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FOOTBALL: Unbeaten streak in league extended



Wealdstone's Alex Reid scored two goals against Altrincham in midweek

Image: Jon Taffel

Taylor praises Stones for character in draw

MATT Taylor's Wealdstone extended their unbeaten run in the National League to six games after twice coming from behind to draw 3-3 with Altrincham on Tuesday.

The Stones hadn't played a league fixture since the 1-1 draw at Eastleigh in November, crashing out of the FA Trophy on Saturday at the hands of fellow strugglers Aldershot.

"We've defended a lot worse than that and got clean sheets. We just made three errors today," Taylor told the club website after the pulsating draw with Altrincham.

"In terms of our performance, it was excellent. To come back in the manner that we did - it was a dubious penalty and probably never a penalty.

"The referee has made a decision he

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feels is right in the moment. I've had a chat with him - it's not a penalty. We've watched it back, but we can't legislate for those mistakes. That's our opinion.

"To show the character we did, to show the quality in the final third to score three goals. We should have had four or five at least.

"The biggest compliment I can give to my players is that Altrincham is a very good team, but I felt we stifled them."

The Stones continued to demonstrate their promising resurgence under the former Portsmouth winger and came into firm control of the game after half time when Alex Reid's double restored

parity, giving Taylor another reason to get behind his players.

"The way in which we used the ball in areas of the pitch where we can really hurt teams was exceptional tonight," he continued.

"The performance is there, but the result is two points less than what I thought we deserved based on our performance.

"The opposition wasted time, even at 3-3. Even though we conceded three goals, the confidence and belief never wavered. We were the only team pushing at the end to score. But we've made errors and we've been punished. That's what happens when you make them against good teams."

Taylor didn't allow frustrations of early missed chances to affect his mood

after the game, continuing to laud their group for another stellar attacking performance.

"We missed chances, yes. But the character we showed in the first half to come back, we were going to need again," he said.

"It's still the same result at the beginning of half-time and at the end of half-time as it was at the beginning of the game - a draw.

"I just felt that if we had gotten that first goal with the chances we had, then we would have gone on to win the game quite comfortably. It wasn't meant to be, and I'm pleased with the point."

Wealdstone return to National League action with a trip to Oldham on Saturday before hosting Dagenham & Redbridge a week later.

Saracens storm past Bulls rivals

EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN BEGINS WITH COMFORTABLE HOME WIN



Maro Itoje attacks for Saracens against Bulls

Image: PA

SARACENS powered to victory over Bulls as a 27-5 victory marked the start of their Investec Champions Cup campaign.

There was an early setback for Saracens at StoneX Stadium as the South African side's winger Sebastian de Klerk scored the opening try. But Wales prop Rhys Carr powered over to level the score and Fergus Burke's penalty gave the hosts a narrow 8-5 half-time lead. The strong wind was to prove a decisive factor as England captain Jamie George, Tom Willis and Ben Earl all scored tries after the break. The three-time European champions head to Stade Francais next weekend. Stade played with 13 men for the final 27 minutes of their 33-7 defeat at Munster.

Pierre Azogoh was sent off for catching Peter O'Mahony with a flying arm and Baptiste Pesenti saw red nine minutes later for a dangerous tackle. Munster secured a bonus point with tries from Thaakir Abrahams, Shane Daly, Alex Kendellen and Tom Farrell. Harlequins and Sale both lost away from home with the London outfit going down 23-12 to Racing 92. Glasgow scrum-half George Horne claimed a first-half hat-trick in their 38-19 victory over Sale at Scotstoun Stadium.

Northampton began their campaign with a comfortable 38-8 bonus-point victory over Castres. But Exeter fell to a 39-21 defeat to South African side Sharks side in Durban. Clermont Auvergne shut out Benetton in a 28-0 victory at Stade Marcel-Michelin, while fellow French outfit Toulon overcame a 14-10 interval deficit to win 24-14 at Stormers.