

JOURNAL

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

Journal Vol 5.

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INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth of our Newsletters. It comes exceptionally with a Colour Supplement (further details of which appear below). There is also the exciting news of the appointment by the Club of an internationally renowned player as coach for the Men's 1st XI (and he can play a bit, too!)

[APOLOGIES ARE OFFERED TO SUBSCRIBERS TO HOCKEY SPORT WHO WILL HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED THEIR COPIES OF THE SUPPLEMENT]

NEWS of OLD MEMBERS

But first the important bit. Not that we have been asking the Royal Mail to deliver by instalments the huge bulk of responses that we have received over the Summer. **David Austin-Jones** wrote from his new Harrogate address with his welcome news and to send a much appreciated financial contribution towards the *Journal's* overheads. He claims now to be retired but still turns out for Harrogate 5th XI as their centre half, having now apparently eschewed goalkeeping. He also enjoys his golf at Alwoodley GC on the outskirts of Leeds.

David recalled the moment of the first Penalty Stroke awarded on the London Hockey scene and whilst he was in goal for H&W, having recently taken over from **Stan Elgar**. The pitch was not marked with the dreaded spot (it was all too new!) and the Umpire at the time was forced to assess the proper distance from the goal line. What better than the standard pace? However, David reckoned that he took far too long a stride, to such an extent that the ball was eventually placed (after eight steps) about 12 yards from the goal. The Old Kingstons flicker was so mesmerised that, as David reports, the ball barely reached him! This led to a report in the London Evening News from E M Wellings under the heading "*How Long is a Piece of String?*"

David wished also to recall **Jim Deegan**, clearly a celebrated Hampstead player of not so long ago and has given us his address, so that he can be circulated with this newsletter. Another subscriber is **Chris Major** who passed his business card on (or had it passed on) so we shall be sending this to him at the office until we are told otherwise! In fact, there have been two recent sightings of "our" Mr Major, one ironically at 10 Downing Street by Peter Boizot and at the NatWest Final by Nick Coleman. This does beg the question as to why either Chris or PJB should have been at Downing Street: whilst the *Journal* might think that, it cannot possibly comment.....

A recent Club member **David Blakemore** has just moved to Hertfordshire and joined a local club. David was the Club's Fixture Secretary from 1988 to 1993 and regular scorer of bizarre but skilful goals for the 6th XI.

Mark Ramsay and his wife Danielle visited Norfolk during the summer and invited Nick Coleman and Harry Watson to a 36 hole Stableford at Hunstanton GC. Ramsay & Coleman (8 and 13 respectively) took on Danielle (28) and Watson (who claimed 21). At the end of the day Harry had



amassed 44 points and won the competition. Perhaps not surprisingly there are allegations of banditry in wide circulation. Some (nameless, of course) allege that Harry should play off 18 or even lower.

The opening weekend of August at Hounslow HC's Duke's Meadow ground saw a mixed event, with poignant memories for H&W

stalwarts:

SAM TAYLOR MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT

This provided an excellent opportunity for many of Sam's friends from far afield to join Jenny and other Clubs closely associated with him, which included H&W, Red Barons, Epsom, Old Walcountians and a Guest XI. H&W members turned out in good number and included **Dirk & Kim Fleming** over from Canada, **Steve Purnell** and **Richard & Melinda James** down from the Wirral. **Greg & Tracey Carr** happened to be on holiday from NSW and dropped in too: pity that Greg claimed to have left his Hockey gear at home! An entrance "fee" was collected and donated to the British Heart Foundation. The evening ended with a disco and by all accounts a good time had by all - doubtless as Sam would have wanted.

PLAYER COACH

Rob Thompson, aged 30, a member of the Great Britain squad selected for the Olympic Games in Atlanta has joined H&W as Player Coach to the Men's 1st XI for the forthcoming season.

Rob has won 148 caps for England and Great Britain and scored 53 goals. He represented Great Britain at the Barcelona Olympic Games and, having been selected for Atlanta 1996, was forced to withdraw following an injury during pre-Olympic training held in Trinidad. Rob has scored over 100 goals for Hounslow in the National League.

