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FOOTBALL: Good signs in opening-day defeat



Sam Ashford heads Wealdstone level against Dagenham & Redbridge

Image: Gavin Ellis/GS Photo

Lots of positives for Stones boss Taylor

WEALDSTONE boss Matt Taylor says his side can take 'lots of positives' from Saturday's National League opener despite going down 2-1 to Dagenham & Redbridge.

Sam Ashford's header looked to have secured a point for Taylor in his first competitive game in charge, but Dion Pereira's brilliant late strike condemned Stones to an opening-day defeat.

"Lots of positives. I thought at times we moved the ball exceptionally well," said Taylor.

"We were really crisp in the way we did that, and we played out of really pressured situations - especially in the first half - really well with confidence.

"When I look at Sam (Ashford) and the goal he scored, he made a real difference when he came on the pitch, but the

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reality is we weren't ruthless when we had our big chances.

"We scored a really good goal, and the momentum shifted to us in the game. We had a great chance probably five to six minutes after we scored, and I think if that goes in, that gives the players a real boost.

"But in terms of that, there were more positives than there were negatives. I thought the boys worked extremely hard in pre-season. They were on their knees today because they've lost a game of football, but I firmly believe today regardless of the result, will never define our season."

After weeks of relentless preparation under Ben Strevens, Dagenham looked to play a possession-based game for the most part and Taylor didn't see anything different from what he had expected from the opposition.

"There weren't any real surprises. I thought we dealt with the aggressive press from them, and we moved the ball much better," he added.

"I felt the players grew in confidence during the game. They've got really good attacking players. You can see that from who scored, but we probably should've maybe avoided them by making some different decisions.

"But we're a new group and I look at the players I wasn't able to select. Sean (Adarkwa) got injured on Thursday in training, we've lost Craig (Eastmond),

who's a big player for us, Munds (Mundle-Smith) is a big player for us.

"I look at Mason (Barrett), who played every minute of pre-season. He tore his hamstring last Saturday in the last pre-season game, so we haven't been particularly lucky with injuries.

"That's not making an excuse, that's just the facts.

"The players that played gave everything they had and you see the supporters reaction to them at the end of the game. That probably tells you everything they've seen. Every player in a Wealdstone shirt has given everything for the badge."

Up next for the Stones is Oldham Athletic on Saturday (3pm), before welcoming Sutton United to Grosvenor Vale on Tuesday (7.45pm).

Harrow start season with dogged win



Harrow and Ashford players clash
Image: David Bonkale

HARROW Borough beat Ashford Town 1-0 to begin their first season outside of step three since the 1970s on a high.

No fewer than 10 players made their first-team debut after Ben Bukowski took the reins in the summer, with only the popular James Gurteen left from the squad that finished second bottom of the Southern League Premier Division South. And the game came to life in first half stoppage time when Harrow's Leo Sery went down under a challenge inside the Ashford half and the referee awarded a free-kick to the visitors.

Jake King was nibbling at the ball which resulted in a minor melee, with half a dozen players from each side involved. After consulting his assistants, referee Mr Wigginton showed Harrow's Jeremiah Luwero a straight red card and yellow to King.

Harrow took the lead in the 49th minute as Luke Ifil crossed from the right edge of the area and the ball deflected off a defender and into the path of Sery, who headed home from six yards.

But their task was made even more difficult in the 57th minute when they were reduced to nine men.

Ashford's Jack Arnold chased a long ball behind the home defence and keeper Andrew McCorkell rushed from his area in an attempt to clear.

Arnold toed the ball past the keeper but, before he could finish, was bundled over by Deago Dunbar-Bonnie.

However, after consulting with his assistant for an extended period, Mr Wigginton sent off McCorkell.

James Gurteen took over in goal with over 30 minutes left and the nine men of Harrow went close through Addison Garnett.

Man of the match Gurteen made a great save with his legs from close range, with the rebound blasted over, and Aaron McLeish saw an injury-time header flagged offside.

Borough host Ashford United in the FA Cup preliminary round this weekend.