

JOURNAL

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

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INTRODUCTION

This is the third of our Newsletters and hopefully still with something worthwhile to say. The brevity of this Introduction is not intended to be indicative of a lack of energy absorbed in its preparation



commitment required of the 1st XI in these circumstances.

This then was the last of the Play-Off matches at Milton Keynes, Warrington having earlier in the day won the other corresponding fixture (officially designated as the Cross Over Matches) and returned to the National League.

NEWS of OLD MEMBERS

It was a pleasure for the *Journal* to hear from **Brian Beaumont-Owles** and for such an entertaining letter. He sends greetings from Down Under to all contemporaries named in a long list, which space only prevents our repeating. He did ask that we send news to **Bob Menzies** in Western Australia and this we shall do: there is a suggestion that Bob will be happy to send details to Evans McRostie and others in WA. Brian is threatening to come out of premature retirement when planning to travel to South Africa on holiday to join the Puritans on a Veterans' tour of vineyards and game parks in the company of **Hugh Wickham** and **Jeremy Potter**. By the way, **Leon Flack**, Brian was wondering if you still had his stick and boots?

Brian also had news of **Greg & Tracy Carr** who have moved to Dubbo in New South Wales. A cynic (not Brian) has suggested that Greg has secured one of the toughest assignments known to the Australian Labour Market, selling Fosters to the locals. The Carrs have become farmers, of some 200 acres apparently, including what we gather is an experiment with Alpaca, "cultivated" for their wool. We understand that they are planning a trip to the UK sometime this summer, probably in July and will be keen to renew acquaintances in London.

Stan Elgar has kindly provided news of changes of address for **Sandy Kay** and for **Alistair Vartan** who has moved to Bermuda (and which doubtless explains the envelopes returned by the Post Office). Mention of addresses brings a return call, please, for details of any changes known to the readership at large. **Mike Hick** rang in to put us right on his change of address of some time ago and mentioned (but all too briefly and modestly, we suspect) a threat to pick his stick up again and return to the good fight soon.

PLAY OFFS

What a way to spend a spring Saturday afternoon or was it evening? The HA appears so keen to cram in every important game in their new stadium that they are in danger of showing insufficient respect to the competitors. Some thought that the Team management were joking when it was discovered that the 1st XI had risen from their beds at 5.00am in preparation for the Saturday Play-Off game against Ipswich. But it's all true! In order to get digested food on board and warm up sufficiently this was a must for the 9.00am push back. Is the tail wagging the proverbial dog here? This too for an amateur sport: let there be no doubt about the

HAMPSTEAD 2:3 OXFORD HAWKS

(Saxby 49 Land 62 : Dawson 48, Laird 65, 68)

H&W displayed unexpected naiveté towards the end of this crucial fixture, allowed the opposition to fight their way back and then agonisingly score the winner with just two and a half minutes left on the clock. Thus they slipped out of the National League. It did not help having only 10 men on the pitch at the end, as a late Hampstead challenge just behind the half way line was "rewarded" with a yellow card for an over-enthusiastic **Adrian Rogers**

This was a bitter pill for H&W's loyal band of supporters, outnumbered though they were by those rooting for Oxford Hawks, in another tension-packed match, with few clear cut chances until the later stages, as each side tried to prise open fairly solid defences, well marshalled by both teams.

After initial opening pressure from Oxford Hawks, H&W won a short corner in the sixth minute but the shot was blocked. **Lindsay Troy** and **Mark Crowley** received green cards in the seventh and twelfth minutes respectively, such was the commitment and in the fifteenth minute on came **Dan Williams** from the bench, making a return to H&W colours after his sojourn abroad. H&W managed to repel a series of Oxford Hawks' short corners in quick succession, with their hitter dummied a full-bloodied drive of the stopped ball but allowing it instead to be pushed right by another, but from where the shot was safely blocked.

