

PARKNEWS



The E-magazine for Rosslyn Park supporters Wednesday 18th November 2009 - Issue 131

LAST GASP WIN FOR 1s

Welcome to Parknews. As a result of last weekend's matches things are marginally tighter at the top (see table on back page). Only 2 points separate ourselves, Clifton and Ealing while Barking are six points ahead of us having played one (home) game more. Their defeat at Clifton was their first slight "wobble" and gives hope to the chasing pack.

Whilst a win over Shelford with the last kick of the match looks too close for comfort, it has to be said that the conditions were far more suited to the Cambridgeshire club's style of play, despite which we created a lot more chances. Importantly, in a really tight and difficult situation we found a way to win – it sometimes looks lucky, but it's what good sides do! Cast minds back a couple of seasons when it was ourselves that were constantly being knocked back by last minute reversals, and there's a difference.

It's also worth bearing in mind that Shelford made a poor start to the season. Promoted as London 1 Champions, they lost key players because of the different registration rules at National level and had the misfortune to get tanked by Barking in their first match. Nevertheless, despite losing on Saturday, they have recovered to sit exactly in mid-table so there was every reason to expect a tough match.

If you think we left it late, consider the Clifton v Barking match. Barking were winning into the 7th minute of injury time when they passed back inside their own in-goal for the clearance kick that would have sealed the win. The receiver took his eye off the ball, it spilled and before he could recover a Clifton player flung himself on the ball for the winning score! These things happen, which is why every single point is worth fighting for.

Whilst there are some tough matches left (not least Ealing and Clifton away, Barking at home and we have yet to play fifth positioned South-end home or away) at least the distribution of points in those matches is within our own control: if we are good enough to be Champions or promotees we'll do what is necessary. Then it comes down to the vexed question of bonus points, and here the table may not tell the whole story because we still have home matches to come against six of the seven bottom clubs.

Big screen action

The 1st XV have a week off, but there is still some good rugby this weekend to whet your appetite. However, because of the pummelling the pitch took last Saturday **ALL HOME MATCHES THIS WEEKEND ARE IN RICHMOND PARK.**

Enjoying the big screen action last Saturday
[photo: John Weatherall]



The 2nd XV have an interesting match against Henley, whose 1st XV we entertain the following Saturday. That is followed by England v New Zealand live from Twickenham on the big screen in the newly-refurbished Clubhouse. Better still, you can bring along as many mates as you like as admission is entirely free!
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Adam Slade commands the lineout against Shelford on Saturday. Park kept their promotion bid on track with a 14-11 win [Photo David Whittam]

Saturday 21st November

No 1st XV fixture

2nd XV v Henley Hawks

Friendly, Richmond Park KO 12:30

Followed by:

England v New Zealand

On the large screens in the Clubhouse

Admission free

Clubsides fixtures yet to be arranged

Sunday 22nd November

Slingbacks v Romford & Gidea Park

Championship 2

Richmond Park: KO 2:00PM

Slingbacks Too v Tabard

League: Richmond Park

(Fixture to be confirmed)

The Clubhouse is open to Members and Supporters on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Why not come down and enjoy a social drink, watch the players train and catch up with the gossip?

Due to the state of the main pitch all matches this weekend are in Richmond Park

PARK TAKEN TO THE WIRE

Rosslyn Park 14

Shelford 11

National 2 South

Ross Laidlaw won it for Park with the last kick of the match. The action took place in the most atrocious conditions: a muddy, slippery pitch, a gale force diagonal wind and squally showers. Shelford were pretty much an identikit of the sort of physical team you just don't want to play in those circumstances. However, those who would be champions have to show mastery of all conditions throughout the season;

Park prevailed, but came perilously close to missing out.

With the advantage of the wind in the first half, Shelford worked a slight territorial advantage from kick off and won a penalty after only 2 minutes to grab a 3-0 lead via Ed Gough's well-struck penalty.

Park came back with a scrum on the Shelford 22, gained a line-out but were penalised before they could exploit the advantage.

The visitors were then caught offside, the penalty hammered to the corner but Park conceded a scum and then, again, a penalty. A promising attack through the middle had a similar end, and when a further penalty on 20 minutes allowed Shelford a 6-0 lead, via Gough's boot, the referee warned against persistent technical infringements. It is becoming a problem.

