

# All eyes on promotion for Tim Flowers' Solihull Moors



Tim Flowers' Moors continue to defy the odds in the National League.

Ben Tyler  
9th Mar, 2019

TIM FLOWERS' merry Moors continue their charge on the National League summit approaching a single-digit number of games left in the season.

Solihull fans would have pinched themselves had they been told of their current fortunes this time last season, when Moors were in the midst of completing the 'Great Escape' – which has since been commemorated by the club with a signed placard inside the clubhouse bar.

But the former goalkeeper, who was a key member in Blackburn Rovers' 1994/95 Premier League winning season, is on the verge of completing another remarkable feat in his first full stint as manager.

Having been number two to Mark Yates in the dugout at the Automated Technology Group Stadium last year, he has made the almost seamless transition to manager this season to wreak havoc on the National League with the once-viewed underdogs.

It is an achievement to date that has been so remarkable, that club sponsors Sportnation.bet had Moors at 200/1 for promotion at the start of the campaign, the odds since plummeting to just 6/5 to complete the unthinkable.

Flowers admits implementing a mentality change since his promotion to manager in the summer has been a gradual process, one that has been in part to improving the quality of his squad – a key facet in upping the ambition levels at the Moors.

"I think a mentality change comes with bringing in better players.

"We went with experience, more than youth – bearing in mind that the average age of the squad is 24 – which isn't that old.

"But we've gone for a spine and one or two others that have been course and distance in this division."

Solihull have brought in a number of names over the course of the season, including the signings of Nathan Blissett and Lee Vaughan mid-way through the season.

The 52-year old believes the additions made this season, complementing the players already present at the club, can be attributed to creating the shared winning mentality and belief that now exists within the squad.

"You look at Danny Wright up top – promoted out of this league, Nathan Blissett – won it with Macclesfield, Lee Vaughan with Tranmere, Kyle Storer with Cheltenham – so we've got a smattering of players who have been promoted out of this division.

"Elsewhere we've got experience, Darren Carter, Jermaine Hylton, Adi Yussuf and Jamie Reckord have been in the Football League, and they supplement the likes of (Alex) Gudger who's been outstanding this season – coming from National League North but has really took to this level."

"(Liam) Daly has been around this level for a long time, (Ryan) Boot played half-a-season last season for Port Vale – in the first-half of the season he played all the games in the Football League."

His side has been branded for adopting a more physical style of play at times, which although being paramount to attaining results on the pitch, has earned them criticism off the pitch by some.

But Flowers dispelled any negativity surrounding Moors' approach, pointing to the majority of teams who play in a similar fashion – to varying degrees of success.

"We're a powerful, physical side who can mix our styles up.

"A lot of people make a lot about getting to the ball up to the likes of Wright, Blissett, or Stenson, but so does everybody else in this league.

"Watch any team you want in this league, there's a couple of teams in this league who play, but not many. Don't try and kid on that you're a footballing team when you're not."

He spoke in depth about his side's tactics, and explained the threat that Moors pose in varying situations.

"Our DNA and the way we want to play, is to get the ball up towards the final third and play there.

"In my opinion, we've got the best footballer in the league in Osborne playing at the point of a three in midfield.

"So when our striker gets hold of the ball and secures it, we've got the likes of him and Hylton, who can offer that width and pace, (Terry) Hawkridge can play out there, Blissett plays narrower using his presence up top – and we've got very attacking full-backs who play outside.

"So once we're there (in the final third), we have licence to start playing our stuff, getting it out wide and in area's that the stats tell you that you score from.

"So if it scalps off their (a defender's) head and they clear it, then we've got throws, free-kicks and corners where we're hurting people, and we've got big lads who, if they make the right runs, are getting the modicum of success.

"It's not rocket science, but it's what most teams in our league are trying to do."

Flowers, who is enjoying a first full-season in management after a brief spell at Stafford Rangers in 2010/11, followed by caretaker manager stints at Northampton Town and coaching roles elsewhere, admitted achieving survival for the season was a turning point in the ambitions of the club.

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Flowers, who is enjoying a first full-season in management after a brief spell at Stafford Rangers in 2010/11, followed by caretaker manager stints at Northampton Town and coaching roles elsewhere, admitted achieving survival for the season was a turning point in the ambitions of the club.

"Getting to 50, 52 points, you're safe. We all looked at that and thought right ok, it's pointless dying wondering – we might as well have a go for it now because we're not getting relegated.

"Before a ball is kicked, we stay in this league and make sure we're National League this season.

"Just after Christmas, we're safe so what's next – can we get in the play-offs?

"So that's the aim, our aim has gone from 14th or 15th to top seven.

"Is it realistic? I'll tell you in 11 games."

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# SOLIHULL MOORS 5

Hylton 9, 26, 33, Carter 14, Yussuf 90+2

# MAIDSTONE UNITED 0

## MOORS' FIVE-STAR HYLTON

**TREBLE TOPS:**  
Jermaine Hylton  
opens the scoring  
for Solihull on his  
way to a hat-trick

PICTURES: Tom King

### MATCH STATS

#### SOLIHULL M V MAIDSTONE

11	SHOTS ON TARGET	2
4	SHOTS OFF TARGET	2
6	CORNERS	2
1	OFFSIDE	1
9	FOULS CONCEDED	9
0	YELLOW CARDS	1
0	RED CARDS	0

**T**IM Flowers labelled Solihull Moors' drubbing of Maidstone as the "perfect way to bounce back" from FA Trophy heart-break, after a first-half Jermaine Hylton hat-trick set his side on the way to victory, while further damaging the visitors' survival hopes.

Darren Carter's first-half free-kick and a goal from substitute Adi Yussuf to cap off the victory in stoppage time, was a just reward for Moors' efforts.

"It was an emphatic win and an excellent performance," said Flowers.

"It was a classic game in Solihull Moors' DNA today – in your face with balls in behind and balls forward, sending the ball into the big men and making it stick.

"We brought full-backs and midfielders into play and got plenty of balls into the box, we won countless set-plays and converted them.

"That's what we've been about since I've been in this building, and we've improved steadily at it today."

Flowers was impressed by the quality of the finishing

By Ben Tyler

of his team, and thought his side could have had more. We could've had two before we scored. We just looked potent, as if we were always going to carve chances out, but we were ruthless.

"It's not an easy thing to do going 4-0 up against any opponent at half-time, we put them to the sword and we must make sure that we replicate that kind of intensity and ferocity until the end of the season."

Solihull had striker Danny Wright back in the starting 11 for the first time since a three-game suspension, and he was denied a goal on his return inside the opening couple of minutes.

A double save from Dion-Curtis Henry from Wright and then Carter's efforts at goal were a signal of what was to come, as Moors dominated the proceedings with their determination to challenge for every ball and their physicality in the final third.

The first goal arrived on ten minutes when George Carline's long throw was headed on into the path of Hylton, shifting the ball onto his left foot before rolling the ball past the keeper.

Carter left Henry motionless four minutes later, after he swept his

## NLP'S VERDICT

A DEVASTATING performance from Solihull was as symptomatic of the majority of their performances that have seen them excel this season. Maidstone dug in but had no answer – there's no doubting the confidence Moors will take from this

free-kick beyond him and sent the ball into the bottom-left corner.

The third arrived just before the half-hour mark when Carline's long-throw was again headed into Hylton's path, who flicked a header home, sealing his hat-trick with a 33rd minute penalty after sending the keeper the wrong way.

The relenting Wright continued to battle late on, and his efforts reaped a final goal of the night, when Yussuf met his centre.

Maidstone United head coach Hakan Hayrettin said: "Every player is going to be important for our run-in.

"We just didn't deal with what they threw at us, even though we prepared for it."

STAR MAN: Jermaine Hylton (Solihull)

ATT: 956

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

REFEREE: Joe Hull 7/10

## LINE-UPS



**SOLIHULL:** Yussuf 7 (for Blissett 67), Hawkridge 6 (for Hylton 71), Maxwell 6 (for Storer 82).  
**MAIDSTONE:** Embery 7 (for Turgott 76), L. Donnellan (for Amaluzor 86).  
**Not used:** Meredith, Paxman, Lewington

## EASTERN COUNTIES

**UNBEATEN** Stowmarket Town maintained top spot following their 3-0 win at high-fliers **Norwich United**.

Josh Mayhew's strike 17 minutes from time broke the deadlock, before Matt Blake and Joe Jefford wrapped up the points with late goals.

**Woodbridge Town** romped to a 7-1 win at **Gorleston**, with Jake Rudge hitting a brace.

George Bowman, Luke Mallett, top scorer Mark Ray, Kelsey Trotter and Nathan Read also found the net, before Connor Ingram's late consolation.

**Newmarket Town** move up to eighth following their 4-0 humbling of **Hadleigh United**.

Joe Robinson's early strike set the hosts on the road to victory, allowing Jack Whiting, Jordan Foster and James Seymour to complete the scoring in the second-half.

Goals from Ross Munro, Austen Diaper and a Jack Chandler penalty sealed a straightforward three points for **Godmanchester Rovers** against **Kirkley & Pakefield**.

Wroxham slipped to a 1-0 defeat at lowly Long Melford, with Jamie Griffith's volley outside the box the only goal.

Josh Stevens' hat-trick set **Whitton United** on the way to a 5-1 drubbing of **Thetford Town**, while **Mildenhall Town** were 3-0 victors over **Ely Town** in Friday night's fixture.

**Brantham Athletic** and **Stanway Rovers** both claimed 2-0 victories, while **FC Clacton** narrowly edged **Walham Le Willows** 2-1.

BEN TYLER



# STORER THE HERO AS BORO CONTINUE RUN



**WISE HEAD:**  
Kyle Storer puts in the winner for the Nuneaton at the end of the first half  
PICTURE: Matt Davenport

**K**YLE Storer provided the clinical touch and continued his fine run of scoring form to down lowly Stratford Town and bolster Nuneaton Borough's promotion hopes.

Fresh from a two-goal salvo at Alvechurch last weekend, where he whipped in two stunning free-kick strikes in the space of six minutes, the returning Boro hero was again on hand to put away a superb diving header to decide a cagey affair at Liberty Way.

**By Ben Tyler**

While the game opened in the manner that was expected pre-kick-off, with Nuneaton dominating the ball on home turf, it was the travelling Bards who had the most chances of note throughout the early stages of the encounter.

Just two minutes in, goalkeeper Tony Breeden was required to keep out Jamie Molyneux's drive with a low stop, while Callum Ebanks dragged wide of the mark after pinching possession and

embarking on a promising solo run. Then, on the half-hour mark, Town's golden opportunity came and went, thanks to some last-ditch defending to deny Andre Wright.

A fine ball around the corner into the penalty area to pick out Ebanks resulted in the forward unselfishly squaring for his teammate, but, despite being a matter of yards out, the ball was somehow kept out by a cluster of home defenders on the goal line.

Wright again had the goal at his

mercy after 42 minutes, drifting inside the left of the penalty area but this time could not hit the target when pulling a matter of inches wide of Breeden's far post.

It was to prove a costly miss, as right on the stroke of half time, Charlie Dowd's sumptuous delivery to the far post put the ball on a plate for Storer to take his Boro account to three goals with a swooping header.

Though the first half promised much of the same after the interval, the second 45 minutes

proved a dour affair. Storer had Nuneaton's only attempt of the half with an arching free-kick that travelled narrowly over the bar, while Wright could not punish Breeden for some erratic goalkeeping outside his penalty area in the dying stages.

The win takes Nuneaton to third in the table. Meanwhile, Stratford Town continue to plunge further into the relegation zone with their 13th defeat.

**STAR MAN:** Kyle Storer (Nuneaton)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆

# Reds down Town to restore order

REDDITCH United returned to winning ways and put behind them their Rushall Olympic horror show to rise to eighth, after Jack Byrne and Murphy Culkin goals downed St Ives Town.

Knowing they could slip below their opponents with a defeat, the Reds were well aware a strong response was needed after last week-end's disappointment and deservedly took a 14th-minute lead through skipper Byrne's imposing header from a Reece Flanagan corner.

Tom Hewlett found himself unlucky not to double the advantage after poking goalwards in the midst of a goalmouth scramble, but could not get the better of James Dadge in the Saints goal.

The Reds forward again made himself a nuisance and stole in on a loose back pass to find himself one-on-one with the visiting custodian,

**REDDITCH UNITED 2  
ST IVES TOWN 0**  
**By Ben Tyler**

but lacked the clinical touch needed with the ball trickling wide of the mark.

And despite Hewlett finding himself denied once more, Culkin put away a second to put United in control of the encounter.

Again coming from a set-piece opportunity, Kornell McDonald's whipped cross to the far post was nodded in by the full-back after 34 minutes. Second-half opportunities falling to Ryan Wollacott and Danny King then failed to hit the net from promising positions.

**STAR MAN:** Tom Hewlett (Redditch United)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆



# THE WULFS SHINE SO BRIGHT IN EPIC FINISH

LEADER: AFC Wulfrunians celebrate with their player-manager Craig Gregg after he fired them in front, inset, with a long-range shot  
PICTURE: Gary Griffiths



By Ben Tyler

**S**HOWSTOPPING player-manager Craig Gregg says the sky is the limit for his AFC Wulfrunians side, after securing their passage to the next round of the competition – having played a key role on the pitch himself.

It was the Wulfs legend who got the ball rolling in the contest after a four hour of football, slipping a sumptuous strike into the top-right

## RUGBY TOWN 1 AFC WULFS 2

Marsden 87

Gregg 60, Bright 90+3

corner of the net to give the visitors a priceless lead against the run of play.

And while a late equaliser was to be provided by player-assistant manager Justin Marsden, after coming on as a first-half substitute from

the opposite dugout, it was to be AFC's day when another super sub – Ryan Bright – nodded in the deciding goal at the death.

Sealing a place in the third round, and with just another win separating Wulfrunians

from equalling their best-ever run in the FA Vase, the veteran winger is daring to dream of further progress to come.

"You've got to look to the next game [in the competition now]," said Gregg. "This was a tough game today and they've only lost one game in the league this season."

"We've got to take confidence from this and going forward, whoever we come up against, we've got to believe we can beat them and get as far as we want to get."

Despite Valley's promising

start, it was the travelling Wulfs who found themselves at the forefront of the most positive play through live-wire Kai Adams.

The game suddenly sparked into life on the hour mark when Gregg caught goalkeeper Matt Hill off guard with a sweet strike.

Luke English should have levelled moments later when cracking the woodwork, so the winger was no doubt left relieved when Marsden came to the rescue with just three minutes remaining to poke

home from close range.

The end result could have been so much sweeter for Town, had Wulfs shot-stopper Jake James not been equal to an audacious bicycle kick from all-time topscorer David Kolodynski in a frantic end.

It should have been no surprise then when more drama ensued, Bright heading into an empty net after Hill had tipped Jay Holdcroft's effort into his path in the third minute of stoppage time.

STAR MAN: Kai Adams (AFC Wulfrunians)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

# LATE SHOW BARDS PEN A THRILLER

PREMIER CENTRAL

STRAFORD TOWN 2  
BASFORD UNITED 2  
By Ben Tyler

A DRAMATIC point was snatched by Stratford Town, thanks to Josh Hawker's 95th-minute leveller for the jubilant Bards.

The scenes witnessed at full-time were a far cry from the game's premature stages, however, when Anthony Dwyer flicked a header into the far corner of Liam O'Brien's net to subdue the home support after only two minutes.

Livewire Luther Munakandafa promptly laid up his second assist of the afternoon 12 minutes later, putting the ball on a plate for Basford skipper Gregg

Smith to double the lead.

Dominant Town finally found some salvation in the 85th minute courtesy of James O'Neill's thumping drive.

And the fightback was complete with the last kick, when Hawker placed the into the bottom-left corner.

STAR MAN: Luther Munakandafa (B Ford)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

# BYFIELD IS OUT DESPITE DRAW

REDDITCH rescued a point having trailed by two with eight minutes to go – but it was not enough to save manager Darren Byfield from the sack (see page 9).

The Saints made a dream start on three minutes when Lewis Irwin's ball was latched onto by debutant Stefan Broccoli, a former Arsenal and Newcastle United trainee, who rolled it into the bottom corner past the advancing Ethan Ross.

St Neots doubled their lead on 17 minutes when Johnny Herd's corner was flicked in at Ross's near post by Tom Wood, as poor Reds defending made it the easiest of headers for him.

The only Redditch chance of note in the first half came through Ashley Sammons, who curled an effort towards

REDDITCH UNITED 2  
ST NEOTS TOWN 2  
By Ben Tyler

the bottom right hand corner only to see it palmed away by Saints stopper Mike Emery.

With time ticking down, it was the impact of substitutes Spencer Weir-Daley and Bradley Maslen-Jones that made the difference.

Weir-Daley's squared ball to Sammons saw the playmaker slot into the bottom left corner to set up a grandstand finish.

A final throw of the dice saw a stoppage time corner headed against the bar by Maslen-Jones, but Weir-Daley was on hand to snatch a point.

STAR MAN: Stefan Broccoli (St Neots Tn)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



# FIVE-STAR MOORS PUT RAVENS TO THE SWORD

TWO-GOAL hero Danny Wright hailed the character and individual performances of his teammates as super Solihull Moors put on a five-star show to bury Bromley.

On a day when Tim Flowers' men went goal crazy, defender Alex Gudger netted with a towering header from Darren Carter's corner; the set-piece specialist then lashed home a 25-yarder and fellow midfielder Jamey Osborne would add to Wright's brace with a fine finish, thus capping a memorable afternoon.

"Today's result was massive following on from the Dover win after two defeats – which we should've got more from," Wright said. "We had to show character last week and back it up this week with a good performance. We went and did that and laid down a marker now for our season."

"We've been a solid team all season but to get five shows it's a great game for us and it breeds confidence."

**By Ben Tyler**

the back of the net via a deflection off a defender onto the knee of Wright.

Wright was not coy to mention his final touch on the ball and admitted: "Everyone had a lot of positives to take personally from today's game, including myself with two – even if Jermaine deserved that goal today! But I've had to claim it after it came off my knee."

Solihull chances continued to arrive in abundance without any sign of resurgence by Bromley, and they could count themselves

lucky when surviving a goalmouth melee, with Solihull hitting the post; but Wright's second-goal before half-time from Osborne's cut-back was another fatal blow.

The rout was completed 18 minutes from time when Osborne turned goalscorer after a sublime touch past a

defender allowed him to bury the ball in the bottom corner. But there was to be late drama when Kwame Thomas received a second

An emphatic first 20 minutes saw Moors race into a 3-0 lead, with Gudger's thumping header from Carter's pin-point corner setting the tone in only the second minute. Carter then turned scorer with a stunning left-footed effort from range that flew past the outstretched arms of Bromley keeper David Gregory.

And when Jermaine Hylton cut inside after getting the better of full-back Jordan Higgs, he fired the ball goalwards and found

yellow for a perceived dive by referee Declan Bourne. Bromley manager Neil Smith moaned: "We knew Solihull were up there so it was always going to be about keeping them quiet, but conceding so early puts you on the back foot. "The first 45 minutes was inept and not a performance we want to be putting out."

**STAR MAN:** Alex Gudger (Solihull)  
**ATT:** 648  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★  
**REFEREE:** Declan Bourne 5/10



**By Ben Tyler**

**S**OLIHULL MOORS manager Tim Flowers expressed his sheer delight about the club's "start from heaven" as he witnessed his men edge a closely fought victory against the bottom-of-the-table side Aldershot Town.

Danny Wright's 50th-minute strike was enough to give Moors a third win from three, maintaining their perfect start to the season and presenting a complete contrast to the club's fortunes at the start of last season.

"I thought we worked really hard against a very good side who have made the play-offs the last few seasons and have an outstanding manager who's managed at a higher level. "But on the flipside I thought my lads were outstanding from start to finish," admitted Flowers.

"We had Darren Carter, a fantastic midfielder player doing a great job for the team at left-back, and George Carlisle – a striker, doing a job at right-back against two quick, quality wingers; so it was always going to be tough.

"But at half-time I said to them it looks like being a one-goal game, let's make sure it's us."

An even first half saw Aldershot go closest through Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong's effort that cracked the foot of Ryan Boot's right-hand post, whilst Adi Yusuf saw an opportunity inside the opposition penalty area deflect wide before the break as neither side could craft a golden opening to break the deadlock.

But five minutes after the restart, a Moors breakthrough led by the ever dangerous Yusuf found its way to Jermaine Hylton on the left-side of the penalty area and he saw his effort palmed away by Will Mannion.

The ball fell into the path of Wright who fired high into the roof of the net.

"Danny has been prolific for a long time at this level and he can always sniff out what can happen," the happy Moors boss added.

"He was on it like a flash and he's off the mark for us."

"He's a guy that the rest of the strikers can look up to and I think if Danny has a big season, then the football club will have a good one."

"I think other than a few

# SOLIHULL MOORS 1 ALDERSHOT TOWN 0



**WRIGHT STUFF:**  
Moors celebrate  
Danny Wright's  
winning goal  
PICTURES:  
Ian Mortimer

# WRIGHT IS HERO FOR MOORS



**STAR MAN:** Jamey Osborne (Solihull)  
**ATT:** 867  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★  
**REFEREE:** Declan Bourne 6/10

## NLP'S VERDICT

A superb start to the season for Moors who look a different proposition from this time last term. For the Shots, it's a case of chipping away from the bottom of the table

# Boucher stars but Olympic prevail

**CHRIS WREH** bagged a debut goal as Rushall eased their way to victory at the Trico Stadium.

Three first-half goals proved enough for the promotion-chasing visitors but the winning margin would have been more had it not been for a brilliant display from Redditch keeper Kieran Boucher.

He pulled off a string of excellent saves, the first coming within the opening few minutes when he somehow managed to keep out Danny Waldron's early header that looked destined for the top corner.

Undeterred, the Pics continued to press and opened the scoring on six minutes when Alex Moore's corner found Mitchell Clarke in the centre and his header ended up in the back of the net via the underside of the bar.

Moore provided the ammunition for Rushall's second on 13 minutes,

**REDDITCH UNITED 0  
RUSHALL OLYMPIC 3**  
**By Ben Tyler**

another corner which was headed in by Waldron.

Daniel O'Callaghan went close to making it 3-0 before Wreh duly obliged with a fierce low shot that gave the over-worked United keeper no chance.

The Reds tried to find a way back into the game in the second half but were again indebted to Boucher on 70 minutes when he managed to keep out a low shot from Waldron.

The same player was denied by the woodwork and then, with ten minutes left, Boucher pulled off another fine point-blank save.

**STAR MAN:** Kieran Boucher (Redditch)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



# Last pair hold on to frustrate K&D charge

**CRICKET:** A WINNING draw against Moseley gave Knowle & Dorridge 18 valuable points in Birmingham & District Premier Division One last weekend.

Hosts Knowle & Dorridge laid down a marker with their score of 315-6 in 55 overs, but they could not grab the final Moseley wicket as the visitors ended on 225-9 to take seven points.

