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FOOTBALL: Taylor's men bounce back from loss



Luke Dreher scored a fine goal for Wealdstone in midweek

Image: Jon Taffel

Stones conquer Kings in latest friendly test

AN impressive win at Kings Langley on Tuesday paired with a humbling home defeat to MK Dons on Saturday saw Matt Taylor's Wealdstone step up their preparations for the National League season.

In a sunny encounter at Grosvenor Vale, League Two side MK Dons raced into a two-goal lead early on thanks Stephen Wearne and Joe Tomlinson.

The Stones grew into the game and hit back through Enzo Boldewijn in the 68th minute, but the Dons regained their two-goal advantage with a fine effort from Matt Dennis, whose shot flew into the top corner late on.

With just two weeks until National League action returns, Taylor named a strong side, with just three changes as Todd Miller, Elliot Simmons, and Micah

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Obiero came into the line-up.

The visitors started with intent and looked the stronger side, getting their reward on 13 minutes.

A brilliant team move saw the ball end up at the feet of Wearne, whose feint inside allowed him enough time and space to finish expertly beyond Stones keeper Archie Matthews.

The visitors doubled their lead two minutes later when Tomlinson fired an effort into the bottom corner at the back post.

And a flurry of late chances for both sides came to nothing, as the Dons took a deserved 2-0 lead into the break.

After several changes at the interval, the Stones halved the deficit when Boldewijn was played through on goal and smashed the ball into the back of the net.

But despite some good individual performances and a swing in momentum in the second half, Taylor's men then found themselves two goals behind once again as MK Dons forward Dennis finished off a brilliant move with an unstoppable effort into the top corner from distance.

A smarter performance three days later saw Taylor's side respond from defeat with a thrilling 3-2 win at Kings Langley.

Goals either side of half-time from Sam Ashford and a first-half stunner by Luke Dreher sent the Stones into a com-

manding 3-0 advantage after an hour.

Langley looked to come back into proceedings and replied in the 74th minute from an in-swinging cross, which found a body in the box to be converted from close range.

In an attempt to hit back instantly, an unnamed trialist fired a powerful effort from range to force an excellent outstretched save from the Langley keeper; but the hosts did manage to grab a second goal just five minutes from time.

The late onslaught wasn't enough, however, as Taylor's side emerged victorious, claiming their third win of pre-season.

Wealdstone's final pre-season fixture sees them host Hemel Hempstead on Saturday (3pm), before visiting Dagenham & Redbridge a week later.

Middlesex off mark in 50-over cup

DUO IMPRESS IN FIVE-WICKET VICTORY OVER NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



Middlesex's Mark Stoneman
Image: PA

MARK Stoneman and Nathan Fernandes shared a stand of 128 to get Middlesex's Metro Bank One-Day Cup campaign up and running with a five-wicket win over Northamptonshire Steelbacks at Radlett.

The left-handed duo were joint top scorers for the home side with 83 apiece before Martin Andersson (35 not out from 23 balls) and Jack Davies (31 not out from 17) completed the job with 11 deliveries to spare.

Gus Miller struck a career-best 73 from 68 for the Steelbacks, with Prithvi Shaw and Saif Zaib also scoring half-centuries before Justin Broad hammered an unbeaten 38 from just 20 enabling his side to post 317 for nine. But, although Broad took 3-65, including two wickets in as many balls, it was not enough for the visitors – who slipped behind Middlesex at the foot of Group A after three consecutive defeats.

Stoneman said: "The first couple of games it was a shambles, really – we couldn't string two balls together and it was way below what we expect of ourselves."

"So it was nice to get a win on the board and make strides towards where we want to get to. There's always a bit of bounce and movement in the wicket here but when you do get used to the pitch, that bounce then becomes your friend and the ball absolutely flies off. "It's always a game of cat and mouse, judging how hard you go up front with the bat when the ball's doing a bit and how many wickets you have in hand. "We had me coming in a bit later on than usual and thankfully I managed to get a good partnership with Nathan Fernandes, which put us in a good position going into the last 10 overs." Middlesex visit Kent on Sunday, then host Durham at Radlett on Tuesday.