

Hampstead on a Euro mission



Hampstead & W 4

Smith 27 (PC), Browne 39
Calnan 44, Edwards 46

Ratcliffe, Smith, Edwards, French, Guise-Brown, Watt, Browne, Shipperly, Loughrey, McCabe, Cargo.
Replacements: Roche, Calnan, Godling, Jakeman, Kelly.



Beeston 3

Wilkinson 24, Lawrence 38 (PC)
Hibell 60

Hujwan, Steenmester, Willars, Nagel, Sharp, Sorsby, Gandhi, S. Lawrence, R. Lawrence, Proctor, Byas.
Replacements: Geeson, Albery, Hibell, Pavis, Wilkinson.

Umpires: Barry Smith & Will Champness

by Graham Otway

HAMPSTEAD and Westminster overcame two serious setbacks to take all three points, and steal a march over Beeston as the season's play-off race and battle for European places reaches its climax.

The closeness of the scoreline would suggest the two clubs are neck and neck to finish in the top five of the Premier Division but behind the scenes the Londoners have a significant advantage.

Over the next couple of weeks, Beeston have to play without leading players like Ollie Willars and James Albery who are in the England squad heading for South Africa and four matches against the host nation and Germany in the build up to this summer's heavy international programme.

Hampstead, by comparison, have lost not a single player to the England cause and at full strength should cash in on the club side rather than international stardom.

The situation was certainly not lost on Hampstead chairman Jonny Witt as he watched the victory over Beeston from the sidelines.

"It's very unfortunate that we do not have any players in the current England squad that has been named for the games in South Africa," he said.

"But on the other hand we may not be affected as much as the other clubs who are going to be without key players for a couple of weekends.

"We do have two youngsters in Will Calnan and Sam French who have played for England 21s and we would love them to develop and obtain full England caps.

"But in the next couple of weeks they will be playing in our settled side and today's win was a good pointer for our chances."

However, it was two Hampstead players from older generations that eventually played a crucial part in their victory.

Kwan Browne, their 38-year-old Trinidadian player/coach scored a wonder goal from open play and in the final third of the match 29-year-old former GB defender Richard Smith, playing again after three years out with knee trouble, was a rock solid pillar in defence.

Having created the better of the early chances Beeston had taken the lead after 24 minutes when Chris Proctor and Elliott Hibell broke swiftly down the left and Jonny Wilkinson slid home a cross.

That lead, however, lasted only four minutes as from Hampstead's first penalty corner of the game Smith equalised with a drag flick.

Shortly after half-time Beeston were in front again as Richard Lawrence scored from a penalty corner but that advantage only lasted three minutes as Browne won a tackle on the edge of the D and sent a spectacular shot into the top corner of the net.

Five minutes after, Hampstead got their noses

It's there!
Hampstead's
Marc Edwards
celebrates his
goal

PICTURE:
Max Flego



KEY PLAYER

Kwan
Browne
Hampstead

in front as Calnan won a tackle in the same area that Browne had done but converted his opening with a low shot.

That was also quickly followed by Hampstead's fourth and final goal of the day when Rupert Shipperly sent in a cross from the right which Marc Edwards slipped home, though Beeston were not happy the goal was allowed.

The visitors believed Edwards had controlled the ball with his feet and after angrily expressing their displeasure to the umpires, Robbie Gleeson and Wilkinson were both sinbinned.

Beeston did halve the gap on the hour when Josh Pavis raced upfield to set up a chance for Hibell but their late dash for a point was thwarted by Hampstead number two keeper George Radcliffe.

Standing in for David Kettle, who has been sidelined after cutting a hand in a non-hockey related domestic accident, Radcliffe made two late and great saves to deny Beeston's Proctor.

Afterwards, Browne was admirably humble about the quality of the second equaliser, saying: "I don't normally score field goals." But he did not hold back expressing pleasure with three points his team had garnered, adding: "It was a key match and we knew it would be really tough so I am extremely happy.

"And it's good to have Richard Smith back in the side again. He reads the game so well and is so full of energy - he had a super game."

The mood in the Beeston camp was a mixture of frustration at the result

and anger that the final Hampstead goal had not been disallowed.

And their coach Steve Wood also identified that as well as losing players to South Africa, there is one big weakness his players must sort out if they are to make the play-offs.

"That's three games we have now lost by just one goal," he said. "So it is not as though we have been heavily beaten and I thought we played really well, creating a lot of chances, but we don't tend to manage our game well when we go ahead. There have been quite a few times when we have scored this season and then conceded soon afterwards.

"We have got a lot of youngsters in our side and their concentration drops after we have scored. They have got learn to get back on the ball quickly."