Fourth-placed K&D remain in contention at the right end of the table, level on points with Smethwick who had a maximum-points win over Shrewsbury, whilst seventh-placed Moseley still have some work to do to advance into the top-half.

by Ben Tyler  
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After winning the toss, Knowle were in the mood for runs, and openers Neil Dexter (28) and Alex Phillips (64) shared a stand worth 43 runs.

With both Dexter and number three batsman Amir Khan (0) gone in quick succession at 44-2, a mammoth effort by Phillips with Ethan Brookes (115) stole the show as the duo put on 105 runs for the third wicket.

Centurion Brookes oversaw a short-lived partnership with James Middleton (22) before joining Sam Reddish (37) in an 85-run stand before both were

removed from the crease in the space of four balls to leave K&D 277-6.

Martin Donald (30 not out) and Aristides Karvelas (8no) then carried their side over the 300-run mark, leaving the Griffs with a mountain to climb.

While opener Asim Shoaib (5) fell quickly, Moseley to their credit chipped away valiantly at the hosts' target score.

While there were no centuries in the visitors' ranks to boost their run chase considerably, there were a number of names who starred – namely

Abdullah Awan (38), Andrew Umeed (32) and Imandeep Kang (35) in Moseley's top-to-middle order.



While Knowle & Dorridge outgunned their rivals at the crease, they were unable to see through the win at Station Road. Picture by Harish Chavda/www.dingleimages.com

Umeed and Kang produced a best partnership of 52 for the fourth wicket but the Griffs could not keep up the run-rate as fear-some bowling from Dexter (3-38) and Mohammed Umar Shaikh (3-26) pegged them back.

When Usman Shabir (38) fell

for the ninth wicket with the score on 204, Moseley had the best part of seven more overs to navigate to avoid defeat at Station Road.

Led by tailenders Yadvinder Singh (32no) and Muhammad Raheem (4no), the Griffs did

exactly that, maintaining their stay at the crease to deny their rivals a big win.

On Saturday, Knowle & Dorridge visit tenth-placed Ombersley, whilst Moseley host Kidderminster, ninth, at Streetbrook Road.

# Dodd on a high after big effort from Gate strikers

by Ben Tyler  
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■ For all of the midweek reports, head to [www.solihullobserver.co.uk/sport](http://www.solihullobserver.co.uk/sport) for a full round-up.

**FOOTBALL:** RUSSELL Dodd hailed the aerial prowess of Aaron Brown and Isaac Jagroop in Highgate United's frontline in a 4-1 thrashing of Gresley.

The Gate moved back into tenth in the Midland League Premier Division table on Saturday after Brown's brace and one goal apiece for Stuart Hendrie and Jagroop, sealed an 11th win of the campaign.

It halted a four-match losing run, leaving Dodd delighted with the battling efforts of his team at The Coppice.

"Selection headaches are becoming the norm now, but I thought having the height of Aaron up-front alongside another big man in Isaac would give us a big advantage," he said.

"It seemed to work with both players on the scoresheet. It wasn't a classic by any means, the windy conditions didn't help.

"But all credit to the whole team for working hard to grind out a win against what were at times stubborn opposition."

Despite the final result, an opening goal seemed hard to come by after very few chances of note throughout the opening half.

A rare clear-cut opportunity, prompted by a mistake from Gresley goalkeeper Ewan Mountjoy, gave Conor Wright a shot at a gaping net, only to crash the ball against the post and out.

Highgate should have broken the deadlock when Jagroop went clean through on goal in the 35th minute, teeing the ball up for Hendrie who saw his goalbound effort kept out by the outstretched leg of Mountjoy.

But two goals in as many minutes put the hosts in firm control of proceedings.

First, Hendrie opened the scoring on

40 minutes with a simple finish after good work between Trevor Edwards and Jagroop before the latter providing the second from close range two minutes later.

While Gresley were largely bystanders throughout the game, they halved the deficit when Louis Briscoe fired home a 58th-minute penalty after a foul by goalkeeper Ryan Conlon.

But it was a short-lived boost for the lowly visitors, who instead fell further behind through Brown's penalty three minutes later.

Brown then made it 4-1, converting from Sam Oji's header seven minutes from time.

Dodd's men were set to face Racing Club Warwick on Tuesday night, in a game switched to Highgate, prior to Saturday's home test against Stourport Swifts (3pm).

■ IT WAS the Dan Carter Show in Division One as Studley hit seven past Chelmsley Town last Friday night.

Carter's four-goal display, plus strikes from Jordan Jones (2) and Harvey Smith, put the third-placed Bees in seven heav-

en in the encounter played at Redditch United's Trico Stadium.

The result leaves Chelmsley placed precariously just above the Division One drop zone in 18th, three points ahead of Nuneaton Griff.

Tuesday night's planned game at Ashby Ivanhoe was postponed but the challenges do not get any easier for Steve Solomon's charges, who host high-flying Uttoxeter Town on Saturday (3pm).

■ HAMPTON were eliminated from the Fazeley Charity Cup after a shock 2-0 defeat to Shenstone Pathfinders at Field Lane.

The Staffordshire County Senior League visitors advanced to the semi-finals of the competition after Matty Morris' double.

Defeat means 11th-placed Hampton are now left to consolidate their league status for the remainder of the season.

They were due to face a Wednesday derby duel away to Earlswood Town, which is followed by Saturday's home game with fellow strugglers Barnet Green Spartak (3pm).



## SOLIHULL MOORS 0 HARTLEPOOL UNITED 1

Noble 58

By Ben Tyler

**H**ARTLEPOOL manager Matthew Bates hailed match-winner Liam Noble at full-time, setting him a goals target for the season, as the stand-in captain fired Pools to a victory over ten-man Solihull Moors.

It was the midfielder's strike on 58 minutes that proved the difference for the North East side in a tight game that extended Hartlepool's unbeaten run to seven games.

"He's one of those players that always wants the ball and will always put his foot in, a good leader and a perfect captain in Andrew Davies' absence. He can be a very important player for us" said Bates.

"He offers not just goals, but creativity, work rate and set-piece-taking as well, we're lucky to have Liam - I have no doubt he could go on to get 15 goals this season."

An opening 20 minutes that saw Solihull lose star striker Adi Yussuf to injury early on was further damaged by a straight red card for Kyle Storer, when going in with two feet for a 50-50 challenge - a decision that proved the only notable action in an otherwise bland first half.

"It's hard to play against ten men sometimes; they sat in with two banks of four and for all the possession we had in the first half, I don't think we were as quick or intense with the ball," Bates added. "But after making a few changes at half-time, we thankfully managed to work something out."

Pools intentions after the interval were clear, going close through Nicky Featherstone's curled effort, moments before Noble's showstopper from the edge of the area left Ryan Boot rooted to the spot and sending the travelling Hartlepool faithful delirious.

Solihull continued to battle away, and looked like issuing an immediate response to falling behind when Jamey Osborne embarked on a mazy run from his own half on the counter, before skimming a low

### LINE-UPS



**MOORS:** Thomas 5 for Yussuf 71, Sweeney 5 for Wright 78, Osbourne 5 for Carline 78. Not used: Maxwell, Murphy. **HARTLEPOOL:** Woods 6 for McLaughlin 70. Not used: Hawkes, Richardson, Newton, Dinanga.

**CLOSE CONTROL:** Nicky Featherstone of Hartlepool is cool under pressure from Darren Carter. PICTURES: Media Image



effort narrowly past Scott Loach's upright.

But as tiredness began to creep into Solihull's game and with the game opening up, the visitors had further opportunities to extend their lead, first through Ryan Donaldson's audacious strike that cracked the bar, before Boot was equal to late tests from Noble and Niko Muir-Merchant to keep the scoreline in Hartlepool's favour.

Solihull manager Tim Flowers remains upbeat. "We tried to keep it nice and narrow and reduce the gaps to tough the game out," he said. "But a goal of that quality changes it and we had to go for it at the end."

**STAR MAN:** Liam Noble (Pools) ATE: 1.311 **ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★ **REFEREE:** Richard Hulme 6/10

### MATCH STATS

SOLIHULL V HARTLEPOOL	
2 SHOTS ON TARGET	8
2 SHOTS OFF TARGET	4
4 CORNERS	5
1 OFFSIDE	3
14 FOULS CONCEDED	14
2 YELLOW CARDS	2
1 RED CARDS	0





**STOURBRIDGE 4**  
Mills 29 (pen), Broadhurst 48, 75, Benbow 65

**COALVILLE T 2**  
Wright 2, Shaw 55

**STOURBRIDGE (4-2-3-1):** Wren, Westlake, McConn, Hayden, Brown (Christophorou 80), Ford, Broadhurst, Powell, Thompson, Brown (Birch 63), Mills (Anderson 80), Benbow.  
Subs not used: Perpoint, Maher.

**COALVILLE TOWN (3-5-2):** Walton, Thomas, Freeman, Fenton, Shaw (Browne 80), Doyle-Charles, Towers (Creaney 80), Wright, McGlinchey, Mitchell, Bernidge.  
Subs not used: Burrows, Martin, Cotton.

# GLASSBOYS STILL INTACT WITH LEON'S STAR SHOW

## Stour on form to seal points

By Ben Tyler

**S**TOURBRIDGE prevailed in blustery conditions at The War Memorial Ground as they ousted Coalville Town courtesy of Leon Broadhurst's brace.

It was a professional and slightly workmanlike performance from the hosts to claim the three points that could prove crucial.

The script appeared in Coalville's favour when they took a second-minute lead through Andrew Wright, as his volley found the bottom-left corner despite James Wren getting a hand to the shot.

It took until 15 minutes for the Glassboys to get a foothold in the game.

Luke Benbow had the first of a number of chances when chesting the ball into the air and unleashing an audacious overhead kick which flew narrowly wide.

Broadhurst's sublime piece of skill to beat a couple of defenders was unfortunate to result in a low shot inches wide.

**GR-EIGHT STRIKE!**  
Leon Broadhurst makes it 4-2 to Stourbridge

PICTURE: Will Kilpatrick



### MATCH STATS

STOURBRIDGE V COALVILLE

11	SHOTS ON TARGET	8
5	SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
7	CORNERS	5
1	OFFSIDE	4
7	FOULS CONCEDED	9
0	YELLOW CARDS	3
0	RED CARDS	0

But left winger Greg Mills then won a penalty

which he took himself, sending Richard Walton the wrong way to bring Stourbridge level just before the half-hour mark.

A dangerous free-kick from Robbie Thompson-Brown towards the far post saw Broadhurst rise to nick the ball in before half-time, only for the linesman to deny Gary Hackett's side a

lead at the interval.

Broadhurst's persistence reaped rewards though, as he notched his first of the game shortly after the break.

He followed in the rebound from Benbow's initial parried shot just as the shocking conditions began to have bearings on the intensity of the game.

The players battled through the conditions though and ensured the pressure continued.

The Ravens levelled with a rare attack, Tom

McGlinchey's cross being glanced past the Stourbridge keeper by the head of Luke Shaw for a goal which drew immense jubilation from Coalville's delighted manager Adam Stevens.

It took Benbow's 64th-minute show-stopper to regain the lead for a second time.

The striker fired a stunning free-kick from 35 yards into the back of the net, rendering the outstretched Walton absolutely helpless.

And when Broadhurst

found himself in the right place to plant a half-volley through a crowd of players and into the net, it brought clear breathing space for the league leaders.

It was a lead which Benbow almost extended in stoppage time when forcing Walton into a stunning tip over the bar from his ferocious left-foot drive.

Stourbridge manager Hackett said: "When we needed the moments of quality they came our way and it's a great win on the



AIR TIME: Stourbridge's Luke Benbow tries an acrobatic shot

**REDDITCH UNITED 2**  
**BANBURY UNITED 0**  
By Ben Tyler

REDDITCH United continued their resurgence under manager Paul Smith as they moved out of the relegation zone with a comfortable win against Banbury.

The visitors started the stronger with a couple of early half chances but it wasn't until the 21st minute for the first clear chance.

Attacking Reds midfielder Robbie Bunn curled an excellent cross from the right which Shaquille Leachman-Whittingham could only stab wide on the stretch.

Ahmed Ali went closer still for the home side when firing low past Emmanuel Agboola's left-hand post moments before Nyeko

# RESURGENT REDS EASE PAST THE PURITANS

Sinclair had a driving effort saved.

Bunn would make no mistake though when giving the Reds an early second-half lead, rifling his effort into the bottom-right corne.

Leachman-Whittingham proved a constant threat after switching to the left-flank, and he marked his excellent performance with a goal. His run matched Jamie Ashmore's pin-

point cross from the right as he tucked the ball into the far corne.

And he was almost the sole creator of a goal of the season effort, collecting the ball deep in Banbury's half, before weaving past a handful of players en route to the penalty area, but he could only lift the finish over the bar.

**STAR MAN:** S Leachman-Whittingham (Redditch)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



# New man has come in Andy for the Boro!

**ALVECHURCH 0  
NUNEATON BOROUGH 2**

By **BEN TYLER**

NUNEATON Borough stretched their unbeaten run to four games as they continued to climb away from the wrong end of the Southern League Premier Central table.

And boss Jimmy Ginnelly again praised the contribution of 'workaholic' coach Andy Danylyszyn who he admits has been instrumental in his team turning the corner.

It was a tale of two headers in Worcestershire, with Jaden Charles' eighth-minute opener putting Boro in the driving seat prior to Anthony Dwyer's clincher nine minutes from time, on an afternoon when Tony Breeden could celebrate a fourth consecutive clean sheet.

Ginnelly said: "I've had some great assistant managers and coaches around me, but this is what we're looking for now - he's got every angle covered - the lad is a workaholic."

"It's his detail on Tuesdays

and Thursdays on the training pitch and in the dressing room, backed up by one or two words from myself - it feels like Clough and Taylor now!"

An assured performance from the visitors saw them go close to adding to their early advantage but for a flying save from Dan Jezeph to keep out a curling first-half effort from the influential Charlie Dowd.

Dwyer lacked composure early in the second period when looking well placed to score, but the 25-year-old was later on hand to wrap up proceedings with a header from Greg Kaziboni's centre.

And while Breeden would be required to make stunning stops to keep out late attempts from Church's Danny Waldron and Nick Clayton-Phillips, it was an afternoon where three points always looked secure.

"We came to stifle the game, to be honest," added Ginnelly. "They're a good footballing side and we said it would probably be 60-40 in terms of possession."

"Tony's made a couple of saves at the end, but have they really hurt us?"

"We seem unbreachable at the moment."

"Scott McManus has been a revelation since he's taken the armband, Liam Daly's very experienced and we've got great strength in depth now with Joe Magunda and Jamie McCrory in there too."

Coventry  
**Telegraph**

**ALVECHURCH 0  
NUNEATON BORO 2**  
By **Ben Tyler**

A GOAL in either half ensured that Nuneaton Borough took full advantage of a below-par Alvechurch performance to claim all three points at Lye Meadow and extend their unbeaten streak to four matches.

Jade Charles nodded in at the near post after eight minutes to give the visitors a priceless early lead following a corner kick, during an opening half in which Ian Long's side failed to shift into gear.

There were near-attempts for Ryan Nesbitt, who flashed an effort wide of the post, and Dave Bellis - who looked certain to score but for Liam Daly's timely block - but nothing

# CHARLES AND DWYER UNITE TO DOWN ALVECHURCH

of note to force Borough custodian Tony Breeden into a sweat.

It was Nuneaton who looked most likely to score next, and perhaps should have done when Luke Benbow twice went close in quick succession, seeing his first shot excellently blocked, before rolling wide inside the box.

Speculative strikes at either end from Nuneaton's

Anthony Dwyer and Alvechurch's Zak Brown went close to adding to the scoresheet, with the former eventually doing just that after 81 minutes to seal the points with a far-post header from Cameron McWilliams' centre.

Tony Breeden saved late on, from Danny Waldron and Nick Clayton-Phillips.

**STAR MAN:** Charlie Dowd (NB)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆



## NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

DANIEL Trott netted a brace to help table-topping **Grimsby Borough** march on to yet another win, a 3-0 rout of fellow promotion hopefuls **Silsden**.

Reece York was also on target as Boro maintained their unbeaten streak after eight matches and held onto a seven-point lead at the top of the tree.

A first win of the season for **Penistone Church** saw them sweep aside **Thackley** 4-0, thanks to a Luke Stewart double and goals from Nathan Keightley and Thomas Brennan.

**Staveley Miners Welfare** were also in the mood for goals, winning by the same scoreline at **Knaresborough Town** where Declan Howe found the net either side of Tomas Poole and Myron Gibbons strikes.

**Emley** came out on top in a 3-2 thriller at **Sherwood Colliery** thanks to Ryan John's winner, after George Doyle twice gave the visitors the lead, earning Richard Tracey's men a first win of the campaign.

Two goals in the space of a minute from Jonny Irving and Sumaili Cissa gave **Eccleshill United** a 3-1 victory at **Barton Town**, while **Albion Sports** and **Bottesford Town** both won by 1-0 scorelines at **Maltby Main** and **Athersley Recreation** respectively.

On Friday night, second-placed **Garforth Town** kept up the pace with their rivals in a 5-0 demolition of hosts **Hemsworth Miners Welfare** with five different scorers registering, and in the day's other game, a Samuel Cable goal was enough for **Goole** to edge past **Winterton** 1-0.

**BEN TYLER**

## Ginnelly: I'll go if Boro want me to

NUNEATON BOROUGH	0
AFC RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS	1

By **BEN TYLER**

THE frustrations of Nuneaton Borough manager Jimmy Ginnelly rang loud and clear after defeat to AFC Rushden & Diamonds, leading the 58-year-old to cry out for backing from the club's boardroom.

A 66th-minute rebound strike from substitute Benjamin Diamond gave the visitors the points in an encounter that the hosts fully controlled without ever really asking questions of goalkeeper Dean Snedker.

The one clear-cut attempt that did draw the Diamonds custodian into action produced a stunning save, as Leroy Lita's header was palmed wide of the post with the game still goalless.

And with little by the way of further attempts, Ginnelly wants a new forward to help arrest Nuneaton's early season struggles.

"Everyone knows it at the club, but we're trying to play games of football without a recognised number nine and we're getting punished for it," he said.

"Do I get backed and we get a goalscorer, or do

we just sit and wait for someone to be fit?

"Everyone keeps having a pop at Luke Benbow to be fit, but the lad is training his socks off behind the scenes. He's probably two or three weeks away - there's your goalscorer. We've got him at the club.

"If the group want to back me then they can, but if they don't then we'll just wait on Luke and run with what we've got."

The situation at Nuneaton, currently 18th in the Southern League Premier, is that dire according to the manager that he has considered his own position.

"This is the third time I've said it to them this season - but I want to apologise to the Borough fans," Ginnelly continued. "If we're in the bottom six, we're there for a reason. I've told the lads that I don't mind resigning, if the club want me to go then I gladly would. That's how low I feel.

"I fear for the club a little bit if I was to walk away as manager. I'm going to have a serious sleep on it and see what comes of it."

## DIAMOND SPARKLES AT BORO

SUBSTITUTE Benjamin Diamond proved the ace in the pack as AFC Rushden & Diamonds narrowly edged out Nuneaton.

The visitors registered the first attempt on target when Nathan Tshikuna rounded Tony Breeden, only to crack the outside of the post when placed under pressure by the retreating Boro defence.

A speculative attempt by Ryan Edmunds inched

**NUNEATON BORO 0  
AFC RUSHDEN & D 1**  
By **Ben Tyler**

narrowly over the bar and preceded a raft of Nuneaton chances, with marauding full-back Scott McManus twice going close with two headers in quick succession.

But with Cain Noble failing to hit the target with a flying volley from

Callum Westwood's right-flank cross, it was a key opportunity wasted by Jimmy Ginnelly's men right before half-time.

A switch in formation and the introduction of Leroy Lita at the interval helped the hosts take control of proceedings, and it was the veteran who was gifted an opening just before the hour mark. Meeting Carl Baker's pinpoint cross, Lita's header

drew a sensational save from Dean Snedker, who clawed the ball behind.

It was a bizarre incident on 66 minutes that decided the game, when substitute Diamond rained on Borough's parade by sweeping home a rebound - all while the pitchside sprinklers were going off down the other end of the pitch!

STAR MAN: Carl Baker (Nuneaton)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

**REDDITCH UTD 1  
BIGGLESWADE T 0**  
By **Ben Tyler**

DAN SWEENEY'S first-half penalty helped Redditch United return to winning ways against ten-man Biggleswade Town and end a three-game winless run for Matt Clarke's side.

The opening chance on 23 minutes required a well-timed block to deny Lewis Clayton, moments after Magloire Muyembe flashed wide of the mark.

Coree Wilson was next to go close for the Waders, but his shot from distance failed to trouble Reds keeper Kieran Boucher.

Then, following a Biggleswade foul, Sweeney was given the opportunity to coolly slot into the bottom-left corner from 12 yards on 32 minutes.

## SWEENEY'S THE MAN TO GIVE REDS A BIGG WIN...

Despite surviving a close shave in their own penalty area, Town were on the front foot and spent plenty of the game in the final third, James Peters going close to levelling the scores with a deflected attempt that required saving by Boucher.

With a succession of corners also proving fruitless in the hunt for parity, a late chance for Joe Neal looked

ideal for Biggleswade's hopes of taking a point - only for the forward to fail to test the home keeper from a prime position.

And matters when from bad to worse for Town when Shane Bush's late challenge on Luke Cox resulted in a red card in the dying embers of the encounter.

STAR MAN: Dan Sweeney (Redditch)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



# Express & Star

DELIGHTED Sporting Khalsa manager Ian Rowe hailed the steadfast approach of his troops - and the match-winning celebrations - in a 2-1 victory over Gainsborough Trinity that saw the hosts advance in the FA Cup.

Jumaane Meggoe's 88th-minute winner sparked jubilant scenes on the home bench at the Guardian Warehousing Arena, where Jake Gosling's penalty before the hour mark was cancelled out by Kyle Dixon's spot kick.

In a feat which ended a three game losing run prior to kick off, and eliminated Step Three opposition in the process, Rowe paid tribute to his side.

"We got the result, we had to play a bit of a different way today as they put the pressure on us early doors," he said.

"It looked a matter of when they were going to score, we rode that which we haven't done in the last couple of games - so it was nice to get to half-time without conceding.

"We dug in and I knew we'd have chances - we'll take the incident off the ball [for the penalty] - which Jake scores.

"I was a bit gutted about their penalty, as from our point of view it looked offside.

"But we didn't fall, mentally we didn't break and we've gone again, it was a fantastic goal [to win it].

"I'm over the moon - as you saw by the celebrations - Jumaane topped it off with a double somersault which showed the passion of the FA Cup and what it's about."

But with league action resuming at Shepshed Dynamo on Tuesday night, Rowe and Co. will have little time to celebrate reaching the second second qualifying round for only the second time in the club's history.

"It's always a difficult place to go in midweek," he continued.

"But we wanted to get to this level for a reason - and part of that reason comes the travel side of things."





