

SPORT

Wasps on the brink of League Championship glory

ALL roads lead to Northampton on Saturday for Wasps supporters as victory over the Saints at Franklin Gardens will secure the Courage League title, writes Alan Bodenham.

It's a massive game for Lawrence Dallaglio's men but as Director of Rugby, Nigel Melville, said: "The emphasis will be on routine."

He added: "The players know what they have to do so we're just going to stick to the tried and tested preparations that have served us so well all season."

Melville was also happy to report that there are no injury problems following Sunday's impressive victory over Sale.

Teenage scrum half, Martyn Wood, proved an able deputy for Andy Gomasall on Sunday but the England scrum half has recovered from a groin infection and will be available to play at Northampton.

Coach Rob Smith issued a note of warning not to be too optimistic. "Northampton have some very good players and, with nothing to lose, they will be relaxed and looking to express themselves," he said. "They also have terrific support at Franklin Gardens and will be up for the game."

Saints indeed look a formidable outfit with five British Lions tourists in Tim Rodber, Paul Grayson, Matt Dawson, Gregor Townsend and Nick Beale. They also have several other internationals, including lineout giant Martin Bayfield who is preparing to go on England's tour of Argentina.

The match will be shown live on Sky, kick off 2.15pm and the League trophy will be on hand for presentation if Wasps win.

Wasps supporters coaches will be leaving from Sudbury at 11am on Saturday. Contact Don Fowler on 866 4246 to book places.

Edgware get a Charity Cup buzz from Finch

Hampton 1 Edgware Town 2

BUSBY Finch was introduced to the Edgware line-up on Tuesday night as a replacement for the injured Carl Lindo and the young striker put in a superb match winning performance to book his side's place in the final of the Middlesex Charity Cup, writes Tom Hooks.

Division One promotion contenders Hampton were always going to be formidable opponents but the Wares matched them in every area of the pitch and were by no means flattered by the final scoreline.

However, victory seemed a forlorn hope after 9 minutes when Rattue's long free kick found Bradley Pratt with his back

to goal in the Edgware area and he flicked it beautifully on the volley into the top corner of the net to give Hampton the lead.

Edgware had a left off when Bryan shot over from point blank range soon after, but they then battled their way back and both Thomas and McCluskey had efforts saved before they scored a brilliant equaliser in the 34th minute. Newing putting Thomas away to put over a cross which Finch volleyed past the helpless Russel.

Another brilliantly executed goal put Edgware ahead right on half time. Thomas and Lyons exchanged passes down the left and Lyons crossed for Finch to side foot home from close range.

In the second half Finch was twice denied the hat-trick his performance deserved, first when Russel saved bravely at his feet and then when his shot from a Newing cross rebounded off a post.

The final will be at Wembley's Vale Farm ground on May 16 when Edgware will meet either neighbours Wembley, or Ashford Town, who play their semi-final this Tuesday.

Edgware: Carter, Hurd, Lyons, Finnerty, McCluskey, Brennan, Coleman, Thomas, Ivers, Newing (Flynn), Finch. Other subs: Whytock, Murphy.



Nick Greenstock scores in Wasps' 36-10 win over Sale. Picture by Gareth Beard

Borough are safe



Harrow Borough's David Clarke keeps a firm grip on Sutton's Matthew Henlan in the Earlsmead club's 2-1 win on Saturday which ensured their ICIS League Premier Division safety.

Wembley in knife drama

Ref abandons vital promotion clash

WEMBLEY'S vital promotion clash at Barking on Tuesday night was abandoned 10 minutes from time following an unsavoury brawl involving players, officials and supporters during which the referee claimed to have seen a knife being pulled.

The trouble stemmed from a robust challenge by Wembley's Hurracia Willock on home centre half Fraser McLean which ended the home side.

Referee Steve Bennett of Redhill was dealing with the incident when members of the Barking management team came onto the field of play to remonstrate and their appearance appeared to arouse hostility with the incident erupting into a full scale fracas, with players and supporters also joining the fray.

Mr Bennett, who is on the Football League list then decided to abandon the game with the scores level at 1-1.

Said Wembley boss Glen Charles: "He apparently saw someone with a knife and therefore abandoned the game, and quite rightly so. But he rendered us blameless for what went on."

"I come down very heavily on ill-discipline in my team but as far as I'm concerned I will be taking no action over what occurred."

Police were called to the Mayesbrook Park ground, but no arrests were made.

The Football Association are certain to investigate the incident, as will the ICIS League who will have to make a decision over whether the game will be replayed or to let the result stand.

The latter course would certainly not please Wembley and they have already written to ICIS chairman, Alan Turvey, to make their point.

"We certainly want it replayed as the result of this game will determine who goes up" said Charles. "Barking would be happy with a point but a win is vital for us. To let the result stand would set a precedent and would reward thuggery."

Before the abandonment, Jon-Barrie Bates headed the Lions in front in the 7th minute after Willock had struck the crossbar.

Keith Boreham later hit a post as Wembley dominated but Barking levelled after 42 minutes when Kevin Beckles missed a cross, allowing Ashley Marsh to head home.

