

LAST KICK DEFEAT AGAIN HAUNTS PARK

Welcome to Parknews Another real thriller at the Rock last Saturday, but not with the outcome Park wanted or needed. The first half saw a strangely muted performance and it was difficult not to think that the Herculean efforts at Coventry the previous week had left their mark. But it was simple inaccuracy and indiscipline that let Park down. Too many passes hit the ground before their target, too many that didn't were mis-handled and we gave away far too many penalties. There was much criticism of the referee by supporters after the match, and some of his decisions did challenge the imagination a little, but if only half of the penalties he awarded against us were justified then it was too many.

It certainly didn't help when Henry Robinson had to retire from the fray within the first half hour, when we were leading 7-6, leading to a reorganisation of the defence. Then within 5 minutes, the referee decided that the next offence was one too many and his replacement Rhys Crane was sent to the sin bin, taking one for the team, before he had even warmed up! Hull scored 15 points while we were reduced to 14 players. It left a mountain to climb in the second half.



Somewhere under here Charlie Amesbury has scored for Park [all 1st XV match photos are by David Whittam]



No one could fault the effort Park made in the second half to recover a 7-24 deficit. Overall, we scored five tries to Hull's three. All credit to Hull Ionians, they came to do a job, played their hearts out and got their tactics right, but looking back it seems fair to say that they created little that did not result from our own errors. The players will be deeply disappointed that having hauled themselves back into the match with some super Rugby in the second half the match was allowed to slip away at the death. A creditable mention in dispatches, by the way, for skipper Adam Frampton, who got injured early in the second half but insisted on carrying on – the swathes of bandages around his lower limb spoke of a dedication beyond the call of duty.

Many of us were expecting to get four points from the last two games (away to Coventry and home to Hull Ionians) but that was predicated upon losing without a point at Coventry and beating Hull - it's the four points gained by Hull that is the problem. The result means that we are now part of the relegation struggle as – with the exception of already-relegated Fylde – all the teams beneath and around us in the table won.

Our next home opponents, Old Albanian, look the most likely to drop as the maximum points they can get are 63. If any one of either they lose at home to Plymouth Albion next Saturday, or we beat Birmingham Moseley next week or we beat Old Albanians in their

Saturday 21 April

**Birmingham
Moseley**

v

1st XV

League

Away KO: 3:00PM

Hatters v Merlins

Friendly

Home (4G) KO 3:00PM

Nomads, B XV, Fours TBA

Next 1st XV home match
Saturday 21 April

1st XV

v

Old Albanian

League

Away KO: 3:00PM

Preceded by Former Players' lunch.

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

final match then we have to finish above them. But beyond that all is far from cut and dried. We are 5 points ahead of Loughborough, who have three matches remaining (away to Fylde, home to Darlington Mowden Park and away to Plymouth Albion). Saturday's result leaves Hull Ionians two points behind us with two really difficult ones left to play (home to Amptill and away to Coventry). Last week's results bring Cambridge into the equation, as they are only a point ahead of us and with only two matches to play (away at Bishops Stortford and at home to Fylde).

In our own hands

The really positive thing, though, is that our destiny is still in our own hands and not dependent on the results of others. Nine points from our last three matches and National One Rugby is assured at the Rock for next season, whatever anyone else does. That starts with a visit to Birmingham Moseley next Saturday. Anyone clinging to the hope that Moseley's position, safely in the middle of the table, might mean they have knocked off for the season was given a wake up call last Saturday when they put in a tremendous battling performance at Plymouth Albion. They were winning going into the seventh minute of added time only to have the match stolen from them by a last minute try. There has been a definite pattern to Moseley's home performances this season. Against teams in the bottom half of the table they have played 7, won 6 and drawn 1. Against top half teams they have played 7, lost 6 and drawn 1. Which suggests that if we play like the top half of the table side we believe ourselves to be, like we did at Coventry, then the game is eminently winnable. If we play below that level then it will be a bit more difficult.

It would be a tremendous boost to the players to get some solid vocal support at the match. Please do come along, tonsils charged, if you possible can. **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.

At the Rock

The **Hatters** are playing Merlins at the Rock this Saturday at 3:00PM in a 'friendly' that should be a feast of running Rugby. The Clubhouse will be open before, during and after the match and there is no charge for admission. If you cannot make it up to Birmingham Moseley, please do come down to the Rock and give the Hatters a shout.

Rosslyn Park 36 Hull Ionians 37

National 1

Park were barely recognizable in the first half as the side that came close to beating the Champions the previous week. Perhaps the efforts from that match were still in their legs as a below-par performance leaves them still in the relegation battle.