That score, though, seemed to galvanise Park who created a good move through the middle to win a penalty but Ross Laidlaw's kick was blown off target. A great move up the left saw Ant Fenner bundled into touch. Concerted pressure saw Shelford concede another penalty, kicked to the corner by Laidlaw and Park again drove to the line and prop Nick Huggett was driven over for the hard-earned try. In the wind the conversion was impossible.

Park began to look sharp, but were nearly undone again when conceding another penalty but Gough hit this one wide. However, it was Shelford who seized the initiative on the stroke of half time, hitting

Park with a good try, with number 8 Aki Lea battering a path and a useful combination of what in the conditions counts as slick passing saw them over the line, via lock Ed Mills. The conversion was

missed but it sent the visitors in with an 11-5 lead.

Park started the second half strongly. Shelford were caught offside and Laidlaw converted from about 40 metres out. Six minutes later a penalty in an almost identical position, also for offside, was missed. This was a good period for Park, though, and a great move nearly put Ant Fenner in before Laidlaw tied things at 11-11 with another penalty on 59 minutes.

Shelford put together a good attack of their own after Park were again penalised, but they were then themselves zapped for not releasing. Park drove a rolling maul to the line, but again fell foul of the whistle. Laidlaw had another chance with a penalty, but missed again – unusual for him, but the squally wind was making his job nigh on impossible.

Match Photos

Top right: Rob Jewell in full cry; bottom right: smoeewhee under the heap Nick Huggett has scored; top left: Rob Jewell find support; middle left: Howard Quigley wrestles for the ball; Bottom right: Park attack in numbers [All photos are by David Whittam]

Indeed the fact that he was being asked to take so many pots in such unfriendly circumstances was a great compliment to Shelford's defensive organisation and Park's inability to penetrate it ball-in-hand..

Park looked useful in the three-quarters but rarely really troubled the visiting defence through that route. It was stick-it-up-your jumper weather – and there are no points for style. Park looked most dangerous when their forwards were rumbling near the line. Perhaps they should have followed that route a bit more.

Park were now in total control but showing signs of frustration that they just couldn't seem to close the victory. But they stuck to their task and Shelford – now themselves leaking penalties – were again penalised and again Laidlaw couldn't quite nail it. There was a good attack up the right, with Huggett nearly going in but a knock-on was spotted. Another good attack led to concerted pressure 10 metres out, but again Park conceded a penalty just as things looked distinctly promising.

James Strong was sent away from near half-way but the pass to him was ruled to be forward. Park continued to press into injury time and gained a penalty, which again Laidlaw couldn't convert. It looked all over, but Park raised one last attack and Shelford were penalised to the left of their posts. It was the last kick of the match – and Laidlaw kept his nerve and nailed it.

Park: Davies; Strong, Sweeney, Jewell, Fenner; Laidlaw; Barr; Huggett, Ritchie, Williams; Quigley, Slade; Jones, Barrett, Lock.

Subs not used: Blemings, Kearns, Anayi, Cannon, Unsel.

Park scorers: Huggett (T), Laidlaw (3P)



READERS' LETTERS

On John Sabel

From former Park Centre and 2nd XV Coach Andy Wyeth

I was really saddened to hear of John's death and just wanted to pass on my condolences to his family. John was undeniably an amazing man and it is nice and fitting to read so many admirable tributes to him. He represented so many qualities that are synonymous with the very special and unique Rosslyn Park, and long may these continue. I have my own memories of our 90's pre-match rituals, Grub's and Noddy's team talks and of course John's jelly babies, not forgetting Timmy Smither's polka dot hanky... need I say more...

