



Season 2017-18

Issue 20

20 December 2017

PARK HOLD OUT BRAVELY TO RECORD A WIN

those who turner up! Welcome to Parknews Park had to battle for the last few minutes with only 13 men before bravely holding out for the 30-26 victory they so badly wanted against a determined challenge from Birmingham Moseley. A penalty try on 71 minutes saw Hugo Ellis and Jack Barnard shown yellow in rapid succession, as Park went from a comfortable 30-19 lead to a decidedly dodgy 30-26. Taken over the 80 minutes Park certainly deserved their win but it was a desperately close run thing as it seemed as if the clock had stopped! Park's tackling and commitment were first rate, and much of the rugby played by both sides with a slippery ball in showery conditions was a credit to the standard in National 1.



Tough going on Saturday! [Photo by David Whittam]

The end of the match should have seen us exactly half way through the season but for the postponement at Hull Ionians. It has thus far been a less successful one than we had hoped for. Necessary cuts to the playing budget in order to keep the Club viable always meant it would be a challenging season, but no one could have foreseen the terrible run of injuries to key players. This has forced us to rely far more than we would have chosen on some of our younger players, but as they gain in experience and confidence the squad is actually getting stronger. With that as a factor and with some players returning from injury we should be able to look forward to a more successful second half!

The result on Saturday takes Park out of the immediate relegation zone, but the players know better than anyone that a massive task lies ahead if we are to pull away from danger altogether. Next Saturday we face another huge challenge as we travel to Blackheath, which will mean that five of our last six matches will have been against the top five clubs in the league!

This Saturday

They are having another successful season after beating Park at the Rock by 25-6 in the second match of the season. Although the Rectory Field had become something of a bogey ground for us, their move to Well Hall heralded an away win for Park last season. Since then 'Club' have recruited wisely and well, as a look at the League table will confirm. Three of their first four home matches were against three of the top five sides: Plymouth Albion, Amptill and Darlington Mowden Park – and they won all three. Then inexplicably they lost two successive home matches to Bishops Stortford and to Loughborough. They returned to form in their last home match, thrashing Caldy by 29-17.

Last Saturday Blackheath played their most local of Derbies, away to Old Elthamians and suffered after a nightmare start saw them concede three tries in the first eight minutes. OEs built a good lead and then put up an immense defensive screen to win by 32-7, the Blackheath try coming three minutes from time when cards had reduced OEs to twelve



Saturday 23 December

Blackheath v 1st XV

National 1
Away KO 3:00

Seasons Greetings to all readers of all faiths or of none



Next 1st XV home match
Saturday 06 January

1st XV v Esher

National 1
Home KO 3:00

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

men. There is no doubt that Blackheath will be smarting from that defeat and will be fighting every inch of the way to put it behind them. Park, similarly, will be thirsting to avenge that earlier home defeat and a small army of vocal away supporters would be a great help. Please come along if you can.

Remember that they no longer play at Rectory Field, but at Well Hall, which is in Kidbrook 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 (but far from cheap) pubs nearby in Blackheath village.

Rosslyn Park 30 Birmingham Moseley 26 National 1



Park got the win they needed, but they needed to battle through concerted Moseley pressure for the last nine minutes whilst two men short.

The early play was with the visitors, and a mis-fieled catch gave them an attacking scrum with only a minute on the clock. From the set piece they worked the ball wide and right wing Mark Harrison scored wide of the posts for 5-0.

Park saw out the early pressure and gradually took over the dominant role. On 21 minutes Park gained a penalty which they kicked to touch. Retaining the ball they drove to the Moseley line but, unable to find a way through, they switched the ball across the face of the goal for centre Dan Barnes to defy three tacklers to score a fine try. Fly half Jacob Atkins converted for 7-5.



Park win the line-out on Saturday (All photos by David Whittam)

The home side were now looking good. Atkins slotted over a long-range penalty on 29 minutes for 10-5, then repeated the trick two minutes later for 13-5.

Moseley were proving resilient and mounted a good attack of their own 4 minutes before the interval and their pack managed to bundle over for lock Brendon Snyman to score, fly half James Dixon converting for 13-12.