A bright start by Park saw some good work by left winger Charlie Amesbury set up his fellow winger Benji Marfo for a good score out wide. Fly half Harry Leonard bagged an excellent conversion for 7-0 with only four minutes gone.

Park aspired to play an open running game, looking the better side but they were gradually undone by inaccuracy and indiscipline, conceding a litany of penalties. The first of these was on six minutes allowing visiting scrum half Isaac Green to reduce the arrears to 7-3.

Park still looked the more dangerous side, but too often promising situations were spoilt by inaccurate passes or handling errors. They also appeared to have got on the wrong side of the referee, who constantly pulled them up for a succession of penalties. Hull fly half Greg Lound landed two of these on 29 and 32 minutes to give Hull an unlikely lead at 9-7. Between those two kicks Park's dependable full-back Henry Robinson





had to be helped from the field, causing a reorganization of the defence.

Worse was to follow. Yet another penalty three minutes later saw Robinson's replacement, winger Rhys Crane, effectively taking one for the team before he had even warmed up and being sent to the sin bin. Green scored from the kick for 12-9.

Hull Ionians saw their chance against 14 men and went on the attack. Park appeared to have blocked the danger until a dropped pass was seized upon and Hull centre Lewis Minikin got over in the corner, Green adding a superb conversion for 7-19.



With Park still short-handed, Minikin struck again on the stroke of half time, running in from close to half-way for 7-24 at the interval.

Park looked like a team transformed in the second half as they strove to rescue the situation. Livewire centre Dan Barnes got over on the right on 50 minutes to reduce the arrears to 12-24.

Six minutes later flanker Harry Hudson popped up to score, Leonard's conversion making it 19-24.

Then on 63 minutes a good run by Barnes saw the ball moved on to Hudson and then wide for Marfo to show great speed and balance to sprint in and get close to the posts to give Park the 4-try bonus point. Leonard's conversion gave them the lead at 26-24.

Just as it looked as if the game was safe, another penalty saw Green restore the lead to the away side at 27-26.

Park surged back upfield and a concerted drive by the forwards saw Amesbury touch down on 71 minutes, Leonard converting for 33-27. This time it was Hull who came back. A kick through saw Hull win the race to the ball, close to the touchline but possibly beyond the dead ball line. Neither the referee nor the nearby touch judge could be sure that it was fairly grounded and play was re-started with a 5-metre scrum to Hull. A succession of surges saw them eventually touch down by the posts, Rikki Stoute claiming the try, and leaving a relatively simple conversion for Green to snatch back the lead at 34-33 with only two minutes remaining.

Park went on all-out attack and won a penalty virtually on the touchline. A magnificent effort from Leonard gave them the lead at 36-34.

Park had only to play down the clock, but a handling error gave Hull a final scrum about 10 metres outside the 22. Park got themselves penalized and Green's kick stole the match at 36-37.

Park Head Coach, Kieran Power, said, "Unfortunately ill-discipline and individual errors cost us in the first half and made it hard task to claw the score line back.

"But it was again penalties that allowed Hull to sneak the game in the last seconds of the match".

*Park: Robinson; Marfo, Grove, Barnes, Amesbury; Leonard; Gash; Nwakor, Gibson, Wade; Spivey, Gray; Frampton, Hudson, Ovens
Bench: Vaughan-Edwards, Lovell, Hughes, Crow, Crane
Park scorers: Marfo (2T), Barnes (T), Hudson (T), Amesbury (T), Leonard (P, 4C)*



Who'd be a referee?

There was some confusion at last Saturday's match about the situation concerning the try for Hull Ionians that was disallowed, leading to a 5-metre scrum which, in turn, led to a try in a more advantageous decision. For those who were not there, a Hull player kicked the ball through and into the Park in-goal area out wide by the touchline and a Hull player got there first but it was perilously close to the dead ball line. Many thought the try had been disallowed because, after consultation with the adjacent touch judge, neither could be certain whether it had been touched down within or outside the dead ball line. As the ball certainly went on to cross the dead ball line, the argument went, then surely with no Park player touching the ball before it went out of play, then the re-start should have been a 22 drop-out for Park. Your diligent correspondent checked and it appears that was not the case: the officials were sure that the attempted touchdown was within the in-goal area, but not that it was fairly touched down. So the ball was 'dead' before it went out of play, but no defender touched it down within the in-goal to occasion the 22 drop-out.

The Editor checked with the latest issue of the IRB Laws on this. They are clear that *if the referee is unclear which team touched down*, then play re-starts with a 5-metre scrum, put-in to the attacking side. But not what happens if the referee is unsure whether or not it was touched down. By implication, one could deduce that the conditions for awarding a try were not met, but where do we go from there? The ball – by this interpretation – didn't cross the dead-ball line before it was declared 'dead', so the Hull kicker did not propel the ball beyond the dead-ball line (if he had it would have been a scrum to Park from where the ball was kicked) and, effectively,

no one touched it down. These columns are open to any qualified referee to opine on what **should** have happened.