Connor Collins rifles home his 23rd goal of the season.

**Pick that one out!**



Connor Collins, right, is congratulated by his Droitwich teammates after netting in the midweek rout. Pictures by Mathew Mason.

**FOOTBALL: FIVE-STAR** Droitwich Spa look well placed to lift the West Midlands (Regional) Division One title after a resounding 5-0 midweek triumph over Wyrley.

Having also recorded a 4-2 success over Sikh Hunters on Saturday, the Saltmen have moved eight points clear at the top of the table, with three games in hand over second-placed Allscott.

Saturday's visit of Wellington Amateurs, who sit third, will be the biggest litmus test of Spa's champions credentials in recent weeks. Kick-off at King George's Playing Fields is 3pm.

# Every game is now a must-win stresses Kelly

**FOOTBALL:** BRENDAN Kelly believes the Southern League Premier Central play-off race will go right to the wire.

Bromsgrove Sporting currently occupy fourth place in the table but have not played since the 2-1 home reverse to Hitchin Town on February 22 in a month significantly affected by a string of post-punishments.

With other sides around them – notably fifth-placed Stourbridge, who enjoyed a successful start to the Mark Yates era with a 2-0 victory over Lowestoft Town last weekend – applying the pressure, Sporting boss Kelly says the situation near the top of the league is far from settled.

"Every game is a must-win from now on," said Kelly.

"There are quite a few teams in the hunt for the play-off places. The league title is beyond us but as far as the play-offs are concerned, it will go down to the last day.

"There are a lot of teams involved, including us, who still have to play each other.

"Even lower down in the table, the likes of Alvechurch will have their say on things with the new set-up there, Leiston are fighting for their lives and are picking up results.

"You get the unexpected results, you look at Needham Market turning over Coalville Town the other week. There will be lots of twists and turns still to come."

Saturday's home game against Barwell, who are stationed in 13th place, now presents the Rouslers

by **Ben Tyler**  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

with another chance to address their troubled form at the Victoria Ground which has hampered their season so far (3pm). Guy Hadland's Canaries, however, have put together a five-game unbeaten run throughout February.

"We're expecting to put right our home form this weekend," said Kelly. "We've had opportunities to capitalise on results of the sides around us but haven't taken them.

"I do wonder about our mentality approaching the business end of the season. We need to take more of the openings that come our way and rectify our home form.

"It's still something that I can't figure out. We had the two-year unbeaten run at home before this season but this time around we've only won around 40 per cent of our games at the Victoria Ground, compared to over 60 per cent of our away games."

Kelly says he is targeting two new signings, with an eagerness to bring in another winger and defender.

He explained: "We've brought in Correy Davidson on loan from Kidderminster in the past week, who will add to our crea-

tive play in midfield. We're trying to work on something for another winger and a defender who we're still looking at.

"We've been helped by the return of Lewis Chester, who is back and has trained really well having been unavailable with personal commitments."

Aside from the first team, Sporting's under-18s reached the semi-finals of the Worcestershire FA Midweek Cup last week after seeing off Kidderminster Harriers 5-3 at the Victoria Ground.

"It was a great result for the lads after an end-to-end game," said Kelly, who was among the crowd.

"Some of the lads who are taking part in the games, the likes of Owen Taylor and Sam Collins, have trained with us for a number of weeks.

"Hopefully they can kick on to the final. It's something that I like to keep an eye on as we definitely have some good players coming through the system."

Possibly the only positive outcome from Bromsgrove's disrupted run of fixtures has been that top scorer Mike Taylor – currently out with a knee injury – hasn't missed many games. "It's the only good thing to come from the games that have been called off," said Kelly.

Taylor, the league's top scorer with 24 goals, will be one of two absentees against Barwell on Saturday, with on-loan defender Jak Hickman still out with a quad injury.



**Manager Brendan Kelly.**  
Picture by Rob McLaren.





Pictured here against Earlswood Town, Perry Moss, left, was in fine form again against Paget with a brace.

# Saltmen hit back after trailing 4-0

**FOOTBALL:** DROITWICH Spa extended their 100 per cent winning record in pre-season in miraculous fashion, recovering from a four-goal deficit at the break to down Paget Rangers 5-4.

It is now four wins in four for the Saltmen, having seen off Earlswood Town 5-1 last weekend in addition to drubbings of Stourport Swifts under-21s (4-1) and Bishops Cleeve (6-2).

But the Paget result could surely not have been foreseen at the interval at the Central Ground - where Rangers are tenants at Sutton Coldfield Town.

From 4-0 down, Spa halved the deficit within the first 15 minutes of the second half, before netting three times in ten minutes to stun Paget.

Perry Moss, who also netted in the Earlswood win, was again on target here with a brace, while Charlie Tilley and two trialists also made their mark on away soil.

On Saturday, Droitwich will visit Hereford Lads Club, who ply their trade in the Hellenic League.

# Kelly backing Cam to make exciting impact

**FOOTBALL:** MANAGER Brendan Kelly has welcomed forward Cameron Ebbutt to Bromsgrove Sporting with open arms, following his arrival to the Victoria Ground.

The 21-year-old, formerly in the youth ranks at Birmingham City and Bristol Rovers, has turned out in more recent years for National League North clubs Hereford and Gloucester City, and will bolster the Rouslers attacking options both through the middle and out wide.

Having appeared in some of Sporting's recent pre-season friendlies, Kelly admits he has seen enough of Ebbutt's talents to believe that he can be a success for Bromsgrove.

by Ben Tyler  
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"Cam has been with us since May and has trained really well," said Sporting's manager.

"In the last couple of games, he has shown me enough to believe he will give us a good option at the top of the pitch. "He can operate through the middle and out wide, and technically he is extremely good, so I'm pleased to have signed him."

Bromsgrove's run of two wins from two in pre-season was ended on Tuesday night, as a mixed side of first-teamers and trialists were beaten 2-1 at Littleton.

The Hellenic League hosts

struck twice in quick succession before the hour mark to put themselves in the driving seat, before a trialist netted on 66 minutes to cut their lead in half.

Bromsgrove, though, did not have enough in the tank to get back on level terms, meaning they could not build on an encouraging 2-0 victory at Sutton Coldfield Town last Saturday.

Again, it was a trialist on the scoresheet to give Sporting the ideal start on five minutes, before Luke Ward added a second just before the break.

With a succession of substitutes at half-time, an eventful half followed at the Central Ground as the Rouslers saw off the Northern Premier League side.



Striker Cameron Ebbutt, captured here in action for Solihull United, has joined Sporting. Picture by Paul Smith.

Next, a Midland League double-header awaits Kelly's men, first with the trip to Romulus on Saturday, followed by an away day at Stourport Swifts on Tuesday.

# On the March into Football League

by Ben Tyler  
sport@learningtonobserver.co.uk

**FOOTBALL:** BRAKES boss Paul Holleran has commended departing forward Josh March for his outstanding contribution to the club after earning a move to the Football League.

The 22-year-old, moved to League Two side Forest Green Rovers on Monday, just half a year after he joined Leamington from Southern League Premier Central side Alvechurch.

In that period he netted 24 times in 27 appearances for the National League North club - enough to attract the interest from a number of professional sides.

March's rapid rise into the professional ranks will have come as no surprise to the likes of Holleran and the player's close allies at Alvechurch, with the Leamington manager confident the prolific striker can continue his progression in Gloucestershire.

"We are absolutely delighted to see Josh make the step-up into the Football League," Holleran said.

"He had a number of clubs look-

ing at him and he spoke to several of them, but has made the decision that Forest Green Rovers is the right move for him - he is moving to an upwardly mobile, ambitious club with good football people.

"It's been an epic rise for Josh and he has been helped along the way by some great non-League football people, none more so than Ian Long and Richard Thorndike [former manager and current chairman at Alvechurch].

"We're just pleased to have been able to play a part and put the cherry on the top for him if you like."

The transfer marks the second time in the space of six months that a Leamington striker has moved into the Football League, following Colby Bishop's departure to League One outfit Accrington Stanley, which ironically paved the way for March's arrival at the Phillips 66 Community Stadium.

Holleran believes the recent trend can only be beneficial in promoting the integrity of the non-League game, adding: "These young players are infectious with their desire to succeed and we will be keeping a close eye on Josh's progress, as we

do with all of the players.

"It's great to see young players do still have a pathway into the professional game and can get themselves noticed playing in non-League."

Josh has really earned his chance with his performances and the goals for us this season and our greatest wish for him now is that he settles in quickly at Forest Green and hits the ground running, much like he did for Leamington."

As part of the deal, Leamington will host Forest Green in a pre-season friendly in the summer.

A 1-0 home defeat to Altrincham last weekend meant Leamington dropped to 15th place in National League North, following Josh Hancock's 56th-minute goal.

It provided a disappointment for Holleran and Co will look to rectify when visiting Kingstons of the Istman League Premier Division in the second round of the FA Trophy on Saturday (3pm).

Josh March is the second Leamington striker to progress to the Football League in six months following a move to The New Lawn.



# Smith efforts in vain as Boars stutter to defeat

**CRICKET** DESPITE Connor Smith's half-century, Bromsgrove found themselves on the receiving end of a seven-wicket defeat at Wolverhampton in last weekend's Birmingham & District Premier Division Two meeting.

On was a case of the Boars fading after an encouraging start at the crease at Danescourt Road. They reached

194-8 but the hosts sealed victory with seven balls remaining.

Openers Jayden Levitt (32) and Smith (61) led the way for Bromsgrove with a partnership of 88 runs, though the visitors' run rate began to slow once both were gone with the score 106-2.

Both Charlie Home (3-33) and Joe Stanley (3-60) posed real problems for the visitors

with the ball in hand, meaning no one posted a score higher than Ashley Newfield's 22 runs for the remainder of the innings.

Skipper Mark Evenson (7no) and Henry Dwyer (17), who was removed with the last ball that Bromsgrove faced, helped see the innings out to its conclusion.

In Wolverhampton's reply,

Smith took his sole wicket of the afternoon to see off opener Simon Lycett (3) at 12-1, but it was only a false dawning as James Hammond (73) and Ali Waqas (50) showed their class to power their way to a 143-run stand.

With 16 shots into the boundary and a solitary six, the pair put Wolverhampton within touching distance of victory.

Charlie Home (13no) and skipper Will Nield (8no) picked up the pieces after Hammond and Waqas had departed at 182-3, inching their side over the line to hand Bromsgrove a third successive defeat.

Looking for an upturn in fortunes, Evenson's ninth-placed charges go to Dorridge, who lie tenth, hoping to revive their campaign.

# Openers in form to fire Boars hopes

**CRICKET:** HALF-CENTURIES from Connor Smith and Jayden Levitt helped Bromsgrove deliver a classy performance in an 84-run win over Bridgnorth last weekend.

Reaching 211-9 after winning the toss, the visiting Boars then needed just 40 overs to bowl out the hosts for 127 runs, with Freddie Fallows (4-26) and Ashley Newfield (3-19) coming up trumps at Victoria Road.

The result meant Mark Evenson's men secured back-to-back victories for the first time since the opening two weekends of the Birmingham & District Premier Division Two campaign, and seventh-placed Bromsgrove go in search of a winning end to the season at home to third-placed Hinley on Saturday.

Openers Smith (67) and Levitt (50) formed a partnership of 89 runs to kick off the innings, but three quickfire wickets followed the departure of the latter.

But with Smith linking up well with Freddie Fallows (30), the visitors got their run rate back on track with a 62-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Adam Quigley (4-49) proved a formidable opponent as the number of overs ticked down, but Bromsgrove did enough to the winning through.

Turning his hand to batting, Quigley hit 45 in a second-wicket partnership worth 76 runs with Matty Simmonds (24) but it would ultimately prove a false dawn with Fallows and Co. coming to the fore.

by Ben Tyler  
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Playing Fields this weekend to decide who wins the Worcestershire League Division One title.

Currently, just seven points separate the two sides and with promotion to the Premier Division already secured for both, it is now a question of where silverware will be heading this term.

With Spa faltering in recent weeks, losing by 110 runs last time out at Lye where they were largely second best, and recording two abandoned matches before that, it is going to take a huge show of character from Max Young's troops to seal the title.

Last Saturday, hosts Lye batted first at Stourbridge Road and Spa struggled to contain Gurpreet Singh (14) and Kamran Mehmud (43) who combined for 94 runs after opener Nadeem Hussain (41) had helped set the tone.

Unbeaten pair Nasir Ali (49 not out) and Wajid Hussain (13no) then saw the innings through as Lye finished on 247-7 in their 50 overs, with the efforts of Jake Young (3-70) and Ahmed (2-36) not enough to cause the hosts too many problems.

A strong start by Max (45) and Jake Young (15) brought an opening partnership of 51, but the innings quickly declined from there for Droitwich as the final six wickets fell for 30 runs.

Waqas Ahmed led the Lye bowling attack with a sensational six-wicket haul (6-40 in 15 overs) and Wajid Hussain claimed 4-20.

# Sadler stars as Bromsgrove end long wait in style



**RUGBY UNION:** TOM Sadler's hat-trick of tries ensured Bromsgrove returned to Midlands Premier Division action in style with a 44-24 success against Seathorpe last weekend.

Having not played a single minute played in the cancelled 2020/21 season, the Finstall Road hosts showed no sign of rustiness with a highly-polished performance.

Ross Attwood, Drew Harper, Ed Krawiecki were also on the scoresheet, with Will Harris adding a penalty for his efforts.

This Saturday, Bromsgrove head to Sheffield hoping for further success, taking on a side who opened with 21-15 victory at Broadstreet.

Will Harris, left, shrugs off a challenge in last weekend's win. Picture by Andy Jepson.

# Robins will look to mix up squad

**FOOTBALL:** MARK Robins has hinted that he will look to squad rotation when Coventry City go head-to-head with Bristol Rovers in next Tuesday's (7.45pm) FA Cup third round replay - following a 2-2 draw on Saturday.

The Sky Blues twice came from behind at the Memorial Stadium, with Liam Walsh cancelling out Jonson Clarke-Harris' opener from the spot, while Rovers' Tony Craig ironically cancelled out his own 32nd-minute strike with a second-half own goal.

Should Coventry win the replay, the Sky Blues' prospects will face the unique situation of hosting their landlords over the weekend of January 24 to 27, after drawing Birmingham City as the 'home' side in Monday's cup draw.

Despite falling just short of a third win in three on the road over the festive period, Robins is

by Ben Tyler

content at a second shot at the fourth round.

"I'm frustrated because we gave up two goals," he said.

"We looked bright, then they got a penalty. It's not a great start when you find yourself 1-0 down."

"We kept playing and were really a bit of quality finishing away from the win."

And with Coventry facing three matches in the space of a week - with Saturday's (3pm) home fixture with MK Dons prefacing a trip to Doncaster Rovers the following weekend - the Sky Blues manager is open to the idea of changing up his side in the midweek replay.

"People talk about the extra games, but we don't mind it," Robins said.

"It's good practice - players need games. The replay comes at a time where we have a few tough games,

so the squad might be used."

After a golden opportunity for Zain Westbrook went to waste inside the opening minute, the hosts were awarded a penalty following Kyle McFadden's foul on Tom Nichols.

It allowed Clarke-Harris to stroke the ball home on six minutes, prior to a Coventry onslaught that resulted in Walsh's stunning leveller from the edge of the penalty area on the half-hour mark.

But seconds later, the Gas restored their lead when captain Craig headed home.

An open second half prompted chances for both sides, but it was the Sky Blues who struck next when Walsh's shot was diverted into Rovers' net by Craig on 53 minutes.

And when a late opportunity for Matt Godden went to waste in stoppage time, the final whistle confirmed that the two sides will have to do it all again at St. Andrews.

# United on march for the title



**FOOTBALL:** COVENTRY United's title challenge shows no sign of slowing after a 12th victory of the season kept them at the summit of the Midland Football League Premier Division table on Saturday.

Jake Holt's first-half effort was the differ-

ing three matches away from a run-out at Wembley.

Kyle Carey tries his luck in Saturday's triumph over Heather St John's. Picture by Jeff Bennett.

**LEADERS** Droitwich Spa take on Ombersley's second XI in a winner-takes-all clash at St Peter's

# Brendan: Not pretty but effective

**FOOTBALL:** MANAGER Brendan Kelly has reassured the Bromsgrove Sporting faithful that the quality of his side's play will return - but only as long as they remain defensively rigid.

The Rouslers made it four games unbeaten after dispatching Loughborough University in the first qualifying round of the FA Cup last weekend, with Leon Broadhurst and Cody Fisher netting in a 2-0 win.

It set up another home tie with Worcester town of the Northern Premier League Division One East in the next round on September 18, and with a home league meeting with Hitchin Town to come before that this weekend, the Sporting boss is keen to stay on the winning track.

"We're in the next round and that's the most important thing," said Kelly.

When you approach games, you try and first go and put in a good performance and get in a result, but it was a strange game.

"They didn't get a shot on goal until the last five minutes, but we didn't



Goalscorer Connor Baker, right, on the ball. Picture by Paul Smith.

dominate either. Our passing let us down badly and that's why it wasn't a free-flowing performance."

"It's four unbeaten for us, it's not been the prettiest at times but we're making ourselves difficult to beat."

"That breeds confidence in itself, and then the free-flowing football will come, especially when we've nursed

some bodies back to full fitness. There's still lots to work on, but if we can do that and keep up that run then it's a positive."

ANDY Crowther's Droitwich Spa side twice came from behind to rescue a point in last weekend's 2-2 draw at Team Dudley and maintain their unbeaten start to West Midlands (Regional) Division One.

It was far from a stellar performance at Priory Road, but the Saltmen managed to take something from the game after Connor Collins buried an equaliser five minutes from time.

Droitwich fell behind in the opening 20 minutes when Daniel Gyasi snuck the ball past stand-in keeper Ryan Williams, only for Connor Baker to head home a stoppage-time leveller.

Team Dudley came again and restored their lead through Gyasi, prior to Collins' late heroics.

On Saturday, Spa return to Walsley Meadow to host witness Tipton Town



# Highest ranking for town ace Glasspool



Lloyd Glasspool has won three of the five finals that he has appeared in this year. Picture by Peter Menzel/PPP.

**TENNIS:** A CAREER-HIGH doubles ranking has been achieved by Redditch ace Lloyd Glasspool, who has propelled himself just outside of the top-100 following back-to-back titles on the ATP tour.

The 27-year-old, who trains at Edgbaston Priory Club, recovered from a quarter-final defeat in the Gran Canaria II Challenger event at the beginning of the month to scoop the ATP 250 Open 13 title in Marseille on March 14 - team-

ing up with Finnish player Harri Heliövaara to see off Dutch duo Sanders Arends and David Pel in straight sets.

That victory inspired him to a second title in succession, reigning supreme in the Biella Challenger with Australian doubles partner Matt Reid, beating Ukrainian pair Denys Molchanov and Sergiy Stakhovsky in another two-set victory.

In all, Glasspool has won three successive finals in 2021 - also lifting the first edition of the Gran

Canaria Challenger tournament in February - having lost his first couple at the beginning of the year.

It should be no surprise then, given his successful year to date, that Glasspool's progress has been underlined by his highest-ever doubles ranking of 102 in the world.

And with another accolade in the form of the Warwickshire Player of the Year for 2020 heading his way, by way of a virtual ceremony for the Warwickshire Tennis awards, there is enough reason to believe that Glasspool is beginning to realise his full potential.

That is the view of Sue Chopra, the chairman of the Warwickshire Junior Tennis Federation, who has lauded the Worcestershire hot-shot.

"Lloyd is a worthy winner of this award, and a real role model to our rising stars," she said. "We're all thrilled that his hard work is paying off."

"Until now, he's often been in Dan Evans's shadow and hasn't always had the full recognition he deserves, which is a shame, as he's a great talent, and someone who constantly strives to improve."



Adam Watson, left, is set to add steel to Redditch Borough's engine room. Picture by Mathew Mason.

## Midfield pair bolster the ranks at Borough

**FOOTBALL:** REDDITCH Borough have continued their summer rebuild with the acquisition of two new midfielders.

Julian Workman's side have brought in Adam Watson and Khuram Iqbal to strengthen their side in the engine room, making it four signings in all during the close season for the Midland League Division Two club.

Watson arrives from West Midlands (Regional) Division One outfit Droitwich Spa, for whom he made two appearances in his debut season in non-league football, whilst Iqbal returns to Borough having previously represented the club between 2016 and 2019.

The moves help build further excitement at the club, with Borough's Sunday team returning to the pitch this weekend with

a trip to Frankley United as the Redditch & South Warwickshire Combination League finally resumes.

Borough Sunday sit fourth in the division with 13 points after six games played, and will fancy their chances against a Frankley side that has conceded 40 goals in seven games, accumulating just two points during that time.

Elsewhere, Redditch's Midland League rivals Fekkenham are gearing up for life on the road, after announcing five fixtures during April and May.

Glenn Adams and Aaron Blackwood's side head to Hereford Pegasus on Saturday, followed by trips to Cadbury Athletic (April 10), Paget Rangers (April 17), Chalmley Town (April 24) and Droitwich Spa (May 1) to officially close out the 2020/21 season.

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Dan Protherough was a key figure in Redditch's batting order in a much needed win against Bewdley. Picture by Nick Fowkes Photography.



Tyrell Hamilton takes on Bromsgrove's Leon Broadhurst, in what was his last game for Alvechurch before joining National League North outfit AFC Telford United. Picture by Ian Macvie.

**CRICKET:** REDDITCH Entaco recorded a first win in this season's Worcestershire League Premier Division to move away from danger, after defeating basement side Bewdley by 76 runs last weekend.

The crucial victory moves Entaco into tenth place, giving Adam Gailey's side a platform to build upon for the remainder of the season.

With Russell Southwick (53) hitting a half-century, and Adel Sajid (49) and Daniel Protherough (40 not out) both approaching that landmark, a 230-8 total left the visitors with an uphill battle at Bromsgrove Road.

And so it proved, as Redditch's bowlers worked their way through the Bewdley ranks to dismiss them for 154 in the 45th over.

Though initially struggling at the crease, a third-wicket partnership of 90 between Southwick and Sajid

established Entaco's foothold in the game. After Sajid's departure left the score 142-4, the hosts crept over the 200-run mark thanks to the presence of Protherough for the remainder of the innings - with five hits into the boundary and one six boosting Redditch's total.

Bewdley had a tough time in their reply, mainly due to a lack of momentum between batting partners.

Captain Rob Connes (26) and Martyn Carr (36) were the only two players to register meaningful totals for their side, as Ghulam Mohtashid downed the Reds, ending their battle at Bromsgrove Road.

With a trip to second-bottom Old Hill on Saturday, Redditch have a real opportunity to put distance between themselves and their fellow strugglers with a positive outcome in Cradley Heath.

# Town seek silver lining to season

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** IT WILL be a winner-takes-all affair at Hampton's Field Lane home this Saturday, when Alcester Town take on Coventrians hoping to reign supreme in the Post-Covid Lockdown Charity Cup.