Rob joins his brother Andrew, last year's Captain at Hampstead & Westminster. This appointment is another indication that the Club is determined to regain promotion to the National League as quickly as possible and to join the top flight in the Premier League.

Rob said of his appointment "After 8 very enjoyable and successful years with Hounslow, I feel that this is the right time to move on. My appointment as player coach to Hampstead & Westminster represents a new and exciting challenge. The Club has great ambitions and it will be my job to assist in realising those ambitions. Obviously, my first objective is to ensure that Hampstead & Westminster gain promotion to the National League without delay".

Peter Boizot expressed his delight at the news and said "I am extremely pleased that a player of Rob's calibre has agreed to join us and bring to the Club his considerable experience for both Great Britain and England".

[If that read like a Press Release, you may be right.....]

MEN'S 1st XI OTHER NEWS

Whilst mentioning 1st XI news, the Club is also delighted to welcome back Dan Williams as the 1st XI Captain. In spite of relegation, the Club has been successful in retaining virtually

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all its leading players from last season, who were generally regarded as having played the best hockey of its pool at last season's National League Play-Offs, even though the results did not match that enterprise and level of play! One of the leavers is goalkeeper Marcus Rudler who has moved away.

There is also encouraging news that very quietly (until this edition, at least!) Dave Dixon has started running again: he claims very gingerly and alleges that he is a good stone overweight. He will not be rushed and will say when he might feel happy to wield his stick properly again. The *Journal* reckons that this is all prompted by a recent Applicant to the Club, introduced via Nick Coleman and who hails from Down Under. He is another (could this be possible?) *another* Dave Dixon and has had to be supplied with an additional epithet. Thus, we have Dave Dixon and Dave (Aussie) Dixon. It remarkable how ingenious the human brain can become when put under severe pressure to be imaginative, *n'est-ce pas?*

INJURY

One sad note is the news that Andy Thompson needed an excuse not to play alongside his elder brother and has been suffered a set back in the "repair" of his cruciate ligament which may mean a long convalescence and regretted absence from the firing line. He will be seeking expert medical advice and we shall wait and see. The injury is not dissimilar to that sustained by Paul Gascoigne and it took him far longer fully to recover, so patience may have to be proved to be a virtue.

TEAM MANAGER

The team has appointed a new Manager in John McCabe who has volunteered his services (in addition to any VAT planning advice that any of the team may require - but not gratuitously). John has been working like a beaver these last two months in the pre-planning and implementation of the Hampstead & Westminster Challenge and can now add water divining skills to his CV, about which there is more later in this edition!

TRAINING PITCH

One severe problem for the team squad has been the shortage of a fully dimensioned pitch for training purposes for mid-week evenings. The pitch at the Westway Centre is short on width and possibly length and if last season is anything to go by would be shared with the Women's section for their 1st and 2nd XI skills training. In trying to find another pitch the whole of London is alleged to have been scoured but so far without success. Admittedly, one limiting factor is the need for a reasonably centralised location and at a cost that is not too astronomical. The lack of pitches with floodlighting is also hampering the search. It was a bit alarming to hear that one suggestion, the pitch at Haggerston Park, Hackney, where the Club did play for a few seasons previously, had been rejected because the surface was damaged: the allegation was that it had been set alight and had burnt!

PRE-SEASON MATCHES

Prior to the Challenge the team has two warm-up matches against Richmond (also relegated from the National League last season) and Wimbledon who will be fellow opponents in the South League this year. The *Journal* is indebted to John for his report on the games which follows:

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER 5:0 WIMBLEDON

The broad objectives of the warm up matches were to look at match fitness, player positions and tactics in light of the new "off-side" rule. Winning was regarded as being of secondary importance. A squad of 14 assembled to start the new era with Dan Williams sweeping in front of the back three and Rob Thompson as advanced centre half - and with no goalie for the first 20 minutes. Barring, of course, the individuals concerned this reminded John very much of the 5th XI of the late 1980s. It was this very formation that had been adopted to see off a strident Hawks opposition and win 6-0 (we think it was) with John Grierson totally blanking out their belligerent Centre Forward in a memorable display. As for no goalie, that was *de rigueur* in those days.

