



Bar too high for Exiles

HOCKEY: ST ALBANS Exiles were outgunned by league leaders Potters Bar on Saturday afternoon. Exiles were once again without leading scorer, Simon White, but were able to field a very strong side.

Potters Bar always looked lively with rapid breaks and very skilful forwards, and it was no surprise when they took the lead after 10 minutes when they broke down the Exiles left and were able to find their striker completely unmarked at the far post. The lead was doubled minutes later when the same striker broke away and fired in from about 10 yards.

Exiles rallied and with 10 minutes of the half remaining left-back Chris Ellins fired the ball long to Martin Jones whose first time pass found James Cowan, who diverted the ball into the goal.

Exiles thought they had levelled the score moments later when Dave Oswin chipped over the 'keeper, but saw a last ditch clearance off the line.

Exiles were not to be denied though, and just prior to half time were awarded a penalty corner. A firm strike from top of the 'D' found the corner of the net.

As the clock approached 35 minutes, Potters Bar were awarded yet another penalty corner. The ball was slipped back to the corner taker and despite Jerry Fretter getting a stick onto the shot; he could only divert it past the defender on the line.

Exiles turned around just one goal down, but Potters Bar had a number of chances which they failed to take. Early in the second half, Exiles were awarded a penalty corner of their own and following an elaborate routine the ball fell to Ian Loffler who tapped home from close range.

The Exiles' hopes of a point, or even more, were short lived as Potters Bar piled on the pressure. In a move similar to Exiles' opening goal, the fast, first time passing split open the Exiles defence, leaving Potters Bar able to finish from very close range.

Exiles went on the attack, but had left big gaps between the midfield and defence which they were to regret. 4-3 quickly became 5-3 as Potters Bar broke away again.

As the ball was passed across the 'D' Fretter managed to get a stick on the ball, only to see it fall onto a Potter Bar stick, who rolled into the empty net.

Potters Bar extended the lead further when Jon Freedman made a tackle on the edge of the 'D'. Unluckily for him the ball came off his stick into the path of an onrushing attacker who smacked the ball high into the net.

Exiles had a number of chances to score what would have been only a consolation, but it was Potters Bar who deservedly rounded off the scoring with another close range effort.

Exiles were well beaten by a very good Potters Bar team who will almost certainly be promoted at the end of the season. Fortunately for the Exiles the teams below them in the league also lost.

Fixtures do not get any easier as they entertain second placed West Herts II at Clarence Park next Saturday, before a basement fixture against Royston II, which will decide where Exiles play next season.

STAGS net impressive medal haul at Berkhamsted

JUDO: FIVE St Albans Girls School (STAGS) pupils won medals at the Hertfordshire Schools Judo Association competition in Berkhamsted on Sunday.

They were competing in a points trophy event with competitors from schools all across Hertfordshire.

The STAGS girls displayed some excellent techniques in a tough competition and each earned medals and a total of 18 points for the school.

Jemma Bishop (u44kg 10-11yr) kicked off the day with a gold medal and Lucy Day (u44kg 12-14yr) continued the STAGS medal haul with silver, with Eva Rowlett (u44kg 12-14yr), Tabitha Weddell (u40kg 12-14yr) and Olivia Smith (u52kg 12-14yr) all winning bronze medals.

The STAGS girls put in a fantastic display of top quality judo and competed in a friendly and sportsmanlike manner.



Jemma Bishop, Tabitha Weddell, Lucy Day, Olivia Smith and Eva Rowlett. Supplied.

Hughes makes a splash

SWIMMING: THE second St Albans District Schools Association (StASSA) Primary Trials Gala has been held at the Hertfordshire Sports Village, Hatfield.

Almost 100 Year 5 and 6 children from over 20 schools within the St Albans district competed for a place in the team to participate in the Hertfordshire Primary Schools Championships.

The standard was extremely high, led by Year 6 pupil Nathan Hughes, national level qualifier from The Kings School, Harpenden, who walked away with four gold medals in four events all in record times.

Nathan also walked away with the Trials Gala Cup awarded for the best

performance of the gala.

Standout swimmers also came from Katalin Dang, winner of all four Year 5 girls' events, three in record times, and also Ben Muckleston, Samuel McConnell, Shannon Stott and Ben Galvin.

The ASA licensed meet produced no fewer than 11 records from 16 events. Andrew Ellis, chair of STASSA, said: "Once again the swimmers from the district have shown that primary school swimming is at an exceptionally high level."

The St Albans District team selected from the Trials Gala will attempt to go one better this year and win the Herts championships in May, after being beaten by one point in the 2010 gala.



Nathan Hughes is awarded the Trials Gala Cup by StASSA chairman Andrew Ellis. Photo: supplied.

Thomas secures narrow win for Harps

HOCKEY: CAPTAIN Tom Bunbury said Harpenden were delighted after their thrilling Premier League B match against Peterborough ended in victory for the Whites.

"We didn't pass it as well as we can or take all the opportunities that came our way," said Bunbury. "But in the last 10 or 15 minutes, we started to pick it up. We got the flick near the end and managed to nick the points. We've been on the wrong end of tight results this season, so we're delighted to come out on top in this one."

