

PARKNEWS

the e-magazine for Rosslyn Park supporters - Wednesday 25th February 2009

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Match reports and photos
League table
Obo remembered
Harry's game
Bonus points
And any other odds and ends that fell into the editor's lap.

PUGH! THAT WAS CLOSE

Welcome another Parknews. Bridgwater proved to be excellent opposition on Saturday and Park had to dig deep to get the win. It was a very committed team performance to take us within a point of Ealing, who picked up a losing bonus point at Ealing. It is important to keep fighting for the second spot, even if Scots have pulled away, because, as well as simple pride in performance, there is every possibility of a club above us going broke (see inside) and creating a vacancy. It's not the way you'd want to be promoted, but if it's going to happen to someone then it would be frustrating to miss out.

On Saturday the 1sts play Worthing Raiders, kicking off at 2:30. It goes without saying that a win is vital, but with Ealing at home to Henley getting a bonus point comes pretty high up the list of priorities as well! This is likely not to be as easy on the pitch as it looks on paper. Worthing suffered at the beginning of the season from the "Catch 22" that affects clubs promoted from London 1. Because registration regulations are more lax at that level, you pretty well have to dip into the pool of Kiwi and South African players who are ineligible at National level if you are to get promoted. But they are no longer eligible once you've achieved it! Worthing lost key players and refused to jeopardise their whole future by throwing silly money at replacing them. They started off anchored to the bottom, but kept faith and are now out of the immediate relegation zone. They are not lightly going to surrender league points now, having fought so hard to reach that position.



Dylan Pugh's break gave Park breathing space on Saturday - 1st XV reports on page 2 [Photo: David Whittam]

The 2nd XV are pretty desperate to find a match on Saturday to keep plays match fit. They were due to play Westcombe Park 2nd in Richmond Park, but they have had to pull out because of County Cup commitments. The Development XV entertain Sutton & Epsom 2nd. On Sunday Slingbacks Too play a re-arranged league match at home to Farnborough kicking off at 2:00PM. Given the thrashing the main pitch has taken, and with the Schools Sevens coming up, it looks very likely that the match will be in Richmond Park. However the Clubhouse will be open as usual.

The 2s had a very narrow defeat at Ealing on Saturday in a game they should have won. The Development XV also lost by 17-7 away to Portsmouth 2nd XV on Saturday, which is actually quite a creditable scoreline though that will be small consolation for the players. And, just to make it third time unlucky, the Colts went down by 8-9 at Hertford in the 4th round of the National Colts Plate, thus missing out on a home tie against Jersey in the next round.

Will Thorogood reports on quite a busy, but mixed, weekend for results. "With the 4's completing their regular Merit Table 1 season at Hammersmith and Fulham, they were optimistic, in fielding a strong side, of a win. However, H&F, never a push-over, had other ideas. In a game, largely dominated by the 4's, Hammersmith scored a couple of opportunistic tries in the first half. The 4's worked their way back to 14-12, but with, literally, the last kick of the game (a penalty) to win, the ball hit the upright, /Continued back page..

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This Week

Saturday 28th February

1st XV v Worthing Raiders

**National 3 South
(Home KO 2:30PM)**

2nd XV (TBA)

**Development v Sutton & Epsom 2nd
(Canterbury Shield Div 3, Richmond Park
KO TBA)**

**Hatters v Ruislip 2nd
(Richmond Park, Canterbury Shield 4, KO
TBA)**

**London Scottish 5 v B XV
(Away, Middx Merit 2, KO TBA)
Old Actonians 2 v Nomads
(Away, Middx Merit 3, KO TBA)
Richmond Heavies v Park Bench
(Away Surrey Vets' League, KO TBA)
4's TBA.**

Sunday 1st March

**Slingbacks Too v Farnborough
(Home, League, KO 2:00PM)**

The Clubhouse is also open on Thursday evenings.

