

A CRUNCH MATCH THIS SATURDAY

Welcome to Parknews Park may have lost at Coventry on Saturday, but they became the first side this season to take a 4-try bonus point and a losing bonus point from the Champions, in front of a crowd of more than 2000 at Butts Arena – and they richly deserved both of them. Coventry supporters around your correspondent said that Park were the best opposition they had faced all season. There's little doubt that we would have beaten most, if not all, other teams in National 1 playing as we did, and it would be mean spirited indeed not to regard this as two points won rather than three points forfeited.

Park held their own from the start, but it looked like 'one of those days' when Coventry scored in the sixth and eleventh minutes. It would have been easy to lose confidence at that point, but Park really dug in. With Andrew Henderson not available, Charlie Amesbury moved from wing to centre – and it looked like an inspired piece of selection when he bagged two tries in a minute to turn the tables. The Park pack played really well, out-scrummaging Coventry and the back row put in a tremendous shift. The backs looked fast and dangerous.

It was 17-17 at the interval, and when Benji Marfo put Park ahead on 48 minutes a major upset looked well on the cards. What cooked Park's goose was probably three successive times we gained a throw in good field position only to fail to win our own ball, and you just cannot afford to spurn chances against a team as good as Coventry. Park played their hearts out and looked distinctly tired towards the end – not a reflection on their fitness, but on the huge effort they made against comfortably the best team in the league.

Let's hope they recover in time for this Saturday when we play at home to Hull Ionians – who had a bonus-point win over Plymouth Albion last Saturday - in a match that could hardly be more important, with both clubs aiming to ensure National 1 Rugby for next season. In the earlier match at their ground Park lost 27-26 to a last minute drop goal, having had the better of the play for much of the game. It was one of those matches that



we could and should have won, but the other side of that coin is that Hull Ionians hung in there and took their chances when they had them with clinical precision. Such sides are always going to be dangerous and deserving of the utmost respect.

Ionians endured a nightmare start to the season. They started with two home matches, but against the top two sides, Coventry and Darlington Mowden Park, and lost both heavily. That may have dented their confidence because they lost their next three matches as well and have thus been locked into the battle for survival ever since. They have put together some decent results at home but have struggled on their



Charlie Amesbury sprints away to score at Coventry [all 1st XV photos are by David Whittam]

Friday 13th April

Hatters v Cobham 2

Zoo Sports Shield
Home KO TBA

Saturday 14 April
Curtain raiser

Fours v R.C. Etten Leur (Holland)

Tour Match
Home (4G) KO: noon

Followed by

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

Followed in the Clubhouse by

The Grand National on TV at 5:15 and at 6:30 a Racenight organised by the Slingbacks at no extra charge!

Nomads v Law Society 2

Surrey Championship
Home (Richmond Park) KO noon

B XV TBA

travels, thus far their only win being a 14-12 victory over Fylde (though they came within an ace of beating Caldy, where they lost 26-27).

Fylde are already down. Old Albanian are on 48 points with three matches remaining, so the most points they can get are 63: Hull Ionians are on 55 points with three matches remaining, and so could get 70. Park are currently on 59 points with four matches remaining. If we could beat Ionians with a 4-try bonus that would put us on 64 points and therefore certain of finishing above Old Albanian. Even if Hull then got 4-try and losing bonus points, their maximum total would be 68, so winning our then remaining home match (against Old Albanian) would ensure National 1 Rugby at the Rock next season. So it's in our own hands: a win this Saturday is absolutely vital – please come down and give the players your vocal support.

This weekend at the Rock

We have a veritable feast of Rugby and social activity for you this weekend. It starts on Friday night when the **Hatters** play an important Zoo Sports Shield match against **Cobham** (the club that gave us Jonny Wilkinson). The Hatters play some great open rugby, so with the weather improving (fingers crossed!) why not come down and enjoy an evening's fee entertainment. The Clubhouse will be open before, during and after the match

Saturday kicks off with an 'international' match at noon with our **Fours** entertaining the Dutch touring side **Rugby Club Etten Leur** from North Brabant, who play in the second division of the Dutch Leagues. Please do come down early for what should be a cracking match. . If you prefer the wide open spaces of Richmond Park, then also at noon the **Nomads** play **Law Society 2** in the Surrey Championship. The pitch is close to Roehampton Gate from where it is a short downhill walk to the Rock. We hope everyone will stay with us and watch the vital 1st XV match against Hull Ionians (see above). If that wasn't enough, after that there's the **Grand National** on the big screen at 5:15, after which the Slingbacks invite you - at no extra charge - to enjoy their **Race Night** at 6:30 (details follow).

