

## FROZEN PITCH MEANS WASTED TRIP

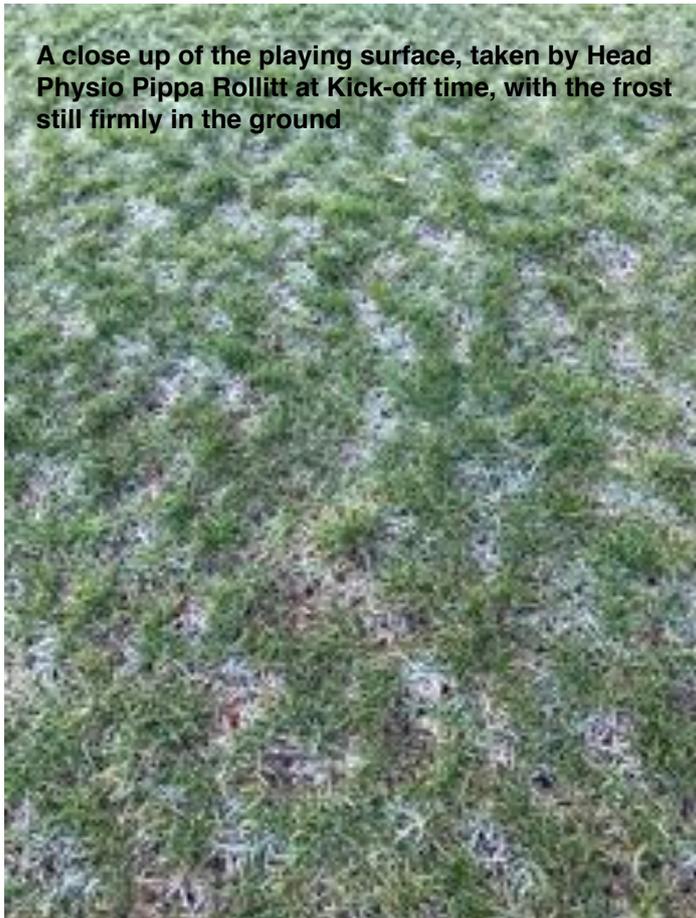
**Welcome to Parknews** A bitter disappointment for players and supporters alike to make the long trip to Hull Ionians last week only to be confronted by a pitch rendered unplayable due to the weather conditions. On the journey up fields were frozen, and on the walk to the ground every patch of greenery seemed too hard to play Rugby on, so there were some concerns. As the temperature was no lower than forecast, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that a 9:00AM inspection would have saved a fruitless journey (the train to Hull left at 09:48). Everyone makes mistakes, and Ionians are a decent club run by decent people, but this looked an eminently avoidable problem.

One disappointed Hull fan suggested that a factor may have been that the club was hosting their largest lunch of the season, a charity bash where hundreds of pounds were bid for jerseys, etc. The suggestion was that, subliminally or otherwise, the thought of the effect of a postponement on this function was just too awful to contemplate and led to an

over-optimistic view of how quickly the pitch might thaw out.

The editor understands that Hull Ionians have offered to recompense the Club for expenses incurred, though I have yet to hear this confirmed, but that is of small consolation to the supporters who paid nearly £50 for cheap advance rail tickets, which were non-transferable and therefore they could not leave Brough before 18:48. The landlord at the Buccaneer pub was probably delighted

A close up of the playing surface, taken by Head Physio Pippa Rollitt at Kick-off time, with the frost still firmly in the ground



though.

One of our players told the editor, "I'm seriously hacked off with this. If an inspection had been arranged when it should have been we could have gone back and put in a serious training session on our own pitch and still had most of the afternoon off".

Two people emerged with credit, though: Team Manager Kojo Jecty and the manager at Hull Trains. Kojo called the train company and they immediately agreed to switch the team's travelling reservation to an earlier return train. The match will now be played on 24 February, which is the next vacant date for both teams, and has been confirmed by the NCA.