The visitors had a chance to take the lead against the run of play when awarded a penalty just before the interval but Dixon pulled it slightly wide, allowing Park to turn round a solitary point in front.

The visitors made a great effort at the start of the second period but Park defended well and regained the ascendancy to generally control proceedings.



Pressure finally told after 57 minutes when the Park pack used all its power to drive relentlessly to the line. Moseley stopped the drive illegally and a Penalty Try was awarded to stretch Park's lead to 20-12, and a Moseley defender given ten minutes in the bin.



Park continued to press and Harry Leonard bagged a penalty on 61 minutes for 23-12.

However, Moseley caught Park flat-footed, turning defence into attack with a clever chip-and-chase, followed by a pass inside for replacement Jacques le Roux to score on 64 minutes, converted by Dixon for 23-19.

Park replied with a big forward drive, gained a scrum and pushed the Moseley pack backwards. Just as a push-over try looked inevitable the ball emerged and replacement scrum half Jack Gash grabbed it and dived over, Leonard converted for 30-19.

Moseley refused to lie down and a tremendous drive was stopped illegally at



the cost of a Penalty Try on 71 minutes to make it 30-26, with skipper Hugo Ellis and flanker Jack Barnard sent to the sin bin for good measure.

Park had to battle out the final nine minutes two men short to hold on to a match they had looked to have won well. Moseley really ratcheted up the pressure but Park showed great character and resolve to hang on for a win they well deserved.

Park Head Coach, Kieran Power said, "This was a must win game for us, and any form of result we would have taken. Although we did make things hard for ourselves through ill-discipline.

"We can take that result and go into next week, and a big London derby, with no fear and nothing to lose.

"If we're disciplined and keep players on the pitch we have shown were a match for anyone".

Park: Robinson; Henderson, Grove, Barnes, Hassel-Collins; Atkins; Crow; Nwakor, Gibson, Maguire; Spencer, Spivey; Barnard, Hudson, Ellis. Bench: Bellamy, Wade, Macfarlane, Gash, Leonard



Park scorers: Barnes (T), Crow (T), Atkins (2P, C), Leonard ((P, C), Penalty Try

Clubsides

Will Thorogood reports That it was a bit of a frustrating weekend for the B's. They were all ready for a midday kick off on Saturday on the 4G against Haberdashers 2's, when on Friday evening Haberdashers pulled out. Frustrating, and a bit of panic letting everyone know. A home walkover for the B's which takes them to the top of the table, but not wholly satisfactory.

The **Hatters** had a Friday evening runaround against Merlins, always an



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expansive side, and came out runners-up, this time, 26-15.

The 4's had a close encounter against HAC 3's, but pipped them 28-26.

The **Nomads** had staffing problems, and could only field 12 players, against London Exiles 2's. A noble effort by the lads, scoring 4 tries, but not quite enough. Exiles 46 Nomads 20.

Apologies, by the way, to anyone who turned up early last Saturday especially to see the curtain-raiser Middlesex Merit match between our B XV and Old Haberdashers 2. Our opponents indicated around Friday lunchtime that they had only 13 players but would turn up anyway. As Will indicates, in the end Old Habs could not raise a team, but the e-mail confirming this arrived after 5:00PM that evening and so it was impossible to let everyone know. Anyone who has played Rugby with a social dimension will be familiar with the hazards of trying to play this time of year! If it's any consolation, the Editor was one of those who turned up.

SantaDult and his Elves Save Christmas

HAC 3rds 26

Park IVs 28

Middlesex Merit 2

By Hamish Reid-Kay

'Twas the week before Christmas, when all thro' East Acton not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. No really, SantaDult and his elite squad of 14 elves arrived at HAC's interesting choice of a home ground to find the pitch deserted, post-less and covered in the mini nets of some sort of round ball amusement activity.

The IVs were unperturbed and smashed into the opposition from the first whistle. Powerful forward play led to ample early possession and territory. However, HAC's defensive line held firm and, miraculously during their first venture into the IVs' half, they managed to score a try in the corner and convert it off the crossbar. This only spurred on the IVs, with the forwards and backs linking nicely to pile pressure onto HAC. Although, once again, the opposition refused to be broken down and the IVs' only return was a

three-pointer from their glorious leader Hynsey's boot. 7-3 to HAC at the half.

