

Basement epic won by Linnets

SYDENHAMS
WESSEX LEAGUE

NEW Milton collected three much-needed points from their bottom-of-the-table Premier Division tussle with Hayling United, writes **ADRIAN KAJUMBA**.

Despite missing a number of key players, including influential pair defender Jon Lever and skipper Paul White, the Linnets managed to nick a 4-3 win at College Road and



build on the excellent point they earned at high-flying Bournemouth in midweek.

"It was a result we needed," admitted secretary Richie Phippard (pictured above).

"When you are down the wrong end of the table you have to at least beat the teams below you.

"It was a closer game than probably it should have been but a good result and won we deserved, especially considering we had three or four players key out."

Bottom-of-the-table Hayling went in front in the 11th minute at the College Ground.

Tim Littler headed the visitors level four minutes later.

Jordan Hughes then headed New Milton into a 2-1 lead after 52 minutes before Ashley Booker's half-volley made it 3-1.

New Milton then suffered a collapse, conceding twice in 14 minutes as Hayling hauled themselves level.

But Alex Baldacchino, signed on dual registration terms from Havant & Waterlooville, rounded the keeper and tapped home the winner seven minutes from time.

Dolphins leap to top

POOLE Town are back in their customary place at the Sydenhams Premier summit.

Two second-half goals were enough to topple Alresford Town 2-0 at Tatnam. It leapfrogs the Dolphins above Bemerton Heath, who went down 2-1 at Bournemouth Poppies, and Winchester City who were otherwise engaged in the Vase.

Steve Smith broke the deadlock from close range with his 15th goal in 11 games and Lamin Dibba bagged Poole's second from a yard out.

Dolphins, who are aiming to clinch a third successive title, have won seven games in a row and, ominously for their rivals, are undefeated in all 11 league and cup games they have played this term.

They face a stern test tonight, however, away to third-placed Poppies.

SAINTS SPOTLIGHT Hillsborough challenge for Adkins' men

■ By Adrian Kajumba

SAINTS will be aiming to avoid setting two new club records at Sheffield Wednesday this weekend.

Saints have never gone six consecutive games without a goal in their entire 125 years.

But if they fail to find the net at Hillsborough they will beat the club's longest ever run of games AND minutes without a goal.

The 0-0 stalemate against Colchester on Saturday extended Saints run of goalless games to five – with all of them coming since the sacking of Alan Pardew.

And in terms of minutes, it is 450 since Saints' last goal – Lee Barnard's 90th minute strike in the 4-0 thumping of Bristol Rovers, Pardew's final game in charge.

The previous longest drought is a massive 534 minutes – over 70 years ago.

Saints have gone five games without a goal three times previously.

The first sequence occurred at the start of the 1922/23 campaign.

Having won promotion from Division 3 South, Saints failed to find the net in the first five games of the following Division 2 season.

They began it with a 0-0 draw at Gateshead followed by a 1-0 home loss to Leeds.

They then lost the return fixture against Gateshead 2-0 before losing 1-0 and 3-0 at Leeds and Barnsley respectively.

Saints were shut-out for five league games on the spin a second time in September 1937.

After starting the season with three goals, albeit in a 4-3 defeat at Norwich, Saints' supply suddenly ran dry.

They suffered a 1-0 home defeat to Chesterfield, were held to a 0-0 draw by Aston Villa and thumped 5-0 at Chesterfield.

Then came a 2-0 reverse at Bradford followed by a 0-0 home stalemate against Plymouth.

The last time Saints went five games



GOALSHY SAINTS JUST 85 MINUTES FROM UNWANTED CLUB RECORD...

without a goal was in 2001.

With echoes of the current situation, that drought also came after a change of manager.

Following Glenn Hoddle's departure to Spurs, Saints went on a dismal run of five games without scoring under his caretaker replacement, Stuart Gray.

Gray's reign began with a 3-0 home defeat to Ipswich.

Saints were then on the road for their next three games at Leeds, Chelsea and Aston Villa.

They suffered 2-0 and 1-0 setbacks at Elland Road and Stamford Bridge respectively before a 0-0 draw at Villa Park.

The final game in the run was a 1-0

home defeat to Sunderland.

No-one would have predicted that Saints would equal those previous droughts when they got their campaign up-and-running with the big win at Bristol Rovers.

But since then they have lost 3-0 and 2-0 at home to Swindon (JPT) and Rochdale respectively, suffered league defeats at MK Dons and Swindon without scoring and been frustrated by Colchester.

Saints' current total of minutes without a goal is 84 short of the previous longest drought in 1937.

Then, Saints' went from the 33rd minute of their opening day clash against Norwich to the 27th minute of their sev-

enth game against West Ham without a goal.

Wednesday's recent form should give Saints reason to be encouraged that their long wait for a league goal will end on Saturday.

The Owls won three of their first four games to top the fledgling League One table.

But they have lost their last three, dropping down to 11th, and the resolute look they had in the early weeks of the season seems to have also disappeared with their good form.

Having conceded just once in their first four league games, Wednesday have leaked five in their last three outings.

Stoneham closer to dream after F2 glory

■ By Adrian Kajumba

DEAN Stoneman sealed the Formula 2 Championship and moved a step closer to achieving his Formula 1 "dream."

Stoneman's prize for winning the F2 title is a test drive with the Williams Formula One team after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November.

But he promised to treat the F1 test the same as any other drive in his career, saying: "I'm just going to get in the car and drive as fast as I can!"

A ninth placed finish in the opening race of the Championship's final round in Valencia was enough to clinch the 2010 crown for the Bishops Waltham-based 20 year-old.

Stoneman went into the weekend's first race with a 31-point lead over his nearest challenger Jolyon Palmer.

The pair were 11th and seventh on the grid respectively after qualifying for the first race with Palmer needing to finish four places ahead of Stoneman to take the championship down to the wire.

But Stoneman made up two places on the opening lap to finish ninth, two places behind Palmer, which gave him an unassailable 27-point lead going into the final race.



Reflecting on his title win, Stoneman said: "It's only just starting to settle in."

"Getting into Formula One has always been my dream, and this just brings me one step closer."

"It's hard to know what to expect but it's obviously a fantastic opportunity to be testing a Williams Formula One car, so hopefully I can prove myself."

"I'm just going to go there and do what I do best: drive as fast as I can!"

Stoneman was relieved to have the title was in the bag before Sunday's second race and season finale.

"It was a fantastic to be in this position," he admitted.

And he rounded off his debut F2 campaign with a third-place finish – his 13th podium this year – and ended the season 42 points clear of Palmer.

"I didn't expect to win it in my first year, but to be walking away with the championship is great," he continued.

"F2 is the highest class of car I've ever raced and this is the highest ranking I've ever been."

Cool customer Stoneman added: "Throughout the season the pressure hasn't really bothered me at all."

"However, sometimes you have to let your emotions out and today's the day."

F2 series director Jonathan Palmer – a former F1 and F2 champion and dad of Stoneman's championship rival Jolyon – was full of praise for the Southampton driver.

"Dean has done a superb job this season and is certainly the worthy champion of the 2010 FIA F2 championship," he said.

"He is an outstanding talent, being extremely quick, a tough fighter, and very consistent."

"I am very confident Dean will prove the high standard of competition in F2 by performing impressively when he has his Williams F1 test drive."



CHAMPION: Dean Stoneham.