

Observer SPORT

Bryan goal sinks table toppers

Wembley 1 Basingstoke Town 0
RESOLUTE Wembley found the time-honoured formula of a breakaway goal and stout defence was the perfect answer to top-of-the-table Basingstoke's style of play on Tuesday.

A superb all-round performance earned Lions a valuable win in an exciting encounter played in a cup-tie atmosphere.

After Basingstoke, hoping for a quick

return to the premier division of the Vauxhall-Opel League, had missed a few early chances, Wembley went ahead with their first effort on goal in the seventh minute. Laurence Murphy's interception was picked up by Paul Bryan and he shrugged off two defenders before slotting a precise shot past the keeper from the edge of the box.

Basingstoke worked hard to equalise,

but found Wembley's defence in fine form and keeper Jeff Fanner was hardly troubled. A second Wembley goal would have settled the game, and it nearly arrived when Steve Smith's free kick struck the angle of post and crossbar.

Wembley: Fanner, Hutchinson, Ray, Walsh, Janaway, Murphy, Smith, Brown, Bryan, Pedlar, Williams. Subs: Charles, O'Hagan.

Rampant Ramps

BATSMAN supreme Mark Ramprakash had his head high in the clouds but his feet anchored firmly to the ground this week as he basked in the glory of his magnificent performance for Middlesex in the NatWest Trophy Final.

On Saturday the champagne was flowing all the way from Lords to Harrow - and the toast was Mark Ramprakash - as the talented youngster from Rowlands Avenue, Hatch End, led Middlesex from pending disaster to titanic triumph with an innings of sheer quality.

In what was a sensational debut for Mark in the competition, his superb 56 not only won Middlesex the Trophy but thoroughly deservedly earned him the coveted Man of the Match award.

In the euphoric aftermath of precocious Mark's momentous triumph, cricket's pundits were swift to hail his success as a prelude to an England call up. But while that remains his ultimate goal, Mark, who had further cause for celebration with his 19th birthday on Monday, brushed off such suggestions as patently premature.

"All I want to do is just get on and enjoy my cricket," he said. "I've had limited first class experience, I'm very young and it's a long time away to be thinking of an England place."

"I just want to carry on playing and if it happens, then okay, that will be great."

Mark, who has played two test matches for Young England against Sri Lanka and has toured with them to both Sri Lanka and to Australia for the Young World Cup, broke into the Middlesex team last season.

By
John Comfort

But he has only made five appearances this campaign and his selection for the NatWest final was an agonisingly late decision. "I'd been doing well in previous matches but it was a choice between me and the experience of Keith Brown and they decided to throw me in at the deep end."

And things couldn't have turned out better for him. His magnificent innings turned the tide, when Middlesex were in deep trouble at 25-4 and then 64-5 chasing a modest Worcestershire score of 161. "We still needed another 100 runs then and it was a hard test," he said. "But I was confident because we weren't pushed by the run rate and I felt that if someone could stay with me we'd be alright."

John Emburey proved to be that man and when they both finally fell Middlesex had the match in the bag. "I was disappointed at not being out there at the finish," said Mark, "but not too much because the game was already won."

Mark has been playing his club cricket for Stanmore and two other Stanmore stalwarts figured prominently in Middlesex's triumph. Paceman Angus Fraser dominated the early Worcestershire batting, claiming the prize scalp of Graham Hick in a 3-36 spell, while spinner Andy Needham contributed 12 immaculately bowled overs for a return of 1-25.

Mark is the Middlesex final hero



Golden double - a Nat West Trophy winners medal and the Man of the Match award medal.

It's no joy ride for the Stones

Wealdstone 1 Dartford 3
ANYONE who thought that every team in the Beazer Homes League would be as easy to beat as Redditch United will have to think again after Stones were beaten decisively on Tuesday, writes Aaron Granby.

Stones fell behind to Taylor's artistry in the 18th minute. He fell and earned a penalty under challenge from Paul Morris and scored with consummate ease.

The hard-working Paul Wilkins chose the perfect time to score his first league goal for Wealdstone in the 38th minute. It owed much to Alan Risk, who challenged keeper Mark McCutcheon and reacted quickest when he dropped the ball. He fed Samson Olaleye whose cross was headed home by Wilkins.

Dartford's killer second goal came on the hour. Morris lost control of a pass on the six yard line and Britnell stabbed home.

Stones pushed everyone forward towards the end and were caught out, Taylor rifling a shot home from 20 yards in the final minute.

Wealdstone: Williams, Corbin (C. Browne), Harrison, Risk, La Ronde, Morris, Cardice, Rowe, Wilkins, Olaleye, S. Browne. Other sub: Wright.

Mackenzie pays the penalty

Harrow Borough 1, Croydon 2
AFTER their proliferation of missed penalties in the opening weeks of the season, it was somewhat ironic that a successful spot kick should end Boro's interest in the Premier Inter-League Cup on Tuesday, writes John Comfort.

Goalkeeper Stuart Mackenzie conceded it four minutes into the second half when he heeled down Ferguson and Hill rammed home what proved to be the winning goal.

The finger of suspicion was also pointed at Mackenzie for Croydon's opener in the 39th minute when he was unwisely drawn from his goal by Dolke's silky skills and consequently found himself stranded as Daly headed home the resultant cross.

Boro's got back into contention three minutes later when Phil Dicker superbly volleyed home when Richard Evans knocked down a Steve Scott free kick but they lost their way in the second half and the away visitors deservedly went through to the next round.