Esther King assists Shanice Williams in dealing with an attacker at Portsmouth on Sunday

Friday 15 December

**Hatters v Merlins**

Friendly

Home (4G) KO 7:45

Saturday 16 December

Curtain Raiser

**B XV v O Haberdashers 2**

Middlesex Merit 1

Home (4G) KO Noon

**1st XV**

v

**Birmingham Moseley**

National 1

Home KO 3:00

To book for the pre-match **Christmas lunch** please call David Booth in the Club Office on 020 8876 6044

**HAC 3 v Fours**

Middlesex Merit 2

Away KO TBA

**Exiles 2 v Nomads**

Surrey Championship

Home (4G) KO TBA

Our own 4G pitch is designed to withstand temperatures down to minus 5 Celcius. However, when the minis turned up on Sunday morning a pitch



The 4G on Sunday morning

that had been playable at 8:15AM had a significant covering of snow and it was decided not to go ahead on safety grounds.

It was around this time that the Slingbacks were assembling for their away trip to Portsmouth. Word was that there were gales forecast and that the pitch had surface water, but that the groundsman was working on it. The Slingbacks set off on the basis that if the call came that the match was off, then the team bus would turn round. The Portsmouth groundsman in fact did a remarkable job, and it is thanks to him that there any action photos at all to break up the text of this Parknews!

We also have a report from the fours, who provided those who ventured out to the Rock on Saturday with some good entertainment.

**This weekend** starts early on Friday evening when the Hatters shake off the cares of League rugby to play a 'friendly' against Merlins on the 4G, kicking off at 7:45PM. These are both sides who enjoy throwing the ball around so a really entertaining match is in prospect. Why not come down and enjoy some free entertainment? The clubhouse will be open before, during and after the match.

On Saturday we entertain Birmingham Moseley in a vital League match at the Rock, kicking off at 3:00PM. Neither side played last weekend due to the weather but, in terms of pulling clear of the relegation zone, none of the three clubs above us or the two below us got a point. We definitely need to get a win to begin to pull clear. That will not be at all easy: our old friends from Moseley have already won three times on the road this season, recording wins at Old Albanian, Esher and Cambridge. They are currently eighth in the table, thirteen points ahead of ourselves.

### Clubsides

Will Thorogood reports a yo-yo weekend of up's and downs, and some bad luck or omens. The **B's** went to HAC, top of MMT1 clash, with the bare minimum, and then in the warm up, a couple of pulled muscles and a knock-out!

It sounds as if it was all too much for the Killer B's, but we did score a couple of tries, but went down 79-10. These things happen, and I'm sure they'll bounce back!

The **fours** had a convincing win against H&F 4's in their MMT2 game before their Xmas dinner. After Kilburn put one over them a couple of weeks ago, the 4's were determined to show that was but a glitch in the overall plan. A 68-12 win, which leaves them still at the top of the league.



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**email: [dom.shabbo@rosslynpark.co.uk](mailto:dom.shabbo@rosslynpark.co.uk) or visit the website**

**[rosslynpark.co.uk](http://rosslynpark.co.uk)**

Hatters and Nomads ended up not playing.

The **Fours' Middlesex Merit Cup semi-final** against HAC will now be played at the Rock on Saturday 24 February, so please do make a note to come along (the England match will be on TV in the Clubhouse)

### Ten Try Park Hammer the Hammers Park IVs 68 Hammersmith & Fulham 4th 12

#### Middlesex Merit 2

Having got used to playing in an average temperature of 36 degrees, Saturday's cold for the early kick off against Hammersmith and Fulham 4ths was a brutal reminder for the writer of what English rugby can be like. Fortunately, he was also treated to a reminder of what the IVs can do when they click.

The early 11.30am kick off, in aid of maximising drinking time before the evening's festivities, proved too much for some. Big Pastry and LateBurn turned up just in time for kick off, Fritzl in time for the second half and Trev midway through the second half inexplicably wearing a pair of trainers claiming that he was going to the gym after the game...

Others were more prepared however, none more so that Captain Fantastic Hynsey who broke the deadlock within the first three minutes, breaking through the line and dotting down. It was the perfect start and set the tone for the rest of the match.