After 24 minutes on came the Stadium lights, such were the rewards for starting play at 6.30pm! This encouraged H&W with a break out on the right side, faced with only two defenders and a strong cross, which even **Dan Williams**, diving headlong, could not get a stick to. With otherwise, by then, only the goalkeeper for company in the circle, this was a good but admittedly difficult chance missed.

Then **Derek Stone** of all people was 'somewhat mysteriously yellow-carded, having, to most in the stand, won the ball from the tackle, but off he came, necessitating a rapid switch of players by the H&W bench, in order to replace him with another defender, much to **Will Saxby's** disappointment, having just come on. **Marcus Rudler** in the H&W goal was then in bother, having to stretch with his stick to push the ball away. He fell rather heavily, requiring lengthy treatment. The half ended with H&W pressure, now back to full numbers. Two H&W short corners were well hit but deflected way over the cross bar and into the tall netting behind, giving the appearance to the crowd that **Dave Dixon** was out practising with his 7 iron! So, 0-0 at the half.

Early in the second half, H&W were often caught off-side, frustratingly once with **Greg Pierce** in a prominent attacking position. In the 48th minute, however, Oxford Hawks took the lead from **Dawson**, who ran right side after a forward pass

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which split the H&W defence allowing him to dummy the goalkeeper and push it into the left hand corner of the goal. A minute later, H&W pressed forward themselves, eager to regain the initiative. Mark Crowley was severely upended by a defender, appearing to go partially airborne but a good advantage was played: Will Saxby kept control rounded the goalkeeper and slotted it home for 1-1. Given the dose of yellow card earlier for Derek Stone, it was a little odd that no action was taken against the Oxford Hawks defender for what appeared to be a substantially more serious assault but presumably it was felt a goal down was sufficient retribution?

In the 58th minute Greg Pierce and Dan Williams repeated the free-hit "swivel" routine on the edge of the circle that had earned them a goal at the 1994 Play-Offs against Olton but frustratingly this time others appeared unaware of its complexity and an off-side was called!

Adrian Rogers then found himself pushing forward in an inside left channel and was heavily stick-tackled in the 25. A short corner was awarded. On came Dave Dixon. The ball into the circle from the goal line was a little strong but was pushed right and flicked in by Nigel Land for 2-1 with only 8 minutes to play. This generated a range of emotions in the stand: the impression was that some of the Hawks' supporters thought the long season might just have ended for them. H&W had another opportunity a minute later, following a short corner shot from the right after Dave Dixon had pushed the ball right from the initial stop but the Umpire blew for off-side just as the shot was hit, which baffled a few.

H&W were strongly committed at this stage, typified by Greg Pierce's winning the ball in spite of being thrown to the ground by the challenge and securing the free hit. Then followed Adrian Rogers' challenge, possibly responding to prompting from the crowd to get back and stuck in that went just too far and his yellow card. With H&W trying to reorganise and suddenly on the back foot (and only 5 minutes to go) an Oxford Hawks short corner was drilled home by Adam Laird. Having kept the opposition play-maker under close wraps for most of the game the metaphorical wheels appeared to be wobbling for H&W and things became all the more frantic. A deliberate stick tackle in our 25 led to a Hawks' short corner in the 32nd minute of the half which Laird again slotted home for 2-3 and delirium in the stand from their supporters.

Although they pushed forward H&W were unable to repeat the success at this stage of a game which they had managed against Warrington a fortnight previously and now were clearly playing "catch-up" hockey. Long balls were driven forward but fairly easily absorbed by the opposition defence and set up their win, very enthusiastically received, (not unexpectedly) by the Oxford contingent.