The tournament, acting as a final curtain on the turbulent and short-lived 2020/21 campaign - and as a fund-raiser for Prostate Cancer UK - has provided a number of Midland League sides with the opportunity to give players a competitive run-out after the pandemic called a halt to the regular season.

For Alcester, it represents a real opportunity to end the current term with silverware and their form makes them favourites to lift the trophy.

Matt Seeley's men won eight of their ten group games with a record of 27 goals and only seven conceded, losing just twice and booking their place in the showpiece final by edging AFC Coventry Rangers 4-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw last Sunday.

In what will have been a useful experience for Division Two Alcester ahead of a second suc-



Sam Fitzgerald fires a free-kick goalwards. Picture by Pete Ray.

cessfully glanced home by Ross Dempster past Coventry 'keeper Ross Davis.

With the match remaining a cagey affair after the break, Rangers hit the front once more when Fola Fagbemi fed the ball through for Farrell to bury his second of the afternoon.

But with the next opportunity that fell the hosts' way, Reece

gratefully glanced home by Ross Dempster past Coventry 'keeper Ross Davis.

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Ross Dempster, left, and Reece Jacobs kept Alcester alive in normal time prior to the shoot-out win.

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# Cowley cracker ruins Church's trophy chances

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** A JASON Cowley show-stopper condemned Alvechurch to finish runners-up in the Red Recruitment Trophy, as Bromsgrove Sporting edged Bank Holiday Monday's finale at Lye Meadow by a 1-0 scoreline.

In what essentially became a winner-takes-all affair after the Church had beaten Redditch United by the same scoreline on Saturday, Sporting's record scorer produced a 53rd-minute cracker, with Ian Long's men unable to instigate a comeback despite Cowley receiving a second yellow with 20 minutes left.

With just two starters from Saturday in Church's XI in the form of Ethan Seplinton and Sam McLintock, a host of youngsters and new faces were given the opportunity to make their bow and impress the manager.

McLintock was first to try his luck with a 25-yard drive that Sporting stopper Max Beardmore was equal to, while Will Shorrocks should have done better down the other end than the hosts' goal gaping.

Tom Chamberlain missed an equally golden opportunity for Church when firing wildly over the bar following Mason Birch's knock-down, before unleashing a snap-shot narrowly past the post just after the half-hour mark.

The match-winning moment that came eight minutes after the interval it was one worthy of winning any game. Cowley touched the ball out of his



Tyrell Hamilton takes on Bromsgrove's Leon Broadhurst, in what was his last game for Alvechurch before joining National League North outfit AFC Telford United. Picture by Ian Macvie.

feet following a ball through from substitute Miro Pais, before whipping a curling shot that dipped wildly into the top-right corner of the net.

An equally brilliant moment of play from Luke Yates almost dragged Alvechurch back on level terms, when the substitute dinked an audacious effort goalwards to beat Beardmore but strike the underside of the bar.

With Tyrell Hamilton on the pitch for the latter stages, the forward almost made the perfect impact with a stinging shot that just evaded both home and away against their rivals.

A second yellow card for Cowley

meant it was all one-way pressure from Alvechurch in the final 20 minutes, but there was no way through and the trophy ended up in the hands of Sporting skipper Leon Broadhurst.

On Saturday, it was Yates' fine finish after going clean through on goal which the substitute dinked an audacious effort goalwards to beat Beardmore but strike the underside of the bar.

With Tyrell Hamilton on the pitch for the latter stages, the forward almost made the perfect impact with a stinging shot that just evaded both home and away against their rivals.

A second yellow card for Cowley

# Noman stars as Entaco warm up for derby test in style

**CRICKET:** REDDITCH Entaco go into Saturday's derby with Astwood Bank in fine spirits, and will hope to make it three wins on the bounce following last weekend's impressive 117-run victory at Old Hill.

Adam Gailey's side were a class above their rivals at the Haden Hill Ground in Cradley Heath last weekend, recording

back-to-back victories for the first time in the Worcestershire League Premier Division since then.

Scoring 229-8 after deciding to bat first, Entaco's Russell Southwick (78) and Gailey (58) led the way for their side, before Noman Mohammad Chaudhry (5-37) proceeded to wreak havoc on the Old Hill wicket

with a five-for that helped skittle out the hosts in the 30th over.

After losing two wickets early on, Redditch recovered through the partnership of 118 runs between Gailey and Southwick which served to set the tone for the remainder of the innings.

Sam Wright (4-53) and Amir Manzoor (3-35) slowed the run rate but Redditch saw out their

50 overs thanks to the reliable Dan Protherough (21 not out).

In reply, only three Old Hill batsmen were able to record double figures as Entaco's bowlers took a stranglehold on the game.

Bilal Hassan (18), Suhayl Iqbal (20) and Amir Manzoor (28) battled on for the hosts, but Entaco wrapped up victory

in double quick time. Meanwhile, Astwood Bank made it two wins on the spin following a fine 164-run win over Colwall.

With skipper Rob West (76) and Tom Underhill (50) on song, the hosts hit 310-8 at Sambourne Lane to lay down the marker for their eventual triumph.

Unsurprisingly, the visitors struggled to match Astwood Bank's high scoring, on an afternoon when Dan Taylor tore through the Colwall middle-order in ruthless style to finish with 5-17 in 7.3 overs. There were also two wickers apiece for Daniel Brookes and Alan White as Colwall were all out for 146 in the 37th over.



## Football

## NON-LEAGUE

## Moors make point after Dallas goal

FC HALIFAX 1

SOLIHULL MOORS 1

By BEN TYLER

A DESERVED point was earned by Solihull Moors thanks to Andrew Dallas' first-half header in a hard-fought battle in West Yorkshire.

An open first 20 minutes saw the visiting Moors show some early signs of promise, sending inches past the post on six minutes courtesy of Callum Howe's towering header from Ryan Barnett's delivery, while Andrew Dallas could not keep his 18th-minute effort on target

when attempting to lob Shaymen custodian Sam Johnson.

But what Dallas could not achieve with his feet, he certainly made amends for with his head, guiding a clever nod into the net from another pinpoint Barnett centre on 34 minutes - a lead that Neal Ardley's men maintained at the break.

Clearly determined to take matters into his own hands, Mani Dieseruvwe emphatically hauled Town back on level terms just after the hour mark.

Being teed up by teammate Harvey Gilmour, Halifax's top scorer thrashed home a sweet strike into the net from the penalty area edge to level on 64 minutes with Boot well beaten.

That goal appeared to turn the tide, with the hosts going close to a second when Milli Alli's perseverance to keep the ball in, beat a man and then try his luck rippled the netting - albeit the outside of the Moors goal.

Louis White forced Boot to keep out an attempt from outside the box in the final minute of regulation time, whilst Sam Johnson had to

deny substitute Josh Kelly's 94th-minute snapshot, though there ultimately would be no winner.

## SOLIHULL MOORS

**(4-3-3):** Boot; Clarke, Howe, Gudger, Mills; Osborne, Maycock (Sbarra, 72), Whelan; Barnett, Cybulski (Beck, 67), Dallas (Kelly, 81). Subs (not used): Roberts, Donawa.

**SOLIHULL STAR MAN:** Ryan Barnett.

A TWO-GOAL show from AFC Wulfrunians' Jumaane Meggoe meant the Wulfs cruised through at the expense of Brocton.

It took all of 16 minutes for AFC to hit the front, courtesy of Meggoe's tap in after Jamie Meddows' effort had been turned onto the post by the visiting 'keeper.

And the home forward had his brace seven minutes before the break, displaying a striker's instinct to rob possession from an opposition de-

AFC WULFRUNIANS 3  
BROCTON 0  
By Ben Tyler

fender before nudging the ball home with ease.

An efficient performance was then capped off when Harry Farnsworth rippled the net from distance in the final minute of normal time, giving Wulfrunians the fine ending they warranted.

**STAR MAN:** Jumaane Meggoe (AFC Wulfrunians)

**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆

## NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

A THOMAS Corner double proved the winning formula for league leaders **North Ferriby** as the Villagers maintained their six-point lead at the top.

T'Nique Fisher headed home a tenth-minute opener via a Josh Morrall cross, prior to Corner's first of the afternoon - another header - from Danny Emerton's corner four minutes later. Corner got his second on 66 minutes after converting on the rebound from Danny Buttle's initial effort; before the latter sealed matters in the final minute.

**Winterton Rangers** kept up the pace courtesy of a 2-0 victory over **Barton Town**, where Martin Pembleton and Josh Walker both netted.

Ben Greche-Brooksbank set the tone for **Thackley's** routine 3-0 win at **Frickley Athletic**, with Aidan Chippendale and Thomas Greaves also on the scoresheet.

**Hallam** also won by the same scoreline, seeing off **Maltby Main** thanks to Kieren Watson's double and Oliver Fearon's penalty on the stroke of half time.

**Eccleshill United** won 4-1 at **Goole** thanks to two from Devonte Newman-Morton, and contributions from Benjamin Gordon and Kiari Vampant.

Iyrwah Gooden's brace brought **Emley** a 2-0 success over **Bottesford Town**, while Kayle Price was also at the double in **Golcar United's** win by the same scoreline over **Silsden**.

**Penistone Church** and **Knaresborough Town** played out a 1-1 draw, while **Hemsworth Miners Welfare** edged past **Handsworth** thanks to Ben Gelder's late winner. Meanwhile, **Albion Sports** and **Garforth Town** drew 0-0.

BEN TYLER



# ETHAN'S SHOCKS



# LEVELLER SILKMEN

HEART-BREAKER:  
Ashton celebrate  
Ethan Beckford's goal  
PICTURE: James Goodhall



## Fantastic Yellows

**T**HERE was heartbreak for Macclesfield after Ethan Beckford's leveller earned a share of the spoils for ten-man Ashton Athletic in a 1-1 draw at Brocstedes Park.

A second-half red card for the hosts' Matthew Reid meant momentum swung in the Silkmen's favour, something which Kielen Adams took advantage

### NORTH WEST COUNTIES

By Ben Tyer

of when tapping home from Aaron Dwyer's centre. But Athletic kept themselves in the contest, rescuing the game with eight minutes remaining as Beckford rounded the keeper to score.

Nearest challengers Wythenshawe Town were held to a

## make their point

2-2 stalemate after lowly Burroughs struck at the death, despite Harvey Whyte and Greg Wilkinson twice giving the hosts the lead.

Longridge Town earned the result of the afternoon by thrashing Lower Breck 5-1, while Northwich Victoria ensured further misery for basement side Litherland REMY-CA in a 4-0 rout on away soil.

Daniel Cockerline's stoppage-time leveller earned AFC

Liverpool a point in a 2-2 draw at Padiham after Marcus Perry and Ryan McKenna cancelled out Fidan Hajdari's opener.

Congleton Town were held by the same scoreline at Run-corn Town to stay third while Joseph Duckworth was at the double in Winsford United's 3-1 defeat of Avro.

Leo Riley scored twice on Friday to lift Vauxhall Motors to fourth with a 2-1 victory over Prestwich Heys.

## FOOTBALL

## Brakes left pointless by early goals

BRACKLEY TOWN	2
LEAMINGTON	1

A FIRST half double from hosts Brackley Town ensured Leamington finished empty handed in this bank holiday tussle

The Brakes came under fire in the opening period and struggled to cope with Town's stranglehold on possession, conceding just four minutes in when Lee Ndlovu planted a header past Jake Weaver.

A rare Dan Turner opening was flashed wide on 22 minutes sparking a spell of Leamington pressure where Simeon Maye twice went close, first with a stinging volley and then with a header straight at Danny Lewis.

Matt Lowe's dinked finish doubled Brackley's lead before the interval while Ndlovu almost had a second the other side of the break but for the woodwork rescuing the visitors.

Junior English gave Paul Holleran's troops a glimmer of hope with an instinctive back-heel finish three minutes from time but it would prove too little, too late to salvage anything from the game.

## REDDITCH UTO 0 TAMWORTH 2

By Ben Tyer

TWO goals in the space of four first-half minutes won Tamworth the day at the Trico Stadium as Henri Wilder and Dan Creaney guided the Lambs to a 2-0 victory.

In a first half full of goal-mouth action at either end, it was the hosts who started most promisingly with Kieran Day's first-time drive flashing narrowly over the crossbar following a poor clearance. Dan Sweeney and Curtis Hutson also forced saves from Lambs keeper Jasbir Singh.

Tamworth threatened mostly down the left flank with Wilder and Jack Concannon linking up particularly well – the latter dragging wide from a good

# LAMBS AT THE DOUBLE SHOW REDS NO MERCY

cut-back from his teammate.

And it would be another Wilder cross from the left that led to the 32nd-minute opener, when the full-back's centre inadvertently hit the post to evade Kieran Boucher and crawl across the line.

Four minutes later, a foul on Jack Thomas inside the penalty area allowed Lambs' leading scor-

er Creaney to sweep home from 12 yards.

Hutson did force a crucial save in first-half stoppage time from Singh, but Redditch had it all to do at the break.

A more subdued second half followed with a long-range Tom Rankin attempt the closest United came to halving the deficit.

STAR MAN: Henri Wilder (Tamworth)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★☆☆

## REDDITCH 4 LOWESTOFT TOWN 2

By Ben Tyer

REDDITCH United completed an emphatic comeback aided by Ahmed Ali's double.

Lowestoft left-back Matthew Brown saw a foray into the Redditch penalty area rewarded when gifted the space to fire the ball through Reece Francis and into the net for a much-deserved lead.

Despite their dominance, Lowestoft were unable to find a second, and were made to pay when Harry Franklin arrived late to meet Jordan Mills' pass.

And Redditch found themselves in front on 50 minutes after starting the second half in much brighter fashion than they had the first.

# COMEBACK KIDS REDS THANK ALI FOR BRACE

Robbie Bunn's crisp free-kick delivery was glanced past Elvijs Putnins by the head of Ali, before Bunn tested the Lowestoft keeper with a low effort from a direct free-kick.

Leam Howards would give the Reds some daylight when finishing off an excellent move that saw an initial chance spurned in the box; whilst the lead was almost extended further

when Shaquille Leachman-Whittingham's solo run saw the finish tipped away.

Shaun Bammant headed in Lowestoft's only second half opportunity to set up a nervy finale for Redditch, one that was settled when Ali swept home his second to cap an impressive Reds display.

STAR MAN: Ahmed Ali (Redditch)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



ALEX Marsh's early double was enough to guide Hitchin Town to a fourth victory of the season and condemn lowly Redditch United to further misery.

The Reds were left shell-shocked when the visitors took a third-minute lead, courtesy of Marsh's close range finish from Jhai Dhillon's cross.

The Canaries doubled their lead six minutes later when Jack Green's cross was flicked on inside the penalty area, with Marsh alert to volley high into the net past a helpless Kieran Boucher.

Dhillon continued to cause havoc and almost

# MARSH AT THE DOUBLE TO FURTHER REDS WOES

made it three shortly after, skipping past a Redditch player before sending his effort wide of the far post.

Ian King's men finally posted their first effort on target on the half-hour mark when Romario Martin held off a defender before forcing a low save from Charles Horlock.

That was as close as the hosts came to salvaging anything in the first half, but they grew into the game after the restart.

But when it came to applying the finishing touch, the Reds were found lacking, with Martin fluffing a golden chance late on from Callum Coyle's first-time cross.

Late drama saw Horlock shown a straight red for handling the ball outside of the area, but there was little time for the hosts to take advantage.

STAR MAN: Jhai Dhillon (Hitchin)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



**SOLIHULL MOORS 2**  
Ball 2, McCallum 59  
**DAGENHAM & R 1**  
Grant 20

# RETURN OF THE MAC IS MUSIC TO TIM'S EARS

By Ben Tyler

MATCH-WINNER Paul McCallum was hailed by his manager Tim Flowers after his second-half header gave Solihull Moors all three points against the blunt Daggers.

The 26-year-old was back amongst the goals for the first time since mid-August after an injury lay-off, pushing the Moors to within a point of the play-off places.

"Let's be honest - we've missed him," Flowers said. "He was playing really well early in the season, we went down to Woking and he picked up a groin issue, and we couldn't get him on the pitch."

He finally got to the root of it and he's had some rest and recovery with the physio and medical department. "We've managed to welcome him back in and you can't believe how delighted I am to see him - he's a top centre-forward and a good player."

ball on a plate for the alert Ball to plant a header past Elliott Justham into the bottom-left corner for an almost instant lead.

It was a rare highlight for an otherwise forgettable first 20 minutes, until the visitors equalised through Grant, who got down low to meet Alex McQueen's deep free-kick and direct the ball into the far corner of the net.

Moors responded positively with a number of half-chances falling to McCallum, who glanced a looping ball from Gavin Gunning narrowly wide

before coming within inches of meeting Callum Howe's low, driven cross-shot across the penalty area.

But when a clear chance came to him in the second half, he took it, heading a pinpoint cross from Jake Beesley across Justham and into the bot-

## MATCH STATS SOLIHULL V DAGENHAM

5	SHOTS ON TARGET	2
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	0
9	CORNERS	2
3	OFFSIDE	0
8	FOULS CONCEDED	7
2	YELLOW CARDS	2
0	RED CARDS	0

**SOLIHULL** (4-3-3): Boot 6; Vaughan 7; Gudge 7; Howe 6; Redford 6; Gunning 6; Storer 6; Ball 7 (Hawkrigge 52, 7); Wright 7; McCallum 7 (Yussuf 79, 6); Beesley 8. **Subs not used:** Williams, Hancox, Neville.  
**DAGENHAM** (4-1-2-3): Justham 6; Wright 6; Charles 7; Clark 6; Stevenson 6; Brundle 6; McQueen 7 (Dobson 79, 7); Robinson 6; Kandi 6 (Quigley 67, 6); Grant 7 (Luque 79, 6); Graham 6. **Subs not used:** Eleftheriou, Wood

**CITY of Liverpool** edged their top-of-the-table encounter with **Congleton Town** 2-1 thanks to Craig Cairns' 55th minute winner, extending their lead at the top to six points.

And title rivals **Runcorn Town** maintained their grip on third place despite having to settle for a 1-1 draw with mid-table **Irlam**.

The viewing of the day was probably to be found at Wincham Park as **Northwich Victoria** were edged out 3-2 by fourth-placed **Bootle**, despite the away side blowing a three-goal lead.

**Burscough** handed out a 5-0 drubbing to **Abbey Hey** thanks in part to a brace from Connor Findlayson, whilst Carl Grimshaw's hat-trick earned **Charnock Richard** all three points in a 4-0 romp of **Litherland REMYCA**.

**Winsford United** claimed a crucial victory against **Padiham**, a David Short hat-trick and a Jack Tinning goal earning a 4-1 victory to move further away from relegation trouble.

**Whitchurch Aipton** fell to a 2-0 defeat to relegation-threatened **West Didsbury & Chorlton**, James Coombes and Lee Gavin scoring.

Joshua Nicholson's strike gave **Ashton Athletic** a narrow victory over lowly **Hanley Town**, pushing the home side up to 13th. **Barnoldswick Town's** clash with **1874 Northwich** was postponed and the match between **Squires Gate** and **Silsden** came to an abrupt end due to a power failure.

BEN TYLER

A second-minute opener from midfielder James Ball gave the hosts the dream start, before Dagenham hauled themselves on level terms 18 minutes later through Reece Grant's diving header.

"I thought from there on in, we were camped in and we just couldn't get that finishing touch," said Flowers. "The message at half-time was not to get frustrated and to keep putting balls in behind."

"Ultimately, we thought the goal might come and obviously it did, we hit the bar, we had one chalked off - God only knows why."

"In the end I think it was a deserved victory." Danny Wright put the

ton corner. Alex Gudge almost sealed the win with a header against the bar from a corner kick, while Joan Luque clipped the goal frame late on with a first-time attempt down the other end - the visitors' only effort on goal other than Grant's leveller.

Frustrated Daggers manager Peter Taylor pointed to two defensive lapses that cost his side, and said: "You can't lose concentration like we did in those moments."

"We remained in the game but two errors have cost us in the end."

STAR MAN: Jake Beesley (S Moors)  
ATT: 1,214  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★  
REFEREE: James Bell

**LUIS Collier's** brace was enough to earn leaders **Tring Athletic** a 2-0 win at **Arlesey Town** and wrap up eighth successive win.

Following a goalless first half, Collier was on hand to break the deadlock, tapping the ball into an empty net after a teammate's header hit the post. He then doubled the lead three minutes later to keep Tring perched on top of the division.

Their afternoon was made sweeter by news of second-placed **Newport Pagnell Town's** 6-1 humbling at **Harfield United**. Jim Burnside cancelled out Luke Baldwin's stunner for the hosts, before Richard Paquette's brace and a Tash Jordan strike put Harfield in pole position. Sam Shaw then compounded Newport's misery with a second-half double.

**London Colney's** struggles continue following a 7-1 thrashing at **Crawley Green**, with Mark Bunker, Oluwanimilo Ajigbolamu and Phil Draycott adding to Sam Holmes' hat-trick.

Goals from Cole Butler, Codi Spavins, Lorrell Smith and Alex Carbonnier took **Biggleswade United** to a 4-1 victory over **Broadfields United**, with Rex Kimona netting for the visitors.

**Aylesbury Vale Dynamos** came from behind to win by the same margin against **Baldock Town**.

Andrew Brennan's 90th-minute winner earned **Oxhey Jets** a 3-2 comeback win, despite trailing twice to **Dunstable Town**, while **Eynesbury Rovers**, **Leverstock Green**, **Colney Heath** and **Potton United** all won.

BEN TYLER









Lili-Rose Hunt pictured after her successful outing at the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Junior Girls' County Golf Championship in July last year.

## Lili-Rose wins double award

**GOLF:** Bromsgrove School pupil Lili-Rose Hunt scooped the Worcestershire County Championship Girls and Net awards at the Worcestershire County Golf presentation night last Sunday.

The 14-year-old had a breakthrough year in 2019, lifting the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Junior Girls' County Championship and IAPS titles, before ranking fourth in the girls' County Champion of Champions event.

Those successes were enough to qualify for the European Championship finals in Cadix, Spain, where she finished 17th overall, and earn a call-up to the regional England golf squad.

Hunt was also presented with a "Certificate of Outstanding Achievement" at the awards night, which was hosted by Kings Norton Golf Club.

## Barley Mow extend lead

**POOL:** The first set of 2020 fixtures in the Droitwich Pool League brought no change at the top of the Mid-West Premier.

Table-topping Barley Mow racked up their 13th win of the campaign with a 6-3 success over The Dovey to extend their lead to 15 points. The Dovey drop to ninth in the standings.

Masons All Chalked Up stay on a title charge in second after a crucial 5-1 win against Pillar of Salt, while The Salt 'n' Ash's are a point behind third-placed Never in Salford after a victory by the same scoreline against The Dorevale Arms.

The result of the week was undoubtedly The Pillar of Dreams' 9-0 whitewash of strugglers The Star & Garter, which was enough to move them into fifth.