The second half began in similar fashion, except Park's charitable Christmas spirit was waning. After further barraging runs from the forwards, notably Grindr, Bloodhound and Fendimus (still seeking redemption for his shocking Das Boot attempt), the IVs found themselves threatening HAC's try line. Due to some confusion about the correct colour of our great game's and that odd round-ball's lines on the 2G artificial pitch, the ref convinced himself that Hamish Reid-Average had undoubtedly scored (a good foot before the correct line).

After such a heroic opening to the second half, the IVs' minds seemed to wander onto the post-match festivities. HAC were not just there to make up the numbers and took advantage, scoring a couple of tries in quick succession. Park rallied and soon forced themselves into the opposition's 22. After some home resistance, SantaDult had seen enough and took matters into his own hands. Using some strange foreign technique presumably developed during his Singatour days, the veteran torpedeed underneath HAC's entire pack and made it across the (correct) line. The IVs continued to batter the home side, and Keogh's quick feet allowed him to slip through their now ragged defence for another try. Hynsey turned the screw soon after, adding a penalty to Park's total.

Some would have thought the opposition couldn't HAC it any longer... Alas, once more they made their way up the pitch and scored in the corner from broken play, putting them 26-25 ahead with 10 minutes to go. Weaker teams would have buckled under the pressure. However, not the IVs; and certainly not this particular crop, with the fire in SantaDult's jolly belly and Christmas spirit of his elven warriors. A monstrous boot from Hynsey put Park deep into HAC's half and the forwards did what they do best, rhino-ing their way to a penalty. The ever-reliable fly-half stepped up and coolly slotted the kick to put Park ahead by two points with five minutes to go. In an unbelievable defensive effort, SantaDult and his elves held out and saved Christmas.

The IVs returned to the Rock 26-28 the victors, and of course further dominated off the pitch. Grindr was awarded man of the match after displaying satisfactory running and aerial competency while Richard of the day went to Fendimus, just because. A special mention must go to debutant Alpha-Cal, who put in a shift on and off the field, sinking pints in the absent Charlie version's honour. This result means the IVs go into the New Year five points clear at the top of the table. Long may their reign continue.

Slingbacks

The Slingbacks have completed their 2017 fixtures, their next match being at home to Witney on Sunday 14 January. It has been a tough season so far for the Park girls, player availability being a key problem. When able to field something like their strongest side they can be a match for anyone, as a tremendous away win at Reading showed, but too many key players have missed too many matches. The strength in depth of the squad is improving under player-coach Alice Lovatt as some of the newbies gain in experience and confidence. An injury-free run in the new year could well see the Slingbacks climbing the table.

Away travel

After this Saturday our next away match is at **Bishops Stortford**, the first time we shall have played there in a League match. They play at Silver Leys, Hadham Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 2QE (Hadham Road is the A1250). At the risk of stating the obvious, by public transport Bishops Stortford, from London Liverpool Street, is the station to book to and there looks to be no financial advantage in booking an advance ticket over a cheap day return. The match kicks off at 2:00PM.

For the following away matches at **Loughborough** (27 January), **Caldy** (19 February) and **Plymouth** (03 March) there is a considerable advantage in booking an advance ticket, and they are all now on sale. For Caldly, the nearest station is West Kirby. The normal routing from London is via Chester, but it is worth checking at the time you book whether it might be cheaper and quicker to get an Advance return ticket to Liverpool Lime Street and pick up a local train from there on a cheap day return. It's about 20 minutes on the local rattler, with a fairly regular service. The Caldly match will be a 14:00 kick off.

National 1 focus

We still need to focus on the nether regions until Park pull clear of danger, and Saturday's win over mid-table **Birmingham Moseley** was not bettered by any of the clubs around us. **Old Albanian** were predictably beaten 26-8 at **Plymouth Albion**, conceding 15 penalties, two yellow cards and one red in the process. The other bottom club, **Fylde**, also lost, 21-0 away to **Loughborough**, which is a mixed blessing for us as the win leaves Loughborough still a point ahead of us in the table.