I look forward to catching up with you at Christmas. **Andy Wyeth.**

From Eric Hewitt of London Society of Referees

So sorry to hear about the passing of John Sabel, if you see any of the family please pass on the condolences on behalf of all of the London Society of Referees. Thanks **Eric Hewitt**

From Judith King

I would like to send my sympathy and thoughts to the family, John was extremely kind and caring to me during my period of loss and I shall always remember him for that - as well as for all 'extra' things he did for the club with a willing smile. Kind Regards, **Judith King**

From Geoff Dignum

What dreadfully sad news about John Sabel. It was with some trepidation that I became eventually touch judge at Park, & was aware what a mantle I had inherited, but I was helped enormously by John's support. **Geoff Dignum**

From referee Bob Ockendon

Rugby and Rosslyn Park has lost one of its great characters. I am saddened by his passing but glad that I had the privilege of knowing John and the pleasure of not only being greeted by him at the Park as a referee, but also of having benefited from him running touch for me on numerous occasions. Please pass on my condolences to the family. Regards **Bob Ockendon**

On Commercialisation and bonus points

From Mark Pavan

Remembering our exchange and your love of commercialisation of a few seasons ago I enclose some news (for wry smiling)

MasterCard is the new match sponsor for the Barbarian rugby internationals for 2009/10.

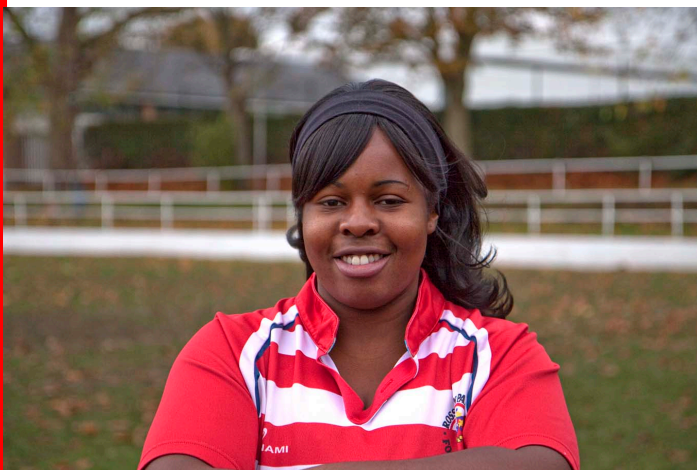
The multi-match deal will cover all the scheduled Barbarian fixtures this season, which will now be collectively known as 'The Mastercard Trophy'. As part of the agreement, MasterCard has access to the comprehensive rights and benefits package, including on and off-pitch branding. There will also be increased value to its commercial partners – including retailers and [financial](#) institutions – and cardholders through the promotion of 'Priceless' experiences. Ben Rhodes, vice president [marketing](#) at MasterCard says sponsorships are a "critical component" of the company's global marketing approach. The sponsorship agreement will provide an impactful rugby platform for MasterCard, establishing a rugby heritage and building [customer](#) engagement towards the Rugby World Cup 2011, which MasterCard also sponsors. The first MasterCard Trophy match takes place on 5 December against the All Blacks at Twickenham, London.

On the separate note of bonus points, it does seem that, as a club, we have been a bit too focussed on "winning" rather than getting bonus points. I know it is early season and blindingly obvious; however it is total points that get promotion and the focus that other clubs place on this shows in their positions. We must all be chanting the mantra our competitors clearly are: a win without four tries is a point dropped. Likewise a loss without four tries scored and/or a seven or less gap is at least a point dropped.

My hope of course is that we don't need to worry at the seasons end; but as last season showed we can't afford to take that risk. In anticipation of many more fives.....**Mark**

Meet the Slingbacks

Somina "Mena" Fombo



Slingbacks prop Somina "Mena" Fombo is a likeable, bubbly character unless, of course, you happen to be packing down against her. In actual fact, the 28 year old tight head only took up Rugby Union as a second choice: "Googled American Football (my fave sport) but no ladies teams in the UK, next up came rugby. I'd never seen a game or played before but thought why not try (pun not intentional), that was in 2004, never looked back".

The Youth Worker / student joined Park from Old Redcliffian Ladies. Asked which players had most influenced her she said, "Maggie Alphonse – sista reppin' for herself for England Ladies and Saracens! Ugo Monye – I fancy him! Charlie Hodgson – I fancy him too – go figure...."

She also admires a couple of Slingback colleagues, "I like playing with Potter on my ass, she seriously launches me into the scrum and she's real encouraging on the pitch. T is off the chain, I like playing with her cos she's openly passionate about the game and not afraid to express herself".

