are now back playing at their highest-ever level.

OUR RECORD v CRAWLEY TOWN:
P21 W13 D4 L4 F42 A21

A bit of history... but just the one previous meeting

Last season we welcomed League Two outfit MK Dons as our first home opposition of pre-season... and that sent our minds whirring here at Programme Towers.

Had we ever played them before? MK Dons are, of course, the franchised version of the old Wimbledon FC which caused such a furor when the South London club located to Bedfordshire in 2001.

That had all started in 1997 when a consortium led by music promoter Pete Winkelman (supported by Asda and IKEA) proposed a large retail development in Milton Keynes including a Football League-standard stadium.

The consortium approached Luton, Wimbledon, Crystal Palace, Barnet and Queens Park Rangers! In 2001 Wimbledon FC owners Røkke and Gjelsten appointed a new chairman, Charles Koppel, who was in favour of this idea, saying it was necessary to stop the club going out of business - and to the fury of most Wimbledon fans Koppel announced on 2 August 2001 that the club intended to relocate to Milton Keynes.

Championship side WFC remained at Selhurst Park while the search of a new stadium continued and in June 2003 went into administration: Winkelman decided to buy the club and arranged the temporary use of the National Hockey Stadium in Milton Keynes, playing its first match there in September 2003. Nine months later Winkelman's Inter MK Group bought the club out of administration and announced changes to its name, badge and colours - the team was renamed Milton Keynes Dons Football Club.

By this time MK Dons were in League One, and though they won promotion to the Championship in 2014 it has been a slow decline for the club since then... ending in relegation to League Two in May 2023.

There is of course rich irony and smug looks among the supporters of the original Wimbledon FC. In the wake of the club's controversial relocation, AFC Wimbledon was born and the phoenix club has risen from Surrey County football right through the Isthmian and National Leagues. Now of course they are also in League Two (relegated in 2021) alongside MK Dons with a new home of their own in Merton, just down the road from the old Plough Lane ground.

Older Stones fans (like myself) have charted the extraordinary stories of Wimbledon and indeed



Alex Dyer sweeps in the first goal last July. Picture: Doug Kermit

OUR RECORD v MK DONS
P1 W1 D0 L0 F2 A1

Milton Keynes City over the past 50 years. Current MK Dons fans may not care to reflect that the area once had a fairly successful Southern League team in Bletchley Town, which went out of business in 1974 and was renamed Milton Keynes City.

In the early 80s the Wimbledon FC chairman Ron Noades bought a controlling interest in the club (I wonder why?) but the lack of interest in football in the town made him bail out in 1985, when MK City went bankrupt.

The club re-emerged in the mid-90s, playing at Wolverton Town's quirky old ground in the South Midlands League - and it was there, I believe, that the Stones only other meeting with a 'Milton Keynes branded team' ever took place.

On the evening on Wednesday August 13, 1997 (three days before the Isthmian League Division Two season kicked off) Gordon Bartlett took a squad X1 to Wolverton for a warm-up friendly. Precious few details are to be gleaned but, thanks to the *Emslie Ender* fanzine and Roger Slater's Wealdstone 'bible' we know that it finished Milton Keynes City 1, Wealdstone 2 in front of a heaving crowd of 87. Maybe Ron Noades was right about the apathy of the local population!

So what happened when we finally met up with 'a Milton-Keynes-branded side' again last summer? Well, the first half, in particular, saw 'Stonesball' in all its glory while their fans, who turned up in good numbers expecting a comfortable win in our home surroundings, were simply mystified. How could a part-time National League side outplay them? What did it all mean to a club banking on a quick bounce-back to Level Three? An early goal from Alex Dyer, a terrific volleyed leveller from Max Dean with 8 minutes to go and an equally smart volley from Giovanni McGregor moments later decided the game.