PARK HAVE TO DIG DEEP

Bridgwater & Albion 15 **Rosslyn Park 25** **National 3 South**

Rosslyn Park effectively trod on a banana skin at Bridgwater but had the wherewithal to regain their balance. They had to dig really deep to beat the Somerset side, and may well have emerged a better team for the experience.

A really positive start saw Park attacking from all angles, throwing the ball around among the backs and the forwards driving at the line, but the home defence was superb. Richard Mahony put a good kick into the home 22, Park stole the home lineout ball but could not engineer a way over the line. After 6 minutes of incessant attack Park gained a penalty 12 metres inside the home half and the fact that Mahony was asked to kick for 3 points – which he did superbly in the blustery conditions – represented a victory of sorts for the home side.

Bridgwater strove to get back into the match and for the first time took the game to Park. The visitors looked to have dealt comfortably with the situation with a clearance kick to just beyond half way when the wind took hold of the ball and deposited it finally over the dead ball line, resulting in a Bridgwater scrum deep into Park territory. They scented blood and got it with a concerted attack that saw number 8 Kimberley crash over in the corner.

That was all the encouragement they needed and a rare defensive lapse seven minutes later saw winger Edwards go over to the noisy appreciation of the home support. At 10-3 things looked distinctly dodgy for the visitors.

Park tried everything to come back but the defence was magnificent. Given a penalty after half an hour, Mahony was again asked to kick for goal from a difficult position but this time narrowly missed. Shortly before half time a fit-again Dylan Pugh was brought on for Mahony, presumably to see if he could provide the key. Park spent the dying minutes of the half still hammering on the door but no one was about to open it.

Facing a second half against the wind, seven points adrift and up the slight slope, it was a time to stand up and be counted. Exactly what Flo Rossigneaux said to his troops remains within the confines of the dressing room but, boy did they stand up! None more so than prop Dan Frazier who made a real 'Man of the Match' contribution.

Park flew at their opponents, forcing them backwards with a combination of slick passing, meaty driving and a fair measure of sheer willpower. Still the defence would not yield and given a penalty plumb in front of the posts, Pugh accepted the 3 points to take his team within a score.

If it looked as if only a great try would pierce the home defence, then almost straight from kick off Park came up with precisely that. A piercing run from close to his own 22 saw full-back Chris Simmons shimmy past a couple of defenders and, when he was closed down well into the home half, he quickly offloaded to Dave Riley, running in intelligent support. Riley's speed and angle of run were superb and took him under the posts, Pugh's simple conversion put his team ahead by 13-10.

While Park had an edge in terms of skill and attacking possession, Bridgwater's more straightforward game certainly could not be discounted and the match was clearly not over yet. If there was an element of fortune about Park's next score – as there always is with interception tries – it has to be said that it was Park's pressure that induced a rash pass and a shrewd reading of the situation by Pugh that saw it coming. With no one between himself and the line he bolted in to leave himself a simple conversion for 20-10.

Park now had a cushion, but they needed it as the home side threw everything into attack with barely 10 minutes left. A massive attack was held up, but the ball was re-cycled and winger Edwards got over in the corner to reduce the deficit to 20-15.

Park kept their collective nerve and, much as the home side huffed

and puffed with noisy support, managed to bottle up the opposition. Eventually, opting for attack as the best means of defence, they drove to the line for Graham Barr to go over in injury time to deny Bridgwater even the losing bonus point they richly deserved. In the best meaning of the word, this was a very professional performance by Park.

Park: Simmons; Riley, Swords, Jewell, Canty (Roche); Mahony (Pugh); Barr; Frazier, Ritchie, Charlton; Quigley, Forster (Harris); Jones, Anayi, Gates.

Subs not used: Williams, Blemings.

Park scorers: Riley (T), Pugh (T, P, 2C), Barr (T), Mahony (P).

