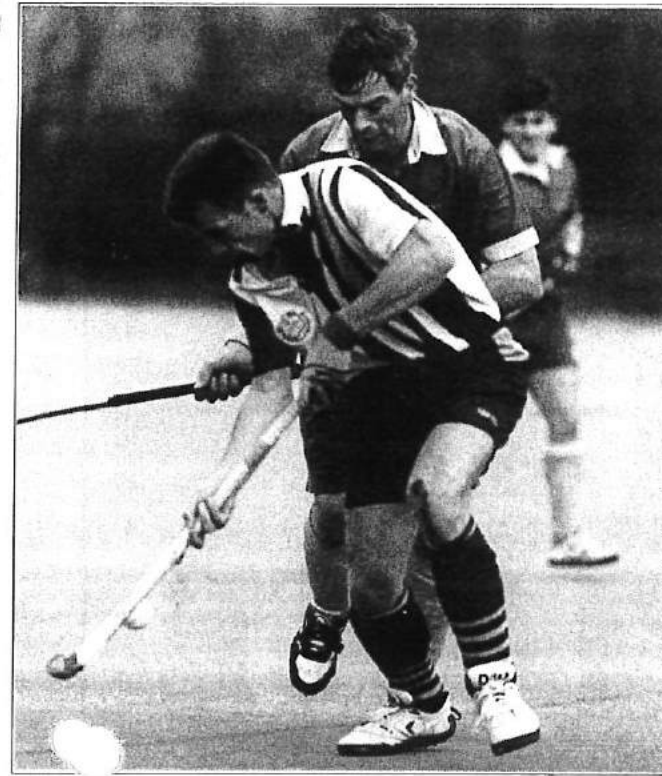
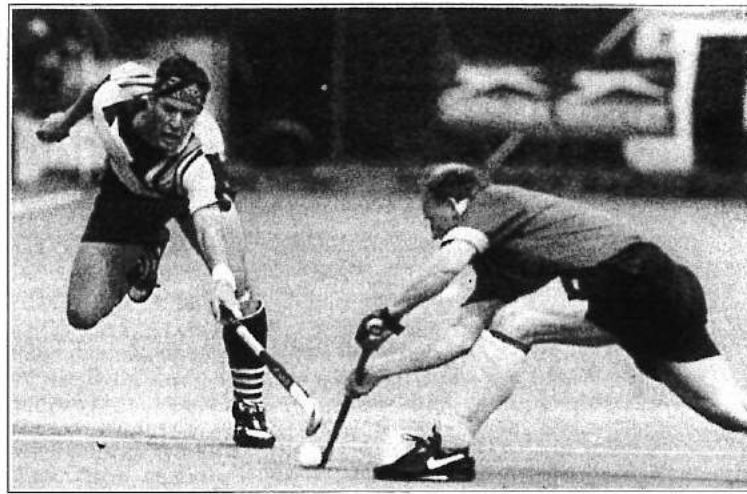


# HAMPSTEAD WIN THROUGH... DONCASTER STAY UP... AND WHITCHURCH, CROSTYX MAKE IT AT THE SECOND ATTEMPT



● Top left, David Finkel comes to tackle Harborne's P Talbot; bottom left, Hampstead's W Saxby applies pressure down the right; above, Hampstead's Greg Pierce (front) is harried by Harborne's Andrew Bostock; above right, Harborne's Des Betts has nowhere to go against Hampstead's packed defence; below right, Doncaster's Mark Wood beats A King of Whitchurch.

**ANDREW DOUGLAS follows the progress of the clubs aspiring to the National League next season.**

**D**ONCASTER carved out a small piece of history when they went to the National Inter-League tournament at Olton on March 25-27 - by becoming the first Second Division side to retain their place at the expense of the challengers from the regions.

And Hampstead & Westminster, the team which has been trying so hard for so long to reach the higher level, at last earned the National League place - much to the delight of

their president, Peter Boizot, cheering enthusiastically from the Olton stand.

