

THIS SATURDAY'S MATCH IS A VITAL ONE

Welcome to Parknews No joy for Park at Birmingham Moseley last Saturday. Park endured some bad luck at times, but it has to be acknowledged that a surprisingly fired up Moseley were, at the end of the day, worth their win. Park spurned chances to take the lead with a missed penalty and then got penalised at their own lineout close to the home line. We looked to be in with every chance at half-time, only 17-12 down but creating chances. Two minutes into the second half a speculative kick was well-covered by Jack Gash and Rhys Crane only for a freak bounce to deliver it to the Moseley winger, who delightedly accepted the present. Then Benji Marfo looked to be very unlucky when he sought to intercept the ball with a clear run ahead of him, but could only get one hand to it: as happens nowadays in the cause of 'consistency' that was adjudged to be a deliberate knock on, he was sent to the sin bin and Moseley scored as a result of the penalty. However, taken over the entire 80 minutes, Moseley were the better team if not quite by the margin the score suggests.



Park's forwards drive back Moseley last Saturday [all 1st XV photos are by David Whittam]

To make things worse, prop Maurice Nwakor – the mainstay of the front row this season – left the field on a stretcher close to the end. However, results from elsewhere at least worked in our favour. Plymouth came back from a 21-14 half-time deficit to pip Old Albanian by 24-21 to consign our next opponents to relegation along with Fylde, leaving the final relegation spot a three-way battle between ourselves and Loughborough on 61 points with two matches remaining, and Hull Ionians on 59 points with one match remaining (away to Coventry). If we beat Old Albanian on Saturday we cannot go down. Hull Ionians look favourites to drop, but anything less than a win would leave us vulnerable if Hull Ionians were to produce a shock result at Coventry because the 'tie breaker' if two clubs finish level on points is number of games won, and Hull have won one match more than ourselves. The same is true of Loughborough who are home to Darlington Mowden Park this Saturday. Both ourselves and Loughborough have a final match in hand, away to Plymouth Albion.

This weekend

We really do not want to depend upon getting a result after the long journey to Plymouth. So Saturday's match against **Old Albanian** at the Rock is arguably the most important for many a season. If you are a Rosslyn Park supporter please do make every effort to get along and give the team your full vocal support. This one really matters, and a good crowd getting behind the team can make a big difference!

It really did not look as if it would turn out like this when we strolled to a 58-0 victory at Old Albanian in the opening match of the season. To be frank, OAs did not turn up that day. They soon put together some better results, but then hit a run of injuries nearly as bad as our own to be plunged into the relegation zone. Since getting some players back they have won five of their last seven matches, but it has been a case of too little, too late. You can be sure, though, that Old Albanian will not be wanting to leave National 1 (hopefully temporarily) without making a big statement. At full strength they are a far stronger team than their league position suggests. Only a top drawer performance from Park is likely to be good enough.

Saturday's match will be preceded by the annual Former Players' Lunch, so do come along and rub shoulders with some Park favourites of yesteryear.

If you want to shake off the hangover after staying behind to have a drink with the players after Saturday's match, then we can offer an excellent way to clear the pipes and stimulate the brain cells. The **Slingbacks** are playing their penultimate League match against **Harlequins** on the 4G on **Sunday morning**, kicking off at 10:30AM and you would be welcome to drop in and add your support. The early kick-off is in order not to clash with the

Saturday 28 April
Last 1st XV home League match

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

Sunday 29 April

Slingbacks v Harlequins

League Match

Home (4G) KO 10:30AM

Family Fun Day at the Rock

starts at 1:00PM - for the whole club

Mixed open touch rugby tournament, games for the children, barbecue Admission - £6

Thursday 03 May

London Floodlit 7s

First match 5:00PM - Final 10:20PM

Featuring: Harlequins, Worcester Warriors, Gloucester Rugby, London Irish, Bristol Rugby, Esher, The Army, Rambling Jesters and, of course... Rosslyn Park

Admission on the night £15 (£5 U-16)

Get your tickets from behind the bar at Saturday's match against Old Albanians for only £10 each!

Family Fun Day, which starts at 1:00PM. This is an occasion for the whole club, from 1:00 PM till Late, so why not come down and enjoy some fine Argentinian steak at the Rock. There will be entertainment for the whole family, with a mixed Open Touch Rugby tournament as well as an inflatable castle and games for the children. Several of the 1st XV will be in attendance and there will be presentations to celebrate the successes of the Mini and Junior teams. Admission costs a flat £6.