Harpenden's narrow win came at the cost of seeing Danny Burgess leave the field with a nasty facial injury. Bunbury reflected, "Danny is a special guy, he always gives 100 per cent, is always positive, so it was a concern to see him go off like that. After the game, we thought it could be a while

before he plays again. It was a bad, bad injury. He couldn't talk or move his eyebrow. But the doctors have done a good job."

Peterborough started full of ideas and inspiration, on a ground where they have held the upper hand in recent seasons, and should have gone ahead inside the first five minutes.

The Harpenden defence went walkabout and gifted the visitors the freedom of their D, only for the 'Borough forward to take his shot early and drag it hopelessly off target.

That early warning shocked Harpenden into action. Buoyed by their convincing win at Pelicans last weekend, the home side again began to show their quality.

Up front Nima Salehi and Alex Beggs, who were starting a league game together

for only the second time, were causing havoc. Salehi in particular was enjoying his return to the first team after a five week hiatus, having one shot blocked and another nudged wide as Peterborough failed to close him down.

In patches, Harpenden produced some delightful free-flowing hockey. They could easily have given the score line a more emphatic look, with Beggs shooting wide and the Peterborough 'keeper saving expertly from Mike Bowler and Tom Ward.

However, the visitors also carved out their fair share of chances, but were unable to punish Harpenden.

Harpenden's decider was started by the majestic David Falk.

The Liverpoolian turned away from one defender, hared past the right half and crossed

for Joe Gosling, who after a breathtaking exchange of passes, teed up Salehi whose shot was adjudged to have been blocked unfairly.

David Thomas converted the ensuing penalty stroke with little fuss, despite the psychological mind games of the 'Borough keeper.

As the clock ticked down Beggs had another shot cleared off the line after he had rounded the 'keeper, following a break from the half way line, but by then, the hosts had already done enough to ensure the win. Bunbury reflected after the game: "There was a lot of pressure on the flick, but I knew Dave Thomas would score."

The win moves Harpenden within a point of Wisbech, whom they visit this Saturday, adding extra motivation for Tom Bunbury's side.

Three in a row for tennis ace Georgie

TENNIS: BATCHWOOD tennis ace Georgie Walker has won the LTA Batchwood Open tournament for the third year in a row last weekend.

National player Georgie, who also trains at Batchwood as part of their Winning Ways programme, made light work of the 12 and Under Girls' event without dropping a set to successfully defend her title.

Along the way Georgie beat National 2000 player Anna Lachlan from Cambridge 6-0, 6-2 and then another national player, Michaela Brown from Essex, in the final 6-0, 6-1.

Her coach Jon Meredith said: "It is great that Georgie won again this week."

"She was the number one seed and had a lot of ranking points to defend so the pressure was on her."

"It was a great effort to win her matches so easily against some quality national players in the year below and deal with the expectation of defending a title and being expected to win. She passed this mental test with flying colours."

Georgie is now looking towards the National Clay Courts Championships in a couple of months.

McMillin leaves board

FOOTBALL: ST ALBANS City vice-chairman Alisdair McMillin has left the board of directors at the club.

Mr McMillin's directorship at the club was terminated last Friday leaving, chairman John Gibson, his wife Karen, Nick Archer, Daniele Manzi, Lawrence Levy and John McGowan on the club's board.

Mr Gibson declined to comment on Mr McMillin's departure from the board but he did say that speculation he'd had plenty of potential buyers contact him was incorrect.

"From my point of view we have not had the flood of offers to take over the chairmanship or the club that some people at the club seem to think we've had," Mr Gibson told the *Herts Advertiser*.

"I have had one routine enquiry about the club but the offers are not flooding in."

Commentary box

Sports editor James Ronayne offers his opinions on the moves, matches, backroom decisions and developments in local sport



COLNEY Heath were certainly without much luck at a bitterly cold Stotfold on Tuesday night.

The Magpies played some really good stuff in the first half at Roker Park and but for some outstanding goalkeeping from home stopper Brad Gillham could have found themselves four or five up at the break.

If their misfortune in the first half could be put down to the brilliance of Gillham, the second half belonged to some questionable refereeing decisions.

The men in the middle do have an incredibly difficult job and they can't be expected to see everything that goes on on the pitch. However the referee's decision not to award Colney Heath a penalty when the game was at 2-1 was beyond beggars belief. Dave Corran was well inside the penalty area when he was taken down so for the referee to award a free kick - and not even in the same vicinity of where the challenge took place - was really hard to take.

Stotfold's third goal really summed up a difficult night for the Magpies with the assistant adjudging the ball to have crossed the line. It was impossible from my vantage point on the halfway line to tell whether or not the ball had crossed the line but the reaction of the players suggested that they felt they had a strong case.

Credit to Stotfold though, they defended brilliantly, lining up two banks of four in front of the goal and using the pace of their attackers to stretch Colney Heath at the other end.

The good thing about the games coming thick and fast is that the Magpies can put things right immediately starting at Broxbourne on Saturday.

Do you agree with James' views? Email your comments to james.ronayne@archant.co.uk

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