A narrow 5-1 victory for DWMC took them past Wessie Wanders, while The Top Pole had little problem in disposing of Rifle No Mans 7-2 to earn revenge for a 5-4 defeat earlier in the season.

## Monners bid to bounce back

**RUGBY UNION:** DROITWICH RFC will be searching for an immediate response to last weekend's 20-17 defeat to Hereford when they visit Kenilworth on Saturday (2.30pm).

The result at the Glyn Mitchell Memorial Ground was a third in a row for the Monners, who sit 11th in the Midlands One West, and now face a tough task against a Kenilworth side who are flying high in third.

Adam Drew's side, though, will take heart from their opponents' 28-14 loss at the hands of Whitechurch.

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# U13s start medal spree for B&R

**ATHLETICS:** THE ANNUAL Worcestershire Association Cross Country Championships at Warley Woods proved to be a happy hunting ground for Bromsgrove & Redditch Athletic Club's top talents.

The undulating course provided particularly good underfoot conditions despite the recent wet weather and, on what was a bright and sunny day, B&R athletes revelled in the conditions to bag many individual and team medals.

The U13 boys set the tone in the day's first race when Will Pridden took individual gold, Sam Hemby silver and Willem Hemby bronze, so it was unsurprising the trio took a well-deserved team gold.

Hot on their heels was Nathan Sanders who finished fifth, with Joshua Evans a close sixth, and Spencer Mayne completed a good race in 20th position.

Determined not to be left out of the glory, the U13 girls also took an excellent team gold in the next race as Hannah Dale finished fifth, Philippa Taylor fifth and Amelle Ranger sixth.

Also having good runs were team-mates Tola Kustra and Megan Charles in 11th and 14th positions respectively.

The U15 boys and girls both



From left: Under-13 girls' team champions Philippa Taylor, Hannah Dale and Amelle Ranger; under-13 boys' team champions Willem Hemby, Will Pridden and Sam Hemby and U20 women's champion Beth Sykes.

came away with team silver. For the boys, Owen Alford took individual bronze and he was backed up by Seb Purvis in ninth and Harry Hughes 10th.

The U15 girls had Esme Ranger taking individual gold, while Lucy Hatfield and Lauren Coates finished fifth and seventh respectively to cement the team's silver.

The fourth U15 girl, Emily Dyer, finished well placed in 11th.

There were no team prizes for the U17 and U20 women but individual gold went to



Beth Sykes in the older age group before younger sister Lauren took bronze in the U17 age group. Also in the U17 group, Rebecca Newland ran well for sixth place.

The U17 trio of men took team silver, led by Harrison Mayne who also picked up an individual silver, Luke Richardson and Harry Williams finished fourth and ninth respectively.

Having been shown the way by the juniors, the club's senior and masters athletes just had to then deliver their own

medals to round off a successful day's racing for the club.

Firstly, the trio of Caroline Warrington, Natasha Newton and Liz Vaughan carried the women's senior/masters team to bronze, with Warrington taking individual gold and Calvin Scottcutt 40th and Malcolm Duff 47th.

In a field of 84 runners, Kevin Lanchman finished 40th, Scott Beverley 54th, Dean Harteley 56th and Anthony Warner 59th.

Report compiled by B&R chairman Len Quarity.

# That was our biggest win ever to go top, roars Kelly

**FOOTBALL:** Bromsgrove Sporting 1 Tamworth 0 Southern League Premier Central Report by Ben Tyler and Max Banner

BRENDAN Kelly says Bromsgrove Sporting's win over Tamworth to take them top of the table was the biggest in the club's history.

Leon Broadhurst's 58th-minute header, coupled with a superhuman display by goalkeeper Daniel Platt took the Roosters to the summit of the league for the first time in their debut season at Step Three.

Previous leaders Tamworth still have three games in hand on Sporting, though that mattered little to delighted Kelly whose side have completed the double over their rivals.

"The win is the biggest result the club's ever had," said the Bromsgrove manager.

"We were going into the game on a great run against the red-hot league favourites, but with the squad very much stretched."

"We had the big crowd backing us



Tom Taylor was imperious for Sporting. Pictures by David Besley.

and to take six points off them in the same season is fantastic, I'm absolutely delighted with the result."

The opening chance of the game fell the way of the visitors when Dan Creaney beat the offside trap to go clear through on goal, only to be denied by

Platt. Platt kept out Creaney a second time, clearing with his feet this time after the forward had found a way through Bromsgrove's defence.

Two chances then fell for Tamworth's Bilal Yafai midway through the half, but he failed to test Bromsgrove's custodian Platt with either attempt.

Sporting's first real chance of note came on the half-hour mark, with defender Tom Taylor had two efforts from close-range kept out following a Greg Mills free-kick.

In the final five minutes of the half, two further opportunities for Creaney went to waste. The first, a strike off-target, was followed by a second attempt which was hit straight at Platt.

The first opening of the second half fell to Sporting's Gift Mussa, but his low shot lacked any real direction or pace to trouble Lambs stopper Jasbir Singh, before Tamworth's Rhys Hoones also failed to test Platt from a good position.

But the breakthrough goal came approaching the hour mark. Mills' free-kick into the penalty area was flicked on by a Tamworth defender into the path



Sporting's Gift Mussa sends the ball forward as Ryan Bewick challenges.

of Broadhurst, who nodded into the top corner from close range.

Platt was equal to a stinging strike from James Fry, saving with his fingertips as Sporting managed to hold firm in spite of late Tamworth pressure.

Instead, it was Bromsgrove who went

closest to scoring with the last opportunity of the game. With Singh stranded after going forward for a late corner kick, Shaquille McDonald picked up a clearance before rolling his strike from 25 yards narrowly wide of the empty net.

# Saltme urged to keep up pressure for title

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivanmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** MARK Owen has challenged his Droitwich Spa players to build an unassailable lead at the top of West Midlands (Regional) League Division One.

The Saltnen made it eight games unbeaten in all competitions with their straight-forward 4-0 home victory against Willenhall last Saturday, though their Division One League Cup game at Bromsgrove Town was postponed on Tuesday night.

A Connor Collins hat-trick against Willenhall and one from Jack Davies kept Spa on top of the pile, with a number of games still in hand on their nearest rivals – including three on second-placed Old Wallfrians.

"To be honest, it was one of our most complete league performances of the season so far," said manager Owen. "We played brilliantly, the football was free-flowing and we probably should have had more."

Having continued their fine run of form, Owen now says the target is to go clear at the top of the table.

"The next job, now we're top, is to stamp our authority on the league," he said.

But nothing is won today, nothing was won at Christmas [when Droitwich first went top], all that matters is how the table looks in April. We've all agreed that we'll take a game at a time, that's the mentality that we've adopted going forward.

The other four weeks, we've not played as well as we'd have liked overall, we've been



Haydn Morris, left, is challenged, while Droitwich teammate Lewis Phillips, right, protests to the referee. Picture by Mathew Mason.

a bit and miss in some games. But we're working on things every week to try and improve."

The visitors did have their moments, notably when Darren Derrick drove a free-kick from 20 yards out on target, forcing keeper Matty Oliver to tip over.

With ten minutes of the opening half remaining, Droitwich had the goal their play had merited when Lennon's bursting run took him around the keeper and allowed him to tee up Collins for a tap-in.

After a change of formation, West Heath made it 2-0. Alex Wesley's dart-

ing turn proved powerful with a cross into the path of Davies, who volleyed first-time high into the net.

Droitwich remained on top in the second period, adding their third through Collins just after the hour mark, before the forward wrapped up his hat-trick with a curling effort into the bottom corner 15 minutes from time.

Owen will have a fully-fit squad available on Saturday (3pm) when Droitwich host Bushdellhome at Walsley Meadow.

The Saltnen sent Bushdellhome to their heaviest defeat of the campaign in October's 7-1 rout but Owen warned his players cannot be complacent.

"Every single Saturday is a challenge, so we've got to keep taking each game as it comes," he said.

# Spartak snatch points to leave Fairfield frustrated

**FOOTBALL:** BARNET Green Spartak marked their return to league action for the first time in three months with a 2-1 victory at Fairfield Villa.

Finlay Gaynor put the visitors 1-0 up just before half-time last Saturday and Darren Green doubled stoppage-time header.

Barnet Green, whose last league outing was on October 5 as a result of cup games and postponements, leapfrog their rivals into ninth in Midlands League Division Two, with Fairfield dropping to 11th.

The meeting at the Recreation Ground was a cagey affair as expected on a difficult pitch, with the visitors battling for possession and territory in Fairfield's half.

A half-chance fell to Fairfield's recent signing Ross Dempster, whose effort was blocked by Barnet's defender, before a headed opportunity also went to waste for the striker.

Barnet Green rarely threatened but just before the half-time whistle, the

wind caught a free-kick from Gaynor and the ball looped over backpedalling keeper Elliott Hart to give the visitors a priceless lead.

Fairfield were on top in the second half but were unable to capitalise on a number of set-piece opportunities.

Instead Barnet Green struck next when Green cut inside and whipped the ball into the corner of the net with 20 minutes remaining.

The arrears were finally reduced in the second minute of stoppage time when Bloomer thumped a header home, but it was too late to start a comeback.

With their trip to FC Stratford on Saturday in the semi-final of the Presidents Cup, with a date yet to be announced.

Meanwhile, Fairfield are on the road at Boldmere Sports & Social Falcons in the league on Saturday (2pm).

The Swans have been drawn away to Coventry Aris in the semi-final of the Presidents Cup, with a date yet to be announced.

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# Bromsgrove A strengthen grip on top spot

**TENNIS:** HAMPANT Bromsgrove A stormed to a 10-0 whitewash of Bewdley to continue their Division Two title charge in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Men's Winter League.

As a result, Bromsgrove are 14 points clear of second-placed Beccoford having played a game more.

Jim Round and Finley Cook set the tone with a 6-0 tie in the first rubber, while Adam Drew's side, though, will take heart from their opponents' 28-14 loss at the hands of Whitechurch.

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Bromsgrove's C team were not quite as fortunate in their Division Four East derby at leaders Droitwich C, losing 8-2. Pete Morris and Simon Halliday came from a set down to win 5-7, 6-4, 7-6 in the opening rubber against the hosts' Neil Bates and Jon Sarriegue.

But that was as good as it got for Bromsgrove, with their second pairing of Adam Drew and Finley Cook losing 6-2, 6-3 to Richard Clive and Ben Seal, followed by a 6-2, 6-1 defeat at the hands of Paul Marshall and Martha Lester 6-4, 6-3.

More fight was shown in the final rubber in an attempt to rescue a draw, but Morris and Halliday were beaten, losing 7-5, 6-2 to Spender and Cook.

A 6-2, 6-1 triumph by Dudek and Stratford then rounded off the thrashing against Hughes and Storey.

Bromsgrove's B team were not quite as fortunate in their Division Four East derby at leaders Droitwich C, losing 8-2. Pete Morris and Simon Halliday came from a set down to win 5-7, 6-4, 7-6 in the opening rubber against the hosts' Neil Bates and Jon Sarriegue.

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**SUNDAY FOOTBALL:** BASEMENT side Rubery Legends chalked up their first win of the Bromsgrove & District League Division Two season in style after smashing title-chasers AFC Norton.

Rubery turned the tables on their second-placed hosts at Dwellings Lane, clinically taking their chances. Daniel Griffin, Kai Brooks and Jake Booton all netted twice, while Josh Horens claimed the other, a home Timmoor, West Heath made it 2-0. Alex Wesley's dart-

ing run into the penalty area resulted in the substitute being brought down, allowing Jake Wicketts convert the resulting spot-kick.

Chris McCrory tapped home a pinpoint cross to wrap the scoring with West Heath's third.

Peter Jenvey hit a hat-trick as Division One's Hizza United 6-3 in Coton Old Boys rise a place into

Catshill move up a place into fifth on seven points, while Hizza are fourth. There were no surprises at the top in Division Three, where leaders AFC Blackwell swept aside Easme United 4-0.

A double from Ross McGuinness and goals from Craig Goldsley and Luke Rowlands keep Blackwell a point clear of second-placed Bromsgrove Parishes, albeit having played a game more.

Coton Old Boys rise a place into

Jack Cole replying for the visitors. Catshill move up a place into fifth on seven points, while Hizza are fourth. There were no surprises at the top in Division Three, where leaders AFC Blackwell swept aside Easme United 4-0.

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# Rouslers on Red alert for derby day test – Kelly

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bultivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** BRENDAN Kelly envisages a number of changes to his Bromsgrove Sporting team when the Rouslers head to Redditch United in Saturday's crunch derby clash (3pm).

Last weekend's 4-1 defeat at Barwell was the latest humbling at the Victoria Ground, raising further questions over Sporting's stumbling home form.

It left the Rouslers fourth in the Southern Premier Central table, four points clear of fifth-placed Rushall Olympic and sixth-placed Stourbridge.

While Leon Broadhurst headed home a close-range equaliser minutes after Tristan Dunkley had put the visiting Canaries in front, persistent poor defending led to a second-half downfall with Kai Williams, Brady Hickey and Omololant Omotola putting Bromsgrove to the sword.

Manager Kelly, who has been left bewildered by the Rouslers' downturn in fortunes on home soil this season, has challenged his chosen starting XI for this weekend's trip to The Trico Stadium to prove their worth.

"Some of the lads who played last weekend won't get the chance on Saturday," said the Sporting boss. "It's important that the lads who do come in make the most of it."

"I can imagine more than one or two changes will be made, maybe as many as five if I need to. As a team collectively, we must get back to basics. It's great scoring all of those goals this season but to have been lacking in concentration the way that we have recently is a concern."



In a call to arms to the Bromsgrove faithful, Kelly has asked the club's fans to back his side to the hilt once again to give Sporting an advantage on away soil.

"The majority of our fans have been fantastic and have always been there home and away to back us," he added.

"If you asked any of our fans before the season started if they'd have taken us being fourth with ten games to go, everyone would take it. We still need to remember what an achievement it has been for us."

"I have no doubt they will be there in their numbers yet again this weekend and in the games that remain."

Bromsgrove were 7-1 winners when the two sides met in January at the Victoria Ground in a memorable first competitive clash since Sporting's rebirth in 2009. Two goals from Will Shorroek and Richard Gregory, plus strikes from Greg Mills, Mike Taylor and Shaquille McDonald sealed Sporting's success.

**Debutant Correy Davidson, right, was able to hold his head high after Saturday's Barwell defeat. Picture by Richard Bowcott Event Photography.**

While bottom-of-the-table Redditch's struggles have continued since then, the club finally put an end to their 25-match losing streak in the league by beating Nuneaton Borough in late February.

"They've had an improvement in their games recently, putting an end to that losing run and only being defeated by the odd goal in the last few games," said Kelly.

"It'll be a much different game this time around, but we'll be ready for that challenge. We can't look at what they're doing and must continue focusing on ourselves instead."

"I think we've missed not just Mikey [Taylor], but also Jak Hickman too. Thankfully with the number of games postponed recently, we've only missed the pair for two or three games at most so far."

An update on the availability on the injured pair has been positive and their return will provide a welcome boost to the Rouslers in the end-of-season run-in.

The club have signed full-back Hickman on a permanent deal from League One side Coventry City after the 21-year-old has been on loan since the start of the season, while top scorer Taylor is back in training and is targeting a return for Tuesday's trip to Tarnsford Town (7.45pm).

Kelly has also hinted that another mid-fielder is close to signing, subject to league ratification.

■ Match report – Page 31

## Harris sparks fightback



Will Harris, pictured in possession, was a leading figure in Bromsgrove's second-half fightback at Kettering. Picture by Andy Jepson.

**RUGBY UNION:** BROMSGROVE did not make life easy for themselves in the 19-19 Midlands Premier draw at Kettering last weekend.

Trailing 19-0 at the break, Dan Protherough's Bears roared back with two Josh Holt scores. In addition to a try and two conversions from Will Harris, at Waverley Road.

Sixth-placed Bromsgrove remain on

course for a top-half finish but could break into the top five with Sandbach nine points in front having played one game more.

With no fixture this weekend, Bromsgrove return with a fixture at Finstall Road against Shropshire side Newport on Saturday March 21.

■ Match report and reaction – Page 30

## Sporting boss fears season may be over

**FOOTBALL:** BRENDAN Kelly believes the Southern League Premier Central will come to a premature end following the suspension of non-league football.

Bromsgrove Sporting - who find themselves fourth in the table at present - have enjoyed a remarkable first season at Step Three, but may now have to wait until a later date to complete their remaining fixtures while the coronavirus pandemic rages on.

And the Rouslers manager is of the belief that his side will not even be afforded the chance to see the campaign out.

"I think that'll be it done," said Kelly. "I think the league will be scrapped and started again next season."

"We very much want to see it through, but the safety of the players and supporters is the most important thing."

"It's up to the powers that be, but we really are in

the unknown."

While Kelly and his managerial counterparts are no strangers to dilemmas - be it squad selection, tactics or on the transfer front - the issues caused by the shutdown offer fresh problems previously unknown at this level of the game.

"There are definitely concerns, when there is no income but still the usual outgoings - paying rates and rent on the ground and a few of the lads being on contracts - plus the fact we've had to cancel all of the functions booked at the club," Sporting's manager added.

"All managers have been asking each other the same questions, it's new territory for everyone."

"But to be consistently arranged which we've now had to cancel, training has had to be called off. The lads will keep kicking over at home as best as they can."

"I think we could've had a better go of it as far as the title is concerned."

"But to be consistently inside the top three or four in our first season at this level, and in a [Worcestershire Senior] Cup final, I think even the most critical fans will agree it's been a very progressive season."

"But with the gadgets that they have, they'll have to

post their stats in the group chat to see where they're at."

Should the eventuality of a cancellation to the season take place in the coming weeks or months, the Bromsgrove boss says his side can look back with pride on their efforts this term, adding: "You've got to say it's been a huge achievement from all involved."

"I think we could've done better, I've got high standards and the players know that. We had a very difficult start, we hit a run of form around October and November and haven't been out of the top eight since then."

"I think we could've had a better go of it as far as the title is concerned."

"But to be consistently inside the top three or four in our first season at this level, and in a [Worcestershire Senior] Cup final, I think even the most critical fans will agree it's been a very progressive season."

"But with the gadgets that they have, they'll have to

## Three-goal Villa at the double

**FOOTBALL:** FAIRFIELD Villa completed the double over Bolehall Swifts, easing to a comfortable 3-0 victory at the Recreation Ground.

In what is likely to be the Swans' final fixture for the foreseeable future, centre-back Matthew Powell's first half headed opener - followed by quickfire goals from Alfie Bloomer and Pete Jenvey in the second - helped Fairfield enter the unexpected shutdown in style.

Keith Draper's men were 2-0 victors in January's reverse fixture, and as a result of their latest success strengthen their ambitions of a top-half finish in Midland League Division Two in ninth place.

While a somewhat subdued opening meant no real chances of note were created by either side, the hosts did look the more comfortable in possession.

Bloomer forced the first attempt on target, albeit fairly comfortable work for the Swifts keeper. The winger also well-placed to meet a clearance to the edge of the area and thump a first-time shot into the net that left the opposition goalkeeper with no chance.

A knock to Ludlow proved the only downside to an otherwise positive afternoon for Fairfield, with his replacement Ethan Hanks twice going close to adding to the scoresheet.

His first, a header which needed to be kept out, was followed by a strike which the Bolehall custodian was also equal to.

The substitution of Jenvey made all the difference and helped make a positive influence on Fairfield's attacking play.

Sure enough, within minutes of the change, Bloomer doubled the hosts' advantage with a wonderful strike from a narrow angle on 62 minutes.

That was followed by Jenvey's

## Bronze helps girls maintain position

**SCHOOL SPORT:** A BRONZE medal helped maintain Bromsgrove School's position as the top-ranking school in the sport at the National Schools' finals last weekend.

Despite missing out on a place in the final - which was contested by two sixth-form college sides - a win for the first team in the third-place play-off ensured Bromsgrove's status remained.

The finals, which are contested by the best 18 schools in the country and played at Stanborough School in Welwyn Garden City, proved a happy hunting ground for Bromsgrove after wins over Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate, St. Edmund's College,

Canford School, Felsted School, Oakham School and Streatham & Clapham High School.

Unsurprisingly, having won five games from five, Bromsgrove topped their pool to set up a semi-final clash with Worthing College.

While a 15-7 loss followed to the eventual winners, Bromsgrove's girls responded positively and returned to Worcester with medals around their necks after a determined display in the 13-8 win over Canford School.

**Bromsgrove School's first team impressed on the national stage.**



Fairfield's Luke Wyatt skips a challenge from a Bolehall Swifts player. Picture by Paul Smith.

scorching effort three minutes later that threatened to break the net.

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His first, a header which needed to be kept out, was followed by a strike which the Bolehall custodian was also equal to.

While no further goals followed - despite two late openings for Ross Dempster - the Swans were good value for their seventh win which blocked inside the penalty area.

Spartak moved down to 12th despite the positive result, and are currently still searching for a first win since January 4.

■ TEN-MAN Barnt Green Spartak rescued a late point in 1-1 draw at FC Stratford following Darren Green's 81st-minute equaliser.

## Shutdown brings problems on and off pitch



Newbold proved too tough for the Monners to handle in Saturday's Midlands One West clash. Picture by Newbold-on-Avon RFC on Facebook.

**RUGBY UNION:** DROITWICH coach Blair Hunter says the implications of the suspended rugby union season could be disastrous for the Midlands One West club.

All activity within the sport at both a professional and community level has been cancelled until Tuesday April 14 following a statement by the Rugby Football Union this week.

While the Monners remained in action up until last weekend, going down 29-7 away to Newbold-on-Avon, the possibility of the club being inactive from both a community and playing sense is a cause for concern for Hunter and everyone associated with Droitwich.

"We're a non-profit making club for the community," he said. "We've had to cancel things that were booked months in advance in our social diary."

"The club host weddings, wakes, committee meetings, even King's School were to use our facility in the next week, those events gave the club a lot in the way of income - but that's now come straight off the top."

With the sporting world in an unprecedented state of confusion and rumour, the Droitwich coach believes the current season will be cancelled, and says the difficulties will continue to mount even if the campaign is allowed to continue.

"We can understand the Premiership Rugby and professional sides playing again at some point later this year, but from a junior and community level perspective I think it's finished," Hunter added.

"In the situations where certain clubs are well ahead of everyone else in the promotion places, then you can understand decisions being made. But where it's not mathematically conclusive, the season has to end as it is now."

"There is no way that clubs at our level, sides that haven't got even the resources that we have, will be in a position to continue playing in the summer and then have a few weeks before pre-season starts again."

"We sent out a group message to all of the players to say that we wish them to stay fit and healthy, once we hear more going forward then we'll be able to update them on what the next step is."

While Droitwich were on the wrong end of Saturday's scoreline, with only an Adam Shaw try converted by Gregor MacLeod to show for their efforts, Hunter says neither he or his players could have any complaints about the outcome against the well-drilled hosts.

"We can hold our hands up and say we were blown away by them," he added.

