



Season 2017-18

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# PARK WIN 9-TRY THRILLER AT THE ROCK

**Welcome to Parknews** Another absolute thriller at the Rock last Saturday when Park dug deep to topple second-in-the-table Darlington Mowden Park with two tries in the last five minutes to emerge with a 38-26 victory and, vitally, five valuable competition points. The win takes us above Esher and Cambridge, into tenth place in the table, and was all the sweeter for those who had made the long journey north for the reverse fixture earlier in the season, where Park had not the best day at the office.

No one could fault Park's commitment to the match. Mowden started confidently, but Park's tackling was of the highest order. An early Harry Leonard penalty steadied the nerves, and Park went on to build up a 24-0 lead before the pre-interval jitters gave our opponents a try right on the stroke of half time. Mowden looked a different side in the second half (after emptying the bench they were a different side!) For long periods Park simply couldn't get a decent hand on the ball or escape our own half of the field. Gradually Mowden pegged back the score until they took the lead with nine minutes remaining.

If supporters were wondering whether we might have to surrender even the losing bonus point, the players had other ideas and summoned up the will to take the game to Mowden. A great try, and a conversion just as good, five minutes from the end gave Park a five point lead. Instead of defending, they took the game to Mowden, who now looked a bit shell-shocked, and scored again. "Never in doubt", lied one loyal supporter entering the Clubhouse. A real pity that the 6-nations somewhat diminished the size of the crowd, because it was another splendid advert for National 1 Rugby.

Next Saturday looks like being a blank one. The Bs were due to play Millfield at 10:00 in a rearranged league match, but that now looks in doubt. You can, however, get your Rugby fix on Sunday when the Slingbacks host Crowthorne in a League match, kicking off at 2:30. As ever, admission is free and the Clubhouse will be open before, during and after the match.

On Saturday week the pressure remains on when we entertain third-placed Amptill at the Rock, kicking off at 3:00PM. The Amps entertain realistic thoughts of finishing as runners-up in National 1 and so will be in no mood to give any favours. Last Saturday they welcomed back their Tongan internationals Aleki Lutui and Maama Molitaka, who had both been out injured and presumably both will be parading their significant physical presence at the Rock. Last weekend the Amps produced a sensational finish to defeat Plymouth Albion 33-28. As the match reached the last moments of added time they were losing and defending inside their own 22. They won the ball and played through no less than 27 phases to score at the other end.

Amptill are definitely opponents to be respected, but hopefully we'll be able to field our sixteenth player – a home crowd really getting behind the team. Please do come along and bring as many friends as you can recruit.

**Rosslyn Park 38**  
**Darlington Mowden Park 26**  
**National 1**

Another thriller at the Rock went right down to the wire, with a last minute try from Hugo Ellis finally sealing victory over the side who are second in the National 1 table.

Play was even, but Mowden blinked first, handling the ball in a ruck to allow fly-half Harry Leonard to kick Rosslyn Park into a 3-0 lead.

Park were clearly 'up' for this one, tackling as if lives depended on it. Reward came on 23 minutes when winger Ollie Hassell-Collins got on the end of a kick in full flight and passed inside for full-back Henry Robinson to score against his old club. Leonard converted for 10-0.



Action from Saturday photographed by David Whittam

**Saturday 17 March**

**Kilburn Cosmos v Fours**

Middlesex Merit 2  
Away KO TBA

**Sunday 18 March**

**Slingbacks**

**v**

**Crowthorne**

League  
Home (4G) KO TBA

**Saturday 24 March**

**1st XV**

**v**

**Amptill**

League  
Home (4G) KO: 3:00PM

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

**Guildford 2 v Hatters**

Zoo Sports Shield  
Away KO TBA

**Nomads, B XV, Fours TBA**

Benji Marfo attacks for Park [all 1st XV match photos by David Whittam]



Park were now in control and four minutes later the pack drove over, Hugo Ellis claiming the try and Leonard adding a conversion for 17-0.

Better was to come with a tremendous break from centre Andrew Henderson five minutes before the interval. When he was finally halted he managed to offload to Hassell-Collins who streaked away to score, Leonard again on target with the conversion for 24-0.

Park could not quite manage to control play to the interval, a surge from Mowden saw full-back Brett Connon get over the line, fly half Warren Seals' conversion bringing half-time at 24-7.

Park made a solid start to the second half, winning a long-range penalty but Leonard's kick bounced back into play off the post.