Tuesday July 11: Wealdstone (1) 2 MK Dons (0) 1 Goals: Dyer 26, McGregor 83. Wealdstone: Trialist A (Trialist B 66), Barker (Phillips 66), Cook (c) (Trialist E 45), Mundle-Smith (Hearn 66), Clayden (McGregor 45), Dyer (Ferguson 45), Charles (Trialist D 45), Kretzschmar (Trialist F 45), Allarakhia (Trialist G 45), Obiero (Olomola 45), Campbell (Andrews 45)

LATE STRIKE DENIES REDS

CRAWLEY TOWN 0 WEALDSTONE 1

REDS relegation worries mounted after a travesty of justice robbed them of three points at Town Mead on Saturday.

BY PHIL BRYANT

A small minority of the crowd called for John Meege lead at the end of the game but he could not be blamed for the defeat, which left the club sliding towards the wrong end of the table.

Meege was given their all from start to finish and for 75 minutes of the match it seemed certain the Towns were about to enjoy his first win since Brian Sparrow left.

New boys Peter Churchill and Jack Dimes were in outstanding form. The pair, who cost just £1,000 between them, looked a

being the target of an over-zealous Craig Whittington. It was Whittington who almost put Towns in front as the seventh minute when his shot flew wide after a free kick run and cross from Dimes.

Reds continued to dominate. Ian Baker and Chris Turner were superb, while Steve Powell and Tim Haine ran the show in midfield.

This led to an incident in the first half with a Lynch being referred to a Lynch header which Dave Winstanley saved with ease.

Twice Powell was denied after Steve Dimes, while skipper Tony Vasey had a shot cleared off the line by Gallagher. This coupled with a strong penalty appeal when Churchill was headed down in the box, left Towns

pondering what they needed to do to win.

Minutes into the second half Reds were still looking for the answer. Vasey ran his shot deflected wide. Dennis Whittier forced David Hudson to tuck up his head over, while Haine unleashed a powerful drive which flew over.

Inevitably after all the attacking, Reds were brought against the run of play. Substitutes Tim Lowe found a free kick into the Crawley penalty area and after a series of mistimed clearances, Lynch kicked the ball away 11 minutes from time.

CRAWLEY: Winstanley, Gordon, Lester, Walker, Vasey, Powell, Dimes, Haine, Churchill, Vasey (Cheverson), Whittington. Unused subs: Winstanley. See also Peter Churchill.

'I think we'll feel a lot stronger physically this time next week after these two games. They are just what we need'

Hello all and welcome back to the Vale.

With the fairly predictable disappointment of the national team in Euro 2024, attention can firmly turn to the National League campaign and our pre season leading up to it. With the base of our fitness work done in the first couple of weeks of training at Brunel University, now is the time that a player can build up his sharpness in the friendlies we have planned.

It's a busy pre season schedule with four more matches still to play before we begin our competitive season on August 10th.

I feel we will be physically a lot stronger this time next week having played these two high-class Football League teams. Both Crawley and MK Dons play a similar style to that which Stuart Maynard's Notts County employed against us: both like to play from the back and build up through the thirds, often scoring high-quality combination goals.

So we need to learn lessons from our match with County. I thought we were a bit too respectful of them in the first half and their class showed through as they controlled the game with the ball for large parts (a tale we are all-too-familiar with).

Conceding two early goals was disappointing as Notts only troubled our goal three times in the first half. The second half was a complete contrast. We played on the front foot and got far more pressure higher up the pitch, something the manager wants to do.

Players will make mistakes under pressure from the

opposition at any level, so it is vital we do this more and more.

I actually watched both Crawley and MK Dons face each other in the League 2 play-off semi final last May. I was supporting my friend, the Dons wingback Kyran Lofthouse.

A magnificent Crawley performance saw them win 8-1 over the two legs, the highest play-off aggregate in history. Tipped to go down before a ball was kicked, it needs to be said that the Crawley Town manager Scott Lindsey has done an incredible job.

What struck me in both semi final performances was the role of Corey Addai, the Crawley Town goalkeeper.

It wasn't his work with his hands which struck me but his positioning and ball work at his feet - he acted as another centre back, creating an overload at the back which allowed Crawley to build from the back with confidence and success.

