

# Hampstead fall to disputed score in premier opener

Patrick Mooney

## HOCKEY

### Hampstead 0 Cannock 1

HAMPSTEAD opened their English League premier division season with a controversial home defeat against fancied Cannock at Paddington Rec on Sunday.

This was Hampstead's first ever game in the top flight – and their first home League defeat since March 1999.

Cannock's disputed goal came with just 10 minutes to go after a break that appeared to hit a Cannock foot but was not seen by the umpires.

The ball passed rapidly down the Hampstead right and the resultant corner taken by Simon Organ was flicked in over Steve Dodson's right shoulder, high into the goal.

However, Hampstead coach Soma Singh was generally pleased with the way in which his team battled and had taken the game to their fancied opponents.

Indeed, Hampstead opened brightly.

The tone was set by an interception by Matt Hetherington deep in the Cannock half within 50 seconds of the start and his shot cannoned off the goalkeeper's midriff.

Craig Carolan was then prominent deep on the right and crosses from Mike Williamson and Mark Darbon skimmed across the Cannock goal with no one available to take advantage.

Dodson, in the Hampstead goal, then pulled off two good saves from short-corner flicks from Welsh international Simon Organ.

With plenty of crisp tackling in the increasingly tight battle for midfield supremacy, Hampstead found it hard to create clear

chances and there were few short-corner opportunities until the 23rd minute, when Jimi Lewis, in the Cannock goal, saved from Hetherington's flick.

Williamson then rose to the challenge with a series of deep runs, showing good stickwork.

Cannock earned four more short corners to end the half but Dodson held firm – once with a stick stop – aided by resolute defensive work.

The second half opened with a Carolan shot on the reverse and Cannock began to exert even more pressure, driving forward through the efforts of England international Chris Mayer.

Dave Sellick, making his Hampstead debut, pulled off a splendid save on the goal line from Cannock's seventh corner after Dodson had blocked the initial shot with his hands.

Another darting run from Williamson earned Hampstead a second corner in the 51st minute but Hetherington's flick was wide of the right post.

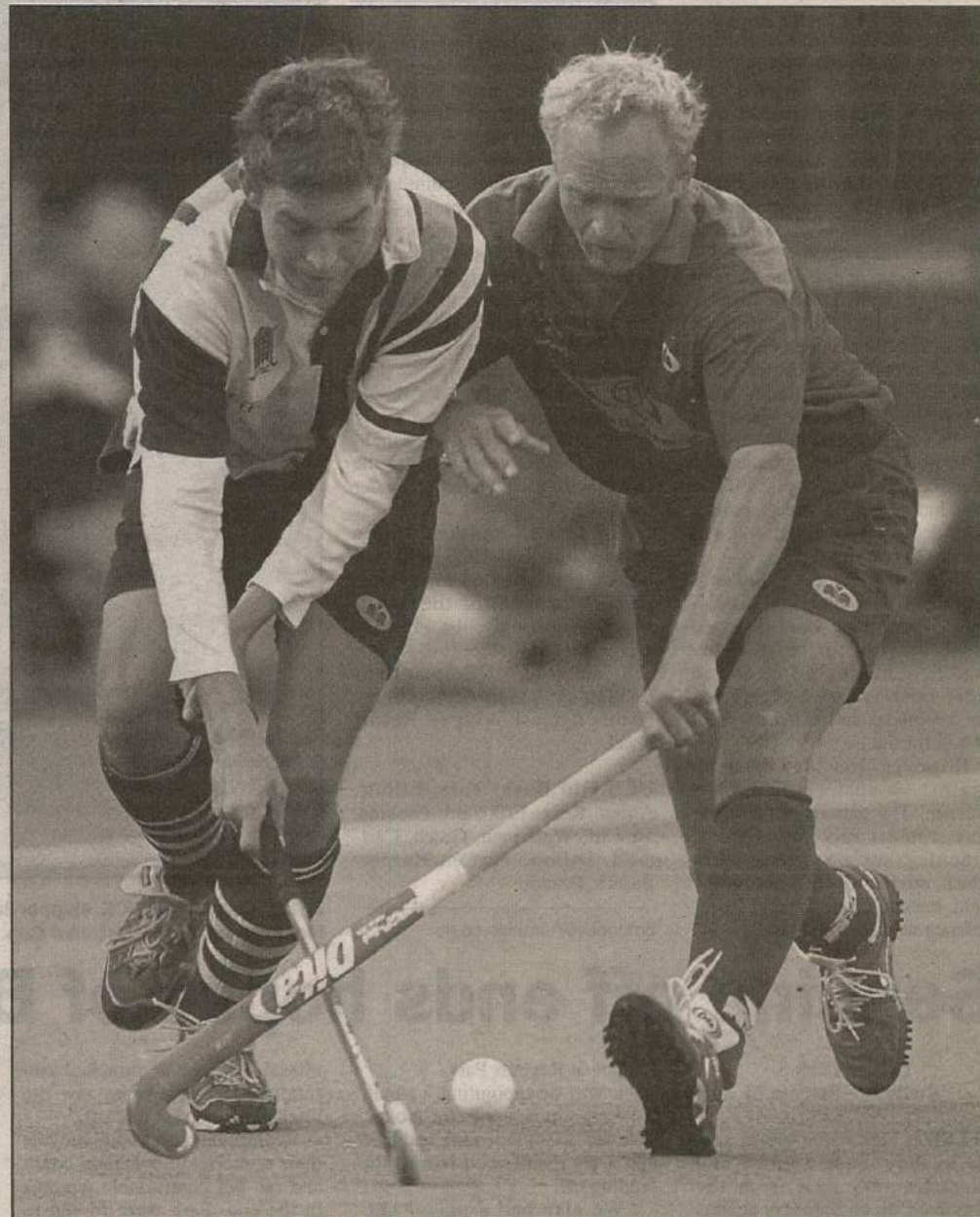
Hampstead mounted a series of counter attacks after the Cannock goal and a chance opened for Darbon but his speculative, deflected shot drifted wide.

Cannock then held on to the points, forcing two late corners.

On Sunday, Hampstead face another tough League game against Guildford at Broadwater School, Godalming.

**Hampstead:** Dodson: von Mayer, Boucher, Sellick, Sully; Hetherington, Singh, Williamson; Bhatti, Carolan, Darbon Subs: Land, Maier, Turner, Matthews.

pmooney@hamhigh.co.uk



● Handy... Hampstead's Mark Darbon (left) fends off a Cannock player to set up an attack during Sunday's English League premier division clash at Paddington Rec. Picture by Max Flego