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FOOTBALL: Eastmond sees red in loss at Tamworth



Craig Eastmond in action for Wealdstone at Tamworth before his dismissal

Image: Jon Taffel

Gibson left frustrated as 10-man Stones sink

NEIL Gibson's frustrations were evident after 10-man Wealdstone's winning run came to an abrupt end in a damaging 4-1 defeat at Tamworth.

With the game goalless at half-time, the Stones capitulated in the second half after Craig Eastmond was dismissed for a second bookable offence within a minute of the restart.

"So many things to take on board. It's hard to come out and eloquently put across how I feel because I'm really frustrated, and I know I've got a number of frustrated players," said Gibson. "We were nowhere near what we set ourselves up for and the standards we set ourselves in the last three or four games. We were nowhere near that in the first half."

"However, we defended our box re-

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ally well from the long throws and the onslaught of what Tamworth are about. There's nothing wrong with it. There's more than one way of playing a game of football.

"They're very good at what they do in terms of that, they are streetwise and the way they go about it."

"At half-time we spoke about how we needed to go through the gears and a little in terms of what we could do and how we could take the game to Tamworth. Obviously, everything goes out the window in the first minute of the second half with the sending-off."

The red card seemed to almost im-

mediately throw the Wealdstone players off track, struggling to prevent the inevitable onslaught from the hosts man less.

"Fair play to Tamworth. They were excellent at what they do and how they tried to go about the game and how they managed the game. The crowd get right behind them and made a lot of noise," added Gibson.

"I think that, maybe, if the referee had his time back to look at a couple of those decisions, he would maybe reflect on them a bit differently."

"But, I'm not going to come out and criticise referees because as long as we take care of doing what we do and be the best version of ourselves at our very best, and then something happens that the referee has an impact on the

game, then you can look at that.

"At the moment, we can only look at what we've got to do better as a group and how we can bounce back."

And the Stones boss sent a message to the disappointed travelling support ahead of a crucial National League clash with Rochdale this weekend.

"We went over at the end to apologise to the supporters and I think we really need to apologise to the supporters on the basis of today. We want to give the fans something to get behind," he said.

"We want to give the fans something they can really feel positive about. The last three games prior to this, we felt we were going in the right direction."

"We've got to really dust ourselves down after this. We can't carry any hangovers into Saturday."

George 'inspired by Root'

HOOKER FEARED END OF ENGLAND CAREER AFTER LOSING CAPTAINCY



Jamie George

Image: PA

JAMIE George feared his international career may be over amid the pain of being stripped of the England captaincy before taking inspiration from cricketer Joe Root to bounce back.

Saracens hooker George is poised to win a 100th cap for his country during Sunday's Guinness Six Nations clash with Italy and harbours ambitions of another British and Irish Lions tour and continuing until at least the 2027 World Cup.

The 34-year-old succeeded Owen Farrell as England skipper ahead of last year's championship before being demoted to vice-captain and replaced by Saracens team-mate Maro Itoje in January. England batter Root was in a similar situation in 2022 when the Test captaincy was passed to Ben Stokes.

Cricket fan George was "gutted" after learning his fate during a "to the point" conversation with head coach Steve Borthwick but aspires to remain at international level for as long as possible as he closes in on a major milestone.

"That hurt, it really did, and the first thing on my mind was 'is that me (done)?', he said. "But at the same time, I have really good people around me; speaking to my old man, my wife, you understand what is important."

"Some of the best times of my life have been playing rugby for England, I love playing rugby for England."

"When I was reflecting on it, I took a bit of inspiration from Joe Root. I look now and the freedom he has and the way he has kicked on and become the best batsman in the world arguably."

"That is hugely inspiring and I see that as the sort of trajectory I aspire to be like, the way he has reacted to it I see it as a huge positive."

"It has freed him up and allowed him to play even better. I want to play for England as long as I can; the World Cup is definitely an ambition."