

## PARK MOVE TO STRENGTHEN SQUAD

**Welcome to Parknews** There are the first details of new signings further on this Parknews, but first last Saturday: the headline score – a 53-14 defeat – at Plymouth disguises a lot of positives. The problem was not the players on the field, but those who weren't! The Saturday after the end of the season is known in rugby circles as "Wedding Saturday" for a reason – and even if players are not going to attend a wedding many book holidays for their first weekend off. In most cases players contracts only run to the end of April. So, even after allowing for injuries, fulfilling the previously postponed fixture with Plymouth a week after the end of the season was never going to be easy.

Only eighteen players were available, so we had only three players on the bench. Of that 18, three were hookers and 3 were scrum halves.

Ollie Milner made his first XV debut at full back and played really well under immense pressure, and also looked a reliable kicker. Mike Macfarlane was joined in the back row by hookers Tom Vaughan-Edwards and Owen Hughes, who put in some tremendous tackles. Jack Gash took over at fly half and you would never have guessed it wasn't his normal position.



Huw Morgan scores Park's first try at Plymouth [all 1st XV photos in this edition are by Marian Parker]

### Friday night rugby

*There is rugby at the Rock this Friday evening in the form of the Clubsides' equivalent of the London Floodlit 7s. There are two of our own sides involved, the Hatters and the Bs, in what is always a really good evening's rugby. The first match kicks off at 5:00PM but there is plenty of action right through to the final at 10:20PM. Admission is completely free and the Clubhouse will be open to dispense drinks at cheaper prices than most local pubs. Come along and bring your friends for a good evening out.*

With nothing depending on the match from our point of view the players went out there to enjoy themselves and throw the ball around. It certainly didn't help that Dan Barnes had to make an early exit through injury, but although Plymouth had the lion's share of possession Park tackled fiercely and the pace and invention of our backs really troubled the home defence. Plymouth took an early 14-0 lead but Park came storming back with two outstanding tries. Benji Marfo made the first showing great speed and balance to goose step two tackles, swerve past a third and pass inside to fly half Gashy who beat a defender before releasing centre Huw Morgan to score. Benji had a hand in the second but it was the blistering run through the heart of the defence by Charlie Amesbury to score that took the eye. Ollie Millner converted both efforts with great aplomb.

It was possible in the moments before the interval to imagine one of the more unlikely victories! Then reality intervened when some 'Barbarian' rugby close to our own line saw the ball spilled to a Plymouth player when the application of the old-fashioned boot would have brought the half-time whistle. Albion had clearly had enough of a fright and dominated the second half, while Park visibly tired with only two effective replacements for fresh legs. Park still tried to play rugby, and had one period of intense pressure on the home try-line, but were unable to get over. After the match Plymouth supporters were generous in their praise of the effort the Park team had made, saying the final score was not a fair reflection.

A mention in dispatches for Donnie Masters, the Management Board member responsible for the playing side of the club. Donnie had a prior commitment that prevented him attending the match, but he still took the trouble to drive to the club at 07:45 before the team left to personally thank each of the players who had put his hand up allow us to honour the fixture.

**Friday 11 May  
At the Rock**

## Clubsides London Floodlit Sevens

- 17:00 Park Hatters v Ironsides
- 17:20 Bank of England v Merlins
- 17:40 Park B v Hamm & Fulham
- 18:00 London Exiles v Akuma Matata
- 18:20 Park Hatters v Bank of England
- 18:40 Ironsides v Merlins
- 19:00 Park B v London Exiles
- 19:20 Hamm & Fulham v Akuma Matata
- 19:40 Park Hatters v Merlins
- 20:00 Ironsides v Bank of England
- 20:20 Park B v Akuma Matata
- 20:40 Hamm & Fulham v London Exiles

21:00 Semi-final 1

21:20 Semi-final 2

22:10 Final

[Exact timetable is subject to change]

**Free Admission – Clubhouse Open**



Ali Wade runs out of defence at Plymouth with Rory Brand in support

## New Players

With National 1 status assured the Club is actively strengthening the squad for next season. The core of the present squad has already re-signed (apart from retirees previously reported) and there are some exciting additions either already signed or actively engaged in discussions that are at an advanced stage.

