



Season 2017-18

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# PARK SO CLOSE TO AWAY WIN

**Welcome to Parknews** An exciting local Derby at Blackheath that could have gone either way ended in a 17-17 draw. If that was a fair result overall, then one could detect a certain frustration in the Park camp that it was a match that they could have won. They had the chances – though Blackheath would certainly counter that so did they. Head Coach Kieran Power surely hit the nail on the head when, while full of praise for his side's commitment and passion he identified incidents of ill-discipline and inaccuracy as the factors that stood between Park and all out victory.

When we talk about ill-discipline in the context of Park's performances this season it is important to bear in mind that we're not talking about 'dirty' play such as dump tackles or swinging punches in the heat of the moment. We are talking more of technical infringements that become too frequent, so a player "takes one for the team". It's most often the other side of the passion and commitment that has been such a commendable feature of the season as we've struggled with one of the worst injury crises anyone can remember. We need to cut out the infringements without losing out on the passion and enthusiasm. That's not as easy as it sounds, but we need to crack it. Whether it is officially recognized or not, referees (and touch judges) do talk to each other, and when a team has gained a reputation for a particular thing it's not surprising that the next referee, being a human being, quickly picks up on it.

It is easy to dwell on what might have been, but the fact is that we went away to the fifth team in the League and gained a draw on merit. Add that to the good performances against the other top sides Plymouth Albion, Amptill and the first half against Coventry, add in the prospect of some key players returning, and there seems to be every reason to look forward to a more successful 2018.

Our first game in the New Year will be a hot Local Derby at home to Esher on Saturday 06 January. Both sides need the points to breathe more easily so far as relegation goes, and we shall doubtless be out to avenge a 32-17 defeat early in the season. Esher are one of those sides that, on their day, can torpedo anyone – as Blackheath and Darlington Mowden Park have already found to their cost this season. They have a pretty good home record thus far, but have fared less well on their travels. Whether the short hop to Roehampton counts as 'travelling' in this context remains to be seen.

The two clubs have had so many players and coaches in common over the years that we shall inevitably see a host of old friends, both on and off the field. Esher always bring



Park on the attack at Blackheath [match photos by David Whittam]



**Saturday 06 January**  
**Curtain Raiser**

## Hatters v Chobham 2

Zoo Sports Shield  
Home 4G KO noon

## 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*

**Members can bring a friend to this match free**

## Fours v Grasshoppers 2

Middlesex Merit 2  
Home (Richmond Park) KO: 2:00PM  
*This match will be played either at 2:00PM in Richmond Park, or on the 4G after the 1st XV match*

## Hampstead 2 v B XV

Middlesex Merit 1  
Away KO TBA

## Nomads v Effingham 2

Surrey Championship  
Venue: TBA KO TBA

plenty of noisy support with them, so please do come along with a lubricated larynx and bring your mates. We can't allow the Esher support to turn it into a home game for them!

We are due to have some other entertainment if you arrive early. The Hatters are also at home to Chobham 2s in the Zoo Sports Shield. The Fours were due to be playing Grasshoppers at noon but the visitors were unable to make the early kick off. Indeed, it's possible that we shall have three matches for the price of one – If Grasshoppers are agreeable that match will kick off at 5:00PM on the 4G, otherwise it will remain at 2:00PM in Richmond Park.

## **Blackheath 17 Rosslyn Park 17 National 1**



These two old South London rivals eventually fought each other to a draw in a tense Local Derby – and although Park could easily have won at the death, the draw was the fairest result.

Rosslyn Park had more of the early play, but it was the home side who took the lead on 11 minutes, winger Leo Fielding slotting over a penalty for 3-0.

Given a penalty of their own, Park attempted to run the ball but it didn't work out and it was Blackheath, now shading the play, who found a way to the line, Fielding slicing through the middle to score and then converting his own effort for 10-0 on 19 minutes.

Park came roaring back through left winger James Hassell-Collins who scored in the corner, allowing Harry Leonard to display his consummate kicking skills in nailing the wide conversion for 10-7 on 29 minutes.



Park win the lineout at Blackheath [all photos are by David Whittam]

Blackheath came back and won a penalty that saw Park prop Maurice Nwakor sent to the bin for 10 minutes, but this time Fielding's kick missed the target.

It was Park's 14 men who came closest to scoring before the interval when a super break by right-winger Rhys Crane had runners in support, but Park lost the ball with the line apparently at their mercy.

Park made a strong start to the second half and pressure on the Blackheath defence yielded a penalty for Harry Leonard to tie the scores at 10-10 after 46 minutes of a pulsating match.



The home side came back with an immense attack, which drew some superb defensive tackling from Park who weathered the storm to clear.

Park then countered and, with numbers out wide, the home full-back Geoff Griffiths' knock-on was deemed a deliberate action to prevent a try and the Penalty Try was awarded to put the visitors ahead for the first time at 17-10 with twenty minutes remaining.



It was now Blackheath's turn to ratchet up the pressure to save the match. They won a penalty, which brought a huge groan from the home crowd when it hit the post. Eventually the pressure told as Park conceded a Penalty Try to level the scores, and left them a man short for the final nine minutes as Mike Macfarlane trudged to the sin bin.