"They had four or five chances to score and took them, we played as well as we could but we were beaten by the better side."

"Newbold were good in their set pieces and scrummage, their line-out was excellent. I thought we actually defended very well considering, but we were flattened by their penalty try at the start of the second half."

"It completely took the wind out of our sails, it was a contentious decision but the referee gave it and they remained in the ascendancy."

"I don't think anyone came off that pitch wondering what if, and when you do that then you can never have any complaints about losing."

**INSIDE: Saltmen heading to the VG – Page 30; Monners upbeat in survival fight – Page 30; Fairfield book cup final spot – Page 31**





LEFT: A reliable performer at the crease for Bromsgrove so far this term, Jayden Levitt was unable to repeat those heroics last weekend. RIGHT: Gareth Williams could take heart from his bowling display after recording the best figures out of his teammates. Pictures by James Hickin Photography.



# Smith heroics in vain as Boars slip down table

**CRICKET:** A BREATHTAKING maiden ton from opener Connor Smith failed to prevent Bromsgrove falling to a six-wicket loss at Barnards Green to leave them trailing the Birmingham & District Premier Division Two frontrunners.

The defeat, which resulted in Bromsgrove slipping down to fifth in the table, was a tough one to take for Mark Evenson and Co. at North End Lane after they had posted a 259-9 score in their 55 overs.

Ultimately, with Barnards Green's skipper Ryan Tongue

by Ben Tyler  
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(156 not out) and Rehaan Edvalath (58) in inspired form, the hosts sealed victory with just over four overs remaining – losing only four wickets in doing so.

Though it will be back to the drawing board ahead of a battle with ninth-placed Harborne at St Godwalds Park on Saturday, the Boars cannot be too downhearted by their overall display, but will perhaps need to be more ruthless with their bowling.

After the hosts won the toss last weekend, Bromsgrove found themselves batting first. Though opener Jayden Levitt (14) departed to leave the score 28-1, Ashley Newfield (42) and Smith (125) put on 69 for the second wicket.

The fall of Newfield and then Alex Milton (6) left the Boars 107-3 but quickfire runs from Deon Patel (42) helped Bromsgrove's cause enormously. He joined Smith in a fourth-wicket partnership of 110 to get the visitors on the road to an enviable score.

However, with Patel becoming the first victim to fall to the imperious George Rhodes (5-24), who swept through the Boars' middle-to-late order, momentum slowed with just over seven overs remaining.

With Smith run out by Zahid Kafai for the sixth wicket, the visitors had lost their talisman who had smashed two sixes and 12 balls into the boundary.

The Boars struck early in the Barnards Green innings when William Tuffin (78-2) removed Rhodes (4) in the second over, while Gareth Williams (2-35)

snapped up O G Rogoff (22) and Joe Crichard (0) to leave the hosts 70-3.

But that only paved the way for the introduction of hot-shot Edavalath to join opener Tongue. The pair were unrelenting in their quest for runs during a 142-run partnership which put the victory target within sight.

Though Edavalath departed with the score on 212, Tongue ended the day with 14 fours and six sixes in all – the final maximum score in his 156 off 129 balls sealing victory with 25 balls remaining.

## Saltmen announce first set of friendlies

**FOOTBALL:** DROITWICH Spa fans have reason to be cheerful after the Saltmen's first set of pre-season fixtures were announced earlier this week.

Ahead of another campaign in Division One of the West Midlands (Regional) League, Andy Crowther's men will be looking to pick up where they left off in the previous two terms in mounting another promotion challenge.

And with dates for the diary to look forward to, anticipation and excitement will now begin to build for what the Spa faithful will hope to be a successful 2021/22 season.

Droitwich will be on the road in four of the five fixtures announced so far, starting with a trip to Paget Rangers of the Midland League on Tuesday, July 13. Spa then take on Hellenic League outfit Hereford Lads Club on Saturday, July 17, before heading to Bevely Town, who are in the division above, on Thursday, July 22.

Two further games against Midland League opposition then follow, with a first home game of the new season against Knowle at Droitwich Rugby Club on Saturday, July 24, before taking on Cadbury Athletic on Tuesday, July 27.

Spa are expected to confirm at least three more friendlies for pre-season, which are to be announced in the following weeks.

# Kelly eyes new faces to overhaul Rouslers squad

**FOOTBALL:** MANAGER Brendan Kelly says he expects a new-look Bromsgrove Sporting side in the 2021/22 Southern League Premier Central season, in the aftermath of winning the Red Recruitment Trophy.

Sporting lifted the end-of-season competition after beating Alvechurch 1-0 in what was essentially a winner-takes-all affair on Bank Holiday Monday, with a show-stopping drive from Jason Cowley, who was later sent off, the difference at Lye Meadow.

With the season now officially brought to a close, the Rouslers have managed to end this term on a high note of sorts, having encountered a rocky patch of form during their short-lived league campaign – which concluded at the end of October.

With a summer break ahead before pre-season preparations begin as usual in July, Kelly's men now have time to rest and recuperate before going again for what many will hope to be a first full campaign since 2018/19.

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

"We've got the bragging rights for Worcestershire for a while, so it was a nice way to finish off before we have our break."

"The pass from Miro [Pais] was probably the best part of the move, because it was an instinctive first-time pass, and then Jason has spotted the keeper off his line and put it in the stanchion. It was a great finish."

"We were under the cosh, as we would be with ten men, but I'm delighted with the clean sheet, to see new faces and lift the trophy."

After a drab first half, it took a moment of inspiration from Sporting's record goalscorer to make the breakthrough in the 53rd minute. Latching onto Pais' through ball, Cowley took a touch out of his feet before rifling an unstoppable strike that left goalkeeper Ollie Taylor utterly powerless.

The goal spurred Bromsgrove on to enjoy further opportunities, albeit without another goal to show for their efforts, as Chris Lait and Jack Wilson both went close.

Attempting a similarly audacious attempt down the other end, Luke Yates almost caught out shot-stopper Max Beardmore with a chip that cracked the underside of the crossbar as Church presented a reminder of their threat.

Cowley was unable to make it two despite making good contact with a pinpoint Jak Hickman delivery, before the forward was given his marching orders for two yellow cards in quick succession. With backs now against the wall, Sporting held on despite opportunities falling to both Tyrell Hamilton and Kevin Monteiro, ensuring the Trophy ended up in Bromsgrove hands at the full-time whistle.



Jak Hickman strides forward with the ball. Pictures by Ian Macvie.



Leon Broadhurst, centre, keeps close tabs on his Tyrell Hamilton.

# Bears' ups and downs continue

**RUGBY LEAGUE:** COVENTRY Bears' quest to record back-to-back wins in Betfred League One this term continues after a 36-12 away defeat to North Wales Crusaders last weekend.

In a result which has typified the inconsistent nature of the Bears so far, Richard Squires' men found themselves unable to keep close tabs on the hosts in Colwyn Bay, providing a setback a week after a stunning comeback win over Rochdale Hornets.

Having found themselves 22-0 down, Coventry fought in vain to claw back the deficit at Eirias Stadium.

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

North Wales hit the front after just five minutes when a flowing move led to Tyni Dow-Nikau touching down for a try that was converted by Tommy Johnson.

With the Crusaders' threat unrelenting, the hosts almost had more points on the board when Patrick Ah-Yan found a gap down the right flank, only to offload the ball to Joe Sanderson with a forward pass that was penalised.

Moments later, the heroics of Liam Wellman denied a second try in the left corner but with the next chance that came their way, North Wales took full advantage.

Winger Rob Massam evaded a number of attempts to halt his 40-metre run before crashing down for a second converted score.

Then, with Coventry beginning to gain a foothold, a third try courtesy of Johnson's jink inside through the visitors' defence – this time unconverted – came as a hammer blow before the break.



Sam Bowring, left, netted Coventry's second and final try. Picture by Rich Beattie/SBS Photography.

With much improvement needed in the second half, Coventry again looked sluggish when emerging from the changing rooms and conceded six more points when Ben Morris latched onto a forward kick and raced home.

While player-coach Dave Scott registered the first Bears points of the afternoon with clever movement through the Crusaders' rearguard, Dan Coates' converting, it was not enough to spark a comeback.

Dow-Nikau was again at the forefront to punish the away side with his second score of the game, shortly before Massam made it 32-6 after a devastating breakdown.

To Bears' credit, they sought to make amends for their below-par showing, scoring their second converted try of the game.

After receiving a high pass from Coates, Sam Bowring did the rest by crossing the whitewash. But the scoring was not quite finished, as Massam wrapped up his hat-trick of tries with an unconverted effort scored in the corner of the pitch.

A tough test at home to second-placed Worthington Town now awaits Coventry, who sit seventh, on Sunday – the start of four consecutive matches at Butts Park Arena.



# Faulkner nets to end Sphinx losing run

**FOOTBALL:** CHARLIE Faulkner halted Coventry Sphinx's three-game losing run after his 53rd-minute winner sealed a 2-1 win at Lye Town in the Midland League Premier Division.

John Woodward and Shaun Thomas' Sphinx had to do it the hard way after going a goal behind after just two minutes when Reiss Taylor-Randle tucked home a penalty.

But Louis Guest kept high to head home a corner to equalise with 11 minutes left to play and it was three on.

A draw looked inevitable but just as it popped Faulkner's Sphinx came to the death to end Sphinx's first league win in five games.



Nathan McNaff was in inspired form for Coventrians with a four-goal display against WLV Sports.

Sphinx's home fixture against Haugmoed on Tuesday night was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch, but they meet Lye again on Saturday's at Sphinx Drive (3pm).

■ COVENTRY United went into last night's (Wednesday) rescheduled FA Vase tie at Worcester City knowing that a victory would give them a last-16 tie at Atherstone Town.

Nearby Atherstone, who play in Midland League Division One, is the lowest ranked side left in the competition so Terry Anderson's men will not have been short of incentives to progress.

A trip to second-bottom Gresley then awaits on Saturday (3pm) in Midland Premier action, before the Red and Greens head to Kirby Muxloe on Tuesday (7.45pm) in the Midland Football League

■ Details of the midweek results from all of Coventry's sides can be read on our website at [www.coventryobserver.co.uk/sport](http://www.coventryobserver.co.uk/sport)

Cup to complete a run of three away games on the bounce.

■ COVENTRY Copswold returned to winning ways to defeat hosts Paget Rangers 2-0 to go 14th in Division One. Copswold had been on a three-game losing run prior to their trip to Sutton Coldfield, with their previous win coming coincidentally against Paget at Allard Way back in December.

Dave Pritchett and Dan Hoskins struck the goals.

Tuesday's game against Southam United in the Coventry Challenge Vase was called off due to rain and Copswold return to action at home to Rochester in a league encounter on Saturday (3pm).

■ GNP Sports' home game against Brinkley AFC was postponed last weekend to leave them 12th in Division One. Shamir Alam's side were due to be in action last night (Wednesday) in a league game against visitors Chelmsley Town, before Saturday's trip to Nuneaton Griff (3pm).

■ COVENTRY Alvis left it late to snatch a point in their Division Two encounter with Northfield Town.

An own goal from a deflected cross gave visitors Northfield a second-half goal, with Alvis made to chase the game for the remainder.

Their efforts were rewarded at the death when Mitchell Roe was on hand to turn home a deep cross and earn a deserved point.

Alvis are eighth in the table and host 13th-placed Earlswood Town at Alvis Sports and Social Club on Saturday (3pm), before welcoming Coventry Plumbers next Wednesday (7.30pm) in a rescheduled Coventry Evening Telegraph Cup tie.

■ PLUMBING'S Midland Football Union in the Coventry Challenge Vase match-up with Welland was postponed last weekend.

The Division Three side are yet to play their first, but face a trip to Enville Athletic on Saturday (1.45pm) in the Birmingham Saturday Vase quarter-final.

■ NATHAN McGarrity bagged four goals alongside Newport Pagnole on 41 points, trailing by a slightly inferior goal difference of +10 to their rivals +20, but there are four other teams still in contention.

Last Saturday's result, thanks to Tyler Haddow and Josh O'Grady goals at Butts Park Arena, helped the Red and Greens earn some revenge for their FA Vase exit at the hands of City just over a fortnight ago.



Coventry Sphinx celebrate Charlie Faulkner's last-gasp winner.

side in the quarter-final at the Callery Sports Ground. A Josh Dixon brace and one from Liam Connolly completed the scoring.

On Saturday (2pm), they head to basement side Shipston Excelsior in a Division Three fixture.

# Purdy's switch to Premiership was inevitable - Walsley

by Ben Tyler  
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**RUGBY UNION:** DIRECTOR of rugby Rowland Winter admits winger Henry Purdy will be a big miss for Coventry Rugby after his transfer to Bristol Bears on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old joins the injury-hit Premiership side after two months at Butts Park Arena, impressing during his short spell at the club in which he made five appearances and scored three tries.

Winter says he can understand why Bristol have made the move for one of Coventry's star talents.



Henry Purdy has moved to Bristol Bears. Picture by John Coles.

James Voss, though Tony Jenner's conversion attempt was unsuccessful.

A second try was registered by Max Trimble, allowing Jenner to redeem his earlier miss and add to the visitors' lead.

Coventry continued to dominate the proceedings, but they were unable to add to their advantage.

Towards the end of the first half Grimoldby scored his first penalty of the game, before adding the extras to Syd Blackmore's try to cut the deficit at the break.

Two penalties in the space of four minutes from Grimoldby then edged Amphill in front.

Now trailing 16-12, Coventry were forced to go on the offensive, and James Gibbons claimed try number three after two Amphill players had been sent to the sin bin.

The ruckoff 17-16 advantage seemed enough to earn the visitors a fifth win of the campaign, until Amphill countered and then snatched victory and the points when Grimoldby struck with a late penalty.

Coventry's Andy Bulamaka went over in the corner to open the scoring following good work between Joe Buckle and



Luka Ferrara, left, celebrates yet another goal during Saturday's victory over File Flyers. Picture by Scott Wiggins.

# Stewart praises Blaze game management

**ICE HOCKEY:** DANNY Stewart hailed the game management of his Coventry Blaze team after they downed File Flyers 4-1 at the Skydome Arena on Saturday night.

It was Coventry's first match back on home ice after four successive matches on the road, the last being a 3-2 overtime loss at Glasgow Clan on Friday night.

Elite League top-scorer Luke Ferrara (23), Janne Laakkonen and Ross Venn found the net against the Flyers, prompting a positive reaction from their head coach.

"It was a good result," said Stewart.

"I thought our first half was pretty slow and the visitors back ahead (29-20) seconds before the middle period, which was crucial."

A third Coventry 'goal' was obviously ruled out after Andrew Johnston's strike found the net at 56.12 so the frustrations felt when Mathieu Roy (56.41) equalised for the Clan seconds later were understandable.

With the game into overtime, Travis Ehrhardt settled the tie for the hosts, striking three minutes 50 seconds into the additional period.

Blaze are sixth in the table and host second-bottom Dundee Stars on Saturday (7pm) before a trip to Guildford Flames, currently in fifth, on Sunday (6pm).

Just 37 seconds later, Coventry blazed the game management of his Coventry Blaze team after they downed File Flyers 4-1 at the Skydome Arena on Saturday night.

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# Stewart urges Blaze to quickly erase pain of overtime defeat

**ICE HOCKEY:** DEFEATED Coventry Blaze head coach Danny Stewart believes his side deserved more from their 6-5 overtime loss against leaders Sheffield Steelers on Sunday night.

The Blaze were leading 5-3 with less than five minutes remaining at the Skydome Arena, but were forced into overtime after conceding twice in the space of three minutes.

A winner from the Steelers' Nikolai Lemtyugov then followed a minute and 39 seconds into the extra period to condemn Coventry to their fifth overtime defeat this term.

Stewart says his side put in a maximum level of effort in the Elite League clash.

"It's disappointing for everyone involved, but particularly for the players," he said.

"They left everything out there and they played well. We've got to make sure that doesn't derail us a little bit as it was a tough way to lose a game."

Blaze, who still look a point for their efforts, got off to a miserable start when former player Marco Valander blasted the puck beyond netminder C.J. Motte just 21 seconds into the game.

The Steelers levelled for the hosts regrouped and got themselves back on level terms when Dillon Eichstadt buried a strike from the blue line at 47.50 – the second being a powerplay goal – to seemingly put Coventry in control.

A two-minute penalty for Sheffield levelled, however, midway through the second period, courtesy of a power-play goal from Tanner Eberle (29:20).

But Blaze regained the lead at the close of the second period when Andrew Johnston finished a move involving Janne Laakkonen and Ferraro on a miserable start when former player Marco Valander blasted the puck beyond netminder C.J. Motte just 21 seconds into the game.

# O'Grady cracker steps up Red's title challenge

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** THE RACE for the Premier Division title in the Midland Football League continued to hot up after Coventry United's 2-0 win over Worcester City put them joint-top of the table.

Terry Anderson's side currently sit alongside Newport Pagnole on 41 points, trailing by a slightly inferior goal difference of +10 to their rivals +20, but there are four other teams still in contention.



United celebrate Josh O'Grady's second goal on Saturday. Picture by Jeff Bennett.

■ COVENTRY Alvis are through to the semi-finals of the Les James Challenge Cup after eliminating FC Stratford in a 3-1 win at the Arden Gardens Stadium.

Janne Burckack's charges had to do it the hard way against their Division Two rivals, cancelling out James Gifford's opener through Didielle Jantzen's leveler before the break and then winning the game with second-half goals from Adam Dour and Riley Keasey.

Alvis, who are eighth in the league standings, will be confident of picking up three points on the road at rock-bottom Redditch Borough on Saturday (3pm).

■ CUP progression was a theme of the weekend as Division Three side Coventry 'Plumbers' reached the semi-finals of the Birmingham Saturday Vase.

Connell Farrell and Jordan Powell were both on target against tenacious Enville Athletic, putting Plumming into the semi-finals alongside Tipton Town, Solihull United and the winner of the remaining quarter-final tie between Alcester Town and AFC Somers.

■ A LATE equaliser from Stafford Town denied Coventry Copswold all three points in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Allard Way.

After a quiet first half, Callum Martin found the net on 51 minutes, moments after hitting the post, to put Copswold on the score for a swift return to winning ways.

But Morgan Bailey's 86th-minute equaliser gave Stafford a share of the spoils, following a 1-0 triumph against the visitors.

■ JASON Evans' first-half strike helped GNP Sports claim a third win in four matches after they were soundly beaten by Staphenhill on Saturday.

Firing home on the stroke of the half-

the forward added her second on 65 minutes with a left-footed stroke into the corner.

Worts then completed her hat-trick in the 80th minute, but the game was still time for Southampton to hit back through Rachel Panting in stoppage time.

Coventry will now welcome Spurs for the fifth-round tie on Sunday, February 16.

Next up for United is a trip to London City Lionesses' Princess Park (2pm) in the FA Women's Championship encounter.

United's Beth Merrick takes the ball from a Southampton player. Picture by Jeff Bennett.



Nikolai Lemtyugov takes the ball around grounded Blaze netminder C.J. Motte, left, before netting the winning goal. Picture by Scott Wiggins.

# Winter's men suffer Hart-ache

**RUGBY UNION:** COVENTRY Rugby were downed by a last-gasp penalty in Saturday's agonising 20-20 draw away to Harpury in the RFU Championship.

In reverse of the previous weekend's events when Rowland Winter's side earned a late win over London Scottish, Tiff Eden broke Coventry hearts with his penalty in the final minute of play at Dillingham Park.

An open start led to early chances for both sides, with Coventry opening the scoring on 11 minutes through Rory Jennings' powerful moment as Joshua Bragman had wasted his attempt for the move.

Bragman did make amends on 21 minutes when firing the ball between the posts, before his teammate Robbie Smith appeared to touch down the opening try – only to be denied by the referee for a block on Scott Tolmie earlier in the move.

Coventry added to Harpury's frustration by claiming the first try of the afternoon, courtesy of Max Trimble's well-timed offload to Rob Knox to touch down. Jennings once again proved successful with his kicking.

A crucial moment in the game occurred just before half-time, when Simon Linsell finished off a swift turnover for the hosts, followed by Bragman's conversion, to level the score.

It gave Harpury the momentum to take the lead eight minutes into the second half, when Seb Nagle-Taylor's tackle set up a position for Will Gaff to touch down a converted score.

Knox closed the gap to two points with 15 minutes remaining after dashing across the try line following the breakdown of a maul.

While Harpury extended their lead through Eden's penalty try, it was not enough before the visitors were back in their opponents half, levelling the scores with a try remaining when Ryan Burrows powered his way through to a try after Lewis Thomas' conversion.

Jennings' missed conversion was a crucial one, however, as the hosts came back to the closing minutes to clinch victory courtesy of Eden's 80th-minute penalty.

Coventry stay fifth in the table and face another big test on Saturday (3pm) when they welcome second-placed Cornish Pirates to Butts Park Arena.



# Beaten Boro may turn to youth to find goals

**STRATFORD TOWN** 4

**NUNEATON BOROUGH** 0

**By BEN TYLER**

NUNEATON Borough manager Jimmy Ginnelly believes turning to youth could be the remedy for his side's problems in front of goal, following Saturday's 4-0 FA Cup exit at the hands of Stratford Town.

A Will Grocott brace came either side of Ashley Sammons and Ahmed Obeng goals, rubbing salt into the visitors' wounds in the second qualifying round clash at the Arden Garages Stadium.

And with finding the net often

proving Nuneaton's downfall this term, Ginnelly admits he has been working tirelessly to bring a proven goalscorer to the club.

"We spoke to around ten centre forwards last week, asking them the question about wanting to come in," he said.

"There will be five or six of our lads who I'll be making the big call on, and changing the whole side around.

"We've got Coalville Town and Peterborough Sports in the next two games, we can't even look for a point at the minute so it feels like a case of damage limitation.

"We've had a few lads from Burton

in training, another from Huddersfield coming in next week, some youngsters that we've been watching and speaking to. Maybe in all honesty youth could be the answer, Stratford had that today and they run us ragged on the wings.

Grocott's 12th-minute opener left Tony Breeden powerless to prevent the hosts from hitting the front, before the Borough 'keeper was caught out again by Sammons' instinctive long-range drive.

After the break, Obeng and Grocott both smashed home on the rebound following Breeden saves, leaving Nuneaton feeling hard done

by after some bright spells at the beginning of either half.

"The 4-0 scoreline was a bit heavy," Ginnelly added. "After 15 minutes we could have scored three or four, but putting the ball in the back of the net is our Achilles heel every time.

"They were the better side, I questioned my lads after the game because passion and desire gets you results - and Stratford had plenty of that today.

"People will say that we have better names on paper, but that means nothing and I don't mask over that."

## DIAMOND SHINES FOR DIAMONDS

BEN Diamond was the ace in the pack as his 80th-minute equaliser earned AFC Rushden & Diamonds a point at the Trico Stadium.

It was the Diamonds who started brightest, central defenders Alex Collard and Blaize Punter making their presence felt at a couple of early corners.