After that Rosslyn Park were rarely able to escape their own half for the next half-hour as Mowden ratcheted up the pressure and looked every inch a top of the table side.



ng, but it looked an irresistible tide coming towards them. The one time they didn't nail a tackle it allowed Sears to skip in for a soft try that he converted himself for 24 – 14 on 49 minutes.

On the hour a sweeping move stretched the home defence to breaking point and scrum half Matt Dudman skipped over to close things to 24-21 with Garry Law's conversion.



With nine minutes remaining a period of intense pressure on the home defence saw replacement front-row Joe Craggs bundled over to give Mowden the four-try bonus point and the lead at 26-24.

It looked all over for Rosslyn Park but somehow they mustered the resources to fight back. The pack drove at Mowden, released the ball for a strong run from Henderson that committed defenders before a splendid pass out wide saw winger Benji Marfo display electric pace to dive in at the corner. An 'impossible' conversion was nailed by Leonard to restore Park's lead at 31-26 with five minutes remaining.

The home side were in no mood to sit on their lead and suddenly Mowden, who had been dictating things for a long time, looked distinctly rattled. With a minute to go a concerted attack was rewarded when the ball reached Hugo Ellis who powered over to seal a hard-earned victory. Leonard's conversion brought the final score at 38-26.

A delighted Head Coach, Kieran Power, said, "We had focused all week on starting the game well and on our scrum giving us that foundation.



"We had a great first half but DMP are a good side and we knew they would throw the kitchen sink at us and the guts and determination to stay in the fight by the boys was excellent.

"That spirit and bravery to still play some great attacking rugby at the end of the game was what pulled us through to what was a great home win"

*Park: Robinson; Marfo, Henderson, Leonard, Hassell-Collins; Grove; Crow; Nwakor, Bellamy, Lovell; Spivey, Frampton; Macfarlane, A. Ellis, H Ellis. Bench: Hughes, Wade, Hudson, Gash, Amesbury Park scorers: Robinson (T), Hassell-Collins (T), H Ellis (2T), Marfo (T), Leonard (P, 5C)*



### Away travel

We have no 'away' matches until we face the runaway League leaders, **Coventry** (who will probably be Champions by then) on 07 April and **Birmingham Moseley** on 21 April. Cheap advance rail tickets for both of those matches are now on sale. Coventry play at Butts Park Arena, Butts Rd, Coventry CV1 3GE. It is walkable from the station, but every time we go there the layout of the paths and subways immediately by the station changes so we won't try to give directions for fear of causing confusion. Our regulars usually go into town for a pre-match refresher, but if you arrive at the ground there's a perfectly good local pub just the other side of the car park opposite the main stand. Coventry charge £15 for admission (£11 concessions).

Birmingham Moseley play at Yardley Wood Road, Billesley, Birmingham, B13 0HN (on the east side of Billesley Common if you are familiar with Birmingham). It's a fair distance from New Street station, though there is a frequent bus service that passes near the ground and it is walkable from Yardley Wood station if you take a local train. It's quite an expensive taxi ride unless there is more than one of you to split the cost. Our regulars

cannot, alas, recommend a local hostelry having always respected the advice of a friendly Moseley fan, "Don't use the pubs near the ground unless you are looking for lager, Sky Sports and a fight"! In any case, they serve a decent pint at the ground. Moseley charge £15 for admission, £11 senior citizens and £6 for 16-17 year olds (below that age is free). It's an extra fiver if you want to sit in the stand.

The away match at **Plymouth Albion** has been re-scheduled for Saturday 05 May, the week after the season ends. It is the firm intention of both clubs to fulfil the fixture. However, the Editor, strictly in personal capacity, would sound one note of caution: there is a precedent for matches scheduled to be played after the end of the season, upon which nothing depends, not being played at all. Assuming Park could not be relegated at that stage, and the result would not affect Plymouth's league position, it is difficult to envisage a large crowd. If the situation were to be that clubs had to extend players' contracts in order to play the match, and Plymouth got in touch to say that it would cost more to put the game on than they could ever make at the gate, it is difficult to envisage Park absolutely insisting on shelling out and making the journey! That is pure conjecture but worth considering before you buy *non-refundable* rail tickets or make *irrevocable* hotel bookings.

### Club sides

Will Thorogood reports that after the freeze, Saturday saw the B's, 4's and Nomads in league action. The **Hatters** are on their "winter break" because of the way the fixture list has fallen.