2s THE NEARLY MEN

Ealing 2nd 27

Park 2nd 24

Canterbury Shield Division 1

By Dan Mitchell

Park started the game at a good pace and were dominant in much of the earlier exchanges and indeed Rhys Gosling gave Park an early lead when he profited from the confusion surrounding a tragic injury to Daniel Mitchell and slotted an audacious drop goal attempt. Despite appearing the dominant team, Park fell behind 5:3 in the 20th minute, when some lacklustre defence allowed a try that seemed to come against the run of play. Park's lead was restored and then extended in the 27th and 29th minute with two Gosling penalties. However Park still went into the break 19:12 down as they conceded two converted tries, and only replied with a penalty on the stroke of half time.

Ealing's lead was extended to 22:12 in the second half with an early penalty and converted try and it seemed that the game was lost however in the final 10 minutes Park seemed to lift their game, as Sam scored a try in the 74th minute (converted by Gosling) and Billy scored in the final minute to take the final score to 27:24

This was a frustrating game for all involved, it was a game that Park should have won, and the team looked good building through their phases throughout the match however a high number of penalties and soft tries, often against the run of play, proved too costly.

1st XV MATCH PHOTO

by David Whittam

How does he keep his enthusiasm? Deep into the second half Chris Ritchie is still leading the charge at the opposition as only he can. More of David's photos on the next page



NOMADS' RUN CONTINUES

Nomads 33

Old Blues 2nd 8

Friendly

by Ed Bracken

We continued our excellent recent form with a good win over a feisty and seriously committed Old Blues side. In an absolutely perfect conditions for rugby (great weather, huge pitch), we slowly gathered in the changing rooms to see our opposition already out on the pitch warming up with tackle bags, and when we finally got out for a warm-up, they'd gone back inside (presumably for a tactics session on a blackboard and a few motivational speeches). The huge disparity in preparations duly paid off when we let the kick-off bounce and quickly gave away a penalty, with which Blues made no mistake 0-3.

Finally switched on, we steamed down to the other end of the pitch and took charge of the game. The first real excitement came with the first scrum which, yet again, we dominated to the point that we turned them over on pretty much every single one of their put-ins - Dale, James and Lapin laying the smack down as usual.

On such a big pitch, there was plenty of space, and we made the most of the opportunity to spread it, with Andrew (making a welcome return from retirement) making a series of breaks down the right, and Bruce heavily involved on the left. With the Blues defence stretched, we drove hard through the middle to set up a ruck, from which Josh steamed down the blindside and crashed over for our first try, calmly converted by Guy: 7-3.

We were seriously turning the screw at this stage, and increasingly desperate Blues defending gave us 2 penalties right under the posts, which Guy slotted to put us in control at 13-3. And still the chances came. Chris varied the game perfectly on his return at 10, looking to get us behind the Blues' rush defence, and Stu made massive yards when counter-attacking from deep. Guy then showed his savage acceleration to break in midfield and cream down the right wing, only to be stopped agonisingly short, but the pressure was unrelenting and Martin soon made another dangerous break down the right and boshed his way over for his 4th try in 5 games since Christmas: half-time score, 18-3.

We started the second half exactly where we'd left off, and immediately set about building on our lead. Flankers Moff, Nick Mc and Ed Bailey worked relentlessly round the fringes, always supporting the ball carrier and tackling non-stop to maintain the momentum. Bas repeatedly showed his power with driving runs through the midfield, and it was no surprise when we increased our lead with Lapin powering over from short range, his first try of the season full reward for another typically aggressive display: 23-3.

Credit to Blues, they refused to give in. They were clearly well up for this one (typified by their mouthy captain, who got 10 minutes on the naughty step for constantly throwing his toys out his pram), and were eventually rewarded for their commitment with a try from a driving maul: 23-8.

Suitably aggrieved, we rampaged down the other end and Matt Mc was rewarded for another blinding display (including, at one point, winning turn-overs with two textbook tackles within a minute of each other) when he marched over from another attacking ruck. 28-8.