It is no consolation for H&W to have been involved in yet another Milton Keynes Spectacular and for the Tannoy announcer to offer condolences on a "difficult year" for the team: so near and yet so far. Big decisions now face the Team. Most clubs in similar positions bravely announce that they will bounce back immediately but few have done so. Warrington, with whom, as readers will recall, a draw was secured - and so nearly (there's that expression, again) a win,

are the only ex-National League team to have achieved it so far. Still, that is not to say that H&W cannot confound the sceptics again. What must be avoided is a slide into oblivion: what happened, for example to Brean, or even Broxbourne? A sad day, then, and an odd time for it all to end: 8.00pm on what was now a chilly Saturday night.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Club's AGM was held on Thursday 23rd April 1996 at the Carlton Tavern, by the kind invitation of Peter Boizot. It was a pleasure to see Tony Swing in attendance along with Colin Greenhalgh, Stan Elgar and Jimmy James, especially as the general turn out by Club members was rather disappointing, especially given the lengths to which Peter had gone to accommodate the Meeting and the efforts of the staff to look after members. Some were, at one stage, wondering whether there would be a quorum to begin the Meeting itself!

PRESIDENT'S OPENING

Peter opened the Meeting and offered a warm welcome to the Carlton, outlining some of his proposals for the establishment, which are comprehensive indeed, including the possible opening of a Club Office (and maybe a shop selling all the latest in kit and equipment) and upstairs, an improved Club Room, an atrium/arbourside: all in all quite a transformation. The AGM was convened in the Back Room, recently redecorated, with its own small bar and it was unusual indeed (particularly if a comparison is made with the days of AGMs at the Paddington Sports Club) for the number of seats to exceed the backsides ready to fill them.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ETC

The preliminary business of the Meeting, other than to confirm the appointments of Andrew Thompson and Laura Davies as the Men's and Women's 1st XI Captains respectively and of Lis Steele as the Women's Club Captain (her new job permitting: watch your early evening TV!) was to introduce a new proposal that incoming players wanting to join should pay a Fee of £40 and receive in return a Club Shirt and socks. These days it is sad how many H&W teams are unable to turn out fully kitted and this measure is aimed at tackling this problem head on. It will mean of course placing an early order pre-season and having to take a guess on how many players will be leaving and how many applicants we are likely to get during the Summer!

POLICY ADOPTIONS

This business was followed by some formal Resolutions, the first to increase the number of possible Honorary Life Memberships, as the previous established maximum has now been reached. Then, a Membership Policy and Selection Policy, largely implemented on an experimental basis during the season were approved (with some amendments proposed from the floor).

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

The next weighty issue up for discussion was the possible appointment by the Club of a part (or even full-time) Administrator. This provoked a lengthy debate with opinion split fairly down the middle. The appearance was given that difficulties over pitch allocation and starting times and with

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non-arrival of opposition seems to visit the Men's teams more so than the Women's, whose administration appears to work better or more effectively. There were several gripes that were aired and the Committee were left to develop the proposal and to consider ways in which match administration might be improved. A chord was struck when mention was made that players of today do (perhaps somewhat selfishly) expect just to turn up and get a game with all the facilities and arrangements handed to them on the proverbial plate.

FUNDING and SPONSORSHIP

There then followed a debate on the Membership's views concerning the best (or perhaps only) way of securing funding for the 1st XIs given the comparatively hefty amounts that are now required to support them, including the cost of coaching and coaching facilities (ie usually floodlit pitches). Some glibly look to Sponsorship without probably realising how difficult it is to achieve, for Hockey still has its low profile to grapple with.

Enough admin news: what about the game? This takes us therefore to news of the Veterans.

VETERANS

The Vets were particularly pleased with their inaugural "win" of the new Jug & Half sponsored by the Men's 5th XI and to be presented at the Club's Annual Dinner to the most sociable team in the Club during the past season. The 5th XI (the self-proclaimed "Neglecteds" of H&W: how sensitive of them!) probably thought that they might be worthy winners (but surely, naively, not of their own trophy?).

Having initially (and warily, perhaps) mistaken the *Journal's* reporter for that of Hockey Sport's when asked for a brief report, Chris Elliott displayed all the panache of a worthy winner of a Woodpecker tankard by providing a detailed review of the past season.

With 3 wins and a draw in the first games, it looked like an excellent season in prospect but a poor November and bad finish left the Vets with a far lower playing percentage than the quality of their hockey deserved. The final record was P20; W10, D4, L6: For 67, Against 39 for 56.7%. The highlights were the 8-1 defeat of Indian Gym, a 6-1 success against St Albans Centurions and the 8-4 win against Dulwich: the first Saturday win over them in some 12 years.

