

Stevenage made hard work of securing victory over 10-man Wycombe Wanderers - but it is a win that might prove vital in the weeks and months to come.

A delightfully composed finish by Carl Piergianni put the home side into a half-time lead and they were given a huge boost three minutes into the second half when visiting goalkeeper Max Stryjek was sent off as last man.

But they were left hanging on at the end, closing out a 1-0 win for their first success in five.

It didn't put them back into the top six but a must-win game against a neighbourly rival was won.

More of the same on Tuesday and there will be plenty of smiles around the Lamex.

There were just two changes to the side that lost in the 90th minute at Derby County one week earlier - and there were proper eyebrow raisers.

Luther James-Wildin wasn't included at all and perhaps even more of a shock than that, neither was Jamie Reid.

There had been no mention of injury to either in the build-up but the club did announce, along with the team news, that the pair were injured, Reid with a groin problem.

Dan Sweeney and Alex MacDonald came in as Steve Evans went to a back five, Nick Freeman going to right wing-back.

That didn't last long mind as Wycombe, buoyed by their EFL Trophy success in the week that secured a trip to Wembley, started by far the better.

They didn't test Taye Ashby-Hammond but they should have scored.

A long throw by Luke Leahy bounced around a bit before finding Gideon Kodua around six yards out.

The flag stayed down but he sliced it horribly and it floated off the bar and wide.

Not long after, Wycombe hit the post, albeit from the most ridiculously tight angles, and that saw Evans change it back to a more familiar 4-4-2, moving Terence Vancooten to right-back and Freeman pushed up to the point of the midfield diamond.

It didn't immediately swing the game towards Boro but it did leave it a bit more even.

The goal, however, did move the swingometer firmly towards Boro, and it was a lovely finish from the most unlikely of sources.

Dan Butler pumped the ball back into the box and it fell to the feet of Sweeney.

He gathered his composure and laid it back to his central-defensive partner on the edge of the box and the skipper simply passed the ball the ball into the corner, left of Max Stryjek.

Ashby-Hammond did have to make an instinctive shot to deny Beryly Lubala, who had been found by a sliced shot by Ryan Tafazolli.

That though was a rare positive moment for the Chairboys in the second part of the first half and Boro could have made it two when Jake Forster-Caskey shot low to the right of Stryjek but the keeper got down low and pushed it away.

Kane Hemmings also headed over and MacDonald scooped a shot over but the break was reached with approval from the home fans.

Three minutes into the second half and there was another pivotal moment.

A ball over the top should have been dealt with by the Wycombe defence but they didn't and it bounced through.

Roberts reacted as did Stryjek and the two met just outside the box.

Neither got the ball but the keeper did get the forward and after a quick check between referee and linesman, the almost inevitable red card was shown.

Franco Ravizzoli came on to replace him, with Kodua the man sacrificed, and the keeper had a baptism of fire, fumbling a tame Piergianni header behind him and out for a corner, maybe with the aid of a post.

The keeper or the upright did prevent Hemmings from adding to the lead when the striker got in at the back post.

But at that point, the only thing that seemed likely to prevent a Stevenage win was if the hosts 'did an Exeter' and conceded to 10 men.

Vancooten did nod a corner over at the back post and like Hemmings, he perhaps should have scored.

But the final 15 minutes belonged more to the visitors, mostly because Stevenage just let their grasp on the game go completely.

Wanderers had a good shout for a pen when Vokes and Piergianni came together, but the decision was six of one, half a dozen of the other.

David Wheeler then curled one wide in the seven added minutes as Boro kept giving up possession.

There was another late block but the magnitude of the win might not have been lost on the boss, punching the air on the final whistle.