Bill came on to continue the demolition job up front, and we could have had more - clearly riled by questions from his opposite man as to his sexuality given his choice of footwear, Guy made two more searing breaks in midfield, only to be hauled down inches short each time. As it was, there was time for one more try, scored in the corner following Martin's clever change of direction. Final score: 33-8.

All in all, a very entertaining game against a team that are top of their league and (again) train every week. We played some great rugby at times, and we look to be building momentum well at the business end of the season.

Man of the match: again, one from each of the forwards and backs (fitting given the even spread of tries). It's always hard to pick out

individual forwards when collectively they worked so hard, but Moff yet again went about the dirty, unseen work with minimum fuss and maximum effect. In the backs, Guy made a series of lightning breaks and showed his range of skills with excellent kicking and defence as well. Awesome work.

Nomads: 1 Dale (Bill), 2 James, 3 Lapin, 4 Josh, 5 Bas, 6 Moff (Nick Mc), 7 Bailey, 8 Matt Mc, 9 Martin, 10 Chris, 11 Bruce, 12 Guy, 13 Ed, 14 Andrew, 15 Stu.

Tries: Josh, Martin, Lapin, Matt Mc, Ed.

MORE 1st XV PHOTOS

More of David Whittam's photographs from Bridgwater & Albion. Top: winger Dave Riley splashes down for a super try following good work by himself and Chris Simmons. Middle: flanker Morgan Jones breaks a tackle to set up another attack. Bottom: Park achieved dominance in the lineout as Russ Forster takes another clean catch.



**Don't forget:
1st XV at home to Worthing on Saturday
Kick off 2:30 PM**

MAKE THEM PARK THIS PROJECT

Rosslyn Park Youth supremo Stephen Cooper urges all Members and supporters to Say NO to parking fees in Richmond Park

You may have heard that the Royal Parks Authority is proposing to levy parking fees in Richmond Park. Consultation is under way. http://www.royalparks.org.uk/have_your_say.cfm

This will cost £2.50 for the 2-3 hours needed to attend a training session or game on Sunday. Over an 8-month season, this will double the cost of playing rugby for youth and mini players and the volunteers who supervise and ensure that they are safe. It is effectively a tax on playing sport for young people.

The reasons given below are nonsense: there is no public transport access to or anywhere near the Park, especially for children travelling alone, nor are there any nearby shops or stations to attract commuters or shoppers. This is not Hyde Park or Regents Park, which are quoted as precedents.

2.3 *The scheme we propose to put in place will introduce charges at rates that are broadly in line with those levied by the authorities in the surrounding areas. While not being punitive to those who have no option but to visit by car, we hope the charges will encourage visitors who can travel to the park by public transport, by bicycle, or on foot. The scheme includes a maximum stay, intended both to ensure a reasonable turnover of spaces (which would be fairer to visitors than our current system) and preclude abuse by commuters and shoppers of a facility that is provided exclusively for park visitors.*

There is rarely a parking 'problem', other than that created by demand –when the weather is good, or when there is sport to be played. Is not that what the Park is for?

The obvious spin-off will be problems with local residents as people park outside, and inevitably some will get 'ticketed'.

Councillor Edward Lister of Wandsworth Council is vehemently opposed to this proposal. So should be all members of Rosslyn Park and I would urge you to email your objections to:

Consultation@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk

Or write to:
Consultation - Regulations Review
The Royal Parks
The Old Police House
Hyde Park
London W2 2UH

Closing date for comments is 1 May 2009.

Adam Tyrer wrote in similar vein:

Can you bring to the attention of Parknews readers that the Royal Parks have just entered a "consultation period" on whether to introduce charging for the car parks in Richmond Park - they are talking about charging £2.50 for up to 3 hours. Obviously that will impact all the sides playing down there (including visitor sides) not only on Saturday afternoons but also the minis on Sunday. With up to 10 cars just for players for each match plus others for spectators it is going to eat into our beer money....

Comments should be emailed to "consultation@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk" by 1 May. A number of club members will have a view on this so I'd encourage them to respond.

