

NEXT UP IT'S CHAMPIONS COVENTRY AWAY

Welcome to Parknews Park did not play badly on Saturday, but lost to a strong (in every sense of the word) Ampthill side. It would be nice to think that our toughest remaining match is now behind us, but with away trips to Coventry and Plymouth yet to be undertaken that is likely to be stretching the truth. In reality we are ten points ahead of the relegation zone, and as close to the top half of the table in terms of points as we are to going down, but all the while relegation remains a mathematical possibility we need to scrap for every single point and in that context it was disappointing to file a 'nil return' on Saturday (*there are details of the remaining fixtures of the bottom sides in the National 1 Review further on in this Parknews*). Having said that, we did not play badly against one of the top teams in the division: it is avoidable defeats away to three of the four bottom teams that explains our relatively low position.



Action from Saturday's match against Ampthill [all 1st XV photos are by David Whittam]

We have a week off before our next match, which promises to be a really searching test. On Saturday week we play away to this season's Champions, Coventry. To say it is a tough task is to put it mildly: Cov have claimed a win with a 4-try bonus in every single home match this season. Only Bishops Stortford and Plymouth Albion have restricted them to four tries, only Stortford managed a losing bonus point. On the plus side for Park, we do have a pretty good record at the Butts Arena from previous seasons and competed well against them in the first half of our home match earlier in the season, until they pulled away in the second half. Coventry are coached by our former scrum half, Nick Walshe.

Your vocal support at probably our most difficult match of the season would be greatly appreciated by the players. 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).

After that we have a really crucial home match against Hull Ionians, a real 'ten-pointer' if ever there was one. Ionians are currently seven points behind us and obviously if we could secure maximum points and deny them, then it would afford some breathing space. In the 'away' match we dominated the play for much of the match only to concede defeat to a last-minute drop goal. A large and vocal home crowd at the Rock on 14 April would be a great asset. If you are a Park supporter please do your bit to whip up support!

live Rugby this Thursday evening

Before all that, please note that there is a very entertaining evening's rugby at the club this Thursday to get your Easter off to a good start. The Hatters are playing their vital Zoo Shield fixture against Guildford on the 4G kicking off at 7:45PM, admission is free and the Clubhouse will be open. Please come along and support!

Rosslyn Park 21

Ampthill 31

National 1

A strong Ampthill team showed why they are one of the top sides in National 1, but Park made them fight all the way for the win that sees them remain in third place in the league.

It was Park who made the brighter start, running at Ampthill. A glorious long pass from fly half Oli Grove set up flanker Harry Hudson for a try wide on the left after only three minutes. Centre Harry Leonard added a good conversion for 7-0.

Ampthill's giant pack was clearly going to be a factor in the match as they clawed their way back into the match, but it was the more subtle skills of fly half Lawrence Rayner that saw

Thursday 29 April

Hatters v Guildford 2

Zoo Sports Shield
Home (4G) KO 7:45PM

Saturday 07 April

Hatters v Worthing 2

Zoo Sports Shield
Home KO TBA

Coventry v 1st XV

League
Away KO: 3:00PM

B XV TBA

Camberley 2 v Nomads

Surrey Championship
Away (but poss in Richmond Pk) KO TBA

Fours TBA

Next 1st XV home match

Saturday 07 April

1st XV v Hull Ionians

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

Both teams observe a minute's silence in memory of the late Tony Brooks, former Captain of Rosslyn Park



him ghost through to score close to the posts and give winger James Pritchard a simple conversion for 7-7 on 10 minutes.



Play was evenly balanced: Park tried to move the ball around quickly while Amphyll went through the phases, but the two defences were on top. It was the visitors who struck next on 25 minutes with a Pritchard penalty for 10-7. Two minutes later a difficult kick gave Leonard a chance to equalize but his attempt missed by a hair's breadth.



It didn't help Park's cause that skipper Hugo Ellis had to leave the field with a cut above his right eye, but probably the decisive moment came when Amps changed the direction of attack with a quick inside pass. Park lock Adam Frampton made an instinctive attempt to intercept but was adjudged to have deliberately knocked on and harshly dispatched to the sin bin.

Playing against a reduced Park pack the strong Amphyll forward unit made hay and mauled their way to the Park line for winger Sam Baker to claim the touchdown, Pritchard converting to make the score 17-7 on 32 minutes.

Park certainly did not lie down and despite being short-handed struck back

three minutes later when a pass out wide found winger Charlie Amesbury who sprinted away to score, Leonard converting for 14-17.

Just as it looked as if Park would reach the dressing room with little damage done, the final move of the half saw another massive maul from the Amphyll pack and it was the powerful figure of Tongan international hooker Aleki Lutui who touched down. Pritchard's conversion brought the half-time whistle at 14-24.

