

SPORT

Victims of the freeze

PROSTBOUND pitches played havoc with Bank Holiday Monday's soccer fixtures. A full programme was scheduled in the Diadora League, but only nine matches were played.

Harrow Borough's Premier Division game at Hendon, Edgware Town's Division Two match at Hungerford, and Kingsbury Town's Division Three game at home to Flackwell Heath, were all amongst the weather victims.

Win tickets to see Wasps play Harlequins
Page 63

Wembley suffer another setback

Wembley 0 Berkhamsted Town 1

THERE was little cold comfort at the Farm for Wembley on Monday as they began the New Year as they had ended the old one - with a very disappointing home defeat, writes Richard Marklewicz.

On the verge of a place in the top three, Wembley have now slipped back into mid-table as a result of two successive losses and to maintain their interest in the promotion stakes, boss Glen Charles will need to do a lot of rekindling to set them on fire again.

His resources were not helped by the absence of several first team regulars and, with a bone hard surface to play on, a very tentative approach resulted from his much changed side.

Berkhamsted adjusted to the conditions far more quickly and they struck what proved to be the only goal of the game in the 36th minute.

Mark Knight's harmless looking through ball looked to be drifting aimlessly wide when suddenly Matt Luddy appeared and slid in to poke the ball past the hesitant Jeff Farmer.

Belatedly, Wembley retaliated with Matt Catlin's low 18 yard drive hitting a post at the end of the first half.

And after the break the Lions had numerous chances of re-dressing the balance.

Most of their efforts were bravely charged down by the Berkhamsted keeper, Scott Ashcroft, but his inability to hold onto the ball always gave Wembley's forwards a second bite of the cherry - which sadly messrs Page, McGinty and Grazzoli all squandered.

Wembley: Fanner, Flaherty, Catlin, Walters, Shields, Hollingdale, Headlam, DeBruce, McGinty, Page, Grazzoli. Subs: Bhatia, Murphy.



A rare moment of joy for Wembley in Saturday's game with Wivenhoe as Andy Smith (on ground) beats keeper Christian Davies to score for the Lions. Report and more pictures, page 63. Picture by Edmond Terakopian.

Wasps go for repeat

Success in west country could help make up ground

WASPS will be hoping for a repeat performance when they resume their Courage League campaign at Gloucester on Saturday.

When the two sides met at Repton Avenue in September, Wasps unveiled their attacking style and overran the west country side by 45 points to 8, scoring six tries in a second half display that was absolutely awesome.

It nailed Wasps' colours to the mast and set the tone on the season.

The Sudbury men are third in the League but with Bath facing a tricky contest at Bristol and Leicester away to a much improved Northampton, there

By Alan Bodenham

is a good chance that they could make up ground.

Gloucester, having adopted a new playing style themselves, have struggled. While Wasps chalked up 50 points against Newcastle Gosforth in the Pilkington Cup, Gloucester were dumped out of that competition by Second Division Wakefield.

However, there is no more hostile venue than Kingsholm which has the most partisan crowd in the Rugby Union. It is never an easy ride there.

Ireland and British Lions prop, Nick Popplewell, makes his Courage League debut on Saturday but Wasps skipper Dean Ryan is unavailable. This may give a chance to England under-21 Peter Scrivener to make his first League appearance of the season in the back row.

Rob Andrew will undoubtedly fill the fly half berth but he will be ruled out of next week's home clash with Harlequins. The Rugby Union are likely to enforce the rule of England men not playing the week prior to an international.

Steve Bates will lead the side in Ryan's absence.

The rest of the squad came through the festive season unscathed, helped by the cancellation of the scheduled holiday fixture at Saracens due to a frozen pitch, but there is a doubt about top scorer Damian Hopley who picked up a hamstring injury during the England training camp in Lanzarote last week.

The Wasps supporters coaches leave Repton Avenue for Gloucester at 10.30 on Saturday morning. The kick off is at 2.15pm.