Full details of the proposals can be found at www.royalparks.org.uk

(I'm currently agnostic on the related proposal clarifying whether horse riders are responsible for picking up the poo deposited by their mounts or indeed the proposal to limit the sailing of model boats in Bushy Park to clearly defined "model boat sailing" areas)
Cheers Adam

OBO REMEMBERED



Princess Alexandra Obolensky next to the statue [Photo: Don Yule]

MEMORIAL TO PRINCE OBOLENSKY

by Don Yule

Rosslyn Park's Prince Obolensky Association were rather surprised to hear that Ipswich Borough Council, spurred on by their Chief Executive, James Hehir OBE, had decided to commission a permanent memorial in honour of the memory of the Rosslyn Park and England player. Ipswich is not thought of as a rugby hotbed but Mr Hehir, a staunch rugby supporter, felt that there was enough of an Ipswich connection with the flying winger to justify placing a sculpture in their town centre and in 2006, 70 years after those two famous tries against New Zealand at Twickenham launched a fund raising project to which the POA were happy to contribute.

A project comes to fruition

That project came to fruition last week when John Gunner and Don Yule represented Park and the Association at the unveiling, by the niece of the Prince, of a striking piece of sculpture in Cromwell Square, Ipswich. The Borough did the occasion proud with a Town Hall Reception which contained a splendid multiple panel display feature explaining how Prince had come to play for England, how he played in an England Trial (amazingly enough) at Portman Road and how he had come to a tragic end in a training accident, in his Hawker Hurricane, at nearby RAF Martlesham Heath, resulting in his grave being in Ipswich Cemetery. The display was capped by a loop of digitally enhanced film of the 1936 New Zealand match and all present could still wonder at the blistering pace of our man.

An international gathering

The event drew a good media coverage and, for once, when the meteoric career of this exotic figure was being recorded, Rosslyn Park got a good mention. Our two delegates were amongst friends and there is no doubt that Park still retains the affections of a wide circle of rugby followers. Current members of the Obolensky clan were present, including one who ironically enough is an officer in the German Air Force, and representatives of the Russian Rugby Union and the Russian Embassy added to the occasion. Memorably, the Prince's niece, known to her friends in Odiham, Hants. as Mrs Alex Hulse but who is the Princess Alexandra Obolensky, brought us a moment of emotion when she spoke of a young man who had touched the hearts of all.

The Sculpture

Cambridge-based Harry Gray was perhaps an obvious choice for the project as he created the emotive figure of the seated pilot at the Battle of Britain memorial in Kent and clearly. Strictly speaking it is not a statue he has given us. A Memorial Sculpture would perhaps be a better description. From a triangular base with excellent descriptive panels about Prince Obolensky's life, there rises a plinth which represents the fuselage and cockpit hood of a Hurricane fighter. This is topped with a bronze bust, rather in the style of Soviet statuary, representing an athletic torso carrying a rugby ball. Whereas this concept may disappoint Park members hoping to see some lifelike portrayal of the flying winger, it is surely a sculpture which will cause people passing through this quiet square to stop and ponder awhile at this symbol of sporting excellence cut down tragically young.

Obo's memory lives on!

DANGER FOR CLUBS PLAYING HARRY'S GAME

Big names may go to the wall as property chickens come home to roost

The talk in Committee Rooms at pre-match lunches at the moment seems to be dominated by rumours of clubs about to go broke. The same names keep coming up, but one doesn't want to risk the "Northern Rock effect" by naming names. They are at risk of becoming victims of a rogue strain of the "Harry Hyams Syndrome".

Anyone born after the 1960s is probably too young to remember Harry Hyams and the controversy over his Centre Point building. He and his business were branded by the Government of the day as "The unacceptable face of capitalism", but it always seemed to many of us that Hyams' only real "crime" was to be clever enough to embarrass the Establishment, at a time of much political turmoil, by providing a focal point for people who wanted to show how daft the "system" was.