Anyway, as a curtain raiser to the 1's dramatic game against Darlington, the **B's** faced up to **Belsize Park 2's** in the MMT1 encounter. A good start by the B's, and a quick 14 points in the first 20 minutes. However, Belsize Park come back at us with a goal and a penalty, so 14-10 at half-time.

The second half was nerve-racking to say the least, with Belsize Park taking the lead with an unconverted try. It seemed that the B's were suffering from ill-discipline, conceding penalties and territory. However, with tenacity and determination, the B's created two late tries and converted a penalty, to give themselves breathing space and a well-earned victory. 29-15.

Depending on other results, there was a glimmer of hope of winning the MMT league, but it wasn't to be. HAC have pipped them, but the B's are now into the Play-Offs on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. Opposition yet to be confirmed.

The **4's** confirmed their status as Middlesex Merit Table 2 Champions, on Saturday, with a convincing win against **Belsize Park 3's**. 4's 35 Belsize Park 3's 12. Congratulations, Mr Hynes and the team. Deserved. What next?

The **Nomads** travelled to the fine facilities of **Farnham** to play their 2's in the Surrey Championship. Arriving with only 13 players, it was going to be difficult, and at one point they were down to 11 men. No match details, as such, but sounds like a plucky and brave performance, against the odds, Nomads 12 Farnham 2's 39.

## Relentless Bs down Belsize Park

**Park B XV 29**

**Belsize Park II 15**

**Middlesex Merit 1**

*by a slightly chubbier version of Rhys Ambrose*



The "Killer Bs"

And so it was, on a cloudy Saturday morning some 140 years after Rosslyn Park established itself as a breakaway from its parent club, that the fine gentlemen of the Bs gathered at The Rock to take on their former brothers from North London. Goodwill was in short supply, however, given the midweek animosity between the two clubs over the permitted number of substitutes.

The pre-match hype focussed primarily on the Bs backline – much to the chagrin of the forward pack, even the Vice Captain could be heard mumbling, “no offence to the pack, but our backs are going to win us this game” – but, if the opening exchanges were anything to go by, it was clear that the Bs pack were quietly in rampaging mood. Amongst them, two stalwarts playing out of position – Rhys Ambrose and Tom Caines – but both showing their usual selfless commitment and ball-playing ability.

The Bs made a flying start. Buoyed by the sheer work rate of Ambrose at 6 at the breakdown and the early muscular carrying from Wolf, Wall and Ben Alexander, their much-vaunted backline cut open their Belsize counterparts with barely 10 minutes gone when fly-half Rossiter's deft, left-footed grubber found leading try-scorer Asonitis who, but for a superb cover tackle from the Belsize full-back, would surely have added to his stellar try tally. It was an early warning shot as to what would come for the next 70 minutes, as the distribution and trickery of Lace and the hard-nosed brutality of Toby Walliams at 13 gelled superbly with the out-and-out speed of wingers Asonitis and Stevens.

The unrelenting pressure from a fired-up Bs pack eventually told when, deep in the Belsize 22, Thompson combined with Reincke to drive over from close range. Lace converted to make it 7-0 to Park. The pressure didn't ease off either from the restart; good ball retention from the kick-off led to the Bs camping on the Belsize 22 once more. The age-old cliché that a bouncing ball from a misplaced pass can open up even the most organised defences proved correct, as MoM Lace picked up a bouncing ball and dazzled his way through what was a well-drilled Belsize defence and dot down under the posts. 14-0 to Park.

Then Park did what Park does best: self-destruct. A series of penalties for failing to adapt to the referee's breakdown interpretation – compounded by

an extra 10m for dissent on multiple occasions – allowed Belsize to claw their way back to 14-10 by half time. The loss of the influential Ben Alexander to injury was a blow, but it did mean the introduction of some of Caines' mercurial X-factor into the back row... more on that later.

Worse was to follow when, again, two consecutive penalties in quick succession allowed Belsize to kick their way towards the Bs tryline and maul over from a close-range lineout to gain the lead for the first time in the game at 15-14. A butchered 2-on-1 by an unnamed Bs centre who had clearly caught white-line fever added to the sense that this might be the undoing of the Bs season.

With 15 minutes left to save the season, however, the Bs finally lit the fireworks.

First, Tambara decided to atone for his earlier error by hitting the after-burners to produce an arcing outside break before putting Stevens clean through and, in so doing, confirming his utter DoD status by running off to celebrate to the touchline before Stevens had even entered the Belsize 22. 19-15 to Park.