### Big runs

What ensued, and aside from a couple of lapses of concentration, was about as much as you could ask from the IVs. The early try and some big runs and tackles, particularly from Grindr and Fenton, was enough to set some fear into to Hammersmith and the IVs looked dangerous every time they went forward. With Rowdy Roddy Bevans dictating proceedings from 10, by the end of the first half, the IVs had put 41 points on the board.

The second half saw the inevitable slight foot off the pedal, but all in all, much of the same. Fritzl, warmed up from a morning running around his house trying to get his escaped possessions back into the cellar, came on bagged a brace including an excellent finish despite the attention of many Hammers. When Fritzl wants something, he gets it.

Newcomer Ethan joined the fray in the second half. With the IVs camped out on the Hammers' 5 metre line and a penalty awarded, he quickly tapped and went unopposed over the line. The subsequent 'fist pump' celebration more likely to be seen on a football pitch was quickly tagged to him as a nickname. With his youth, and many years ahead of him, there is plenty of time for that name to evolve (Fist Pump, Pumper, Fisty, The Fisting Expert, Fistmeister General, etc etc).

Rixy Cant showed his range returning to the field in the second half to fill in at centre and was quick to rectify the fact that he hadn't scored in the first half, darting sideways across the Hammers' 5 metre line (always run straight?) just waiting for the right gap before taking a right turn and over the line. It almost made up for him managing to knock the ball even though it wasn't in play. Not seen that before.

Rosslyn Park Fours are sponsored by the Wellington pub <http://www.thewellingtonpub.com>



Anja Grant held up after leaving a defender behind

**Slingbacks**  
**Portsmouth 55**  
**Slingbacks 0**  
**League**

Had Park been able to field a full-strength side this game, played in high winds on a pitch that had been swept clear of standing water, would have been tighter, but Portsmouth showed why they are favourites for promotion. They soon showed that they meant business, scoring their first try with barely a minute on the clock, and never really took their foot off the pedal.

The home side's full-back was a strong, athletic player who should probably be operating at least two levels higher than this and rather set the tone for a difficult afternoon, sprinting past defenders to score a try that she made look

runs from the deep.

However, the Slingbacks themselves did put together some really good passages of play against an excellent defence. Such was the quality and speed of the home side's tackling, though, that the number of phases it took to make significant distances beyond the gain line, with slippery ball and treacherous underfoot conditions, meant they were always struggling to make inroads towards the home try-line.

Centres Shanice Williams and Dani Williams (no relation to each other) did their best to shore up the centre with some committed tackling but Portsmouth attacked from anywhere, often cutting in from out wide, and it was a beleaguered Park team that turned round 36-0 adrift.

The second half was more even. Park pressed and won penalties inside the 22, which they ran at the defence but simply could not find a way through.

Portsmouth saw less of the ball than in the first half, but were still lethal in attack. It isn't that the Park girls didn't tackle – they tackled their hearts out – but Portsmouth had several strong runners and plenty of support once they committed a defender.

The Portsmouth full-back scored probably the try of the season. With Park pressing inside the home 22, she got her hands on the ball and just took off. Her speed and power took her through the first two tacklers and she managed to avoid three



The Slingbacks front row did their share of the tackling

a lot easier than it was.

Park's own full back Anja Grant was under immense pressure but made some great tackles and looked good whenever she had the time and space ball-in-hand. She really is beginning to fulfil the promise she showed as a raw recruit not that long ago. Everyone tackled well and put herself on the line, none more so than number 8 Amanda Bruton who was a tower of strength. But the attacks just kept coming, and defending under pressure was really tiring on the heavy pitch.

With no specialist scrum half available the versatile Esther King took the 9 jersey and did as well as was possible, but with Park having to beg, borrow and steal to put together a full front row she was playing behind a retreating scrum. That also cut down fly half Alice Lovatt's options and left her kicking more than she probably would have liked against a side making incisive



Esther King clears for Park



others with sheer pace and angle to touch down under the posts.