On the coaching front we are delighted that **Kieran Power** will remain as Head Coach and **Andy Houston** as attack coach. Unfortunately, **Andy Reay's** new work commitments along with the demands of a young family leave him no longer able to devote sufficient time to continue as our defence coach and strength and conditioning guru with the highest standard that he has always demanded of himself. He leaves us on the very best of terms and we are deeply grateful to 'Razor' for his significant contribution – we will hopefully see him around the Rock from time to time.

However, every cloud has a silver lining and we welcome **Jordan Turner-Hall**, the former Harlequins and England centre as our new Defence Coach. **David Mobbs-Smith** joins from Richmond and will act as a skills coach for the First team and he will also work within the wider playing side of the Club. We shall expand upon that elsewhere, but some positive developments are afoot.

In terms of players, we can confirm some attractive signings, but there are some others very much in the pipeline. We will make further announcements when negotiations are complete and the ink is dry on the paper.

**Arthur Ellis** joined us on loan from Ealing for a brief spell last season and now joins Park on a more permanent basis. Brother of Hugo, he can play either flanker or centre with equal aplomb.

**Rory Walton** is an Australian lock who played Super Rugby for Western Force and spent last season playing in France with Carcassonne. He has recently moved to London and we are very pleased that he has chosen to join Park.

Those of you who watched the HSBC Rosslyn Park National Schools 7s will doubtless have been impressed by Cranleigh second row **Hugh Tizzard**, an outstanding talent whose longer-term future probably lies with Premiership rugby as a Harlequin. He will be jointly registered with Park in order to gain experience.

**Gregor Gillanders** is an experienced back row, who can also play in the second row, joining from London Scottish where he has played much Championship rugby.

**Connor Hayhow** joins us from London Scottish. Connor can play in the centres or the wing and will add some real bite to our back line.

Centre **Ollie Richards** started his career at Harlequins, gaining England U-20 recognition, before playing Championship rugby for Leeds Carnegie and in the Premiership with Newcastle Falcons.

Pacy winger **Harry Barlow** is another really exciting prospect from Cranleigh school. Already an England U-18 international he will be dually registered with Harlequins.

There are others definitely in the pipeline, but there is one other announcement on the management side: since the retirement of Ron Savage as our kit man, Kojo Jecty had been left saddled with that job in addition to his other duties as Team Manager, a demanding job in itself. We are pleased to announce that the popular **Fergus Farrell**, who most will know by sight if not name, will be taking on the role of operations manager next season.

## Plymouth Albion 53 Rosslyn Park 14 National 1



With the season formally ended the previous Saturday – along with the players' contracts – Park nevertheless had to make the long journey to Plymouth to fulfil the fixture that was postponed from March. From Park's point of view, nothing more than pride was at stake, but the home side had to win to maintain their bid to finish third in the table.

Park had only 18 players available, leaving them two short on the bench, and of those three were hookers and three scrum halves! Nevertheless Park's makeshift team pushed Plymouth all the way, for the first half at least.

It was clear from the start that Park were there to enjoy themselves and



throw the ball around. They initially took the ball to their opponents, but were undone when Plymouth Number 8 Herbie Supple intercepted to race away and, when caught, laid off to centre Dean Squire who touched down. Full-back Matt Shepherd converted for 7-0 on four minutes.

Plymouth had far more possession, but Park tackled well and – when they got the ball – always looked dangerous.



It looked like being a long afternoon for Park, though, when Shepherd kicked the ball past the visiting defence and winger Harrison Cully won the chase for it, Shepherd adding a conversion for 14-0 with only sixteen



minutes gone.

But Park came back with winger Benji Marfo flying up the left wing from inside his own half, evading two tackles at top speed before off-loading to stand-in fly half Jack Gash who side-stepped a defender to pass on to centre Huw Morgan who completed a classic try. Full-back Ollie Milner converted for 14-7 on nineteen minutes.

It was Marfo again who started the move that saw Park equalize just before the interval, but the lion's share of credit must go to replacement Charlie Amesbury whose blistering pace defied tacklers to score a fine try. Milner again converted for 14-14.

Park should have reached the interval all-square, but on the stroke of half-time they tried to play their way out of defence when the application of the boot was called for, the ball was spilled and Plymouth winger Jordan Gott seized it and touched down. Shepherd's kick brought the interval at 21-14.

Hopes of a Park revival were soon eradicated with three home tries in the first sixteen minutes of the second half, a second from Gott, one from centre Robbie Weeks and one from hooker James Salter when the home pack drove over.