But such has been the success of the team that many players have left and found clubs higher up the footballing pyramid. Of course Crawley have made signings too, including former Stone and friend Charlie Barker. It's a fantastic move for Charlie and I'm sure he will learn heaps from Lindsey.



Only way they can stop him... Max is flattened in Notts game

As I alluded to earlier, both Crawley and MK will pose us defensive problems but ones which we should relish. We conceded 72 goals last season and if we want to improve upon last season's position and push the boundaries, this figure will have to be reduced. I think the experienced signings we have made will help matters... that know-how of how to win 1-0 with a clean sheet, or to take a

point away from home are the small, invisible attributes I'm hoping will improve this season with our added experience.

No matter, it's a long season but come August 10th we must be ready. This week will go a long way in preparing us for Dagenham & Redbridge away and I'm looking forward to it.

Enjoy the games and Up the Stones!

Don't miss my revealing vlog >>> youtube.com/@maxtalksfootball

This programme is printed by Hillingdon Greenprint, based here in Ruislip, using plant-based ink and fully recycled paper. Details from Graham at www.hillingdongreenprint.co.uk. Local and affordable!

Welcome to the first WFCSC notes of the new season!

I hope that many of you will have seen the announcement regarding the Supporters Club donation of £15,000 to cover the cost of the new larger dugouts at the Vale... and over the last two seasons we have donated over £33,000 to the main club - a fantastic figure that's the culmination of a lot of hard work by many people and is really making a difference to the main club.

When we report on the success of the Grosvenor Vale Fanzones we only include profits from the BBQ, parking and shirt raffles... but of course another sizeable benefit is the profits made by the social club.

Whilst we don't know the exact sales, given the 'nature' of the patrons on these days, they easily make the Vale's top 10 trading days. Sarah and her bar team do a fabulous job.

Some of our donations will go straight to the club as just that, a donation. However, we will also purchase shares to increase our shareholding to own more of the club that we all love, and we hope to increase this over the coming seasons.

On that note, after a few weeks off, the fundraising starts again for the new season.

This coming Friday, July 26th we have our summer 'shorts and shades' disco at the club with tickets £10 on the night or £7.50 in advance.

Following that comes the return of the fan favourite Jam tribute act "A Band called Malice" on Friday 9th August. Doors open at 8.45 and tickets can be purchased for £15 in advance or £17 on the door.

In case either of these don't tickle your fancy then perhaps our **Comedy Night** on Friday August 30th might appeal! It features three top comedians who have all featured on TV, with MC Jonathan Elston joined by Ian Stone, Fiona Allen and Paul Tomkinson to bring laughter to your Friday night. You can purchase tickets for all three of these events by contacting James on 07979 795414.

come on wealdstone!
BY MARK RANDALL



The Supporters Club committee try out the new home dugout for size. Definitely no inappropriate jokes about stress-testing in this caption

The Megastore, meanwhile has some new lines in development which are about to come to fruition along with all your favourites. Please come and see us, just up from DD's burger van, with the ever popular programme shop just opposite. We don't just sell on match days either: you can find us at www.wfcmegastore.co.uk and on eBay. We are always looking for donations so please drop in.

Coach travel 2024-25

WE are looking to run more coaches to away games this season kicking off with with Solihull Moors on August 31st, and then our first ever visit to the eco-friendly New Lawn Stadium of Forest Green Rovers on September 14th.

The latter is difficult to get to, so why not simply hop on the coach at the Vale and be dropped off at the stadium in the lovely Cotswolds? Look out for further details on how to book.

I mentioned in the 'dugout press release' that we are always looking for people to help out and I hope that recent donations may just be the final push for you to come forward and join the Supporters' Club committee. You can help out regularly or just ad hoc - there is a role for you.

On the eve of the new season, we are already planning our next donation so please look out for this in the coming weeks Here's to a successful 2024/25 season and maybe, hopefully, a cup run.

Up the Stones! Mark