

# SPORT

Read the latest sports news at  
harrowtimes.co.uk/sport

## RUGBY: Saracens star to lead Six Nations quest



England's Maro Itoje during the Autumn international match at the Allianz Stadium

# Itoje 'humbled' to be made England captain

SARACENS' Maro Itoje will lead England into the upcoming Guinness Six Nations after replacing clubmate Jamie George as captain.

George has been in charge since the 2023 World Cup but is demoted to vice-skipper alongside Ellis Genge, with Itoje taking on the role on a permanent basis for the first time.

Itoje has previously deputised for George when the hooker has been replaced in the second half of games and the promotion continues the 30-year-old lock's rise as a leader, having been appointed his club's captain at the start of the season.

Head coach Steve Borthwick has picked a 36-man squad for the Six Nations that includes rampaging Saracens number eight Tom Willis, but is

missing veteran prop Dan Cole and scrum-half Ben Spencer.

"With 88 England caps, Maro has been a central figure in this squad for many years, bringing a vast amount of experience both on and off the field," Borthwick said.

"He's a calm, influential leader, renowned for his commitment to upholding high standards and his ability to motivate those around him.

"His strong rapport with the squad and coaches, combined with his leadership experience at Saracens, makes him ideally placed to take on this responsibility.

"I'd like to recognise the outstanding leadership of Jamie George, whose contributions as captain have been significant and will continue to play

an important role as a vice-captain."

At 34 years old, George faces a battle to be involved in the next World Cup in 2027 and is fighting for his position as first-choice hooker, with pressure coming from Luke Cowan-Dickie and Theo Dan.

Questions were also asked of George's suitability for the captaincy given he was frequently replaced early in the second half, coming off at time when matches were hanging in the balance.

England won only five of their 12 Tests in 2024 and suffered a string of narrow defeats to France, New Zealand and Australia.

"I'm incredibly humbled and honoured to have been asked by Steve to be England captain," Itoje said.

"It's a truly incredible privilege for both me and my family and I feel grateful to have been given this opportunity.

"With the role comes a great deal of responsibility, but I'm at a point in my career where I feel ready to give my all to serve the team and the fans with the captaincy, and also produce my best on the field.

"It's reassuring to know there is a group of senior players to support me and help build on the achievements of Jamie, who has led the team brilliantly and who has been a great friend and leader for so many years.

"I am excited by the squad of players we have - who are all hungry for success - and I look forward to leading them out for the forthcoming Six Nations."

## Harrow announce exit of duo

FIRST-TEAM MANAGER AND ASSISTANT LEAVE WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT



Ben Bukowski and Keagan Cole  
Image: Bruce Viveash

HARROW Borough Football Club confirmed that Ben Bukowski and Keagan Cole had left their positions as first-team manager and assistant manager with immediate effect this week.

The announcement was made on Tuesday, when it was also revealed that first-team coach Dennis Quigley would take charge of the team in a caretaker capacity, starting with the game against Harefield United in the Middlesex Senior Cup.

The news came with Borough sitting in seventh place in the Isthmian League South Central division, just four points off the play-off places, following a 1-1 draw at Uxbridge on New Year's Day.

They are due to visit sixth-placed Hartley Wintney on Saturday.

\*Wealdstone saw their National League fixture at Altrincham postponed at the weekend, as wintry weather hit the UK.

Matt Taylor's men were due to visit Sutton last night (Wednesday) in what will have been their first game in 20 days, having seen Henry Sandat recalled from his loan spell by Hull City.

Midfielder Elliot Simmons has had his contract terminated by mutual agreement having been out on loan at Bedford Town since August.

Stones are due to welcome Hartlepool United to Grosvenor Vale on Saturday in what is their 'Her Game Too' fixture to bring attention to the inclusion of women and girls in football and encourage attendance at football matches.

Girls aged under 19 gain free admission, an offer available for home and away fans, while those aged 19 and over can buy a ticket for just £5.