

SPORT

Towers get a taste of the ecstasy and the agony

THERE was ecstasy and then agony this week for the London Towers as the 7 Up Trophy holders booked their return to the final of the competition with an 80-71 victory over Sheffield Sharks on Thursday and two days later saw their Budweiser League title hopes take a knock as they suffered an embarrassing 82-46 defeat at the hands of Manchester Giants.

In their Trophy semi-final against Sheffield, Towers trailed by a single point from the first leg and things didn't go too well in the first half, with a succession of misses shots and turnovers seeing them

turn round 42-41 down.

The second half began in the same vein but then Towers' passing and handling became more precise and from 48-53 down, they finished the third quarter 54-53 ahead, which tied the aggregate score.

A determined 11-0 burst in the final quarter virtually killed off the Sharks and despite three three pointers from Iain McKinney, Sheffield could get no closer than eight points.

Towers' Tony Windless was clear MVP with a match high 27 points. Towers now meet Chester Jets in the final at

Birmingham NEC on March 2.

On Saturday the Towers crashed in spectacular style to the Giants at the Nynex Arena - their paltry 46 point tally being the joint second lowest total in the Basketball League's history.

Boosted by recent signing Colin Irish, whose 18 points included 12 from three point range, Manchester led 43-23 at half time, with Kevin St Kitts nailing a remarkable three pointer from six feet inside the Towers half right on the buzzer.

Towers' problems deepened when Giants began the second half with 13-3

run and there was no coming back as they tumbled to a defeat which cost them the league leadership.

Tomorrow (Friday) the Towers are away to Newcastle Eagles, tip off 7.30pm and on Sunday return to Wembley to face the Thames Valley Tigers, tip off 5pm.

Admission is £6 for adults and £4 for children when booking in advance, £1 more on the door. For a family of four booking in advance the price is £14, £16 on the door. For tickets call the Towers Hotline on 0171 722 6677 or the Wembley Hotline on 900 1234.

Borough injuries give Dowie a selection headache

HARROW Borough boss Bob Dowie has selection problems for Saturday's visit to fellow strugglers, Staines Town, following a spate of injuries.

Jason Court, Sean James and Chris Metcalfe are all struggling, while David Clarke is ill.

Only good news is that John Hurlock returns after a suspension, provided that last night's (Wednesday's) game with Bishops Stortford was played.

John Shanahan has ended his three match ban but he could well find himself out of favour and not automatically get his place back for Edgware Town's visit to Ware.

Karl Thomas and Joe Lyons are both injury doubts but Anthony Whytock is now fit and will be in contention for a place.

Without a league game, Wealdstone have arranged a friendly against former Southern League rivals, Baldock Town, although the match is in some doubt as the rain-soaked White Lion ground pitch cut up considerably in Tuesday's clash with Braintree.

Injury makes Denis O'Rourke doubtful for Kingsbury Town's visit to Camberley on Saturday. Striker Jeb Hughes is definitely out.

This week's soccer fixtures

Saturday February 22
 ICIS League Premier Div: Staines Town v Harrow Borough
 ICIS League Div Two: Wembley v Bedford Town (Vale Farm, 3pm); Ware v Edgware
 ICIS League Div Three: Camberley Town v Kingsbury Town
 Friendly: Wealdstone v Baldock (White Lion ground, 3pm)

Monday February 24
 Middx Charity Cup: Cockfosters v Wembley (Edgware FC, White Lion ground, 7.30pm - to be confirmed)

Tuesday February 25
 ICIS League Associate Members Trophy: Egham Town v Wealdstone (7.45pm); Leatherhead v Wembley (7.45pm - to be confirmed)
 ICIS League Div 2: Tilbury v Edgware Town (7.45pm)



Edgware striker Carl Lindo holds off a Chalfont defender in Saturday's game. Lindo scored the goal in Wares' 1-0 win.

WEALDSTONE FC BLUE RIBBON LOTTERY
 Week 37
 £50 2472; £50 2-09-253; £55 A-06-495; £75 M-08-009; £150 A-10-780

Cancelled cup tie causes confusion for Wembley

WEMBLEY'S forthcoming fixtures have been thrown into confusion by the cancellation of their third round Associate Members Trophy match at Leatherhead on Tuesday because the Surrey club's pitch was waterlogged.

The tie could be re-scheduled for either this coming Tuesday or Thursday.

The Lions are set to play a Middlesex Charity Cup game with Cockfosters at Edgware Town on Monday night. If the Leatherhead game is confirmed for

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Double puts Lions back in the hunt

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Harrow keep on the title trail

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Noble eyes up Mini Marathon repeat

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Put the bubbly on ice, Stones!

Who can stop them now after Braintree massacre?



Manager, Gordon Bartlett - 'We've got one hand on promotion.'

THEY can put the champagne on ice at Wealdstone FC.

After their remarkable 6-0 annihilation of title rivals, Braintree Town, at the White Lion ground on Tuesday night, the ICIS League Third Division Championship is surely destined to become Stones' first major honour since they achieved the non-league double in 1985.

Stones boss Gordon Bartlett said in his programme notes that he didn't think the Braintree game would be the match that decides the championship, but that victory could make the task that much easier.

Yes, there are still 13 games to go, including tough home and away clashes with promotion contenders Northwood and Harlow, but with his side now holding a massive 13 point

By John Comfort

lead at the top of the table, the manager must be supremely confident that the title race is now all but over - even if he steadfastly refuses to admit it publicly.

"We haven't got one hand on the trophy, we've now got one hand on promotion," was his guarded comment afterwards.

Of his team's performance, which saw Braintree not only beaten, but thoroughly outclassed, he said: "We were absolutely magnificent. It was easily the best we've played since I joined the club."