Birmingham Moseley 34

Rosslyn Park 19

National 1

Any hopes Park may have entertained that Birmingham Moseley, safely in mid-table, might take this match lightly were soon squashed when the Midlanders threw everything they had at them from the kick off. Only some alert defending and committed tackling stopped an early score.



Park soon began to compete on equal terms. Fly half Harry Leonard missed a chance to put his side ahead with a penalty, but Park continued to put pressure on the home side, only to be undone when penalized for a non-straight throw at an attacking line-out. Then on 16 minutes impressive home lock Ciaran Moore finished off a nippy move which he had started, for 5-0.

Things looked bleak for Park when back row Chris Brightwell added another for the home side three minutes later, converted by fly half Sam Hollingsworth for 12-0.

However, Park battled their way back into the match and a great run by centre Dan Barnes ended in a close range try from Hugo Ellis on 25 minutes.

The visitors continued to press and ten minutes later levelled the scores when a lineout led to the pack forcing their way over, flanker Mike Macfarlane touching down and fly half Harry Leonard converting for 12-12.

Moseley had the last say before the interval when some smart handling led to back row Laurence Cowan grabbing a try for 17-12 at the break.



It took only two minutes of the second half for the home side to extend their lead when a stepling kick got an incredibly lucky bounce to elude two covering defenders and set up winger Sam Pointon to score and provide an easy conversion for Hollingsworth to make it 24-12.

Park were still in with a chance, but it got a lot harder when Benji Marfo, attempting an interception, could only get one hand to the ball and was harshly adjudged to have deliberately knocked-on and sent to the sin bin. Moseley soon took advantage with Hollingsworth spotting a gap in the short-handed defence to score a try that he converted for 31-12 on 67 minutes.





That looked to be the final nail, but Park showed great spirit to come back with a score of their own, replacement scrum half Rory Brand darting round to score a try that was converted by Leonard for 31-19, putting his side in with a chance of at least a losing bonus point.

But on 78 minutes Hollingsworth effectively ended the match when he stroked over a penalty for 34-19.



Park Head Coach, Kieran Power, said "A slow start and lazy work in defence cost us early on. We then clawed our way back into the game but some sloppy kicking and mix ups in defence, along with a yellow card, gave the game to a very physical Moseley team".

Park: Amesbury; Crane, Henderson, Barnes, Marfo; Leonard; Gash; Nwakor, Gibson, Wade; Spivey, Gray; Macfarlane, Owens, Ellis
Bench: Hughes, Lovell, Hudson, Brand, Vaughan-Edwards
Park scorers: Ellis (T), Macfarlane (T), Brand (T), Leonard (2C)

Club sides

Will Thorogood reports that it's end of season, or almost, maybe?! The **Hatters** had a run-out on Saturday against **Merlins**. With just the bare XV set to play, the Hatters had a couple of late pull outs just before kick off, because of niggling injuries. Merlins kindly lent the Hatters a couple of players, and scrums had to be uncontested. To cut an 80 minute story short, it was a fast open affair, as usual, between these two skilful sides, with

Merlins winning, in the end, by a 31-14 margin. A good game to watch, and a hot one to play in! There are no scheduled Clubside games this week, but the Hatters were talking about possibly finding a home friendly, 5pm kick off, on the 4G but all to be confirmed?

Slingbacks

The Slingbacks entered a team in the Development 7s tournament organised by Barnes RFC last weekend. The Park girls finished second in the shield cup in a tough final against Streatham Croydon ladies. Well done to our player of the match Sam who was leading the defence and Fran who scored 5 tries in her first ever rugby match!



The Slingbacks are playing their penultimate League match against **Harlequins** on the 4G on Sunday morning, kicking off at 10:30AM and you would be welcome to drop in and add your support. The early kick-off is in order not to clash with the fun day being organised by the junior / mini Section for that day, which starts at 1:00PM.

The girls' final final League match, at home to **Crowthorne**, will be played the following Sunday 06 May, kicking off at 2:30PM.

Youth Rugby Guildford Colts 0 Park U17s 50

Surrey President's Shield Final

By Gary Muchmore

Last Sunday the U17s became the first winners of the Surrey President's Shield. A new 'waterfall' competition formulated by Surrey Rugby to ease the conflict for players between clubs, schools, the County and academies.