Sam Emery rises unchallenged

When the referee indicated ten minutes remaining, skipper Hannah Boardman asked her players for one last big effort. The Park girls dug deep and a combination of guts and effort saw them match their hosts to the

final whistle. There can be no complaints about the effort the Park girls put in – nor, alas, about the final result.

The Slingbacks now have no fixture until 14 January, and if they are back to anything like a full-strength side by then the results will improve.

### Away travel

Next up after Saturday is Blackheath on December 23. Remember that they no longer play at Rectory Field, but at Well Hall, which is in Kidbrooke Lane, Eltham, SE9 6TE. It's just a short walk from Eltham Station (from Charing Cross or Waterloo East). Turn right out of the station entrance and cross Well Hall Road. 100 yards along the left is the pedestrian access into Kidbrooke Lane. The entrance to the ground is half way along the left. Our regulars cannot recommend a local pub, but Blackheath have erected a decent bar at the ground that serves real ale. Alternatively, break your journey at Blackheath (two stops before Eltham) and there are two or three decent pubs nearby.

### National 1 focus

The teams around us in the table all either lost or didn't play last weekend. Bottom club **Fylde** were desperately unlucky not to pull off a shock when a last-minute try saw **Darlington Mowden Park** just pip them at Woodlands by 10-13. The second from bottom club, **Old Albanian**, lost at home to **Old Elthamians** by 15-24. Immediately above us, **Loughborough** got beaten 43-12 at **Bishops Stortford**. **Hull Ionians** of course did not play, but immediately above them **Caldy** lost at **Blackheath** by 29-17. **Esher** were the only side in the bottom seven to get a point – a losing bonus point in a home defeat to **Cambridge**, who are ninth. At the top of the table, **Coventry** smashed **Amphill** by 63-14. This coming weekend they visit the second placed club Darlington Mowden Park, who boast a 100% home record. Something has to give – and if it's Mowden the NCA might as well give Coventry the Championship trophy as a Christmas present.

### Next fixtures

Amphill v Hull Ionians  
Caldy v Esher  
Cambridge v Bishops Stortford  
Darlington Mowden Park v Coventry  
Old Elthamians v Blackheath  
Loughborough v Fylde  
Plymouth Albion v Old Albanian  
Rosslyn Park v Birmingham Moseley

### Deja Vu

The situation at Hull Ionians on Saturday reminded greybeards among us of a match at Morley many years ago, which was mentioned. When Park arrived the half of the ground that was in the shadow of the stand was not just hard but frozen solid. As we had arrived it was up to the captains to agree whether to play or not, the referee being involved only if they disagreed. Nearly all the Park players and officials were in agreement that whilst it meant a wasted trip the conditions were far too dangerous. Indeed the only one keen to play was the skipper, Alex Milward. By an amazing coincidence, the first person the editor bumped into in the Clubhouse Sunday morning was Alex. He asked about what happened at Hull, and his instant response was, "do you remember Morley?"

At that time the minis had decided not to play on the snow for safety reasons. Alex's youth side were due to play later and he was checking out the conditions. "We'll play", he declared. Some things never change!

Mention of the Morley incident reminded your correspondent of that club's then President, a distinguished looking old gentleman, a product of his time and environment, whose friendly demeanour could not quite disguise the fact that his political philosophy lay somewhere to the right of Ghengis Khan. He eschewed the club bar when entertaining the club's guests, bringing always instead a couple of fine bottles of claret from his own cellar. Half way through an extremely acceptable glass he embarked on a story about a local taxi company that was racist in the extreme, though he appeared not to realise this. With previously unknown diplomacy I "remembered" that I had left a beer in the other bar, where I asked a Morley contact exactly what their esteemed President used to do for a living. "Oh he still works", came the reply, "he's a Crown Court Judge".

### Next Parknews

The next Parknews should appear on the website some time between Tuesday lunchtime and Wednesday next week. . If you would like to receive a 'tweet' immediately it appears then subscribe to the @RPNoseyParker twitterfeed. Letters and other contributions from readers are always welcome: the usual deadline is around noon on Tuesdays.