Enough of that reverie. Playing as assuredly as you can with wingers in deep positions and with huge gaps in midfield, H&W began to exert pressure and took a first half lead through Lindsay Troy after 28 minutes, followed by Will Saxby's goal 2 minutes later, after a cross from Troy on the right. In the second half, Rob Thompson opened his account with a well taken and very hard hit short corner after 43 minutes and then on 50 minutes Nigel Land hit the post, leaving the final scoring flourish to Pat Curtin with goals in the 63rd and 69th minutes.

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER 6:5 RICHMOND

No, not a pause before the tie break in the Tennis but a rather high scoring game where it was just possible to recollect the number of goals and who was in the lead. Making a return to goalkeeping for H&W (probably "pulled out of bed" may be a more accurate description) was Stuart Cunliffe who last played seriously in goal over 6 years ago, since when (barring overseas touring) he has elected instead for centre forward duties with the 6th XI.

The squad was now down to 13 and faced Richmond, smarting from their own relegation from the National League and likely to feature as strong contenders in the South League along with H&W.

After a great deal of pressure and 5 unsuccessful short corners, H&W found themselves 0-1 down after 5 minutes and then unspeakably, 0-4 after 20 minutes. This was the classic case of 4 goals from 4 isolated, but admittedly speedy, breakaways from the opposition.

H&W continued to retain as much possession as they could and maintained good ball speed. The pressure on Richmond began to increase. Troy came off and Ian Farrish came on. Mark Crowley slotted home H&W's first and Farrish scored the second (probably his debut goal for the Club). The half-time talk was very positive. Jack Galliford came on for Derek Stone. Pat Curtin then scored 3 minutes into the second half and it was now 3-4! Rob Thompson then stepped up for goals 4 (45th minute) and 5 (50th minute) to make it 5-4 (still there with the count?).

Richmond seemed almost spent by now (surprise, surprise) but snatched an equaliser after 55 minutes (5-5 to those now lost) but Pat Curtin strode forward to grab the winner in the 61st minute.

John says that H&W had taken the game by the scruff of its neck in the second half and demonstrating great team spirit,

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generated some exhilarating hockey: in his view, a breathtakingly entertaining game to watch.

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

The start of the season is fast upon the Women's section with their League fixtures well into gear before the Men. With a view to the Season's prospects the *Journal* spoke to the Women's Club Captain Lis Steele to investigate how things were (or indeed *are*). Lack of space regrettably prevents our reporting here but this, too, will be a candidate for Edition 6. Sincere apologies if this edition is too male-lopsided: there *did* seem to be a dearth of news to bring you!

NATIONAL LEAGUE SLOUGH HC RESIGNATION

Another piece of intriguing news over the Summer was the shock announcement that Slough had resigned from the National League. It may be a sign of the times and, if so, it is an extremely concerning development that a Club such as Slough, the last English club to win the European Championship, cannot survive and presumably compete to attract top quality players (and presumably compete in the recruitment stakes): it is a worrying development for Hockey in general.

CANVASSING

For those who heard of the news and wondered if H&W were aware and doing anything about the "opportunity" that this might provide, fear not. It is sad but one man's loss can so easily become the other man's gain. The Club immediately wrote to the Hockey Association in the hope that the National League might be willing to approve a replacement team to take Slough's position in Division 2 (as was) and reminding them that, if so, H&W had as good a case (if not better) than most to be considered.

It was stressed that H&W were the team that had the most recent National League pedigree (that's a euphemism for "the last to be dropped" to some) had enjoyed the best playing record of the non-qualifiers in the Play-Offs, could relatively easily provide full fixture list integrity by swapping with Slough their place for ours in the South League. Further there was confirmation of the Club's resources to maintain National League hockey.