Coventry 32 Park 27 National 1

This season's Champions, Coventry, maintained their 100% home record but not before a battling Rosslyn Park performance gave them one hell of a fright. Park became the first away side this season to leave the Butts Arena with a four-try bonus in addition to their losing bonus point.



It looked like being a long afternoon when, after some even midfield sparring, on 6 minutes Coventry left-wing Max Trimble raced away at a clever angle to dot down in the corner for 5-0.

Fears seemed to be confirmed five minutes later when, following a kick to touch, hooker Scott Tolmie broke off from a drive to go over and extend the lead to 10-0.

However Park came roaring back with two tries in two minutes from Charlie



Amesbury, deployed as a centre but using his wingers' speed to finish off two good moves, the first wide on the left and the second through the heart of the defence. Fly half Harry Leonard converted the second to give Park the lead at 12-10 on 19 minutes.

That lasted only two minutes, whereupon Cov right wing Rob Knox found space to cut in just to the left of the posts. This time fly half Will Maisey converted to restore the home side's lead at 17-12.

Park tackled like tigers and were now putting together some moves of their own that troubled the Champions. The pack were more than holding their own, and the backs always looked dangerous. When Cov number 8 Luke Narraway intervened illegally to stop a distinctly promising move, being sin-binned for his troubles, Park were well placed to take advantage.

On 36 minutes the pack drove Coventry back over their own line for number 8 Mike Macfarlane to touch down and tie the scores at 17-17. Had the conversion gone over, Park would have gone into the interval with the lead but Leonard's kick hit the post.

Park started the second half really positively and reaped their reward after only eight minutes. The pack drove towards the Coventry line on the right





but the home defence held solid. The ball was rapidly switched across the field and there was no stopping pacy winger Benji Marfo, cutting in at speed from the left flank to give Leonard an easier conversion, which he accepted with alacrity for a 24-17 lead and the four-try bonus point.

Park were tackling themselves to a standstill as Coventry strove to maintain their unbeaten home record. It was fresh legs that swung the match back in their direction, replacement back Tony Fenner putting in a telling kick from which full-back James Stokes out-paced everyone to score near the corner to reduce Park's lead to 24-22.

It was another replacement, flanker Tom Jubb, who restored the lead to the home side with a try on 61 minutes, Maisey converting for 29-24.

Although clearly tiring from a supreme effort, Park were doing more than just hanging on. So it must have come as a hammer blow when, with five minutes remaining, Coventry were awarded a penalty from which Maisey added three points, which stretched the lead to eight points, thus removing the losing bonus point.

Somehow Park summoned the effort for a final attack, to gain a last-minute penalty from which Leonard bagged the three points for 32-27, restoring the richly deserved losing bonus.

At the end of the match, relieved Coventry boss Rowland Winter gave credit to Park, saying, "They're stacked with talent and should be a lot higher up the table".



Park Head Coach Kieran Power said, "The boys put in a very courageous performance at Coventry and came away with two well earned points with some excellent rugby played.

"Our scrum was excellent but our lineout let us down and was probably the reason why we didn't take the game.

"It does, though, give us some great momentum into our game against Hull Ionians at home next week (kick off 3:00PM)".

Park: Robinson; Crane, Amesbury, Barnes, Marfo; Leonard; Gash; Nwakor, Bellamy, Wade; Grey, Frampton; Ovens, Hudson, Macfarlane.