Asked to recall any notable or funny incidents she tells a story against herself. "I once scored an amazing diving try in front of a reasonable sized crowd, I was so proud of myself, being prop and not getting that many opportunities to score. Only to look up and realise that the posts were still in front of me and it was actually the 5 yard line I'd scored on – well turns out it wasn't a try, just a knock on and extremely embarrassing – even the ref laughed at me – in fact not sure why I'm sharing this story!"

Mena's hobbies are, "Film making and I've just started to learn how to swim and I'm slowly getting into cycling – London is so flat compared to Bristol." And, so far as other sports are concerned, "I was captain of my rounders team at school – and got a trophy – does that count?"

So far as family connections with rugby are concerned she says that her brother played for 12 years but that it never really interested her then.

In respect of potentials changes to Laws or tactics she might suggest, there will be those who will perhaps breathe a sigh of relief that Mena is not on the IRB Committee. "I honestly think we should divide the game into 4 quarters, have offensive, defensive and special teams, wear helmets and be able to throw the ball forward or tackle people not holding the ball. I reckon it'll really help improve the game as a whole".

Mena's final message to Parknews readers is: "**U WANNA MESS WITH ME?, U MESS WITH MY WHOLE TEAM - SLINGBACKS RULE OK!!**" Like we said – she's a bubbly character.

ALL UP FOR THE KEARNSY CUP!

A READERS LETTER

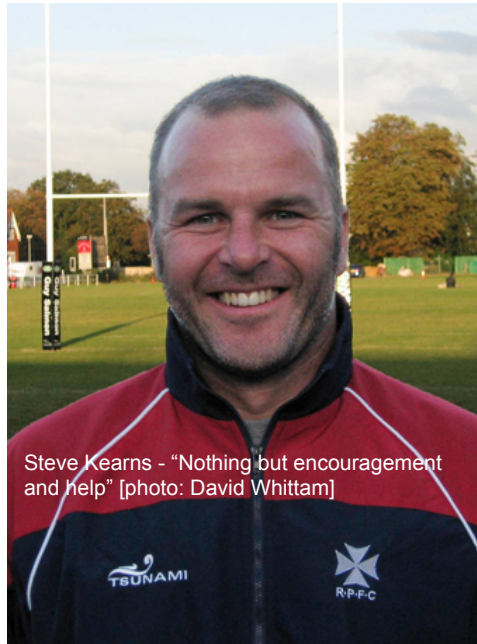
From the Chairman of Park Youth and the Past and Present Chairmen of Park Minis

Dear Sir

Over the past few years we have witnessed a huge change in the culture of the club. Before, there was precious little interaction between the many sections of Rosslyn Park. Most eyes were on the 1st XV while the many successes (and challenges) of the social sides, Slingbacks and junior sections were barely acknowledged.

Now things are very different. Park News itself must take some of the credit, of course, but our reason for writing now is, on behalf of everyone connected to Rosslyn Park Minis and Youth, to express our deepest thanks to and admiration for Steve Kearns.

Even before he became General Manager of the club, Steve devoted himself to helping the Minis and Youth sections. We will never forget the training sessions that he ran some years ago, bringing 1st XV squad members to train with us - one highlight being his demonstration to the Under 10s of three quarter play involving himself and Jon Cooke!



Steve Kearns - "Nothing but encouragement and help" [photo: David Whittam]

And as General Manager Kearnsy was at the heart of every one of our initiatives, raising sponsorship, ordering kit, arranging for the kids to play on the hallowed turf of The Rock, supporting quiz nights, Christmas parties and barbecues, "bagging" Rocky from Richmond Park, the list goes on and on. When we dealt with Steve we only ever got encouragement and help, no problem was too small, none too large. His enthusiasm rubbed off on everyone he dealt with, coaches, parents and children of all ages.

Today the Minis and Youth are not only bigger, more fun and more successful than ever, they also do their bit for the club as a whole - because they feel part of one club. Steve Kearns has been at the heart of this.

In appreciation of everything that Steve has done for us, we plan to create a new annual award within the Youth and Minis, recognising dedication to the club. We very much hope that Steve himself will be available to hand out this "Kearnsy Cup". Thank you, Steve.