Road Race at Stadium

THE Brent 10k Road Race and junior fun run will take place at Wembley Stadium on Sunday.

Entries for the two events will be taken on the day at the kiosk in front of the Twin Towers. The fun run starts at 10am with the main race starting at 2pm.

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It's final - Stones on course for a double

Wealdstone 3 Leatherhead 1
IT is 12 years since Wealdstone last won a major honour but after this magnificent Associate Members Trophy semi-final replay triumph on Tuesday, they are now amazingly on the brink of a league and cup double, writes John Comfort.

Despite being bereft of several key players, including suspended centre back duo Roy Marshall and Ian Waugh, Stones produced an outstanding team performance to deservedly earn their place in the final against Leighton Town, the date and venue for which has yet to be determined.

Said delighted manager Gordon Bartlett: "It was a great performance. If someone had said at the beginning of the season that we'd be in line for the championship and in a cup final, I wouldn't have believed them!"

Heroes on the night abounded, but particularly outstanding were the elusive Lawrence Yaku, whose arrival as a substitute for the injured Simon Garner to make his competitive first team debut proved the turning point of the game as he made one goal and scored another, and Bryan Hammatt, whose tireless efforts were rewarded with a two goal haul.

Wealdstone's opener came after 24 minutes when Yaku, who had only been on for three minutes, slipped effortlessly past his marker into the Leatherhead area.

His shot hit a covering defender but the ball fell into the path of Hammatt who slotted in past keeper Tony Webb.

Only the legs of keeper Darren Bonfield kept out Stuart Lawson's point blank range header from a corner soon after, enabling Wealdstone to take their lead into the second half, but six minutes after the restart they doubled it.

Hammatt was put free on the left and when his low, hard

cross was half cleared in the goalmouth, Yaku was on hand to lash home the loose ball.

A great save from Bonfield kept out a 20 yarder from Bower destined for the roof of the net but on 71 minutes Leatherhead did reduce the deficit, Ross Edwards' cross from the left somehow eluding the Stones keeper and dropping over him into the far corner of the net.

However, three minutes later a third Wealdstone goal effectively sealed victory.

Terry Hibbert collected a poor goal kick by Webb and

found Hammatt on the edge of the Leatherhead area and he drove a superb low shot past the keeper into the far corner of the net.

In injury time Leatherhead's misery was completed when they had Danny Edwards sent off for rather stupidly fouling Hammatt to get a second yellow card, straight from a free kick he had conceded for a foul on Tony Smith which had earned him his first booking.

Wealdstone: Bonfield, Massey, Smith (Sheldrick), Moore, Sterling, McKay, Walton (Keen), Hibbert, Hammatt, Garner (Yaku), Bircham.

SOCCER FIXTURES

Saturday April 26 ICIS League Premier Div: Chertsey Town v Harrow Borough ICIS League Div Two: Hemel Hemp v Wembley; Edgware Town v Dorking (White Lion ground, 3pm); ICIS League Div Three: Clapton v Wealdstone; Kingsbury Town v Aveley (Silver Jubilee Park, 3pm); Middx League Alec Smith Cup semi-final replay: Willesden	Monday April 28 Football Combination: OPR v Luton Town (Earlsmead, 7pm); Tuesday April 29 Middx Charity Cup semi-final: Wembley v Ashford Town (Vale Farm, 7.30pm); Wednesday April 30 ICIS League Div Three: Harlow Town v Wealdstone (7.45pm); Constantine v Rayners Lane.
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Cadle magic works again as Towers make semis

LONDON Towers have booked their place in the Budweiser Championship semi-finals with a 96-80 win over Newcastle Eagles on Sunday, giving the 7 Up Trophy Champions a 2-1 victory in the best of three quarter final series.

It was a remarkable achievement for Towers coach Kevin Cadle who has not once failed to make it to the semis stage of the Championships in the 10 year history of the Budweiser League.

Said Cadle afterwards: "I look forward to competing in my tenth consecutive Championship semi-final. Hopefully we will play to our potential and if we do we will walk away with the trophy."

Towers have been drawn against Sheffield Sharks in the semi-finals at Wembley Arena on Saturday May 3, tip off 8.45pm. Chesters Jets and Leopards contest the other semi, tip off 6.45pm.

Inspired by Diamond Danny Lewis, who hit an incredible 43 points, Towers made short work of a Newcastle team who were

looking for their first ever visit to the Wembley finals.

Lewis had 27 of his haul in the opening two quarters which left Eagles 50-35 in arrears.

In the previous meetings between the teams, Towers have been vulnerable when holding a commanding lead, but the experience of Cadle ensured that there were no mistakes this time as they carried a 19 point advantage into the final period.

By then the game was all but over but Towers made sure of victory, scoring 12 of 16 points to lead 80-57 with seven minutes remaining. Newcastle put together a 9-2 run but this proved the last throw of the dice as the game was then put beyond doubt from the free throw line with Lewis adding a further six points to his already impressive tally.

Tickets for the Championship semi-finals are available by calling the Towers hotline on 0171 722 6677 or Wembley on 900 1234.

Middlesex County RFU

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v

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