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## FOOTBALL: Three wins in seven days boosts boss



Harrison Sohna in action for Wealdstone

Image: Jon Taffel

# Gibson hails massive week for Wealdstone

NEIL Gibson's positive start to his tenure as Wealdstone manager continued with a 4-2 win over Ebbsfleet United on Saturday, writes TOM NORTON.

Although the visitors have occupied the bottom spot of the National League throughout the campaign, the Stones had to twice come from behind to secure victory at Grosvenor Vale and make it three wins in a row.

Gibson said: "You could tell the first 10 or 15 minutes; the intention of the players was to try and get on the front foot. That's what we've sort of spoken largely about - trying to start games well and get on the front foot.

"It didn't quite happen. You could see how they exerted themselves on Saturday and Wednesday [2-1 win at Braine Tree]. It was really, really difficult to get a foothold in the game.

"Obviously, Ebbsfleet are fighting for everything they've got. They've picked up some really good results recently and been difficult to beat.

"For us to score four against them is really pleasing, but I think we'll be disappointed with the goals we gave away."

Belief amongst the squad had been difficult to come by prior to the Stones turnaround in form, and Gibson certainly seems to have breathed new life into a team threatened by relegation.

He added: "A lot of players have played three games in seven days. Three victories, a long trip to Yeovil, a trip on Wednesday night, so a day less in terms of recovery.

"But we grouped on Friday and put the information across to them, and they obviously responded really well.

"They started to get the second wind

in the second half, but what was really helpful to us was that we were able to get some bodies back on the bench. The bench looked a lot stronger for us in terms of personnel who have got the experience to come on and change games.

"The lads were fantastic throughout in terms of their attitude and application, but being able to bring on a triple change at 65 minutes really reinvigorated us and we went from strength to strength and went on to win the game."

And the Stones boss wanted to pay special attention to January loan signing Harrison Sohna, whose goal on the stroke of half-time drew the scores level after Ebbsfleet had taken the lead again.

"Harrison took his chance really, really well. It came out to him and he moved his feet really well and fired it off. We know the quality he's got - that's

obviously epitomised with the third goal and his second," Gibson said.

"Ultimately, that does give you a little bit of belief and momentum going into the break because it'll be a sickening blow for Ebbsfleet.

"We know what that's like to be on the receiving end of. It's something we want to address. We took that momentum into the second half and the belief and team spirit.

"There are some real shifts being put in by senior players and throughout the group to get us to where we wanted to be, and we know three games and three wins make a massive difference within a week."

Tuesday's home game with Boston United was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch, but Stones are due to visit Tamworth on Tuesday.

## Itoje: Great to win, lots to improve



Maro Itoje with the Calcutta Cup  
Image: PA

**SARACENS'** Maro Itoje was delighted with the way England performed to narrowly defeat their auld enemy Scotland 16-15 at Twickenham and keep hopes of claiming the 2025 Guinness Six Nations Championship alive, writes Ziad Chaudry.

Despite the visitors winning the try count thanks to Ben White, Huw Jones and Duhan der Merwe, Finn Russell's missed conversion in the final minute proved very costly.

Tommy Freeman's lone try on seven minutes, eight points from Marcus Smith and a Fin Smith penalty 11 minutes from time was enough for England to clinch victory and regain the iconic Calcutta Cup after four years.

The England captain in that 13-6 Murrayfield success in 2020 was former Saracens star Owen Farrell, now at the Paris-based French Top 14 outfit Racing 92. "One thing we did do was fight," England captain Itoje told England Rugby's official website, after playing alongside clubmates Ben Earl, Tom Willis, Elliot Daly and Jamie George.

"We scrapped, we ran hard for one another. There's loads for us to get better at but we are delighted to win.

"We've been more clinical than we've been in the past when we get into the opposition half. There's a feeling we're going to score when we get into the opposition half.

"We just need to find ways to spend more time there and I think we're going to execute more.

"Scotland played a lot in our half and we didn't exit the way we wanted but we did fight and scrap. There is loads for us to get better at but we are delighted to win.

"In the first half and second half, we probably didn't play as much as we wanted and Scotland probably played more than us, but we were more clinical than we have been."

England host Italy on March 9 after their 73-34 hammering against France in Rome. Ireland beat Wales 27-18 in Cardiff.