But while Hampstead moved up in style, winning all three of their matches, Doncaster had to fight all the way, finally winning through against Whitchurch, the champions of the Sun Life West and South Wales League.

There was consolation for Whitchurch, though, when they beat Olton in the play-offs two weeks later - making

history themselves by becoming the first Welsh club to win a place in England's National League. Crostyx, the Essex-based team, also won their way into the Second Division with a comfortable victory over Formby, the Ernst & Young North Premier League champions.

Curiously enough, there was a real guide to form on the opening day at Olton. All four of the sides which eventually won Second Division places started off with victories.

#### ● Sound Start

Hampstead, the Nastro Azzurro South League title holders, started with a 2-1 victory over Olton, their goals coming from American international David Finkel and a

penalty stroke by Dan Williams.

They went on to beat Crostyx by the only goal from old campaigner Dave Dixon at a short corner. The former Hounslow defender added two more in their 2-1 defeat of Harborne in their final match - a match that relegated Harborne to the Midland League.

#### ● Doncaster In Form

Doncaster also started well with a 3-0 win over Anchorians, with two goals from Mark Wood and another by Alistair West. But their next encounter, against Formby, was full of drama, with the Yorkshire team's equaliser at 3-3 coming from a last-minute penalty stroke.

But they made no mistake against Whitchurch, the side

which had been regarded as perhaps the most impressive at Olton, in their final game. Mark Wood put them ahead from an eighth minute penalty stroke and when he added the second after 59 minutes Doncaster were sure of staying in the National League.

Two weeks later Whitchurch had the right to join them in a dramatic game in Cardiff. Olton & West Warwicks started in splendid style, taking a 24th minute lead through Steve Wilkinson and it was not until close to the end that Gary Hibbert equalised from a short corner to take the game into extra time - and strokes.

Two saves from Nick Suller earned Whitchurch a 4-2 win in the shoot-out - and denied Olton coach Gavin Feather-

stone, who also trains Oxford University, of the chance to take a team through the play-offs in successive years.

Whitchurch trod a fine line, though, for only 30 minutes before the start they were still without Hibbert and their skipper, Mark Lewis, the former GB international. They had been on a skiing holiday in the French Alps and their returning plane arrived at Bristol an hour late. Fortunately for Whitchurch, they made it just in time.

#### ● Crostyx Surprised

Crostyx got a rude shock when Robin Benford put Formby ahead after only three minutes at the Old Loughtonians ground. But by half time Crostyx were 2-1 up through

Andy MacLeod and Nick Duck and completely in charge.

Formby had arrived with a depleted side and were not helped by injuries to two defenders as Crostyx steamed on happily with a second half hat-trick from Paul Dover, including two from the penalty spot.

#### ● Youngster Scores

Mark Handley, an impressive 14-year-old, briefly interrupted the Crostyx progress but they still cantered home 5-2 winners - and it would have been a wider margin but for a superb display by Formby keeper Andy Forshaw. Even 15 Crostyx corners failed to produce a goal as he dived to stop shot after shot.

#### RESULTS National Inter-League Tournament (Olton).

**Pool A** - Olton 1, Hampstead & Westminster 2; Harborne 1, Crostyx 3; Hampstead 1, Crostyx 0; Harborne 1, Olton 0; Hampstead 2, Harborne 1; Crostyx 1, Olton. *Placings* - 1-Hampstead, 9pts; 2-Crostyx, 3; 3-Olton, 3; 4-Harborne, 3.

**Pool B** - Doncaster 3, Anchorians 0; Formby 0, Whitchurch 1; Whitchurch 6, Anchorians 1; Doncaster 3, Formby 3; Anchorians 2, Formby 3; Whitchurch 0, Doncaster 2. *Placings* - 1-Doncaster, 7pts; 2-Whitchurch, 6; 3-Formby, 4; 4-Anchorians, 0.

**Play-offs** - Crostyx 5, Formby 2; Whitchurch 1, Olton 1 (Whitchurch won 4-2 aps).

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