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FOOTBALL: Club climb out of drop zone after win



Wealdstone's Alex Reid celebrates his winner at Altrincham

Image: Jon Taffel

Stones seeking bumper crowd to help boost bid

WEALDSTONE are hoping for a bumper crowd as they welcome National League rivals Woking to Grosvenor Vale on Non-League Day on Saturday.

And Neil Gibson's men will go into the weekend action having climbed out of the relegation zone with a fine 1-0 win at play-off hopefuls Altrincham on Tuesday.

The hosts had the best chance of the first half, but Luca Gunter denied Alex Newby with a good save.

And Stones made the breakthrough just two minutes into the second half when Alex Reid converted Dominic Hutchinson's cross.

Gunter thwarted Justin Amaluzor as Alty looked to respond, but Enzo Boldewijn went close to doubling the advantage at the other end.

By **LEE POWER**
lee.power@newsquest.co.uk

Stones survived eight minutes of stoppage time to move two points clear of the drop, as Altrincham's fourth successive loss left them one point outside the top seven.

Wealdstone's victory came on the back of a remarkable 3-3 draw with Eastleigh at the weekend.

They fell behind after just two minutes as Ludwig Francillette struck, with the centre-back netting a second just past the half-hour mark.

A delicate chip from Tyrese Shade put the visitors 3-0 up the break, leaving Stones with a mountain to climb.

But Tyler Walker gave the home side

hope midway through the second half and Reid cut the gap to one from the penalty spot soon after.

Reid struck again three minutes from time to complete a stunning comeback and ensure Stones picked up a valuable point in their battle to stay in the division.

Gibson said: "Couldn't be any worse than we were in the first half and probably very much as close to as good as we can be in the second half."

"That's frustrating for us. The goals are really soft that we've given away."

"Eastleigh came with a game plan, very direct team, nothing wrong with that. For us to concede from two set-pieces was very disappointing. That's nowhere near the levels we want and expect and harsh words were said."

"But the players have to take the plaudits for the second-half performance. The group really showed some resilience and enormous amount of character."

"The position we find ourselves in the league, we've got to have people willing to stand up and fight."

"We do have that in a number of players but we've just got to cut out the real silly errors that are making it difficult."

"Because when we score the first goal in games, I believe we will go on and win games of football."

Premier League and EFL season ticket holders can attend Saturday's game for just £13, when buying tickets online in advance.

Stones also host Aldershot Town on Tuesday (7.45pm).

Itoje happy with romp over Wales

NEW ENGLAND CAPTAIN PROUD OF 2025 SIX NATIONS CAMPAIGN



Maro Itoje attacks Wales

Image: PA

DESPITE being beaten to the title by France, Saracens Maro Itoje insisted he was satisfied with England's 2025 Guinness Six Nations Championships campaign, writes Ziad Chaudry. After Ireland beat Italy 22-17 in Rome, England needed Scotland to derail France's title charge in Paris after demolishing woeful Wales 68-14 in Cardiff.

But the Red Roses, who last won the title in 2020, will have to wait after Les Bleus beat Scotland 35-16 to regain the mantle they last claimed in 2022.

Despite losing to defending champions Ireland 27-22 in Dublin, England - coached by former Saracens lock Steve Borthwick - bounced back with home wins over France (26-25), Scotland (16-15) and Italy (47-24).

And Saturday's overwhelming 10-try success at the Principality Stadium saw them finish second with 20 points, a point behind France.

Captain Itoje, who played alongside clubmates Jamie George, Elliot Daly, Ben Earl and Tom Willis as Nick Tompkins appeared for the hosts, began the try blitz after two minutes.

Chandler Cunningham-South and debutant Henry Pollock scored twice apiece as Tom Roebuck, Tommy Freeman, Will Stuart, Alex Mitchell and Joe Heyes also touched down. In-form Fin Smith kicked 10 points and Marcus Smith added eight more.

"We've been building towards this and in each game we've shown a different side of us and we're just happy to finish it well," Itoje, 30, told England Rugby's official website.

"You have to be consistent even when results aren't going your way," he added. "The challenge for our team is to continue to grow and get better. Whether we get praise or scrutiny it doesn't matter, let's just stay consistent."