Then, in a moment of pure genius – and comic ululation from the skipper chastising his deputy's decision – scrum-half Weller's vision saw him recognise the absence of a full-back and produce a sublime chip over the top of a ruck. Caines, playing out of position in the back row but displaying all of his usual predatory instincts as befits a centre, was on hand to gather and dot down to finally settle the score. One further penalty made the final score 29-15 to Park.

## Slingbacks

**Slingbacks 0**

**London Welsh 47**

**League Match**



Alice Lovett goes for a gap in the London Welsh defence

This match against the Champions-elect would have been tough enough had the Slingbacks been able to field their strongest team. With no fewer than fourteen players unavailable, including several of the most experienced, it was really a case of Mission Impossible. With the Park girls unable to field a proper front row the match was played with uncontested scrums from the start, a small crumb of comfort for winger Sam Emery, pressed into service behind the scrum as neither specialist scrum half was available either!

Despite the unequal struggle the Slingbacks gave everything and held Welsh for long periods, despite losing Cat Manson – one of the few specialist forwards – to an early injury. But despite some neat approach work they were unable to really make much headway deep into Welsh territory but some determined runs, particularly from Amanda Burton picking up the ball and attacking from the back of the scrum, kept their opponents busy.

The Slingbacks' tackling was superb, as it needed to be, but centre Alice Lovett still had to employ her prodigious kicking skills probably more than



Sam Emery gets the ball away from the rear of the scrum

she would have wished simply to relieve the pressure.

The spirited Park girls pretty much held Welsh for the first half hour, restricting them to a single try – a breakaway from their speedy right winger. But then three quick-fire tries just before the interval left Park with a 20-0 deficit and a mountain to climb – especially with Amanda also succumbing to an injury.

The Slingbacks battled on. The forwards continued to put in some telling tackles and fly half Shanice Williams tried to find some space for her backs but it was an uphill struggle. Full back Anja Grant had to make some good last-ditch tackles against some considerably heavier opponents, and her deceptive pace running out of defence with ball in hand was one of the few real weapons the Slingbacks could deploy.



Amanda Burton



Shanice Williams

Four more unanswered tries extended the Welsh lead to 42-0 as the match entered its final minutes. Skipper Hannah Boardman called for one last big effort from her beleaguered troops and for a few minutes the Slingbacks rose to the task and besieged the Welsh line looking for the consolation try their efforts richly deserved. Welsh defended superbly, and once they got hands on the ball made two quick passes and sprinted the length of the field to score. It just about summed up the Slingbacks' afternoon.

The problem was not those who played – who gave everything – but those who couldn't.

*Park (1-15): Becca Burridge, Gemma Naylor, Hannah Boardman; Hannah Murphy, Billie Baker; Zara Hachman, Cat Manson, Amanda Burton; Sam Emery; Shanice Williams; Sarah Vinner, Elly Boshell, Alice Lovett, Emma Anderson; Anja Grant.*

*Replacements: Ayesha Faulkner, KC Gates*

Next Sunday the Slingbacks will be hoping for the return of some players when they play Berkshire side Crowthorne at home, kicking off at 2:30. Admission is free and the clubhouse open. Please come along and add your support.

### The Rosslyn Park HSBC National Schools 7s Tournament

The tournament, the biggest Rugby Tournament in the world, will take place held over 5 days next week, between 19 – 23 March, with continuous play from about 10:00-16:30 on 23 pitches adjacent to the Robin Hood Roundabout on the A3. Organised by Dom Shabbo, the statistics of the tournament are worth repeating:

- 9,000 Participants
- 1,781 matches
- 24,934 Minutes of Rugby
- 755 Teams
- 360 Balls
- 130 Referees
- The 9,000 participants approx. aged from 13 to 18 with boys and girls taking part
- Approx. 7000-8000 spectators come to watch each year
- 750 teams of all levels from across the UK as well international visiting teams
- The tournament has an unrivalled roll-call of former participants including Ex England Coach Martin Johnson, Gareth Edwards, Lawrence Dallaglio, Ugo Monye, Chris Robshaw Jonathan Joseph and former England Sevens captain Ben Gollings.
- It's the 79th year of the competition in 2018

The precise timetable for this year will be:

Monday 19 March: Juniors tournament commences

Tues 20 March: Colts Tournament commences

Wed 21 March: Vase Tournament commences (U18 Boys) and Colts Finals

Thursday 22 March: Cup (U18 Boys) & Under 14 Boys commences and Vase Tournament Finals

Friday 23 March: Girls (U18s), Girls ASSE (U18s), & Prep commences and Cup & Under 14 Finals.

