

## Wycombe bring class to avoid FA Cup slip at Wealdstone with 11th straight win



Wycombe fans celebrate with their players after Richard Kone scored the second goal. Photograph: Bradley Collyer/PA

For [Wycombe](#) there were 11 changes and an 11th successive win, for Wealdstone the consolation of a fine performance and forcing the League One leaders to bring on their heavy hitters to see out the game. The visitors did just enough to keep their bandwagon rolling, a goal in each half securing their place in round three and lending an unfairly serene sheen to an awkward tie during which they were blunted for long periods by the National League strugglers.

Both goals were outstanding in contrasting ways, Beryly Lubala opening the scoring with a beautiful free-kick and the substitute Richard Kone making the game safe in the 84th minute after capping a fine run infield from the left with a composed finish. But if they were always a bit sharper in mind and movement there was little sign of the ease with which Wycombe have disposed of so many League One opponents this season, Matt Bloomfield's side creating little from open play until Wealdstone started to be gripped by fatigue and desperation in the final few minutes.



Beryly Lubala curls home a gorgeous free-kick to open the scoring for Wycombe. Photograph: Bradley Collyer/PA

“There was always going to be a risk that it was going to be slightly clunky today with so many changes but they were excellent,” Bloomfield said. “It’s not easy to come in from not playing and produce a performance in tough circumstances. There’s a reason why it was live on TV, a reason why we had the early kick-off, all these things come with a reason – it’s because everyone was hoping there might be an upset and we might be the story.”

Perhaps they might have been, had the goalkeeper, Shamal George, played less impressively, or had Alex Reid not missed an open goal midway through the first half.

“That would have changed everything,” said Matt Taylor, the Wealdstone manager. “If that first goal would have gone in you’d have seen this place become quite intimidating, because the supporters were desperate.

“It’s always going to be difficult when you play a team that’s from two leagues above you and sitting on top of the league. The biggest testament to our players is that they’ve had to put all their best players on to the pitch to see a game out at little old Wealdstone.”

Wycombe failed to create a single chance in the opening period but still took a lead into the break: the tall, commanding Wealdstone centre-back Jack Cook hared rashly out of the defensive line to trip Dan Udoh 25 yards from goal and Lubala curled the ball into the top corner from the resulting free-kick.

By then the Stones had carved out and horrifically missed the best chance of the game, a low cross from the left finding Reid unmarked at the far post, but with George nowhere and a yawning goal in front of him somehow he sidefooted over the bar.

Reid also missed their best chance of the second half, intercepting David Wheeler’s attempt to chest the ball back to his goalkeeper – when Wycombe finally created a chance it was for the wrong team – but hitting George with his shot. In the 73rd minute the Oldham loanee carried the ball to the edge of the area before sending in a shot that deflected off Ryan Tafazolli and was excellently saved.

By this point Wycombe’s creativity had scarcely improved, though Tafazolli had a header cleared off the line from Matt Butcher’s corner. But in the closing stages Tafazolli shot across goal and wide, albeit after the referee missed a clear pull on a defender’s shirt, before Kone’s 12th goal of an extraordinary first full season in professional football, 10 minutes after coming on, settled the tie.