Pat Coy was leading scorer with 22 goals despite playing irregularly and he will be sorely missed next year: his average was three goals per game! With this he won the Golden Sticks Trophy and Vets' MVP. Other than Pat Coy, in the goal scoring seriatim were Richard Chapman with 13, Peter Mellwaine with 8, Doc Alibhai with 6 and Hugh Smith and Richard Sykes with 4 each.

The Vets were well served by their roster of Umpires, with Ron Hart and Morley Pecker (by kind permission of JD Weatherspoon and the EU in Brussels respectively) and Lawrie Allen, who is an experienced League Umpire.

Three fixtures were lost as the opposition did not turn up (or were unaware the fixture had been arranged). This has led the Vets to conclude that they would like to play 12 like-minded sides of similar standing on a home & away basis,

which could become an unofficial Veterans' London League, with possible participation by Richmond, Wimbledon, Southgate, Crostyx and Old Louts. and may be for 1997/98 if it can be organised?

UMPIRING SLOT

We promised a discussion with the Umpires in a previous edition and have now successfully found a moment - hence "slot" - to speak to the busy Tony Elliott, Secretary to the Middlesex County Hockey Umpires Association (MCHUA). In the days when Dave Teale was General Secretary, and filling in Team Sheets at selection meetings, he tended to let the nominated teams know that their umpire would be provided by the local Association. Thus, the name "MCHUA" would appear frequently in Team Bulletins. Imagine Dave's surprise to learn that a Hampstead player had enquired who was the Scotsman who never seemed to get a game for the 2nd XI, although named virtually every week? Why, he even had what must be a brother faring equally badly, week in week out, by the name of SCHUA.

POST- SMOLDEN?

The consequences of umpiring and refereeing have been brought into sharp focus by the High Court decision in April that a Rugby referee has a duty of care to players participating in a match in which he is officiating. For those abroad who may not have heard of this, a rugby match at Colts level led to several instances (among others) of collapsed scrums. One player injured his neck (and spinal chord) when yet another scrum collapsed and the referee was eventually sued for the personal injuries suffered, it being alleged that he had failed to take sufficient action to prevent unlawful play and had been encouraged by the touch judge (it was said) to take positive action but had failed to do so. The RFU maintained insurance cover and the case was therefore brought.

This decision has also stirred up the Hockey world, especially amongst the Umpires. Given that Hockey is (reputed to be) a non-contact sport, the chances of similar circumstances recurring are generally thought to be low. However failure to stamp out persistent rough play, leading to injury *might* be actionable.

Tony reports on behalf of MCHUA that they took the precaution of securing public liability cover some two years ago in conjunction with other Associations. The £1m limit is under review and MCHUA understands that the HA is reviewing a national scheme.

However, this will only provide cover for badged Umps. The ordinary poor-suffering Club member who can normally be persuaded to do a stint might therefore be put off, especially if there is no Club cover available. Some protection might be available from existing domestic or household insurance policies (for public liability - where the cover is normally in the region of £1m). H&W may need to consider the need for its own cover.

CHANGES in the LAWS

The no-Off Side rule is apparently a two year mandatory experiment, starting on a pitch near you this Summer (ie post Atlanta). Tony foresees a few difficulties and has identified

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another, not apparently yet appreciated by others: that's our Tony!

It is suggested that Umpires will be forced to invigilate (aka "stand") a little deeper than they would ideally wish, especially if a team posts, say, two attackers virtually on the goal line for the long speculative pass upfield to one or both. Tony anticipates that somewhere between the 25 yard line and the Goal line may prove to be the optimum choice for Umpires, who will have to spend the summer adjusting their positional senses.

Another concern, not commonly yet appreciated, is what is to happen if an attacker stands deliberately in front of the GK with a fellow attacker sizzlin' in a shot which the other attacker makes no move to intercept or deflect in some small way and thus by sheer presence distracts the Goalie in order to ensure the ball gets into the net?