This will be the tournament's eighth year as the main sponsors of the event. Other Key Sponsors are - AKUMA (Sporting Apparel), SKINS, Wattbike, Karma Resorts, Edwin Doran(Sports Tours), Ipro Nutrition Drinks, Perform Better, Playertek.

We hope as many as possible of our own members and supporters will

come along to support the event. If you can't get the time off then matches from the main pitch are screened live on the Internet.

### Masquerade Ball

For the first time in a while the Club is holding what used to be the Annual End-of-Season Ball, and it will be a very special event. The Masquerade Ball will take place at the Rock on Saturday 05 May. It will be a Black Tie dinner, dance and auction, with several other attractions. We are hoping the event will bring together the whole Rosslyn Park family – mini parents, coaches, club sides, ladies teams, players and admin staff. It will also contribute to two worthwhile causes: the Rosslyn Park Injury Trust and Cancer Research. You can find out more and book your tickets through the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/end-of-season-masquerade-ball-tickets-42625758792?aff=eac2>

We will also be running an end of season BBQ on the 29th April and details will follow shortly.

### 400 Club – more winners

March winners are - Brian Kiely £100, Paul Sexton £50 and Vanda Montgomery £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.

### Summer Race Night

Whether you are following the Cheltenham Festival this week or not, make a note in your diary that the Slingbacks are planning a Race Night and social for Saturday, 14th July. More details soon, but these evenings are always great fun when hosted in the inimitable Slingbacks style. A great way to bring the whole club together during the summer recess.

### National 1 Focus

The first definite promotion / relegation issue was decided with Fylde's 36-5 defeat at Blackheath, which leaves them with not even a mathematical chance of survival in National 1. It is sad to see a great club, with whom we have had friendly relations for many years, go down but our sympathies are inevitably tempered by the fact that we are not quite safe ourselves yet! Nevertheless we shall miss the trip to Woodlands next season. Hopefully they will be able to regroup and get back soon.

Three weeks ago Old Albanian would almost be spoken of in the same breath. Their situation is still dire, but a third five point win on the trot – this time a 34-19 beating of Loughborough – has to give them hope of survival, possibly at the expense of the students! Hull Ionians put on a fine defensive display to secure five points at home to Caldy (29-24) to slightly ease their own worries. Two other clubs were drawn into the relegation equation after losses last Saturday. Esher went down 17-28 at home to Bishops Stortford

and Cambridge by 14-13 at Birmingham Moseley. Park are now five points ahead of those two clubs following our 5 point win over second placed Darlington Mowden Park. Cambridge have a game in hand, which is at home to Mowden next Saturday.

Only two clubs have even a mathematical chance of stopping Coventry (48-13 winners over Old Elthamians) which are our next opponents Amphyll and Plymouth Albion, who met each other last weekend. As mentioned earlier, Amps produced one of the greatest escape acts in Rugby, losing going into the last moment of added time while defending in their own 22: they turned over possession and played through 27 phases to score at the other end and snatch the win by 33-28.

*Next weekend's matches:*

Cambridge v Darlington Mowden Park, Plymouth Albion v Bishops Stortford

### Next Parknews

It is unlikely that a Parknews will be produced next week, as only the Slingbacks and Fours are expected to play at time of writing. Any reports from those matches will be carried over to the following week. Normally Parknews appears on the Club website weekly, usually between Tuesday lunchtime / Wednesday afternoon. Contributions are always welcome and the deadline is normally at noon on the Tuesday of publication. 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.

## STOP PRESS TONY BROOKS

As Parknews was about to go to press we received the devastating news that our former skipper Tony Brooks died at the weekend. We have no information beyond the fact that he coached his Colts squad to a 49-0 victory, went home and was watching rugby on television when he inexplicably passed away. His many, many friends and playing colleagues at Rosslyn Park will be shocked and deeply saddened at the news. Our sincere and deepest sympathy to his family.

When we have more news we shall, of course, share it. He was a great player, a great skipper and a great human being.



SAVE THE DATE  
SATURDAY MAY 5TH, 2018

# MASQUERADE Ball

BLACK TIE CHARITY BALL IN AID OF  
ROSSLYN PARK INJURY TRUST AND CANCER RESEARCH

DINNER, DANCING AND AUCTION

LOCATION: ROSSLYN PARK RUGBY CLUB

PUT THE DATE IN THE DIARY AND WE'LL BE IN TOUCH  
WITH MORE INFORMATION VERY SOON.