LEAGUE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This fell on deaf ears as many had thought, believing that the HA and NHL had a situation on their plates that was akin to staring the gift horse in the mouth, namely a chance to reduce the numbers in NHL2 without much aggravation. Further, there was news that Slough would not actually compete in the South League and would pool their resources into the London League Premier instead, where they will now come up against H&W's 2nd XI and presumably provide fairly tough opposition - if they can keep those players that they have (or had when the news broke).

Also any thoughts that the other Play-Off losers might stand aside and wave us on (and in) were dashed when Harborne contacted the Club to express their interest and to

suggest a September Play-Off with them for the place! As too much cardiac strain had been imposed already on H&W's supporters, this was not welcomed with any relish and the matter was left with the League Management Committee, who last week announced that Slough's place would not be filled and that each NHL2 team would be given the Sunday off when they otherwise would have been playing them.

How would the teams have lined up for such a Play-Off anyway? Certainly team squads will have changed perhaps dramatically since the end of last season. In H&W's case Kevin Gallen has returned to NZ and Jean-Paul Stijnem to Holland. Doubtless had Rob Thompson been named for H&W, there would have been a hue and cry.

1996/7 PROPOSALS

The League's decision has latterly been confirmed by proposals that were to be put to the HA Council Meeting for 18th September. The League Management Committee wants to accelerate the reduction of teams in National Division 1 (ex NHL2). Their proposal for the end of the coming season is to relegate the bottom three teams automatically. The next two nearest the foot of the table will have to Play-Off with the 6 winners of the Regional Leagues. As before there would be 2 pools of four, with the NHL teams drawn in separate pools. The Pool Winners do not get automatic promotion this time: they must play Cross-Over matches with runners up. The winners secure promotion and the rest return to their regional Leagues. With H&W's hopes high at the start of the season, this is an added hurdle (Brechers Brook more like). Thanks are again owed to Stan Elgar for this piece of intelligence.

COLOUR SUPPLEMENT

The primary aim of adding the Supplement is to demonstrate the extent to which the Westminster Challenge (now properly called the Hampstead & Westminster Challenge) has become a significant feature in the Hockey calendar and has continued on from last year's leap forward to attract the interest of the best Clubs in the country. This is in no small measure attributable to the efforts of the McCabe Somes-Charlton and Boizot triumvirate. Apologies that it may read like Yesterday's Papers but it was felt important to give you a taste of what the Club can offer today.

This year's added attraction was the Hockey Fair that *Hockey Sport* sponsored and that relied to a large degree on Peter's energy and powers of persuasion and diplomacy. This suddenly became a substantial event in its own right and attracted an exciting number of exhibitors. This, too contributed to the exposure of the Club on the national scene and was regarded as essential if H&W is to attract the best that there is out there. There is plenty of ambition from within to make the Club succeed and the feeling that with the kick-start now given, which has since accelerated, the opportunity is there. Other substantial Clubs are clearly looking further forward, forging alliances with other leisure operations or with educational institutions in order to progress, and all in a sport where funding continues to be scarce and imagination is called for. OK, end of sermon!

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WESTMINSTER CHALLENGE

A Report on this year's Challenge will hopefully feature in the next edition of the *Journal* (the Editor is off on his holiday, Ash Ghadavi's skills willing!).

PRG PITCHES

The general state of the pitches at PRG has been a cause for concern over recent years, not assisted by the pasting they take from sports (organised and the not so organised) that do not covet the surface as much as Hockey aficionados.

There was a good deal of concern in advance of the Challenge that they were likely to prove sub-standard for the quality of teams that H&W were to host. Through the Sisyphean efforts of Peter Boizot and John McCabe arrangements were made for both pitches to be given some restorative maintenance in the week preceding the Challenge.

The sand based pitch has been brushed and vacuumed. The sand and dirt is sucked out of the pitch, the dirt discarded and the sand then re-applied. The caged pitch has been brushed several times over (its first such treat ever, it was thought) in order to raise the pile and to remove such crud as the ubiquitous chewing gum and doubtless other unmentionables and the surface then vacuumed.