After a series of pool matches, the U17s were drawn against Guildford RFC in the final of the Shield. The weather was kind. Overnight rain softened the pitch, and the sun shone during play. It certainly seemed to inspire our players who won the match, scoring 8 un-answered tries. A performance built on strong support running, accurate rucking and clinical finishing. It didn't





feel like a 50 pointer, but Park capitalised on every turnover or missed tackle to secure field position or points.

Definitely the performance of the season, which is not quite over. Our next fixture is the final of the county cup competition sponsored by Harlequins. Fingers crossed.



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

Hail and farewell

This time of year always sees us bid farewell to some familiar faces and this year is no exception. There are always some contemplating whether they are willing or able to put their bodies through the rigours of another season and one who has already answered that question in the negative is **Paul Spivey** who is retiring. Another familiar face we won't be seeing next year is **Andrew Henderson**, who is off to Hong Kong. Both men have given their all in the red and white hoops and they leave with our best wishes, knowing that a warm welcome awaits them whenever they choose to visit the Rock.

Readers' letter

From Phil Stringer

Dear Charlie,
 Oh, to be a fly on the wall!

I'm no Level 3 or 4 coach but, for the past couple of Home matches (at least), the first halves have seen a litany of indiscipline, poor core skills, lazy running and drifting across the field . . . but come the second half . . . wow! What a difference!

The guys come out fired up, pulling their horns in against what could by then be a hostile ref, cutting back against and making breaks through solid defences, take passes that they really shouldn't be able to, have a great sense of urgency and resolve and play the sort of rugby that we all know they can - bright, inventive, aggressive, fast, fantastic open rugby!

So what exactly is said to the squad at half time?

Cheers, Best Regards
Phil Stringer

National 1 review

Coventry are Champions, but lost their unbeaten home record to second club, **Darlington Mowden Park** last Saturday by 36-46 (interestingly in front of a smaller gate than when we played there a few weeks back). **Amphill** are currently third after coming back from a 13-point deficit at to beat relegation contenders **Hull Ionians** 42-16. Fourth place **Plymouth Albion**, seven points behind, could still pip them for third having three matches in hand. They pulled down the shutters in the Last Chance Saloon against our next opponents, **Old Albanian** last weekend. OA had built a 14 point lead but Albion were simply too strong in the end. **Fylde** were relegated weeks ago, and their home supporters endured a nightmare last Saturday as they lost 33-81 to **Loughborough**, who are now level with ourselves after our defeat at **Birmingham Moseley**.

Blackheath assured themselves of finishing fifth with a 28-23 local Derby win over **Old Elthamians**, who look likely to finish sixth, just ahead of Moseley. **Bishops Stortford** will finish in the top half of the table despite a home defeat by **Cambridge** to the tune of 27-33. **Esher** removed the mathematical chance of relegation with a 42-28 win over **Caldy**, which takes them to ninth in the table and illustrates how tight the battle has been to avoid the third relegation spot. Hull Ionians need to get at least a draw away to Coventry to avoid the drop, but ourselves and Loughborough are still not completely in the clear.

Matches next weekend:
 Amphill v Birmingham Moseley
 Caldly v Bishops Stortford
 Cambridge v Fylde
 Coventry v Hull Ionians

Loughborough v Darlington Mowden Park
Old Elthamians v Esher
Plymouth Albion v Blackheath
Rosslyn Park v Old Albanian

Away travel

We have only the match at **Plymouth Albion**, re-scheduled for Saturday week 05 May, the week after the season officially ends. There had been some speculation as to whether the match will go ahead if nothing depends upon it. It looks as if it will, with Plymouth still competing for third place, regardless of our own position. The other consideration is that they also had their home match with Loughborough postponed, which is due to be played the following Saturday. One would think that the loss of two home gates and the attendant sponsorship income would mean that Plymouth will be keen to play, regardless of League position. One word of advice though if you are travelling down by train: **there are works on the line out from Paddington** which means that either there will be a bus replacement service for part of the route or the train will divert around Oxford. All lines will be closed between Hayes & Harlington and Maidenhead, but a small number of long-distance trains will run to and from London Paddington, with journey times around 60-75 minutes longer. Other long-distance trains will start and terminate at Reading. Make sure you consult a timetable that reflects these changes.

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>

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.



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