Park never gave up, but when an extended period of pressure on the home line yielded no score it was clearly not going to be their day.

Shepherd atoned for three missed conversions with a try of his own, though could not convert that either, and in the last ten minutes Weeks bagged two to complete his hat-trick, Shepherd's conversions bringing the final score of 53-14.

Park Defence Coach, Andy Reay, said, "For more-or-less a scratch side we played very well, particularly in the first half. The boys out there gave everything and I'm proud of them".

*Park: Millner; Crane, Barnes, Morgan, Marfo; Gash; Brand; Wade, Bellamy, Lovell; Higgins, Gray; Vaughan-Edwards, Hughes, Macfarlane.*

*Bench: Smith, Crow, Amesbury*

*Park scorers: Morgan (T), Amesbury (T), Millner (2C)*

## Clubsides

Will Thorogood reports that it turned out to be quite a busy Clubside weekend of rugby, both at home and abroad. News has filtered back from the **Fours** that their "secret destination" was Budapest! How one can keep such a destination a secret and covert from the team, heaven only knows, but maybe a job in MI5 could be in the offing for the "Fixer"! All I know is that a good time was had, two 4's failed to return home to Blighty, for one reason or another. Oh, the 4's did win, by the way! No details, except it was played in a haze, but not a polluted one.

The **B's** partook of the Middlesex Club 7's at the Richmond Athletic Ground, winning their pool, and reaching the semi-final, but losing to a strong Merlins 7. Score unavailable.

The **Hatters** roamed from Vienna to Hersham. The Viennese game was a

26-10 victory over the Rugby Club of Wien on Saturday, I think. Details to follow, but possibly in German! Ja!

On Monday afternoon, at Esher Rugby Club, the guys played in the Surrey Tankard Final against old rivals, Guildford 2's. Initially, a little battle and beer weary, the Hatters conceded three quick tries to trail 19-0. However, a renaissance in scorching conditions lead to two tenacious tries. 12-19 at half time.

Then another try soon into the second half. 19-all. G's converted a penalty, and then scored a well worked try under the posts. 19-29. However, the tenacity of the Hatters continued, and they, themselves scored a good goal, but then the final whistle blew. A few more minutes, it could have been another story, but...

An excellent and competitive game of rugby, played by two good sides. Hatters 26 G'ford 2's 29. Well done all. Don't forget to support the Clubsides London Floodlit 7s on Friday.

## Slingbacks Club backs Park women

Women's Rugby is the fastest growing sport in the country. After a period of retrenchment, our own Slingbacks have had their best season for a few years, and have recruited well this season to ensure that they maintain that progress.

Although we cannot hope to commit the resources that Premiership sides seem to be putting into the women's game, the Club is determined to support the Slingbacks in putting Rosslyn Park back into the higher echelons of the ladies' game.

A first manifestation of this is to make David Mobbs-Smith (or 'Mobbs', as he prefers to be known) available to coach the Park girls on Wednesday evenings and on matchdays. Mobbs has a wealth of experience from coaching around the world and is much-respected, in the Women's game in particular. He joins from Richmond, whose ladies he coached in the Premiership, and there are few if any better placed to develop the Slingbacks' promising youngsters.

The Club will also be actively supporting the Slingbacks in forging close links with Roehampton University, where there is a wealth of potential talent.

## Slingbacks 50 Crowthorne 0 League match

The Slingbacks last match of the season saw them cruise to victory against a short-handed Crowthorne team, who refused the offer of a player on loan for the match.

It was pretty much one-way traffic with Park's tackling and contact skills denying their opponents much worthwhile possession. Crows were game



Anja Grant heads for the try-line

and showed some good skills on the odd occasion they had the ball, but even at full complement they would have struggled to contain the Park girls on this sort of form.

Park were quick out of the blocks and took an early lead when left-winger Zara outpaced the defence up the left and ran round close to the posts. Shanice converted for 7-0.

Soon after the re-start Park were in again when some neat play released full-back Anja to sprint through the defence for a cracking try, Shanice again converting for 14-0.

Crowthorne's plight became worse when a player had to retire from the pitch with an eye injury. Park were in no mood to show mercy. A superb clearance from kick from fly half Alice, playing her last game, put the Slingbacks deep into opposition territory on the right-hand side. Tall, athletic winger Emma, an outstanding prospect having only recently taken up the sport, dominated the line-out throughout and stole Crowthorne's throw. The ball was worked across the pitch, where Emma was out wide to finish off the move she started. Shanice converted for 21-0.