Briefly and simplistically – because this is really about rugby – what he did was to get hold of a prime site at Tottenham Court Road, build a prestige office block there...and leave it empty. That way he made more money than he ever could have by letting it. He had realised that the value of an office block was calculated by a formula of, I think, 14 times the Annual Rental income (the exact multiple is irrelevant). Once he let it, the value was set in stone. With rents rising considerably faster than either interest rates or inflation, it was financially advantageous to leave it empty and to raise finance against its constantly increasing notional value as an asset.

assets under-stated

Suddenly a whole raft of spivs, wheeler-dealers and shysters cottoned onto how property values could be used to generate vast sums of money. It wasn't long before a few realised that football clubs, mostly limited companies, significantly under-stated the value of their assets in their balance sheets because it had never occurred to their Boards of Directors how much the grounds were worth if only they didn't insist upon kicking a ball around on them.

Mercifully rugby union clubs were spared the worst excesses of this asset stripping. Nearly all members' clubs, they were built up over generations of volunteer labour. As participants in an amateur sport there were few financial imperatives to drive them to exploit the value of their grounds. After all, if you got rid of the ground, where would you play rugby?

Noting what was happening in soccer, some clubs that had been local rivals for years realised that they could sell one of the two grounds, merge and build facilities that they could otherwise only have dreamed about. A few other clubs who occupied prime potential building land also realised that developers, to get their hands on these sites, would build them whole new bigger, better grounds with state-of-the-art facilities just outside the towns. Many of these clubs have prospered, with access to funds that they could otherwise never have commanded.

lethal cocktail

Some clubs, however, will never now realise the value of these assets. They are victims of a lethal cocktail of the obsession with "professionalism" and the recession. The first driver was the perceived need to pay players, either to maintain existing status or to enhance it. The logic continued that enhanced status would mean bigger crowds and better sponsorship. So clubs were tempted to exploit the value of their assets to provide short term finance. If the ground could be worth – say - £8 million on the books, why not borrow £3 million from the bank against the value of the ground to take the club forward? As property values rose it would be easy to offset the interest charges against this as well as exploiting your new projected income streams. It's how Harry made his fortune.

But costs were ratcheted up. Demands from players, that would have been described as ludicrous had clubs not met them in order to keep abreast of their rivals, drove up costs. Many club volunteers then didn't see why they should work for nothing when the players

were earning good money. People were now being paid to carry out tasks that were previously done free. Any new or increased income streams, and more, were used up as soon as they have arose. But, fatally, the recession has seen a catastrophic slump in the value of the grounds that were used as collateral. Several clubs are now in the position that the values of their grounds are significantly less than the sums they originally raised against them. With banks under political and shareholder pressure to rid their books of bad debt they are in no mood to show mercy. It seems inevitable that some clubs will face forced closure in the not too distant future.

When clubs like Richmond and London Scottish went bust a few years back, mercifully most of their grounds were not in hock to the banks. They were able to build again from the grass roots, something – regardless of local rivalries – we should all be grateful for. That option doesn't look to be available to many of the clubs that are in danger of going to the wall now, and some of them are in the upper echelons of the league structure where costs are at their highest.

Rosslyn Park

Rosslyn Park, by the way, for the benefit of newcomers, does not own its own ground. It is leased from the Roehampton Club at a rent that is affordable for the foreseeable future, and its value has never appeared on our balance sheet. It is probably the **only** aspect of the recession that we are more or less immune from!

Park may only need one club above us in the structure to go bankrupt and promotion could be back on the agenda. In the interests of the game as a whole, please let us not pray for that. But, the way things are going, it can be argued that it may take a famous name or two to be killed off before the rest of us can return to sanity.

BONUS SYSTEM BANKRUPT?

Let's record at the outset that we knew perfectly well at the start of the season that the bonus point system was in place so, if others have been more successful than ourselves in exploiting it, then the fault lies with us. Having got that out of the way: the system stinks.