**REDDITCH UNITED 2  
AFC RUSHDEN & D 2**  
**By Ben Tyler**

Ahmed Ali had Redditch's first clear effort, sending the ball flying over the bar from a promising position, but he had team-mate Harry Franklin to thank for making amends. The midfielder snapped a

half-volley home into the bottom-left corner from a loose ball in the box.

Reds stopper Adam Whitehouse did well to tip away Ben Farrell's driving effort, but Declan Rogers snuck a leveller when his header was headed off the line, but the linesman deeming it to have gone in.

Captain Andrew Par-

sons restored the hosts' lead on 57 minutes, placing a storming header downwards into the bottom corner that was too hot for Ben Heath to handle.

But the equaliser came when Diamond flicked a header over the backpedalling keeper.

**STAR MAN:** George Washbourne (Redditch)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



# USHER'S MAN AT THE BEST TOWN!



KNEES-Y DOES IT!  
Cheadle Town  
players can't hide  
their delight after  
securing promotion  
PICTURE: Alun Roberts

## Cheadle marry up with Step 5 status

**C**HEADLE Town came from behind on the road to cruise into Step 5 next season with a 3-1 win at Sandbach United.

Robbie Hatton stunned the visitors with a 12th-minute opener for United in this Division One South showpiece, only for Town to level two minutes later through Ryan Usher's towering header.

Cheadle didn't look back

**NORTH WEST COUNTIES**  
By Ben Tyler

from there and after a clutch of quickfire chances, Usher curled beyond Eric Merner after Jordan Lazenbury's initial effort was blocked.

And the celebrations were underway after Martin Pilkington's 97th-minute clincher.

The lottery of penalties ruled

in Chadderton's favour as a 6-5 shootout win over FC St Helens secured Chaddy's place alongside Cheadle at Step 5 next term.

For two sides that required penalties to claim their stake in the Division One North play-off final, another match going the distance seemed the obvious outcome after the 1-1 stalemate.

Chadderton, who missed out on automatic promotion to Pilkington by two points, will feel

Josh Goddard's second-minute breakthrough would prove a sign of what was to come.

Joe Barker's flicked header into the far corner tied things up after a first-half dominated by the hosts, with a scrappy second 45-minute period following.

There would be no need to fear however after six clinical Chadderton penalties found the net, with keeper Joseph Oldham securing Chaddy's Premier place in sudden death.

## MORROW SENDS AVRO UP

**LINCOLN UNITED 1  
AVRO FC 2**  
By Ben Tyler

THERE was to be no sorrow for Avro, thanks to Jack Morrow's edge-of-the-box drive as they ran out 2-1 winners away at Ashby Avenue and confirmed relegation for lowly Lincoln United.

The Ro are into Step 4 for the first time in their club's history as the result sparked scenes of wild celebrations during a tense finish to a momentous day in Lincolnshire.

Alex Frost's men were intent on making the breakthrough, as defender Kallum Smith was forced into a goal-line clearance before Liam Ellis' strike was chalked off for a foul in the build-up.

The deadlock was broken after 30 minutes, courtesy of Thomas Bentham's cleanly-struck effort to thump home after a corner was flicked onto the far post.

Matthew Cotton's 42nd-minute penalty could've threatened to throw Avro off their stride, but it fired them up.

Michael Afuye teed up Morrow, who proved their match winner on 54 minutes.

**STAR MAN:** Michael Afuye (Avro)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆

## NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

THERE WILL be Premier Division football taking place at Oxford Street next season, after Rossington Main's 3-1 triumph in the Division One promotion play-off final.

Bradley Grayson's double ensured the hosts saw off Horbury Town in the end-of-season decider, which notably featured five red cards in an enthralling battle in South Yorkshire.

A spot-kick from former Matlock Town, Grimsby Town, Chester and Barrow striker Ross Hannah brought the breakthrough on 14 minutes for the Colliery after the hosts' leading scorer had been brought down inside the penalty area by a clutch of Horbury defenders.

Five minutes before the break, Rossington's star man Grayson netted his first of the afternoon with clinical precision after receiving possession just inside the penalty area from Manasse Kianga.

Any hopes of a second-half revival for Town looked to be quashed after an astonishing melee resulted in James Cusworth, Finn Ellis, Ousmane Sidibe and substitute Sam Awty all being dismissed for the visitors, while Main's Cody Prior also saw red on the hour mark.

Despite it being a game of ten versus seven, Horbury somehow gave themselves a lifeline when Lamin Bojang wrapped home a free kick on 66 minutes.

But any Rossington fears were soon eased just four minutes later, Grayson converting on the rebound for his second of the afternoon after seeing his initial effort saved superbly by Paul Hagreen.

A low-key ending failed to dampen the spirits of the 1,164 bumper crowd, ahead of Rossington's first campaign at Step 5.

**BEN TYLER**



## NON-LEAGUE

### Moors find a way to win with 10 men

<b>SOLIHULL MOORS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TORQUAY UNITED</b>	<b>2</b>

By **BEN TYLER**

ENDEAVOUR and heart ensured ten-man Solihull Moors recorded back-to-back National League wins for the first time since October last night.

A disastrous start to proceedings saw the Gulls hit the front just seconds after the opening whistle, when Ross Marshall snuck home a far-post header after meeting a flick on from the evening's first set piece.

But from thereon in, Moors gradually began to assume the upper hand, eventually turning half chances into clear-cut ones with James Clarke forcing Mark Halstead to acrobatically

tip a rasping drive over on 17 minutes.

The United custodian was again required moments later to claw away Mark Beck's



Mark Beck

header, but had no answer to Josh Kelly's 37th-minute leveller – a placed finish into the bottom-right corner after good work from the enthusiastic Mitch Roberts on the left flank.

Then, the go-ahead goal before the break, this time Callum Howe finding himself in the right place at the right time to touch home into an empty net after his initial header had rebounded kindly back into his path via the post.

Roberts helped himself to a second assist of the night 11 minutes after the restart, meeting Josh Kelly's feed through to drive low across the six-yard box and give Beck the simplest of tap ins.

Jamey Osborne's straight red with little more than half an hour of play remaining meant Lewis Collins' scruffy finish 16 minutes from time threatened to take the game away from Moors – who ultimately saw out victory with an efficient closing display.

**SOLIHULL MOORS (5-3-2):** Boot; Donawa (Wood, 92), Clarke, Howe, Gudger, Roberts; Osborne, Maycock, Sarra; Beck (Whelan, 67), Kelly (Jones, 85). **Subs not used:** Mills, Howell.

**Birmingham**  
**MAIL**

## NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

AN EMPHATIC second-half display saw **North Ferriby** strengthen their position atop the table, seeing off **Knaresborough Town** by a 3-0 scoreline.

Following an opening half that left much to be desired, the hosts had Danny Clarke to thank for forcing the breakthrough when firing home via Danny Emerson's free-kick on 66 minutes. Seven minutes later and it was two when Oli Donald flicked a header home, with the scoring complete in the final minute through Josh Morrall's thrashed effort.

**Maltby Main** oversaw **Goole's** second-half revival to see through a 3-2 result, with Alexander Hardwick, Brandon Bagley and Alister Haydock's first-half efforts ultimately proving enough.

**Golcar United** were winners by the same scoreline, overcoming **Frickley Athletic** thanks to Daniel Naidole's winner with eight minutes to spare.

**Winterton Rangers** keep a strong hold on second place after brushing aside **Thackley** 3-0, with **Emley** remaining third courtesy of a 3-1 defeat of **Hemsworth Miners Welfare**.

**Eccleshill United** and **Garforth Town** could not be separated in a 2-2 stalemate, thanks to Luke Sidaway's 89th-minute leveller for the hosts.

**Yorkshire Amateur** also needed a last-gasp equaliser to rescue a point against **Handsworth** in another 2-2 draw, while Ryan Johnson also popped up with a 90th minute winner for **Penistone Church** in their 1-0 success over **Barton Town**.

**BEN TYLER**

## Brakes find some breathing space

<b>LEAMINGTON</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>CURZON ASHTON</b>	<b>1</b>
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LEAMINGTON hit four of the best to claw themselves away from the National League North drop zone, overcoming Curzon in a 4-1 rout.

It was the hosts who raced out of the blocks quickest, taking a sixth-minute lead when Liam Cross' timely run to finish from a whipped delivery came after the initial corner had been punched out by goalkeeper Chris Renshaw.

That advantage was doubled on 35 minutes when Kelly Evans pulled off an audacious chip to the delight of the home crowd. While the Nash did claw a goal back through Hayden Campbell's snapshot seconds after the restart, the Brakes went on to control affairs from thereon in.

Just before the hour mark, Leamington restored their two goal advantage when Dan Turner nodded home after Dan Meredith's pinpoint cross evaded two Curzon defenders to set up a simple finish.

On 64 minutes, the scoring was complete when Devon Kelly Evans ripped a sweet strike into the net from distance, leaving Renshaw utterly powerless. Theo Streete would see red in the dying stages, in a victory that leaves Brakes 20th.

<b>KIDDERMINSTER</b>	<b>0</b>
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<b>BOSTON UNITED</b>	<b>0</b>
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KIDDERMINSTER Harriers and Boston United could not be separated in a goalless stalemate at Aggborough.

In an expectedly drab game, Harriers had the first real opening of the half when loanee Joe Foulkes and Kane Hemings combined on six minutes, the latter eventually fluffing his lines.

Hemmings proved to be the hosts' livewire, going close before the break after wrapping Jack Byrne's lay-off just past the post.

Captain Luke Shiels almost opened the scoring with an acrobatic attempt after the break, while Zak Brown should have done better when firing over with 20 minutes to spare.



# Mantom and Pics embarrass Bards

STRATFORD only had themselves to blame on a dismal day for Gavin Hurren's men against Rushall.

The opening goal set the tone for an afternoon of difficult viewing for the home support, when Alex Fletcher's long throw into a busy crowd of players resulted in Stratford turning the ball into their own net. A minute before the half-hour mark it was two, after Reece Mitchell's right-flank corner kick looped directly into the far corner of the net – leaving Town custodian Leon Phillips disenchanted.

It was game over when Pics skipper Sam Mantom drilled home low into the bottom-left corner following a well-worked move after 56 minutes, with Phillips again culpable for the concession after allowing himself to be beaten far too easily.

To his credit, the Stratford shot-stopper did do well to tip over

**CENTRAL**

**STRATFORD TOWN 0  
RUSHALL OLYMPIC 5**  
By Ben Tyler

Krystian Green's dipping header moments later, before exiting on the hour mark due to injury.

His replacement, Callum Monaghan, could do little to impact matters and was powerless to prevent Andre Carvalho-Landell from rounding him and slotting home with 25 minutes to play as Stratford's embarrassment continued.

The Bards' nightmare finally came to a conclusion after 75 minutes, when Green's drilled cross was turned into the net by home defender Jack Turner.

**STAR MAN:** Sam Mantom (Rushall Olympic)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

**ALVECHURCH 3  
LEISTON 3**  
By Ben Tyler

LATE salvation from Jed Abbey and Maxwell Ng-benue ensured Alvechurch's unbeaten run stretched to five games in a six-goal thriller.

After a drab opening, it was the visitors who hit the front courtesy of super sub Wyatt Hill, as the wing-back dispatched fellow replacement Jake Spooner's initial cross beyond Dan Jezeph with a spectacular half-volley in first-half stoppage time.

But if spectators were expecting a similarly dour spectacle after the restart, a goal from either side in the space of three minutes quickly dispelled any fear of that. Ethan Sephton's 25-yard stunner from a

# STUNNING SIX-GOAL THRILLER AT LYE MEADOW

deadball situation was too hot for Leiston keeper Samuel Donkin to handle to restore parity, only for Will Davies to plant a header into the bottom-left corner moments later to the dismay of Alvechurch.

The Blues forward doubled his tally for the afternoon and made it eight for the season in the process after sliding to turn home Finlay Barnes' low cross –

a goal which looked to have knocked the stuffing out of the hosts.

Late hope was provided when Abbey buried a spot-kick after Danny Waldron had been felled, with jubilation soon ensuing when Itoa bundled home from Waldron's initial spilled shot in the third minute of added time.

**STAR MAN:** Will Davies (Leiston)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

# Five-star Ravens produce stunner

**REDDITCH UNITED 1  
COALVILLE TOWN 5**  
By Ben Tyler

COALVILLE Town romped to a crushing victory over Redditch United as Andrew Wright and Tim Berridge each notched a brace.

Wide-man Tom McGlinchey got proceedings underway for the visitors, when he looped a swerving effort over the head of Louis Connor who was caught off his line.

Shaquille Leachman-Whittingham had the best chance to haul Redditch level when firing narrowly wide of the bottom-left corner, but the Reds could only stand motionless to watch Wright's drive into the top-left corner from distance to double Coalville's advantage.

There was some hope for the home side after the break when Montel Gibson headed in at the far post but Coalville continued to dominate proceedings.

That dominance would be rewarded with a late flurry of goals. First, Berridge notched his first of the afternoon when gifted a free header from McGlinchey's left-wing cross from close-range, before Wright sealed his brace with a left-footer off the underside of the bar.

The rout was completed in the 81st minute when Berridge fired home a cutback.

**STAR MAN:** Andrew Wright (Coalville)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

# Davis off the mark for Reds

**REDDITCH UNITED 2  
ST IVES TOWN 0**  
By Ben Tyler

PAUL DAVIS saw his Redditch United side claim their first win under his managerial reign with a deserved victory against St Ives.

An early scare for the Reds might have led many to believe their recent misfortunes were set to continue when George Bailey struck the left-hand post.

Those fears were to be eased on nine minutes though when Caolan Boyd-Munce's cross towards Montel Gibson was nudged away only for Stefan Moore to pounce and he picked out the top-right corner with aplomb.

Redditch soon doubled their lead when Saints keeper Tim Trebes parried a corner kick into the path of Shaquille Leachman-Whittingham who steered a volley through a crowd of players and had defender Liam Francis to thank for claiming the final touch on its way in.

A potential goal of the season was on the cards when Reds midfielder Declan Benjamin unleashed an emphatic swerving volley from range that seemed destined for the top-left corner only to be turned around the post by Trebes before Redditch saw out a quiet second half to seal the points.

**STAR MAN:** Shaquille Leachman-Whittingham (Redditch United)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

# UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE

**TABLE-TOPPING** Daventry Town maintained their perfect start to the season with an emphatic 3-0 victory at Wellingborough Whitworth.

Goals from Luke Emery, Greg Anayitos and a late Adam Creaney penalty clinched a deserved three points for Arron Parkinson's side.

Second-placed Eynesbury Town ensured **Harborough Town's** early struggles continued as they were put to the sword, Jamal McKenzie claiming the pick of the bunch in a 3-0 win.

**Holbeach United** handed out the drubbing of the day with a 6-0 thrashing of Kirby Muxloe, Will Bird and Jack Smith claiming a brace apiece as they rose to 12th in the league.

**Rugby Town** edged a seven-goal thriller 5-2 at home to **Boston Town**, Danico Johnson hitting another hat-trick to take his tally to eight this term.

**Cogenhoe United** and **Deeping Rangers** both continued their strong starts with a point apiece at **Oadby Town** and **Desborough Town** respectively, while Ian Dunn's tap-in was enough to earn **Pinchbeck United** victory over **Leicester Nirvana**.

Ryan Oliver hit a hat-trick to hand **Sleaford Town** victory against **Northampton ON Chenecks** in a 5-0 romping, with **Peterborough Northern Star** equalling that scoreline at **Rothwell Corinthians**.

**Newport Pagnell Town** battled to a 2-2 draw against **Wellingborough Town** to earn their first point this term.

**BEN TYLER**

# SLOPPY PITMEN SLIP UP AT THE CHURCH

**ALVECHURCH 2  
HEDNESFORD TOWN 1**  
By Benjamin Tyler

HEDNESFORD TOWN edged out a feisty pre-season friendly at Lye Meadow.

The Pitmen opened the scoring on 11 minutes moments after Josh March had gone close for the Church; when a clearance broke through for Dan Cockerline to sidefoot home into the bottom-right corner.

Approaching the half-hour mark, Church were brought level through Josh March's thumping downwards header into the roof of the net from a corner-kick, a deserved leveller for their fighting spirit in the gusty conditions.

Cockerline again was the thorn in Alvechurch's side as he capitalised on sloppy defensive play and thumped a fierce strike goal-

wards – Evans having his goal frame to thank for the scores staying level going in at the break.

The substitution of Mamoke Akauna brought a fresh lease of life for the Church forward line, having an instant impact when running in behind the defence to meet a searching ball – but not having the composure to finish his hard work when dragging wide of the mark.

The visitors nudged their noses back in front following excellent work down the right from Micky Nelson to break through, his ball into the box was eventually poked home by Matt Dodd in the penalty area to restore their advantage – a lead which would remain intact despite a late Hednesford penalty area scramble as the Pitmen chased an equaliser.

**STAR MAN:** Dan Cockerline (Hednesford Town)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



## Sporting Khalsa 5-0 Dereham Town - Report

# Express & Star

IT WAS five of the best for Sporting Khalsa in a straightforward contest at the Guardian Warehousing Arena, with Josh McKenzie twice on target in the thrashing of Dereham Town.

A LIAM Armstrong show-stopper had manager Ian Rowe singing the midfielder's praises, on a day when Josh McKenzie's double set Sporting Khalsa on the way to five of the best in their thrashing of Dereham Town.

It was a goal-laden opening 45 minutes at the Guardian Warehousing Arena, with McKenzie's double setting the tone for the afternoon, followed by a third from Sean Williams and an Armstrong effort that had the Khalsa boss in disbelief on the touchline.

"Our fourth goal was the best I've seen in all my time as a manager," Rowe admitted.

"Liam's hit one from 30 yards out, and that has lifted everything for us again in the game.

"Dereham weren't a bad side at all, they played decent stuff, but we just had that clinical edge.

"It's a bit open again at 4-0 again starting the second half, they played expansively as a young team, it was important we kept playing in the right way, kept our concentration and kept our clean sheet."

Burying his first on three minutes from a low, driven cross, McKenzie doubled up his tally on 19 minutes to finish off a free-flowing move as the Lions made their thirst for goals clear.

With the visitors lacklustre in their approach play, a third from Williams three minutes before the break demonstrated to Dereham how it's done, while there was still time for Liam Armstrong to thrash home a goal that had everyone who lay witness in awe before the half was out.

Khalsa already had the points in the bag, so it was understandable that a drab second half was to follow, but a cherry on top of the cake was still to come when Miracle Okafor buried from the spot at the death.

And with Sporting back in action against a wounded Loughborough Dynamo, who fell to a 3-0 defeat at Harborough Town, next weekend, Rowe is eyeing more of the same next time out.

"They were in the running for the play-offs before the season, and they'll be looking to bounce back after their result," he added.



# Seadogs sink Harriers with late winner

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers and Leamington both endured an afternoon to forget after suffering narrow National League North defeats on home soil.

Harriers succumbed 1-0 to Jake Charles' poked finish from close range nine minutes from time at Aggborough, to dent the hosts' play-off ambitions while strengthening Scarborough Athletic's hopes.

It was very much a hit-and-miss outing for Russ Penn's side, failing to provide enough of a threat to test Scarborough keeper Joe Cracknell.

The Seadogs No 1, though, did excel after just two minutes when he pushed away Kane Hemmings'

dead-ball effort that looked destined for the top corner.

Krystian Pearce headed over and Hemmings fired a 30-yard free-kick wide.

At the other end, Tom Palmer

denied goalscorer Charles with an attempt from a matter of yards, but was powerless to deny the Scarborough man from deciding the contest when he latched onto a deflected cross.

The result leaves Harriers eighth in the table, five points behind fifth-placed Scarborough.

Paul Holleran's ten-man Leamington were dealt a big blow in the battle against the drop, seeing Joe Clarke dismissed and a Blyth Spartans

penalty dispatched just before the break in a 1-0 defeat.

Both Dan Turner and Liam Cross threatened Alex Michell's goal late in the opening half as the Brakes pushed for a goal.

But Blyth struck after Clarke's brought down Michael Spellman on the stroke of half-time. Clarke was red-carded and Sam Hodgson stepped up to crash home from 12 yards.

An injury to goalkeeper Callum Hawkins compounded the hosts' afternoon, resulting in James Mace donning the gloves for the closing stages.

Blyth remain second from bottom, while the Brakes lie three point and three places above them.

## BOLDMERE ST M 2 RUGBY TOWN 1 By Ben Tyler

**BOLDMERE** St Michaels left it late to secure their place in the next round of the FA Vase, courtesy of substitute Joe Lyng's 90th minute winner to down ten-man Rugby Town.

It was the away side who started as the dominant force, taking an 18th minute lead from the penalty spot, Romario Martin slotting home after keeper Lewis Fenney had felled Simeon Tulloch.

Boldmere would grab a deserved equaliser after growing into the game, with another penalty awarded and a red card for Loyiso Recci for a last-man foul - Rikardo Reid duly sending the keeper the wrong way.

And with the game ebbing out, Lyng's thumping header from a corner flew past Matt Hill to snatch it for the hosts.

STAR MAN: Danico Johnson (Rugby)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

# Fans out in force for Reds' derby joy

A BUMPER crowd at the Trico Stadium were witness to a derby day victory for Redditch United at the expense of rivals Bromsgrove Sporting.

Just over 1,100 were in attendance on an afternoon when Lewis Hudson and Bernard Mensah struck woe into Bromsgrove hearts, as Matt Clarke's men wrapped up a double over their neighbours to boost their play-off push.

Despite being on the back foot for the majority of the opening half, the Reds hit the front moments before the break when left back Hudson wandered inside to meet Mensah's through ball before whipping a strike into the far corner.

That advantage was doubled ten minutes after the restart, putting United in the driving seat to take their 11th three-point haul this term. It came as a result of Ben Sheaf's

## REDDITCH UNITED 2 BROMSGROVE SPORTING 0 By Ben Tyler

endeavour down the left flank, with a low driven cross being turned home by Mensah to the delight of the fervent crowd.

The scoreline almost looked much sweeter for the hosts, had Murphy Culkin showed more composure when meeting the rebound from Sheaf's original effort, while Danny King would have given Redditch a third but for a post denying him.

Despite opportunities for former Red Dan Sweeney and Miro Pais, Bromsgrove could not haul themselves back into contention in the closing stages.

STAR MAN: Lewis Hudson (Redditch United)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



■ Krystian Pearce



## Glassboys win a thrilling clash

Stourbridge FC | Published: Apr 10, 2023 |  [Comments](#)

Stourbridge earned the most dramatic of victories over nine-man Bromsgrove Sporting.

The Glassboys trailed by two goals until Jason Cowley's late double four minutes from time, prior to Farid Mikidam's go-ahead goal on 90 minutes that looked to have completed an unlikely success on the road.

But the most captivating twists were yet to come, for Jack Newell's stoppage-time leveller for the hosts was rendered meaningless thanks to Tyler Lyttle's 97th-minute penalty to win the day.