The ordinary rules of obstruction will apply but admittedly, this will be difficult for the less experienced Umpires to detect. What will occur if the attacker is, say, no more than 6 feet from the GK? This may become a tactic only employed by the top ranking teams but undoubtedly will add to the Umpires' lot: life's rich pageant and all that.....

OTHER CHANGES

For those in blissful ignorance, every hit in the attacking 25 will now require *all* players to be 5 yards from the hit when it is taken. The obligatory starting push-back may now be a push-forward, bringing the game more into line with football (surely an insignificant change?). Corner Hits are now to be taken from the side of the pitch; thought by some to be a mistake, in that it neutralises any benefits of goal line proximity which the old system enjoyed. Lastly, a new style GK gauntlet is being tested. The Stick is permanently affixed/slotted through somehow, we are told. There was some initial controversy which now awaits a final decision. This gauntlet means the goalie cannot drop his stick!

RECRUITMENT DRIVE/OPPORTUNITY

MCHUA is continually on the look-out for new Umpires, especially those on the Level One Register. Numbers are stable for Middlesex apparently. With London League Div 3 games requiring badged umpires from this next season (with the regime soon to spread down to other teams) this will improve quality and should bring about a consistent approach. However, it will make Club's administration that much harder. MCHUA offers Umpire Training Sessions for a modest fee and several in H&W have expressed interest.

FANZENE STUFF

In a vain hope of keeping in touch with the current membership the *Journal* has followed several other august publications and taken to the 'phone to conduct in-depth interviews with players. However, none of the "What is your favourite food?" or "What was the first record that you bought?" stuff: this is serious material (well, some might be hoodwinked, huh?). So, armed with a dozen or so questions.....

For this edition, and as our "guinea pig", the *Journal* spoke to John Grierson, known to many on the Old Member's

List. John took responsibility for fund raising in the Hornsey days and was General Secretary of H&W for three years (when his experience was used to secure funding for the acclaimed H&W National League programme for 1994). John has also carried out as stints as 5th XI Captain but now enjoys Hockey with the 7th XI. He founded his own company advising in Pensions and Personal Finance and has an office in Bloomsbury, close to where he lives.

At what age did you first start playing Hockey?

Thirteen

What was your first competitive match and with what result?

A win in a tournament against St Luke's College, with the McGinn brothers in the opposition

When did you join Hampstead/Hampstead & Westminster?

1976

Which H&W teams have you played for?

Modestly confess to the lower teams, 5th to 7th XI, with one appearance for the 4th XI when some prima donna refused to play away from home. Also, games with the Vets/Spaniards

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

Too many to recall

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

Kevin Gallen for the 5th XI v Guildford on a muddy Charterhouse pitch, when we were four players short. Oh yes, and Dave Mason, who played 5ths hockey before elevation to the 1st XI: we trained 'im

Which is the best Hockey match you have watched?

H&W v Surbiton 1-1 London League decider, at Reed's School, with virtually all H&W members there and the missing of those two open goals!

Who is the best Hockey player you have seen playing?

Dave Dixon - got to be

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

Don't be stupid.....

What infuriates you most about Hockey?

Ever increasing bureaucracy from the HA

Your most amusing incident on a Hockey pitch?

7th XI v Richmond, away, on the day of the Twickenham international and playing on the grass next to London Welsh watched by 4,000 drunken Welshmen: our match was abandoned, needless to say

Which team do you least look forward to playing against?

Surbiton, of course!

Which other Club do you most admire?

Hounslow - they managed to extract so much cash from the Sports Council!

Except for Hockey, which sport gives you most pleasure?

Soccer: for it has virtually the same tactics: you know, with wingers, to whom the ball is never played.

Thank you, John: others should wait for the call. It could, after all, be you!

FINALLY

The next edition is likely to out in September, as the *Journal* tries to gather interesting news: do *you* have any? Please contact Ian Smith at the address mentioned at the foot or fax it to 0181 906 5485: we want to hear, please!