Bench: Vaughan-Edwards, Lovell, Spivey, Crow, Grove

Park scorers: Amesbury (2T), Macfarlane (T), Marfo (T), Leonard (P, 2C)

Slingbacks


The Slingbacks


present

Race Night

Pre buy a horse for one of the 10 races that will run at The Rock racecourse in Barnes. Glorious prizes to be won.



French chalet for 1 week



Come to the racecourse and have a flutter on the horses on the night.

Many More Prizes!!

Sat 14th April

6:30pm

Rosslyn Park Rugby Club

To buy a horse email us at: slingbacks@rosslynpark.co.uk

Fundraising for The Slingbacks Ladies Rugby Team

Personalised Gin & £40 at the Tree House, Barnes

Majestic Wine Tasting

Signed Baabaas Shirt

Bowling Alley for six

Comedy at The 99 Tickets

Sofa at the Olympic Studios Barnes

Created by [@slingbacks](#) - Facebook

Fear not if your horse falls in the Grand National on Saturday, because you have every chance to recoup your losses later on! The Slingbacks are running a Race Night and social in the Clubhouse this Saturday, after the first XV are at home to Hull Ionians. It promises to be great fun, hosted in the inimitable Slingbacks style. In addition to having some fun and possibly the odd flutter throughout the evening, you can become an owner and be in with a chance of winning some attractive prizes, as set out below. If you would like to buy a horse please email, slingbacks@rosslynpark.co.uk

Race 1 Wimbledon tennis annual & two jugs of Pimms and lemonade at The Stag's Head. £5 a horse, with 6 horses remaining for sale.

Race 2 Two comedy tickets at The 99 Club. £5 a horse, but already sold out.

Race 3 One hour ten pin bowling session for six people. £10 a horse, with 6 horses remaining for sale.

Race 4 Family day at London Wetlands Centre for two adults and two children. £10 a horse, with 7 horses remaining for sale.

Race 5 Sofa for two at a film of the winner's choice at Olympic Studios,

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THE ARMY | BRISTOL RUGBY | ESHER



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GATES 4.30PM | KICKOFF 5PM | FINAL AT 10.20PM
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Barnes. £12 a horse, with 6 horses remaining for sale.

Race 6 Royal Horticultural Society Plant and Art Fair tickets (11th and 12th July) & two tickets for World Without Us at the Battersea Art's Centre in May. £15 a horse, with 7 horses remaining for sale.

Race 7 Devon Distillery personalised bottle of gin and a £40 voucher at The Tree House Pub, Barnes. £20 a horse, with 1 horse remaining for sale.

Race 8 Majestic tasting for six people and two bottles of fizz. £30 a horse, with 6 horses remaining for sale.

Race 9 Signed Barbarian v Australia shirt. £40 a horse, with 8 horses remaining for sale.

Race 10 One week's accommodation in the mountain resort of St-Gervais-Les-Bains, France, for up to six people. £50 a horse, but already sold out.

Whether you come along as an owner, punter or just a spectator it should be a great evening, and there's no charge for admission!

Dates for your diary

The Slingbacks will be playing their League match against **Harlequins** on Sunday 29 April, kicking off at 10:00AM in order not to clash with the fun day being organised by the junior / mini Section for that day, which starts at lunch time. The final League match, at home to **Crowthorne**, will now be played on Sunday 06 May, kicking off at 2:30PM.

Club sides

Will Thorogood reports that, looking back a week, the Thursday night saw a tight game between the **Hatters** and **Guildford 2's** in their Zoo Sports 3 clash. The Hatters, however hard they tried found it very difficult to breach the resistant Guildford defence, but, at the same time, they were always in touch. 5-7 at half time to Guildford. At the restart, we conceded an early try

which took it took it 5-14, plus a penalty, 5-17. The Hatters dominated the possession and did score another try which left the final score at Hatters 10 Guildford 17. A hard game which would set the Hatters up for a challenging task against Worthing on the Saturday just gone.

The Hatters set up an attack against Guildford



In that match last Saturday the **Hatters** lost by 26-12 to a strong **Worthing 2s**, the Champions-elect, and the boys still have a good chance for the play-offs. The **Nomads** also played against Champions-elect in the form of **Camberley 2s** and had an excellent win by 27-21.