Your scribe is not a sudden convert to this cause after looking at the League table: a diatribe against the system appeared in these columns even before it was introduced. It is one of those situations where there is no pleasure whatsoever in saying "told you so".

The bonus point system was clearly conjured up by a marketing bonehead with too much time on his hands. Surely the basic aim of rugby union is to win: if you cannot win, then you go all out to draw. In directing reward away from that simple premise, the system does the sport a disservice.

A team that battles to a draw in a tight contest where they score 3 tries or less gets 2 points. Another team can lose by 7 points in a match where the defences didn't show up and also collar 2 points: one for scoring 4 tries and one for losing by 7 or less. Can that be right?

There have been times this season on a firm pitch in good weather when we've been able to throw the ball around and score 4 tries with a few gears to spare. Other times we've had to battle it out in dreadful conditions and scored 3 tries. Is the first situation really deserving of more reward than the second?

The system is supposed to make the game more interesting and exciting for spectators. How ironic it is then that the team with by far the most bonus points – Ealing, who gather bonuses with the alacrity of a bankrupt banker – have the second lowest attendances in the Division!

Currently (see the league table on the back page) having played the same number of matches as Ealing, we have won two more than them and lost one fewer, yet we are a point behind them. Ok – as I said at the outset – we knew the rules. But surely in all common sense the situation is ridiculous? Any views?

/ From front page...

and it wasn't to be. However, the "playoff" campaign awaits.

"The Hatters traveled up to Verulamium, or was it Tirana, for their first game in nearly a month because of the bad weather and oppo canceling on them, to play Old Albanians 2's in their Canterbury Shield 4 game. Fraser, acting skipper, said they came a "close" second...47-12 to the Albanians!! I think this was a game where the cobwebs were being coughed up and the effects of the long journey took its toll. I'm sure there'll be an improvement for their next game which is at home this week.

"The Nomads, whose original Merit Table oppo, Quins 2's, postponed their game, ended up playing Old Blues 2's in a quickly arranged friendly. In what sounded like an enjoyable game, the Nomads came out 38-8 winners. Well done.

"The B's were the only home side at the weekend, and I must say that the clubhouse did feel rather empty and cavernous. Playing the Bank of England, a game of "interest", the B's did make hard work of it, but worked their way to a 23-8 win".

Selection posers

Dave Riley's performance on the right wing last Saturday poses some selection problems of the type it is a pleasure to have: who on earth do you leave out from an embarrassment of riches among the backs as players return from injury? Billy O'Driscoll is now fit again;

Alex Cadwallader may be fit this weekend; class players like Tony Paul and Martin Ridley have had hardly any opportunities; James Strong has had a minor op and should be fit again shortly (I gather, by the way, that his op was conducted by the former Bristol, Bath and England full-back Jonathan Webb). And that's ignoring promising guys on the way up like James Pedder. You could perm any four for a three-quarter line, as good as any in National Three South, yet none of them played last Saturday! These are exciting times.

400 Club

This month's prize winners have all featured here before although one of them not for eight years, so a tad overdue in his case. They are Gary Henderson (£25), Tony Lawrence (£50) and Marcel Fenez. Many congratulations to them, the results of the penultimate draw for this season will be published on 28th March

Brian the Oracle

At half time at Bridgwater last Saturday there was much debate at half-time among supporters about how Park might go about digging themselves out of an apparent hole – seven points down, unable thus far to get past the home defence and about to play uphill

against the wind. Brian Lawrence alone called it absolutely correctly. "I don't think we'll have too bad a problem", quoth the sage. "The wind has actually hindered us", he opined, "because it is blowing our passes away from the man. In the second half Bridgwater will have that problem, whereas it will blow our passes more towards the receiver". And thus it was.

Mea non culpa

A few club luminaries are more than a tad miffed that they missed the unveiling of Obo's statue last week. It was, alas, a complete breakdown in communications. Normally I'd get a tip off from the Club Office on that sort of thing but they didn't know either. It seems that the organisers assumed that because the Obolensky Society knew, then that was tantamount to telling the Club. That ignores the phenomenon that has long afflicted us, known as "digital difference". It is common in most organisations for the left hand not to know what the right hand is doing. At Rosslyn Park we have developed this technique to the level that the individual fingers on each hand don't know what each other are doing.