And there was praise too from the manager for the vociferous Wealdstone supporters who made up the bulk of the 411 crowd, the club's

best gate of the season.

"They were superb," he said. "They don't realise just how influential they can be to the team."

Stones' victory over Braintree was their 11th successive home league win of the season - a new club record.

The amazing scoreline for the Braintree game certainly caught out entrants in the Stones Predict A Score competition.

Perhaps not surprisingly, not one of the 124 people who are taking part this season correctly predicted the outcome, although Lori Gale, the partner of club chairman, Paul Rumens, was mighty close with her 6-1.

Certainly my own forecast of a 1-1 draw was made to look just a little sick!

It's no contest as Wealdstone give their title rivals a six-goal thrashing

Wealdstone 6 Braintree Town 0

MARVELLOUS, magnificent Stones made a total mockery of the ICIS Division Three title race on Tuesday night with this sound thrashing of second in the table Braintree, writes John Comfort.

It was so unbelievably one-sided, it was almost untrue, as the league leaders and champions elect simply played the visitors off the park.

Doubtless still reeling from the weekend departure of their manager Keith Martin, and with leading scorer Wade Falana injured, Braintree were clearly not up for the job.

However, they did enjoy some good fortune - they got away with just a six goal hiding.

Had Stones' finishing been better, it could so easily have been double figures.

Wealdstone dominated right from the start and with the Braintree goal

often resembling the Alamo, it was only a matter of time before the goal avalanche began.

Stones' opener came in the 13th minute, Bryan Hammatt turning in a Simon Garner shot following a Steve Bircham corner, but a host of chances went begging before they added to their lead a minute from the break, Roy Marshall netting with a bullet header at the far post from a Bircham cross.

Set up by the impressive Paul McKay, Terry Hibbert quickly killed off any thoughts of a Braintree comeback when he drilled home Wealdstone's third goal five

minutes into the second half.

10 minutes later Garner followed up to score the fourth after keeper Paul Catley had failed to hold a blockbuster from inspirational skipper Fergus Moore after he had made one of his numerous surging runs into attack.

Garner hit his second from a Hammett cross after 72 minutes and three minutes from time Tony Smith rifled home a great 25 yarder to complete the rout - and almost certainly the title race.

Wealdstone: Bonfield, Smith, Sterling (Massey), Moore, Waugh, Marshall, McKay, Hibbert, Garner (Green), Hammett, Bircham. Other sub: Weedon.

The latest soccer league tables

ICIS LEAGUE Premier Division		Division Two		Division Three																
P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	25	18	5	2	60	20	25	14	5	4	67	30	53	27	10	8	1	24	12	54
Yeovil T.	24	18	3	3	39	18	25	10	5	4	45	28	47	24	10	2	3	58	20	41
Sutton Utd.	23	12	7	4	51	37	23	14	5	9	48	38	44	21	10	8	1	41	20	38
Dulwich Ham.	26	12	6	8	42	32	23	14	5	9	48	38	44	21	10	8	1	41	20	38
Dagenham	23	11	8	4	34	16	21	13	4	9	46	28	43	19	10	3	6	40	29	33
Yeading	24	11	7	6	38	26	20	13	4	9	46	28	43	19	10	3	6	40	29	33
Oxford C.	26	11	7	8	50	45	20	12	7	4	36	28	43	19	10	3	6	40	29	33
Aylesbury Utd.	24	11	6	7	30	27	23	12	7	4	36	28	43	19	10	3	6	40	29	33
Purfleet	27	11	7	9	41	36	38	11	9	8	42	44	42	23	11	9	8	42	44	42
Haybridge Sw	25	10	6	9	34	43	36	10	10	4	44	26	40	23	11	9	8	42	44	42
Kingscliff	28	10	4	14	53	57	34	9	19	9	1	39	19	23	11	9	8	42	44	42
St Albans C.	22	9	5	8	41	36	32	25	11	4	10	45	37	37	10	2	7	20	27	33
Hitchin T.	26	9	5	14	36	47	32	26	9	8	35	34	36	20	6	10	25	39	22	22
Canterbury Ath.	27	8	7	12	31	40	31	25	10	5	10	58	45	35	5	8	38	21	1	1
Bishops Cleeve	25	9	4	12	26	37	31	20	10	2	8	39	31	32	18	5	8	14	50	20
Boreham Wd.	23	9	3	11	31	34	30	19	10	2	8	39	31	32	20	6	2	12	16	35
Harrow Boro.	26	7	8	11	37	42	29	25	9	4	12	48	50	31	20	4	1	11	16	44
Staines T.	28	7	5	14	30	41	26	28	9	4	15	31	47	31	18	5	1	12	19	43
Hendon	25	5	10	13	31	38	25	26	5	5	16	30	61	20	21	3	1	17	16	10

Wasps aim to go clear

WASPS will be four points clear at the top of the Courage League if they beat West Hartlepool at Sudbury on Sunday, kick off 2.30pm.

Although the result should not be in doubt after Lawrence Dallaglio's men rattled in seven tries against the same opposition just two weeks ago, Director of Rugby Nigel Melville is taking nothing for granted.

"We prepare for every match as if we were up against a Bath or Leicester. We did win fairly easily the other week, but that doesn't

mean we'll be resting on our laurels. These two points are absolutely vital.

Melville will pick from a strong squad, the only injury doubt being fly half Alex King who took a knock at Brierton Lane.

Lawrence Dallaglio and Andy Gomarsall were both named in the 60 plus British Lions training squad selected this week while Buster White is also honoured, having been chosen for the Barbarians, who play Leicester at Welford Road on February 25. Rob Henderson has also been selected.

CHEQUECASHING

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