National 1 review

The weekend before last there were three matches played. **Hull Ionians** lost 29-19 at **Cambridge** (who claimed the four-try bonus). **Darlington Mowden Park** denied **Esher** a significant away win when a penalty from the last kick of the match saw them win 18-16. **Old Elthamians** lost at home to **Amphill** by 6-18.

It's probably more interesting to look at the bottom of the table than the top. **Fylde** are already definitely down and really did not need the 71-24

thrashing at **Bishops Stortford** to drive the last nail into the coffin. Just above them, **Old Albanian** are still in deep trouble despite their bonus-point win (43-25) at home to **Caldy** being their fourth win in five matches. They are on 48 with only Old Elthamians (a), Plymouth Albion (h) and ourselves (a) yet to play. Immediately above them, and still in the relegation zone on 51 points, are **Loughborough** despite a 25-23 win away to **Esher**. They have yet to play Bishops Stortford (h), Fylde (a), Darlington Mowden Park (h) and Plymouth Albion (a).

Our next opponents, **Hull Ionians**, are one place above the drop zone on 55 points, but with only three matches remaining. They will take heart from a great 33-14 win over **Plymouth Albion** last weekend, but have to face ourselves (a), Amptill (h) and Coventry (a). That home defeat against Loughborough leaves **Esher** on 59 points with only three matches remaining: Cambridge (a), Caldly (h) and Old Elthamians (a). **Rosslyn Park** are on the same total after gaining 2 bonus points in the 32-27 defeat at **Coventry**, but with four matches yet to play: Hull Ionians (h), Birmingham Moseley (a), Old Albanian (h) and Plymouth Albion (a). **Caldy's** defeat at Old Albanian means that on 62 points with 3 matches remaining (Blackheath (h), Esher (a) and Bishops Stortford (h), which is exactly the same as **Cambridge**, who surrendered a 12-0 at **Blackheath** to lose 23-12, and who play Esher (h), Bishops Stortford (a) and Fylde (h).

At the top of the table **Coventry**, of course, are already Champions. **Darlington Mowden Park** consolidated their grip on second place with a nail-biting win at **Amptill**. Mowden led by 10-8 going into the final minute only for Amptill to be awarded a penalty try, apparently snatching the win. But there was just time for Mowden to get the ball to the other end where they were awarded a penalty try! **Blackheath** move up to fourth, ahead of **Plymouth Albion** (who have two matches in hand) while **Old Elthamians'** 32-28 away win over **Moseley** takes them up to fifth.

Matches next weekend:

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

Away travel

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, and less likely now that Plymouth have had another postponement to re-schedule, presumably for the following week, but worth considering before you buy *non-refundable* rail tickets or make hotel bookings.

Tony Brooks funeral

The service will be held on Monday 16th April at 3pm, Easthampstead Park Crematorium, South Road, Bracknell, Wokingham, RG40 3DW. Following the service there will be a reception at Maidenhead Rugby Club, Braywick Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1BN. The family very much want to celebrate Tony's life so attendees should feel no obligation to wear black. Rather than floral tributes the family would be hugely thankful for donations to the rugby charity Wooden Spoon. There will be collections at the service or you can donate via www.justgiving.com/fundraising/brooksie8. They added, "If you are unable to join us, please remember Tony fondly and raise a glass to him".

Inflexible

Just as we thought our luck couldn't get any worse.... With all the injuries we have had, we came to an arrangement to loan Arthur Ellis for the remainder of the season. Some supporters in the Clubhouse on the Saturday we played Amptill asked why Arthur wasn't playing. No one is an automatic selection, but Arthur – through no fault of his own - became an automatic de-selection. Ealing encountered some injury problems and wanted to recall Arthur as cover for a B & I Cup match that weekend, as is their right. That cup match was postponed in the event. But Ealing had to re-register him as a player before that happened and could not formally release him and Park re-register him before the transfer deadline intervened. So Arthur cannot play for Park again this season, even though he has played for no-one else in between. Rules are rules.

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

March draw winners were Greig Macpherson £100, Lindsay Dean £50 and Ian Peacock £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

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.