If Park had a hill to climb, that became a mountain when a bright start to the





second period by the visitors saw centre Peter Weightman finish off another Amphill attack, Pritchard converting for 14-31 on 42 minutes.

Park continued to put their faith in running rugby but struggled to find a way past the opposition. When the door finally opened it was to a quite breathtaking try. Winger Benji Marfo fielded the ball close to his own line. The ball reached Leonard who made a searing run out of his own half and, when caught, Marfo was at his shoulder to receive the pass and sprinted over to score. Leonard nailed a really difficult conversion, but it was too little too late. The final whistle came at 21-31.



It was not the result that Park wanted or needed, but they can hold their heads high after taking very good opponents right to the wire.

A disappointed Park Head Coach Kieran Power said that it was, "Very frustrating on our behalf, silly errors and penalties cost us good field position. That resulted in our defence being heavily tested on our try line.

"There were some good positives from open play in the second half, but we left it too late to turn it around".



Park: Robinson; Marfo, Henderson, Leonard, Amesbury; Grove; Crow; Nwakor, Bellamy, Lovell; Frampton, MacPherson; Macfarlane, Hudson, H Ellis.

Bench: Hughes, Wade, Ovens, Gash, Crane

Park scorers: Hudson (T), Amesbury (T), Marfo (T) Leonard (3C)

Club sides

Will Thorogood reports that Easter weekend approaches, but there is some Clubside Football this week! Before I go into detail, a brief summary of the weekend just gone.

In what has been an overall very successful season in MMT1, the Killer **B's** were in the Semi-Final Play Off against Old Haberdashers 2's. Originally planned as a midday curtain raiser on the 4G, the game had to be played in in Richmond Park. Haberdashers couldn't make the early start. The B's hadn't played a home game in Richmond Park for two seasons, and so conditions may have been a little alien to them. No 4G there, but I wonder what grazing deer would make of that?!

Anyway, this game was a hard battled affair, but not particularly open, with the B's starting off well, and scored a try after about 15 minutes. Habs soon replied with a penalty, and then seem to take control in the set pieces, scrum and line-outs. We conceded three tries, I think, before half time, but we scored a couple more ourselves. 15-18 at half time. If tries had been converted and penalty attempts at goal, it could have been a different story. Anyway, a mix of tight and open football, the second half was an exciting affair, and in the last 10 minutes, the B's trailed only 22-24. However, they couldn't hold out a series of Habs' attacks, and we conceded a late try. After that, and a series of our own pressure, the final whistle was blown. Final score B's 22 Habs 29. Well done, all, through a generally excellent season. Good prospects in view next season.

The **Hatters** played H&F 2's in a friendly, but with only thirteen players and some loaned H&F players. They were just pipped, 15-17. A good gallop out to clear the cobwebs for a crucial Zoo League game on Thursday evening at the Rock, 19.45h, against Guildford 2's. **Nomads** and **4's** did not play.

Hammersmith & Fulham XV 19 Hatters 17 (friendly)

Disappointingly, the Hatters arrived at Hurlingham Park with only 13 men after a number of players had either failed to update their availability correctly or had pulled out at the last minute. Fortunately, what those that did turn up lacked in numbers, they more than made up for in quality. They were also generously reinforced by two Hammers players who put in sterling performances in the second row and a third who had a cameo in the back three after Porter had to leave the field but more of that later.

Receiving the kick-off, Park started strongly with the forwards making ground off Riley at 9 and Coops at 10. As the Hammers defence was drawn in, gaps began to appear out wide which Longers did not take long to exploit. After a textbook turnover from De Haan and Wilson in his newfound position of choice on the flank won Park a penalty, Wardie beat his man to win his first of many lineouts. After some good hands in the midfield from Savage, the ball found its way to Mason who finished well in the right hand corner. 5-0 to Park with barely 10 minutes gone.

Quickly, however, Park's discipline began to let them down. While the Hatters stood up well in the tackle, with Riley and Wilson with a tackle count into double figures well before halftime, a succession of penalties allowed the Hammers to play in Park's half eventually crossing the whitewash to make it 7-5.

The Hatters' ill discipline continued with a succession of penalties for foolishly kicking the ball out of the ruck. Unfortunately, but perhaps unsurprisingly, this culminated in Porter feeling the full force of the referee's wrath after a high tackle and being forced to spend ten minutes in the bin. Park defended well with 14 men conceding only 5 points: 12-5.