There was still a final twist as it was Park's fourteen who swept up the field to threaten the home try line. Park did actually get over the line, and claimed to have scored, but such was the pile of bodies that the referee could not possibly see whether or not the ball was grounded. From the five metre scrum, Hugo Ellis did touch down, but the whistle had already gone to re-set the scrum.

Eventually Blackheath broke out and the final whistle brought an end to a classic local Derby that neither side would have deserved to lose.

Park Head Coach, Kieran Power, said "In some ways we were better but in the end it came down to ill-discipline with three yellow cards.

"We had the opportunities to win at the end, but just lacked accuracy".



## Rosslyn Park Football Club Half-Season Memberships available for just £90



### Special benefits include

- Entry to all remaining home games
- Free match day programme
- Free Bar Loyalty Card for 10% bar discount

Don't miss a game contact the club office on 020 8876 6044

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

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

He summed up his side's performance, "Commitment and passion: brilliant – accuracy: still yet to improve".

*Park: Robinson; Crane, Williams, Barnes, Hassell-Collins; Leonard; Crow; Nwakor, Gibson, Maguire; Spivey, Macfarlane; Barnard, Hudson, Ellis. Bench: Bellamy, Wade, Cooke, Gash, Atkins. Park scorers: Hassell-Collins (T), Leonard (P, C), Penalty Try.*



### Away travel

After Esher 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). If you are driving, it looks as if it's Junction 8 on the M11, then the A120 towards Puckeridge until what locals refer to as the Tesco roundabout and, with Tesco on the right, then the ground is about



400m on the left. But do check. 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 compared with a cheap day return. Remember that the match kicks off at 2:00PM. If you are looking to whet your whistle before or after the match, the Bricklayers Arms opens at noon and is about half way between the station and the ground at 61 Hadham Road. It's a former Benskins boozer, now owned by the couple who run it, and they like to support independent local brewers with a revolving range of ales (nb the Editor will be away on holiday and therefore will *not* be on free beer for the plug - the information is from a CAMRA app).

For the following away matches at **Loughborough** (27 January), **Caldy** (10 February) and **Plymouth Albion** (03 March) there is a considerable advantage in booking advance tickets, 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. Although previous Loughborough away matches have kicked off early, we understand that this season it will be a 3:00PM kick off.

### National 1 focus

None of the clubs below us won last weekend, so the two points we won at **Blackheath** (who remain fifth) keep us in thirteenth place. **Fylde** look firmly anchored to the bottom after a 9-34 home defeat to tenth-placed **Caldy** in a match that saw nearly as many cards as a game of poker. **Hull Ionians** also drew a blank, going down by 26-0 at **Darlington Mowden Park** who remain second in the table. **Old Albanians** made up a point on us as they gained a draw 35-35 at home to **Amphill**, they got their final try to equalize in added time, but as it was their fourth (against the 6 Amphill scored) they got a bonus point as well.

Immediately above us **Loughborough** lost at home to **Cambridge** (now eighth) by 21-28, despite scoring three tries to their visitors' one. A whole sackful of penalties cost them the match. Above them **Esher** lost 29-33 at home to **Plymouth Albion** but got the four try bonus and a losing bonus and so, thanks to the genius of the bonus points system, got as many points for losing at home as we did for drawing away!

At the top of the table the **Coventry** juggernaut goes on with a 17-41 away win at **Moseley**, scoring five tries without reply in the first half, but Moseley can take some consolation in the form of gate receipts from a crowd of more than two thousand. In the other match played, **Bishops Stortford** beat **Old Elthamians** by 34-20 to remain sixth and seventh respectively in the table.

### Fixtures for 06 January:

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

### 400 Club

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.

### Penalty tries

Unless there has been an amazing coincidence, there seems to have been a directive given to referees regarding the Penalty Try. Where previously in most cases a warning was issued first, now it is at first offence and the yellow-carding of someone as a result seems now to be mandatory. Two penalty tries were awarded in the penultimate match against Birmingham Moseley, and two more at Blackheath. Then on Sunday two more in the televised Premiership match. It's uncertain whether any of them might have been given the previous season. The current interpretation may well be the correct one in strictly applying Law, and there can be no complaint about inconsistency or bias on the part of the referees as they were all given one either way.

There is a certain logic to automatically issuing a yellow card inasmuch as that is the sanction for acting illegally to stop the other side from scoring, and if someone hasn't done that then how can it be a Penalty Try? It's also consistent. Previously, though, there was a train of thought that if the illegal intervention wasn't too serious then the award of the try was sufficient punishment. Then came the final penalty try in Sunday's Premiership match, in which the whole front row were deemed at fault. As no individual could be identified, no card was issued. The message from the authorities is clear: if you must risk a penalty try, make sure a few of you collude in it.

### Next Parknews

The next Parknews should appear on the website some time between Tuesday lunchtime and Wednesday the week after the Esher match. After that one, the Editor is off and out of the country for two weeks. There will not be a Parknews during that time, but all reports etc will be held until the following week. After that things should revert to normal. 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.