We have now overtaken **Hull Ionians**, who suffered a 45-17 defeat at the hands of **Amphill**. Two points ahead of ourselves are **Esher** and **Caldy**, who played each other in Cheshire on a quagmire of a pitch with Caldly winning a dour battle by 15-7.

We mentioned earlier our next opponents' – **Blackheath's** – 32-7 defeat At **Old Elthamians**. The only other match that was played was the local Derby at **Cambridge**, where the home side beat **Bishops Stortford** by 22-21.

This weekend's fixtures:

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

Compensation culture

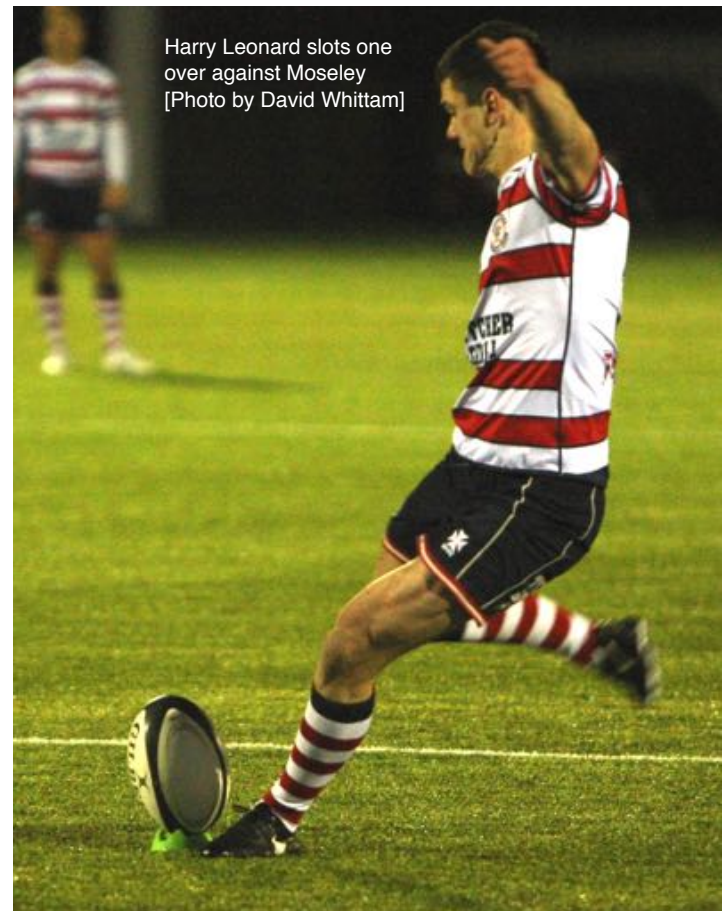
There may be some financial repercussions for the Club from the late postponement of the match at Hull Ionians. The Park party travelled up by train to the match, leaving at 09:48 and arriving at 12:02 for a 14:00 kick off. To have travelled by coach and arrived in time for the players to get the journey out of their legs would have meant leaving prohibitively early. Given the distance Park had to travel, if there was any doubt as to the match going ahead a local referee should have been called in either the night before or early enough on Saturday morning to avoid a wasted journey. That did not happen, nor was the weather any worse than was forecast, and it was pretty clear on arrival that the pitch could not have thawed out sufficiently in the prevailing conditions. Hull Ionians, one understands, offered to compensate us for the wasted journey, as they are required to under the rules of the competition. However, the rules also say that compensation should be for the cost of a coach – about half the cost of the train journey! We would argue that as the first part of the rules was not obeyed in terms of holding a proper pitch inspection then it is unfair to enforce the second part restricting the compensation. Ionians are a decent club and hopefully this can all be resolved amicably. Perhaps we should argue that we did travel by coach – it was Coach C on the 09:48!

400 Club

December winners are - P. Hamilton-Smith £100, Joan Barclay £50 and Simon Dyson £25. If you would like to help your club while having the chance to win monthly cash prizes (and an end-of-season 'Jackpot') then the 400 Club could be just what you are looking for. Contact Boothy in the Club Office on 020 8876 6044 for full details.

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.



Harry Leonard slots one over against Moseley
[Photo by David Whittam]

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