The match is being shown live on Sky Television.

Borough search again for a keeper

ON loan keeper Neil Thompson returns to Enfield this week to leave Harrow Borough boss Harry Manoe once again with the headache of finding a stand-in for the suspended David Hook.

The bans imposed on Hook and midfielder Andy Pruton mean they will miss Saturday's League game at home to Walton and also Tuesday night's visit to neighbours Kingsbury Town in the Middlesex Senior Cup.

On the injury front, Borough's only doubt is Darren Seabrook with his continued back problem.

Wealdstone have signed goalkeeper Tony Franklin from Aylesbury and he is due

to make his debut for the club on Saturday when promotion seeking Salisbury City are the visitors.

Centre back John Frankland, who had a short spell with Stones last season, is over from America for a month and could also be in the side.

Striker Rod Brathwaite has had an achilles tendon operation and will be out of action for six weeks.

Former Stones favourite Steve Browne, who played a couple of games for the club prior to Christmas, has now joined Yeading.

Also departing is midfielder Paul Webb who has left through mutual agreement

after failing to command a regular first team place.

Defender Mark Hill is unlikely to serve a suspension for his sending off at Weston Super Mare. The referee, after consultation with a linesman after the game, agreed that the decision was perhaps harsh, and requested in his report that the dismissal be regarded as sufficient punishment.

Wembley look to get back to promotion form on Saturday, but they face a difficult task away to fellow contenders Basingstoke, who defeated the Lions earlier in the season at Vale Farm.

With most of his players returning from New Year celebrations, manager Glen Charles has a bumper squad to choose from. However, Steve Daly is likely to be sidelined with a knee injury.

Edgware Town boss Jock McGeishe is another who has an embarrassment of players to select from as his side look to continue their progress up the league table with a further move to get in among the Diadora Division Two promotion

contenders.

Only Eugene Flynn, who still has one match of a ban to complete, and Gerry Brennan, who is still recovering from an operation, are unavailable from his squad for Saturday's home game with Ware.

Back in contention for a place is skipper Seamus Finnerty following his nose operation, and Dave Instone, who is back from holiday.

Dave Sue has recovered from a broken toe injury but is likely to be given a few games in the reserves before returning to first team action.

With games coming up against three of the leading promotion candidates, Witham, Saffron Walden and Bracknell, McGeishe knows that Edgware's chances of going up are very much in their own hands, but he is hopeful more than confident.

"We're not going to give up, we're just taking each game as it comes," he said. "But I think we might end up regretting the seven points we lost against Egham, Leatherhead and Chalfont."

Soccer fixtures

Saturday January 7
Diadora League Premier Div: Harrow Borough v Walton & Hensham (Earlsmead, 3pm)
Diadora League Div One: Basingstoke Town v Wembley
Diadora League Div Two: Edgware Town v Ware (White Lion Ground, 3pm)
Diadora League Div Three: Homochurch v Kingsbury Town
Beazer Home League Southern Div: Wealdstone v Salisbury City (The Warren, 3pm)

Tuesday January 10
Middlesex Senior Cup: Kingsbury Town v Harrow Borough (Silver Jubilee Park, 7.30pm); Wembley v Edgware Town (Vale Farm, 7.30pm)
Middlesex Charity Cup: Wealdstone v Russlip Manor (White Lion ground, 7.45pm)

Latest league tables

DIADORA LEAGUE		Premier Division		Division Two		Division Three	
Pos	Pts	P	F	P	F	P	F
1	23	11	11	11	11	11	11
2	21	10	11	10	11	10	11
3	19	9	10	9	10	9	10
4	17	8	9	8	9	8	9
5	15	7	8	7	8	7	8
6	13	6	7	6	7	6	7
7	11	5	6	5	6	5	6
8	9	4	5	4	5	4	5
9	7	3	4	3	4	3	4
10	5	2	3	2	3	2	3
11	3	1	2	1	2	1	2
12	1	0	1	0	1	0	1

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