Harrow Boro: Mackenzie, Payne, Dicker, Cassidy (Hoddy), Evans, Emmanuel, Scott, Bolton, Lloyd, Adams. Other sub: Tully.

Boro' out on top

HARROW Borough Reserves top the Suburban League (North) with five wins from five matches.

Gavin Hughes and Paul Flynn scored in Saturday's 2-1 win over Feltham which followed a 3-0 success at Wembley on Tuesday when Robert Haynes, John Kennedy and Hughes netted.



Moment of triumph for Mark Ramprakash, pictured at Lords with Middlesex skipper Mike Gatting and the Nat West Trophy after their final victory.

Mark's birthday treat

HARROW'S prodigal son Mark Ramprakash gave himself the best birthday present of his life when he cast his youth aside to steer Middlesex to a thrilling Nat West Trophy final victory at Lords on Saturday.

Ramprakash, 19 on Monday, joined the fray as Middlesex had stuttered to 25-4 in reply to a sensationally low Worcestershire total of 161. He had just seen skipper Mike Gatting run out in the most bizarre fashion without facing a ball, and found himself in the unenviable position of facing a rampant Worcestershire attack led by England's Graham Dilley.

But the youngster showed a composure beyond his years, picking his shots with perfect judgement, and executed them in a style that would have no doubt impressed the watching selectors.

He even weathered a possible disaster as partner Roland Butcher ran himself out but this only led to the arrival of the effective, albeit unorthodox John Emburey.

By
Geoff Teather

The combination of Ramprakash's flair and Emburey's cool head blossomed into a sixth wicket stand of 85. Ramprakash's 56 being met with optimism from every part of the ground, and not surprisingly his captain who watched the young aviator from the Middlesex balcony.

When he eventually holed out to Radford at deep fine leg after trying to hit Dilley into the Warner Stand, the job had been all but done. It was indeed fitting that he should leave the field alone to a rapturous standing ovation. His superb knock of 56 had led Middlesex scoring only three runs to win.

The final accolade came from another great batsman, Geoff Boycott, whose adjudication for man of the match must have been a simple task.

Holmes goes on list as Boro buy Bolton for record £4500

PROLIFIC goalscorer Lawrence Holmes is to leave Harrow Borough following the surprise arrival of Jimmy Bolton from Farnborough late last Friday night.

Bolton, 26, was signed for a club record £4,500 from fellow Vauxhall-Opel premier division side, Farnborough Town just in time to make his debut in Saturday's goal-less draw at Croydon. He is a striker who has regularly scored 30 goals a season for the Hampshire club and earned FA and league honours.

And Borough boss Keith Chamberlin has transfer-listed Lawrence Holmes and full back Robbie Johnson, saying: "It is time for a change."

Chamberlin pulled Holmes out of last Wednesday's friendly with the Reserve Bank of Malawi to tell him his services were no longer required by Borough. On the same night Johnson was also told that he was being put back on the transfer list.

Holmes, 27, has been with Harrow for seven years and is the club's second longest serving player behind Steve Emmanuel. He has scored 119 goals in 286 games. He was signed for former boss Mike Tomkys from Harlow Town and was previously with Edgware.

Johnson, 25, has played 234 games in his five years at Earlsmead, scoring 21 times. He was formerly with Arsenal, Brentford and Hayes. Both players are expected to command fees of at least £1,000.

Keith Chamberlin's current role now he has become a director is more administrative with coach Alan Randall assuming responsibility for

By
Aaron Granby

the day to day running of the side. And he is quick to point out that this was a joint decision.

"Alan Randall and I had a long discussion following our defeat at St Albans. Then after we had played Farnborough the opportunity came up for us to sign Jimmy Bolton. He is someone we had been looking at for a long time and we decided to go for it," says Chamberlin.

"We are looking to make a few alterations to our team now and we feel that Jimmy Bolton will make a difference. Our aim is for him to partner Richard Evans up front."

And that surprise announcement, after Chamberlin had earlier let centre back Ray Mangan go back to Edgware because he intended to play Evans in defence, could lead to either Matt Luddy or Ronnie Tully quitting Earlsmead too.

Tully is unlikely to relish the prospect of reserve team football, having spent three years in it before moving to Edgware and scoring 20 Spartan League goals last season. And to waste Luddy's immense talent in the Suburban League would be criminal.

With Richard Evans moving back up front, Borough are now looking to sign another defender to plug the gap he leaves.

And midfielder Steve Scott could also be on the move. He is being watched by third division Pulham.



Lawrence Holmes - transfer listed following the arrival of £4500 Jimmy Bolton.

soccer fixtures

Saturday September 10
Beazer Homes League premier division: Worcester City v Wealdstone.

Vauxhall-Opel League premier division: Harrow Borough v Basingstoke (Earlsmead, 3pm).

Vauxhall-Opel League division one: Kingsbury Town v Southwick (Silver Jubilee Park, 3pm); Chalfont St Giles v Wembley.

FA Vase - 1st preliminary round: Sun Sports v Raynes Lane.

Spartan League Cup: North Greening United v Edgware Town.

Suburban County League: Harrow St Marys v Graystone (Barry Lodge Lane, Harrowwood, 3pm).

Tuesday September 13
AC Delco Cup first round: Harrow Borough v Hayes (Earlsmead, 7.30pm); Kingsbury Town v Newbury Town (Silver Jubilee Park, 7.30pm); Herndon v Wembley.

Wednesday September 14
Greene King Spartan League premier division: Edgware Town v Barnet (White Lion Ground, 7.30pm).

Soccer preview is on page 63

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