In the final 10 of the half, Park rallied and began to realise that the key was to move the ball out of contact where the Hammers were well-organised. With Wardie, Savage and Wilson combining well in the back row, space again appeared in the midfield which Coops and Longers exploited well putting the back three in space. It wasn't long before Mason was able to

cross the try line for a second time after a good finish. 12-10 at halftime.

As players tired in the second half, the game became increasingly scrappy allowing the scavengers of Wilson, de Haan and Savage to add to their considerable turnover tally. Coops played an intelligent kicking game keeping the home side pinned in their own 22 but Park couldn't quite capitalise on this possession with points. Against the run of play, Hammersmith and Fulham in a rare foray into Park's half managed to convert pressure into points making it 19-10.

With 10 minutes to go, Park still had something in the tank and were able to string a number of phases together before Longers ran a superb line in the midfield to run in 7 points.

With only 2 points in it and 2 points in it the Hatters knew what they had to do but after several weeks off neither mind nor body were willing. A fair result which gave the Hatters a much-needed opportunity to blow out some cobwebs ahead of this Thursday's league tie against Guildford. Man of the match went to Wilson who put in a superb performance on the flank with an extremely impressive tackle and turnover count. DotD went to Porter who (I forgot to mention this) was forced by the referee in the second half to be replaced or face a red card - he reluctantly left the field voluntarily.

Slingbacks Race Night

The Slingbacks are running a Race Night and social on Saturday, 14th April, the day the first XV are at home to Hull Ionians. More details soon, but these evenings are always great fun when hosted in the inimitable Slingbacks style.

National 1 review

With Coventry already securing the title it is probably more interesting to highlight the battle for survival at the bottom. **Fylde** lost at home to **Esher** by 17 – 32 and are already relegated, but two clubs will go down with them, and it is worth looking at who they play in their remaining matches. **Old Albanian**, despite a recent improvement, went down by 50-26 at **Cambridge** last Saturday and are 7 points in arrears of the third-from-last club Hull Ionians and have played a game more. They have played 26 and have 43 points, so the most points they can amass is 63. Their remaining fixtures are Caldly (h), Old Elthamians (a), Plymouth Albion (h) and ourselves (a).

Immediately above are **Loughborough** (played 25 and with 47 points, so a maximum haul of 72) who got 3 points from a 34-34 home draw with **Blackheath** on Saturday. They have yet to play Plymouth (a), Esher (a), Bishops Stortford (h), Fylde (a) and Darlington Mowden Park (h). Above them are **Hull Ionians** (played 25 with 50 points, and so a maximum of 75) who got the 4-try bonus point in a 42-26 defeat at **Old Elthamians**. They face Cambridge (a), Plymouth Albion (h), ourselves (a), Ampthill (h) and Coventry (a).

Immediately above them are three sides, Cambridge, ourselves and Esher who all have played 25 with 57 points, thus a maximum of 82. **Cambridge** have to play Hull Ionians (h), Blackheath (a), Esher (h), Bishops Stortford (a) and Fylde (h). **Rosslyn Park**, after our 31-21 defeat to third-placed **Ampthill** have Coventry (a), Hull Ionians (h), Birmingham Moseley (a), Old Albanian (h) and Plymouth Albion (a). **Esher** play Darlington Mowden Park (a), Loughborough (h), Cambridge (a), Caldly (h) and Old Elthamians (a).

Elsewhere, **Coventry**, our next opponents asserted their right to the title with a 24-21 away win at **Plymouth Albion** in a match played in awful conditions. That consolidated **Darlington Mowden Park** in second place after a tight home win (41-35) over **Bishops Stortford**. In the mid-table struggle **Caldly** had a 21-20 home win over **Birmingham Moseley**.

This weekend's matches
Old Elthamians v Ampthill
Darlington Mowden Park v Esher
Cambridge v Hull Ionians
Plymouth Albion v Loughborough
Matches on 07 April
Ampthill v Darlington Mowden Park
Birmingham Moseley v Old Elthamians
Bishops Stortford v Fylde

Blackheath v Cambridge
Hull Ionians v Plymouth Albion
Old Albanian v Caldly

Away travel

After Coventry on Saturday week we have only two away trips remaining, the first one being on 21 April when we visit Moseley. **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, 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 hotel bookings.

Thanks Katie

We said goodbye on Saturday to Dr Katie Hornby who has been a valuable member of our medical team for the last couple of seasons. She is leaving to experience the joys of motherhood, but is promising to come to the next match as a supporter, saying that the excitement might cause her baby to arrive. The Robert Holmes Stand has witnessed a lot of things over the decades, but that would be a first! Everyone at the club wishes Katie well.

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 and end of season BBQ on the 29th April and details will follow shortly

Next Parknews

With little action over the Easter weekend, there will be no Parknews next 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.