María Castellina passes from the back of the scrum



Dani Williams beats the first of many defenders on her way to a great try

Katie Parkinson came off the bench for her last match in a Slingbacks shirt before she emigrates, and gave a cameo display of what we'll miss, getting stuck in as only she can. Park were now attacking in waves and centre Sophie rounded off an impressive attack, Shanice again converting for 28-0.

Number 8 Amanda was a tower of strength behind the scrum, picking up the ball and charging at the defence. One of her rampaging runs brought the fifth try, and the bonus point, but this time Shanice's kick hit the post.

To their credit, Crowthorne never gave up and put together their best attack of the match. Unfortunately the ball carrier ran into Alice, who stood her ground, at some speed. Alice was sent to the bin, a decision that looked more like an attempt at evening things up than enforcing the laws, but it had interesting repercussions later.

Even with 14 players the Slingbacks simply had a gears to spare. Full-back Anja ran through several opponents to score a super individual try,



Emma dominates at the line-out



Shanice Williams converts for Park

converted by Shanice for 40-0.

Not to be outdone, flanker Dani grabbed the ball and ran through and past several defenders from well inside her own half for a great try to make it 45-0.

There was just time before the half-time whistle for scrum half Maria to score what turned out to be the final try of the season for 50-0.

At the interval Crowthorne conceded the match, but were persuaded to play on for a short period so that Alice did not end her illustrious career in the sin bin. With Alice back on, the next break in play saw the referee blow for time.

The win sees the Slingbacks finish in fifth place after their most successful season for a while. Much credit for that must go to player-coach Alice Lovett, who has led by example on and off the field. She will be greatly missed.



Amanda Burton on the attack

Park: Anja G; Emma A, Sophie M, Shanice W, Zara; Alice L; Maria C; Hannah B, Gemma, Becca B; Hannah M, Cat; Dani W, Ellice R, Amanda B  
Bench: Esther K, Marta R, Julia, Katie P, Sarah V, Ellie H-I, Elly B  
Park scorers: Anja (2T), Zara (T), Emma (T), Sophie (T), Amanda (T), Dani (T), Maria (T), Shanice (5C)

Gloucester Rugby: winners of the 2018 London Floodlit 7s sponsored by Deloitte [Photo by David Whittam]



### London Floodlit 7s

The London Floodlit 7s title, sponsored by Deloitte, was won by Gloucester Rugby who beat the Sevens specialists Ramblin Jesters in the final by 19-12. Park acquitted themselves very well, losing by the smallest of margins in the qualifying round to the powerful British Army team by a single conversion (19-21). That was enough to see them into the Semi-final pool. In that pool Park drew 24-24 with Harlequins but their second effort brought a 41-26 defeat by the eventual runners-up.



A try for Park!

It was another successful Floodlit 7s and a big thank you is due to everyone who supported the tournament, especially our main sponsors Deloitte. It's never too early to book your tent or hospitality for next year's tournament - bear it in mind when your company draws up its 2019 marketing budget!

### Exciting Developments

There are a few exciting developments planned, beyond strengthening the squad which we hope to report on soon, but best to ensure that agreements and permissions are in place before getting too carried away. Although this is the last Parknews of the present season, we hope to bring you the first of the new season very 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.

### Subs due in June

The close season is difficult for all clubs, with little if any rugby-related income but the bills still coming in. It really helps if Members pay their subscriptions as soon as they become due in June. If you are not already a Member, please consider becoming one. We are still owned by and run on behalf of our own Members so in addition to saving on admission costs, becoming a Member gives you a say and a vote on club affairs.

### Jack of all Trades



Scrum half Jack Gash was pressed into service as emergency fly half at Plymouth Albion last Saturday - and made rather a good fist of it.

### Next Parknews

Normally Parknews appears on the Club website weekly, usually between Tuesday lunchtime / Wednesday afternoon. However, this is the last Parknews of the current season (the Editor is on holiday next week anyway) but the first issue for next season should be published fairly shortly. Keep an eye out on the website or opt to follow @RPNoseyparker on Twitter to receive a tweet with a link to the next one and to subsequent issues as soon as they are published. Contributions are always welcome and the deadline is normally at noon on the Tuesday of publication. Letters and other contributions from readers are always welcome: the usual deadline is around noon on Tuesdays.