Yours sincerely Steve Cooper, Graham Robson, Tom Blake

Xmas feast of Youth Rugby

The picture shows a certain Welsh Rosslyn Park lad jinking his way through an Argentine back line in Buenos Aires (Park are confusing things by playing in light blue) and with talent like this it is hardly surprising that he has been called up for international duties..... for Ireland! The Welsh selectors may have a few words to say about this but boyo the England team could have done with some Ross Thomas Jones jinking action against Argentina at the weekend! Many congratulations to Ross Thomas Jones on being selected for Ireland under 19s, Tim Steer reports.



The Park Under-19 side that took South America by storm may have largely dispersed to disparate Universities, but they are back together for two fixtures in December - away to Henley Hawks and then home to Bedford Blues Academy. We now have a sponsor for the home game against Bedford and we will therefore be playing for the DivaSki Cup. For those of you who are interested in Skiing, the web site is: <http://www.divaski.com>. DivaSki specialise in affordable skiing in Verbi-er. There will be opportunities obviously for the winners to be photographed with some of the DivaSki models so there is an incentive!

NOSEY PARKER

Revenge, so they say, is a dish best served cold. And so it was last Saturday when Ross Laidlaw's penalty brought victory over Shelford with the last kick of the match. Most eyes were on either Ross or on the posts as he went through his kicking routine. Nosey Parker had no doubt that the kick would go over (it was the first Ross had where the wind would actually help him) and so focused on the villainous figure of Chris Glynn, the Shelford full-back.

We need to go back a few seasons to National 2 days, and an away fixture at Preston Grasshoppers. It was one of only two occasions of watching Park where Nosey Parker has genuinely felt that the referee deliberately influenced the outcome of a League match, rather than just wanting to wind up someone in the bar. I know our Coach, Kent Bray, agreed because for the only time in his career he called the referee a "cheat" to his face as he left the pitch, though he later apologized and got away with it. Anyway, in order to achieve this act of rugby larceny the ref needed an accomplice, and he found a willing - if unwitting - one in the form of the Preston full-back - the very same Chris Glynn.

Park held the narrowest of leads at the end of the match, and the referee was allowing play to go on and on interminably into injury time as Grasshoppers threw everything into attack. After several plays the Park team were beginning to wonder if the match was ever going to end; would the off-license be closed before the team bus even left? When Park were awarded a scrummage, the skipper checked with the ref who confirmed that it was indeed the last play. About bloody time was the general consensus. So no clever stuff, quick ball, passed backwards and wallop! A mighty kick to touch over the half way line and a job well done; not bad putting one over the Grasshoppers in front of a one-eyed home crowd and the walking embodiment of the referee from hell. Just as Park arms were rising in triumph, however, they realized that the referee had not blown. He had double-crossed them, and a home winger took a quick throw and the ball was whipped across to Chris Glynn on the half way line. He gave it one hell of a boot and it soared towards the posts. At the precise split second that it bisected them the referee blew for time.

No one from Park could believe it. Chris Glynn, of course, was only doing his job - brilliantly as it happened - unaware of the fact that the ref probably had a Ladbroke's betting voucher where his yellow card should have been. But there's far more pleasure in bearing a grudge if you share it around a bit. It was sorely tempting on Saturday to wait in the bar and buttonhole Mr Glynn with, "What goes around comes around, eh, mate?" But it was too risky. Not just that he might have bopped me on the nose, though that was also a consideration. But it would be terrible to discover that someone who had been a pantomime villain figure as the Crook's Accomplice for nearly a decade was actually quite a decent bloke. Far better to just gloat.

From front page..

free! Why not watch the match in a real rugby club atmosphere, almost certainly paying less for your pint than in the local pub? To be honest, we really do very much need the revenue from the bar, so do please come along. By the way, training this week will also be away from the ground, though the Clubhouse will still be open for those of you who fancy sampling the waters.

Sunday

On Sunday the Slingbacks have a home League match against Romford & Gidea Park, kicking off at 2:00PM. The Park girls were really unlucky in a vastly entertaining match against Blackheath last week, so the presence of your vocal chords could make all the difference! It's free admission and the Clubhouse is open all afternoon, so how can you lose?

2nd XV

The 2nd XV had a tough time of it at the Athletic Ground last weekend. Because of 1st XV demands they could not field an experienced enough front row and so it was the deeply unsatisfactory case of unopposed scrums from the outset.