Mea Culpa

A normally reliable source tells me that when Chris Ritchie came out of "retirement" to re-join Park a season or so back, he announced undoubtedly meaning it - that he'd reached that stage of his career where he was really just an impact player, good for half an hour or so at either end of a match. Try telling that to the Bridgwater defenders on the receiving end of his drives and boshes well into injury time on Saturday. The man's fitness levels and enthusiasm are an example to any younger player. But it's more than just his on field presence. A short while back, after he'd played with his usual total commitment the previous day, he spent his Sunday morning in the most filthy weather coaching our youth players. Let's hope that when he does finally stop playing (and on present form, don't get your hopes up Mrs Ritchie) that a way can be found to keep him involved.

The Editor actually owes Chris an apology. When the younger Ritchie was a flanker, and first took up being a hooker, I observed to a coach - who mercifully took no notice - "He's a great flanker, and gives us an extra dimension in the front row with his speed - but I still don't think he'll make it at this level as a hooker". After several seasons at National One, and a couple of Barbarian jerseys, I suppose I really should apologise.

Poker Tournament

On Sunday 15th March the England v France match will be shown in the Clubhouse, after which Tyron is trying to organise the first Rosslyn Park poker tournament. If you fancy yourself as a poker star then talk to Tyron about how to enter. For legal reasons, we understand that actual participants need to be club members as this affects the prize money we are able to offer. If you're interested: Tyron's

your man.

Do Your Bit

Whatever the end of the season brings in terms of promotion or otherwise, it is clear that an increased playing budget will be required next season if we are to continue to drive the club onwards and upwards towards our former status. In a recession that is far more easily said than done. Commercial Manager, Steve Kearns, is working his socks off to find new revenue streams, but he really needs your support if he is to be successful. He's more than happy to follow up leads if you know of any individuals or firms that would be prepared to support the club - be it taking an advert in the programme or sponsoring a match. We are also still seeking corporate sponsors to take marquee at the Floodlit Sevens on Monday 6th May. If you know anyone at all who might help, speak to Kearnsie: 07968 114485 steve.kearns@rosslynpark.co.uk

National 3 South

	Home			Away			Bonus			Pts			
	P	W	D	L	W	D	L	F	A		Diff	Try	Loss
London Scottish	17	8	0	0	8	1	0	591	209	382	10	0	76
Ealing	18	8	0	2	5	1	2	619	298	321	12	2	68
Rosslyn Park	18	7	0	1	8	0	2	464	203	261	7	0	67
Rugby Lions	18	5	3	3	4	0	3	427	391	36	4	2	48
Richmond	17	5	0	2	4	1	5	314	324	-10	3	1	42
Dings Crusaders	17	6	1	1	2	1	6	346	392	-46	5	1	42
Canterbury	16	4	1	3	4	0	4	399	409	-10	6	1	41
Barking	19	5	1	4	2	0	7	387	399	-12	4	6	37
Henley	17	4	0	4	3	2	4	316	334	-18	4	1	37
Bridgwater & Albion	16	5	0	3	2	0	6	313	400	-87	2	1	31
Worthing	18	3	1	5	2	0	7	292	448	-156	3	4	29
Lydney	17	3	1	4	1	0	8	262	430	-168	2	4	24
Chinnor	18	2	0	7	1	2	6	289	508	-219	2	4	22
Havant	18	2	0	8	1	0	7	238	512	-274	3	4	19

Barking have been deducted 3 points

This weeks fixtures:

Canterbury v Bridgwater & Albion; Dings Crusaders v Chinnor; Ealing v Henley; Havant v London Scottish; Lydney v Rugby Lions; Richmond v Barking; Rosslyn Park v Worthing Raiders