Club sides

Will Thorogood reports that a **Rossllyn Park** (4's and Nomads) XV or XXX entertained, mixed, matched and collaborated with a very sociable and social **Etten-Leur** Rugby team, from the South of Holland. As a curtain raiser to the Hull nailbiter, the game epitomized and reflected the spirit of Rugby Football, through skill, fast running, being a "Match for Anyone", form shape, sizes and ages. Young and old, short and tall! Chris Dunn cameoed, Ed Balsden, Tom and a few others. Played in 4 x 20 minute sessions, it became clear that the points flow was a bit one sided, and so we swapped around, which made for a much better and enjoyable game! Anyway, the UK XV 89 Dutch XV 53, so it was hardly a pointless game! Good fun, entente cordial, esprit de corps and solidarnosc (whatever the Dutch is for that) and good friends made! Well played and drunk! Until the next time.

Sadly, the **Hatters** just failed by one point to qualify for the Zoo League 3 Play Offs, and it looks as if the 4's "Cross Border" Middlesex/Essex Challenge Play-Off is not happening,

Slingbacks

The Slingbacks held their inimitable Race Night last Saturday, which was successful and great fun, helped by the Dutch touring side, RC Etten Leur who stayed on a while and the Clubside players who, as their hosts, felt compelled to stay on with them (or at least that is what better halves were told). Whether anyone remembers if they won or not is another matter, but it certainly enhanced the bar takings and raised some funds for the Slingbacks, who meet their own expenses.

The Park girls 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.

London Floodlit 7s

Thursday 03 May sees the 2018 staging of the Capital's Greatest Rugby Party at the Rock in the form of the annual London Floodlit 7s, with the usual array of star teams (see the flyer on this page). Gates will open at 4:00PM and the first match kicks off at 5:00PM with non-stop action right up to the final at 10:20PM. This is one of the Club's main fund-raising events, so we hope the whole Club will support it. Everyone has to pay for admission (£15 on the gate, £5 for Under-16s) but you can get a decent discount if you buy in advance at £11.79 each by following the link below or – even better – get tickets at £10 each from behind the bar at the Old Albanian match on 28 April.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/london-floodlit-7s-tournament-2018-tickets-42078248173>

If you want a luxury evening out to entertain friends, colleagues or clients in a friendly and convivial environment then – as we go to press – there are still just a few packages available for a marquee with a perfect view of the pitch with seating, a private bar and picket fence. These are for 20+ people in increments of twenty persons. If you are interested please e-mail dom.shabbo@rosslynpark.co.uk or ring the Club Office on 020 8876 6044

At the back of this Parknews is a poster-size version of the flyer shown below. If you could print it out and display it in the local pub, gym or anywhere else it might (legally) be affixed then that would be a great help.

National 1 review

Champions **Coventry** may be winding down for the season as they recorded only their second loss. The 22-10 home win means that **Ampthill** still have a mathematical chance of being runners-up with two matches remaining, but that chance will disappear if **Darlington Mowden Park** (40-7 winners over already-relegated **Fylde**) gain two more points. **Plymouth Albion** have two games in hand over their rivals and could – mathematically at least – still pip both of the clubs immediately above them, but it took a try in the seventh minute of added time for them to gain the try



THE LONDON **Floodlit 7s** TOURNAMENT

Sponsored by **Deloitte.**

THURS 3RD MAY 2018
ROSSLYN PARK FC
£15 ON THE GATE | £5 FOR U16s
£11.79 AT LONDONFLOODLITSEVENS.COM

HARLEQUINS | WORCESTER WARRIORS
LONDON IRISH | GLOUCESTER RUGBY
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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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TICKETS
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that saw them beat our next opponents, **Birmingham Moseley**, by 28-24 last Saturday.

Blackheath are fifth in the table after a 42-18 defeat at **Caldy** that sees the Cheshire club secure National 1 rugby next season. Sixth placed **Old Elthamians** suffered a home defeat at the hands of **Old Albanian**, who have now won six of their last seven matches as they battle to stave off relegation, which looked inevitable a few weeks back. Seventh placed **Bishops Stortford** also suffered defeat at the hands of relegation-threatened **Loughborough** by 32-14. **Esher** took another step towards safety with a 32-22 away win at **Cambridge**. **Hull Ionians** 37-36 win at the Rock keeps their chances of avoiding the drop alive.

Matches next weekend:

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

Away travel

After this Saturday we have only the away match at **Plymouth Albion**, 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 they 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.

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

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.



Benji Marfo scores his second try on Saturday

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.



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