The real prize discovery, however, has been the successful uncovering of a substantial water supply. There are tales galore, now embedded in H&W folklore concerning the search for water. Even Steven Spielberg was reputedly interested for yet another sequel for Indiana Jones. No need: we have the intrepid McCabe, whose Kirkaldy-honed skills were always expected to come in useful.

John's persistence has resulted in the discovery of a main with sufficient water pressure to deliver 40 gallons per minute and the necessary ancillary plant and equipment will have been purchased, installed, tested and made ready for the Challenge. No more Bowsers carted in from Peterborough!

There are high hopes that these combined measures will make the caged pitch acceptable in the short term for National League purposes (it being recalled that the sand based pitch had to be used for NHL home matches). The access to the water supply will be a permanent asset but the Club's objective is to persuade the City of Westminster that we need to build a new water based pitch dedicated to Hockey with a bank of low level spectator seating on the side.

NEWPORT

Just as H&W was finalising its arrangements for the annual trip over the Severn to the Newport Pre-Season Tournament, in came news of two late withdrawals and with insufficient time to call up reserves. This led to the cancellation of the event, much to H&W's regret. Still, it used to be bi-annual and there is no longer the chance to idle away the time between matches as honorary guests in the bar of Malpas CC. Spitty Park ain't quite the same.

100 CLUB

H&W will be reinstating a 100 Club this season and details will be included in the next edition of the *Journal*:

subscription by any Old Members would be particularly welcome as it is hoped to show Peter, in particular, that he is not being taken for granted and that fund raising is for all. The present proposal is for tickets of £20 (which will offer far better odds than the National Lottery) and for a monthly draw with a bonanza prize at Christmas. If you want to get in early, contact Harry Watson whose telephone number is 0181 444 4168.

ENCORE FANZENE

Courtesy of BT (or was it MCI or AT&T?) the *Journal* has made contact with New Jersey and Cyril Flaszner.

Cyril and family are on their second stint in the US, the first having been in Manhattan. Cyril is no longer trading in commodities but responsible, instead, for risk management for all commodity activities for his company in all the Americas. (Narrow job description or what!). Cyril joined H&W from Cambridge University (and St Caths in particular) and was an ever-present in the 1st XI in the late 1970s and 1980s, when he left for Hounslow (probably to savour National League Div 1 hockey, alongside Dave Dixon) eventually returning to H&W to add that measure of solid experience and sound no-nonsense.

So, tell us, Cyril:-

At what age did you first start playing Hockey?

9 years old

What was your first competitive match and with what result?

Cannot recall but my first school 1st XI match was a 2-2 draw
When did you join Hampstead/Hampstead & Westminster?

1979

Which H&W teams have you played for?

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and Vets XIs

Which H&W match result gave you the most pleasure?

Hampstead & W 1-0 Neston; HA Cup in 1993

Who is your best H&W player you have played alongside?

Dave Dixon: he's head and shoulders above the rest and does it all so effortlessly

Which is the best Hockey match you have watched?

On TV: Great Britain v Germany in Seoul 1992

Who is the best Hockey player you have seen playing?

Tommy van Teck (Kampong & the Netherlands)

What was the last item of Hockey kit that you bought?

Socks (for the Travellers)

What infuriates you most about Hockey?

League Administrators

Your most amusing incident on a Hockey pitch?

Emptying to all and sundry the contents of our Goalkeeper's suitcase at a pre-match presentation - much to his consternation
Which team do you least look forward to playing against?

Slough

Which other Club do you most admire?

Travellers HC

Except for Hockey, which sports give you most pleasure?

Soccer, Skiing and Baseball

Thank you, Cyril! There does seem to be a remarkable similarity with the responses obtained from Harry Watson for the last edition but, as Cyril can testify, the two sets of answers were entirely independent of each other: they are just kindred spirits!

That's All, Folks!!