The teams at the Athletic Ground line up to observe a minute's silence in memory of John Sabel [John Weatherall]



Action from the 2s 36-0 defeat at Richmond [John Weatherall]

Manager Robert Boulwood told Parknews, "After a minute of silence with both teams honouring John Sabel, Richmond played the first half with the gale force wind and rain at their backs. Not surprisingly the half time score was 31 to 0. At half time, the wind dropped, and Park's decision to play with it were dashed. Park held Richmond to "nil" in the second half until the dying minutes when an unconverted try was scored by the old rivals. Not a good experience all round". Let's hope for some better luck against Henley this weekend.

National 2 South

	Home		Away				Bonus		Diff	Try	Loss	Pts	
	P	W	D	L	W	D	L	F					A
Barking	11	6	0	0	4	0	1	336	134	202	7	1	46*
Ealing	10	5	0	0	3	0	2	356	192	164	7	1	40
Rosslyn Park	10	5	0	0	3	1	1	290	173	117	4	0	38
Clifton	10	5	0	0	3	0	2	248	175	73	4	2	38
Southend	10	4	0	1	2	1	2	255	215	40	3	2	31
Canterbury	11	4	0	2	1	1	3	259	341	-82	5	0	27
Richmond	10	2	0	3	2	0	3	265	278	-13	4	1	21
Shelford	10	2	1	1	2	0	4	201	233	-32	1	2	21
Westcombe Park	10	3	0	1	2	0	4	166	212	-46	0	0	20
Lydney	11	2	0	3	1	0	5	230	251	-21	3	5	20
Dings Crusaders	11	2	1	3	1	0	4	206	276	-70	2	2	18
Henley	10	3	0	3	1	0	3	222	223	-1	2	0	16*
Worthing	10	2	1	2	1	0	4	171	226	-55	0	2	16
Barnes	10	0	0	4	2	0	4	161	242	-81	1	2	11
Bridgwater & Albion	10	1	0	5	0	0	4	122	317	-195	1	0	5

* Henley and Barking have each been deducted 2 points

Clubsides

Will Thorogood reports, "Activity from the weekend was wet and wind-swept. The Hatters, after a run of losses in the league, were winners against Ruislip 2's, 13-5. Nick Liddle, skipper, was quoted to say 'it's good to win, phew!'.

"A Combo XV, but it turned out to be a Combo XI, went to H&F to play their Combo XV. After some negotiation and mixing 'n matching, a "classic" was played. 60 percent of the game-time was taken up by scrums, which we dominated. However, a breakaway try by H&F resulted in a 5-0 win for the Hammers! Anyway, this is grassroots rugby, and well done to all who turned out!

"Remember, the leagues restart next week".

There is a God!

John Weatherall, looking after the 2nd XV with Robert Boulwood on Saturday, probably began the day doubting in a divinity, but ended up feeling someone was watching over him. His diary for the day began, "Started the day packing the Van with the rugby gear and kit for the 2nds and drive off to Richmond. Get really soaked and lose to Richmond. Pack up the gear and return to The Rock".

It continues in similar unpromising vein, "Unpack all the dirty and muddy gear" and then things begin to improve, "Bump into David Booth who repays me some money he owed me and buys me a cup of Coffee. (I was going leave straight away as I was soaked). Pretty knackered so I see a vacant chair and sit down. Opposite me are some Slingbacks. I ask are they selling raffle tickets. So with Booth's cash I buy a couple. Finish the coffee take Booth home".

Then things improve dramatically, "10pm: Get phone call from Will Thorogood who tells me He thinks I have won something. I asked him what? He goes and hunts down the organizer, who informs me a Box at London Irish v Saracens match. Yep the must be a God looking over me at the Rock".

It's good to know that sometimes one of the honest grafters, who puts in far more than he takes out, sometimes comes up trumps!

Worthing lunch

Worthing, whom we visit on Saturday 5th December, have asked us to let supporters know that lunch will be available for those who want it at 12:15. The cost of lunch is £20.00 which includes ground admission and a programme. Kick off is at 2:00PM.

The Scrum

Don't forget that you can catch up with the latest news on the London rugby club scene by tuning into BBC Radio London's "The Scrum" on 94.9 FM at 9:00PM on Thursday. If you miss it, or are outside the broadcast area, then you can listen via the BBC website.