On an afternoon that atoned for Saturday's loss to lowly AFC Rushden & Diamonds, it was the hosts who made the breakthrough despite a positive spell from the visitors, when Prince Henry dispatched from Brandon Smalley's through ball on 20 minutes.

It was two 14 minutes later, courtesy of a stunning breakaway and finish from Miro Pais, drilling the ball through the legs of Charles Price.

Stourbridge seemed unlikely to bring themselves back into contention despite Tom Taylor's dismissal for Sporting, until Cowley buried in a crowded box with four minutes to play.

Cowley thumped home from an indirect free kick three minutes later, before Mikidam sparked pandemonium on 90 minutes with a debut strike to put the visitors in dreamland.

Despite Newell subduing the celebrations with a close-range leveller, Lyttle thrashed home the all-important winner from the spot moments after Muhammad Sebbe Njie was sent off in the subsequent melee.

ALVECHURCH 1  
NEEDHAM MARKET 1  
By Ben Tyler

PURE striker's instinct from Danny Waldron claimed Alvechurch a stoppage-time point in a Good Friday battle.

It was in the 93rd minute of play when the Church striker decided to take matters into his own hands in a game in which the visitors looked good value for victory, evading Needham goalkeeper Marcus Garnham to flick a long ball forward into the net.

The services of home custodian Dan Jezeph were required as early as the third minute, getting down low to parry Luke Brown's drive, before an even more impressive save from point-blank range to deny Ross Crane's far-post

# WALDRON'S LATE EFFORT SAVES POINT FOR CHURCH

header. In an encounter that showcased both goalkeepers' capabilities, Garnham pulled off a stunning last-gasp stop to the amazement of the home crowd when pushing away Waldron's swivelling shot.

A breakthrough would come in less spectacular circumstances, when Dylan Williams' looping free-kick was inadvertently headed into his own net by

Abel Alabi seven minutes before the break.

The Marketmen should have doubled their lead two minutes later, but for Luke Ingram side-footing Crane's layoff wide of an empty net.

After a drab second half, Waldron was quickest to meet a lofted ball into the box ahead of Garnham.

**STAR MAN:** Ross Crane (Needham)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆



# New boss Ardley: Moors ambition matches my own

**FOOTBALL:** INCOMING manager Neal Ardley admits the opportunity to add to the growing narrative at Solihull Moors played a big role in attracting him to the SportNation.bet Stadium.

Formerly of AFC Wimbledon and more recently at Notts County, the 48-year-old will formally take charge of the club on July 1 after penning terms with the Moors, and will be tasked with leading Solihull to a National League promotion challenge in the 2021/22 season.

Having turned out for Wimbledon and Watford for the majority of his playing career, Ardley returned to the Dons

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

as manager in 2012 and notably achieved promotion from League Two via the play-offs in the 2015/16 season.

After six years with AFC, he moved to Notts County in 2018 for a three-year spell, departing in March with the Magpies in the play-off places after the club fell away from eventual champions Sutton United.

And having waited patiently for his next managerial role, he says Moors' ambitions perfectly met his own aspirations.

"After leaving Notts County I was hoping my next job could be

a project that would give me the chance to take a club forward," said Ardley.

"From day one, after meeting [board members] Darryl (Eales), Tim (Murphy) and Craig (Cope), it was clear that there's a huge ambition to go alongside the wonderful story of Solihull Moors.

"I hope to add to the great work that's been put in place and keep the club moving forward – on and off the pitch.

"I'm really looking forward to starting with the players after their strong finish to last season, and working closely with James Quinn and all the staff at the club."

Quinn, a coach under previous

managers Mark Yates, Jimmy Shan and Tim Flowers, has been promoted to assistant manager, whilst Ardley's former number two at County, Greg Abbott, is set to become a consultant, assisting in the areas of player recruitment and match preparation.

Moors chairman Darryl Eales, said making the move for Ardley

has been a long time in the making.

"I first met Neal when he was at AFC Wimbledon, and I was chairman of Oxford United, I would have liked to have appointed him as Oxford manager when Michael Appleton left to join Leicester City," he said.

"At that time, I deemed it inappropriate to approach a man-

ager at another club, so it was serendipity when Notts County released Neal - I am absolutely delighted that we have persuaded Neal to join the Moors project.

"I'm also delighted that Quinny will play a more central role in the coaching team and that we have secured the experience and know-how of Greg Abbott to assist our push for promotion."

With a promotion already on his CV at AFC Wimbledon, Neal Ardley will be hoping for a repeat at the Moors.



# Kyle left Hud over heels with awards

**FOOTBALL:** TRIPLE award winner Kyle Hudlin pointed to his persistent belief in his own ability behind his successful season, having made a considerable impact in his debut National League campaign.

The 20-year-old ended the term on a high by starting in Moors' 2-0 final day win over Eastleigh on Saturday – in which James Ball and Joe Sbarra netted to end the visitors' play-off ambitions – capping a season in which he netted 11 times in all competitions for 11th-placed Solihull.

To top it all, the towering six-foot, nine-inch forward was crowned joint-top goalscorer alongside Ball, as well as taking the Young Player of the Season and Goal of the Season prizes after the full-time whistle at the SportNation.bet Stadium.

With a hat-trick of accolades to highlight the remarkable campaign Hudlin has had since making the move from Midland League club Solihull United

by Ben Tyler  
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back in October, the young gun feels he has provided the perfect first glimpse of his talent.

"I didn't expect to get all of those awards, but I'm grateful for getting them," he said.

"I feel like I've had a good season considering where I've come from.

"I always knew I had the ability to do it, I'm just so grateful to the club for giving me a platform and allowing me to showcase myself which I feel like I did this season.

"The supporters have seen that too, in terms of proving it to everyone else, so I'm grateful that I've done what I've done to back up my talk.

"I knew it was going to take a lot of patience to cement myself within the squad, and even when I did score a couple of goals I knew I still hadn't confirmed my place."

And having netted the majority of his goals since the arrival of Mark Yates in February, the forward believes the managerial change had a positive impact on him personally.

"He had a lot more trust in me, so I appreciate the opportunities that I got [from Mark]," Hudlin added.

"I'm glad that I've been able to show that I've got a wide range of goals [in me], I'm not just a heading man.

"I've got a bit of everything, I showed that I've been creative with the back heel against Notts County, that I can create my own piece of magic against Halifax.

"It's pleasing that most of my goals have been vital ones, most have been winners."

Re-iterating his desire to keep repaying the club for taking a leap of faith in snapping him up from Step Seven of the non-League ladder, Hudlin added: "I need to take [into perspective] the difference of levels from where I've come from.



Kyle Hudlin, right, shared Moors' top goalscorer award with James Ball, left, this term. Picture by Richard King.

"I didn't understand how good of a season I've had to score the goals that I have.

"I've jumped six steps, if I was to

do the same again it would be impossible, so it's a situation where I'm overwhelmed and grateful for everything the club have done for me."



# Hungry Rouslers looking to storm back into action

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** BRENDAN Kelly says his Bromsgrove Sporting players are itching to step back onto the Victoria Ground turf when they host Hitchin Town on Saturday (3pm).

The Rouslers suffered the disappointment of their away fixture at Hednesford Town being a victim of Storm Dennis last weekend, and to add to their frustration promotion rivals Peterborough Sports, Rushall Olympic and Stourbridge all managed to play and pick up points.

A return to action on Saturday against a Canaries side occupying 17th in the the Southern League Premier Central table provides an ideal opportunity for Bromsgrove, on paper.

It is a challenge that the Rouslers manager won't take lightly, however, with a last-minute Hitchin equaliser

## Top of the table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	G	D	P
Tamworth	28	19	2	7	55	26	29	59	
<b>Bromsgrove Sp</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>57</b>	
Peterborough Sp	29	17	6	6	80	43	37	57	
Royston Town	26	15	6	5	50	27	23	51	
Rushall Olympic	31	14	8	9	56	42	14	50	
Stourbridge	27	15	5	7	49	43	6	50	
AFC Rushden & D	28	14	7	7	49	42	7	49	
Coalville Town	28	13	9	6	49	30	19	48	
Nuneaton Boro	31	13	8	10	53	43	10	47	

that denied Sporting all three points in October's 2-2 draw still fresh in Kelly's mind.

"[In the previous meeting] it was quite even in the first half. We dominated the second but we were quite naive in conceding that late goal the way that we did," he said.

"They've come up this way and turned over the likes of Stourbridge and Redditch already this season, and as we

know anyone can beat anyone at this level. They're not to be underestimated. "Because of the reaction that we've had to our last defeat [a 3-0 loss at home to Coalville] and going three games unbeaten, you want the games to keep coming thick and fast.

"The players are raring to go against a Hitchin team that we feel is a winnable game, but we know that we can't afford to be naive again this time around."

One player whose availability will be monitored closely is midfielder Kieren Westwood, who has suffered a back injury but has a 50-50 chance of being fit for the weekend.

Kelly says that while he is on the lookout to add to the squad, he is more than happy to turn to the club's youth system, which has already proved a capable supply line to the first team this season.

"It's a case of utilising the whole of the squad," said Sporting's manager on dealing with injuries.

"We have a number of players who



Kieren Westwood, right, will face a fitness test for Saturday's game against Hitchin. Right, Sam Collins has already stepped into the first team. Pictures by David Kettle.

are capable of playing out of position too, so we're fortunate in that area.

"I've seen a lot of the under-18s games and I wouldn't be afraid to turn to some of them if needed.

"We've already seen Sam Collins, Tom Massey and in the past Charlie Dowd appear in the first team, so there are lads coming through if needed."



## Boars must be ruthless to stop victory hopes going for a Burton

**RUGBY UNION:** DAN Protherough believes it will be a game of few opportunities when Bromsgrove head to Burton in Saturday's Midlands Premier meeting (2.15pm).

The sixth-placed Boars have swept aside both Broadstreet and Bridgnorth in recent weeks, putting them firmly in the picture for a top-three finish come the season end.

While Protherough's side got the better of Burton in a 24-14 comeback victory in October, the Boars chief has no doubts

that a real challenge will await them at Peel Croft.

"They're a good side, we've played them a few times – other than last year – and they've always been great games," said Bromsgrove's director of rugby.

"It'll be a very tough game this weekend with the wet and windy conditions, it's going to be a slug-fest.

"There's a 90 per cent chance that the match will go ahead, but we know it will be about who can take their chances.

"It's been a funny week as this was due

to be the weekend off in the match calendar, so now we're suddenly playing, everyone in the league is going to be missing a few players.

"It's a case of putting together a team that we know can cause them problems."

Bromsgrove have a real opportunity to extend their winning sequence in the coming weeks, with a favourable run of fixtures against bottom-half sides Doncaster Phoenix (eighth) and Kettering (12th) after this weekend.

Protherough knows better than to

underestimate the opposition, and says his team will need to dig deep to keep the momentum going.

"It's hard because as we saw in the last game against Broadstreet, there's not a lot between most sides," he said.

"Between third from bottom and third from top, every game is a potential win, but also a potential loss. So we've just got to focus on our own performances more than anything.

"In these kinds of games in this weather, we've got to be good at building from

set-pieces, taking opportunities and being sure not to give away easy yards.

"None of the upcoming games will be easy, some of the teams we'll be playing will be scrapping for their lives."

Bromsgrove will be without the absent Will Harris and Drew Harper this weekend, while Jack Thorne has departed the club after joining the RAF.

Protherough has thanked Thorne for his contributions and described him as a "fantastic addition" since arriving in the summer.

by Ben Tyler  
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**RUGBY UNION:** THE FINISHING line for Bromsgrove Rugby Club's fund-raising push for revamped changing facilities at Finstall Road is within sight thanks to the generous backing of supporters.

While proceedings on the pitch have ground to a halt for almost a year since the outbreak of the pandemic, the club are busy off the field plotting a redevelopment of their home that will drive Bromsgrove forward when the Midlands Premier side do eventually resume action.

With the Boars' initial target of \$20,000 already smashed within the first three weeks of their Crowdfunder campaign launching, the club are pushing on to hit the \$30,000 mark which will allow for covered outdoor seating for spectators and new floodlights - in addition to the new physiotherapy facilities, strength and conditioning area and refurbished changing rooms for men, women and children.

As of Wednesday morning, the fund-raiser sits at a total of just over \$27,000 thanks to the goodwill of 139 supporters who have bought into the club's extensive reward scheme, which ranges from purchasing a brick in a commemorative wall dedi-



cated to the club's supporters, to hospitality at Finstall Park for future events.

Dan Protherough, Bromsgrove's director of rugby, says the forthcoming developments have been a long time coming and anticipates a positive knock-on effect for all of the Boars' adults and junior sides.

"The club for a number of years have wanted to develop the changing areas which have

existed for a long time," he said.

"It has a single shower block, which has got six changing rooms connected to it, this in effect means that you can't necessarily have men and women on site at the same time using the changing facilities - and the same for adults and children.

"Therefore, we're very restricted in what we can achieve in terms of broadening our base and what we can offer to the

local community."

Those sentiments were echoed by first team manager Clare Foster, who added: "It will hopefully enable us to have a women's and girls' section, which we've tried a couple of times over the years but have never quite managed to get off the ground.

"If we could get the renovations done for next season, that would be amazing, the sooner we can arrange the money, the sooner we can get out there [to begin construction work]."

Unsurprisingly, the effect of the pandemic has drastically limited the normal revenue streams the club now have access to, rendering the fund-raiser a necessary one in the current climate.

"Normally, the club runs a number of big fund-raising activities, such as the sportsman's lunch in the summer, the gala ball and bonfire night," Protherough continued.

"These three events have a huge impact on the club's fund-raising efforts in a 12-month period and unfortunately last year they all had to be cancelled."

To contribute to the fund-raiser, visit [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/bromsgroverugby](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/bromsgroverugby).

**The Boars chief says the effects of the fund-raising campaign will be far-reaching across the club. Picture: Andy Jepson.**

## Exciting Boars revamp is gathering pace nicely

## Sporting wait to learn their fate

**FOOTBALL:** BROMSGROVE Sporting will await to hear the implications of Monday's address by Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the government's exit plans from the third national lockdown - which may finally bring their 2020/21 season to an early close.

Any decision to bring the curtain down on Steps Three to Six of the non-League ladder will be orchestrated by the Football Association, who have decided to delay taking any action until hearing the latest government instruction.

While the outcome may be a negative one as far as the prospect of Brendan Kelly's Rouslers returning to the pitch is concerned, a decision on continuing - or bringing to an immediate end - the current campaign will at least put a stop to the uncertainty that has surrounded the grassroots level of the game in previous weeks and months.

It has also been revealed, per a Football Association statement, that any resolution to the 2020/21 season will take into consideration the action taken by the National League and National League North/South - at Step One and Two respectively - who have been voting on the outcome of their respective divisions.

There could be a situation, for example, whereby Sporting's Southern League Premier Central season continues, whilst Worcestershire rivals Kidderminster Harriers in National League North abandon their campaign with immediate effect.

Should play resume for Bromsgrove, a restart date of early March has been recommended, although this will again be impacted directly by the Prime Minister's outlining of plans to bring the nation out of the current lockdown.

By way of comparison, Sporting had completed 31 fixtures at the beginning of March 2020 prior to the abandonment of the 2019/20 season, but have only played eight league matches this time around - statistics which offer little realistic hope of a full league programme being completed.



# Kelly aims for delightful dozen

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL: BRENDAN** Kelly has targeted 12 wins from Bromsgrove Sporting's remaining games in a race to the finish line with their promotion rivals. The Rouslers remain second despite Saturday's 6-0 demolition of Lowestoft Town at the Victoria Ground, where Shaquille McDonald and captain Richard Gregory - making his 100th appearance for the club - finished the game with a hat-trick each.

Leaders Tamworth remain in pole position in Southern League Premier Central as a result of a straightforward 2-0 win at Redditch United.

With two games in hand and a two-point lead over Bromsgrove, the Lambs will remain strong title favourites until their next slip-up.

It's a situation that Kelly is keen to influence by putting pressure on their closest rivals - starting with Saturday's trip to Hednesford Town (3pm).

"Their confidence is probably low on the kind of run that they've been on," said Sporting's manager on Hednesford's five-game winless streak.

"But you only have to look at Tuesday night's game with Needham Market. Coalville would have been expected to have won that at home but Needham turned them over - so anything can happen in this league.

"If your mentality and concentration levels aren't right, then you can lose to anyone. The thing for us is never to concentrate on the opposition, we always look to concentrate on ourselves.

"There are 12 games left and we're targeting wins in all of them, so whoever gets nearest to 93 points will be

deserving winners."

Repeat displays from the forward pairing of Gregory and McDonald would no doubt leave Rouslers fans confident of seeing through Kelly's ambitious statement, as Sporting embark on another promotion charge not too dissimilar to last season.

Then, Bromsgrove went toe-to-toe with Peterborough Sports - who are incidentally the next closest side in the title race in third - for the entirety of the campaign.

While Sporting pulled the short straw of having to take the play-off route after missing out on the sole automatic promotion spot, their experience of having been in this position before will no doubt prove useful to Kelly's current crop.

And with three strikers in Gregory, McDonald and Mikey Taylor contributing consistently to the goalscoring cause, the Irishman has talked up the importance of the trio in deciding



Richard Gregory celebrates his hat-trick goal. Picture by Andrew Maguire.

their destiny.

"There is an element of competition between the three," Kelly said.

"But all of them are more focused on the team and chipping in to the overall goal tally.

"At the same time, it's brilliant to have three lads all going for the golden boot in the same season."

Currently, Taylor is clearly leading the way at the top of the charts on 24 goals, with Gregory and Peterborough's Dion Sembie-Ferris keeping in touch with 16 goals each.

While the league's top scorer is an injury doubt having left the pitch early in the Lowestoft win, Gregory has been the subject of particular praise after making his landmark appearance.

"If you look back at the goalscorers that this club has had, he'll go down as one of the best goalscorers in Bromsgrove's history."

"Chris Conway was well out on his own for a while before Jason Cowley came along. Rich is now chasing

Jason down with 81 goals in his 100 appearances so far.

"A lot of people had question marks over Rich before this season about whether he could make the step up, but I've seen a different side to him, especially since he's taken on the responsibility of the captaincy.

"He's become stronger as captain, he's a better and fitter player and has so far stood up to the test. At this stage you have to say he is a club legend.

"You look at his goal ratio, he's central to our plans and he's hungry for more - he loves the club."

With loanee Jak Hickman the only other injury doubt for Bromsgrove, Kelly remains coy on turning to the transfer market for cover at this moment in time.

"We want to make sure we strengthen the squad but don't want to upset the balance," he said.

"It's something we might look into but they've got to be players who fit into what the club is about."

## Kelly: Battle to go up will continue to very last game

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL: BROMSGROVE** Sporting manager Brendan Kelly believes the Southern League Premier Central promotion race will go right down to the final day.

The Rouslers' reign at the top of the table was ended on Tuesday when Tamworth recorded a 2-0 win at Alvechurch, thanks to two goals from substitute Chris Lait, to move two points clear with two games in hand.

Sporting had recorded a 1-0 victory at Banbury United on Saturday after Mike Taylor's strike to bounce back after their 3-0 humbling by Coalville Town in their previous outing.

"I have to say the promotion battle will [go down to the wire]," he said. "I went to watch the game at Alvechurch and from what I saw it was a bit of a smash-and-grab from them.

"I spoke with a few of Tamworth's staff and they also seem in agreement that it will go on until the end of the season.

"From Tamworth's point of view, when you have the likes of Chris Lait, a player of that quality to come off the bench, then you're always going to be confident of your chances."

After being shellshocked by their Coalville defeat, Sporting have reeled off two promising results. Following the win at Banbury, they advanced to the final of the Worcestershire Senior Cup with a 6-0 rout of Evesham United to set up a clash with either Alvechurch or

Top of the table						
	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Tamworth	27	18	2	7	27	56
Bromsgrove	29	16	6	7	35	54
Peterborough Sports	27	15	6	6	31	51
Roydon Town	26	15	6	5	23	51
AFC Rushden & O	28	14	7	7	7	49
Coalville Town	27	13	9	5	20	48
Nuneaton Boro	29	13	7	9	13	46
Rushall Olympic	29	13	7	9	12	46
Stourbridge	25	13	5	7	4	44

Kidderminster Harriers. Charlie Dowd's hat-trick, Richard Gregory's penalty and goals from Shaquille McDonald and Taylor helped the Rouslers to a barnstorming result at The Spire & Hartswell Jubilee Stadium against Division One South opposition on Monday.

"It makes it easier for me when we're scoring and winning games, we've got make sure we keep it up," said the Sporting boss.

"Charlie's given me a headache for the team selection on Saturday. He had a bad game at Kings Langley which knocked him, but he was excellent at Evesham.

"If he can do that every week then he'll be invaluable to us.

"Liam Spink in midfield was excellent, and it was good to give Max Beardmore a game in goal. We're yet to concede



Manager Brendan Kelly. Picture by Rob McLaren

when he's been in goal. He appeared at Alvechurch on Boxing Day [a 4-1 win], but we'd already conceded by the time he came on."

Bromsgrove earned their 16th win this term at the Banbury Plant Hire Community Stadium on Saturday, with Kelly highlighting the significance of victory against one of the old guard at Step Three.

"I think not only the lads, but myself, did a bit of soul searching after the Coalville game. To show that level of performance after the run we were on was alarming," he said.

"We hope to go on another little run now. The defence was brilliant in that game at Banbury, and have no doubt about it, that was a big scalp for us against an established club at this level."

"They were beaten fair and square."

The Rouslers will return to the Victoria Ground on Saturday to face 16th-placed Lowestoft Town (3pm).

It offers the title challengers a real opportunity to address their indifferent home form, where they have won just six times in 14 matches.

The visiting Trawler Boys have struggled against top-six opposition this season, having only recorded a slender 2-1 win against Coalville Town in November, but Kelly warns they will be tough opponents.

"It won't be straightforward, I've said it to the lads before but the only team that can beat us is ourselves," he said.

"All the hard work from this week will be undone if we don't do it again on Saturday. At this stage of the season, you can forgive lads for slip-ups through fatigue, but we need to just get points regardless of how we perform."

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TOP: Ethan Priest looks to shrug off a Broadstreet challenge. 0620003MMR4



LEFT: James Martin looks for a gap. 0620003MMR3

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## Boars are Streets ahead...finally

**RUGBY UNION: BROMSGROVE** had to do it the hard way against visitors Broadstreet to win their Midlands Premier encounter 19-16 with the last play of the game.

A couple of tries from Josh Holt and one from Tom Sadler, two of which were converted by Will Harris, took the Boars to their tenth victory of the campaign so

far, despite the hosts being behind for the majority of the match.

Dan Protherough's fifth-placed side, on 50 points, are now within touching distance of nearest rivals Shropshire side Newport (56pts) and Bridgnorth (53pts), but have a weekend off before a trip to Burton next Saturday, February 15.

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# Crowther relieved to see late goals seal last-four tie

**FOOTBALL:** ASSISTANT manager Andy Crowther admitted he was not confident Droitwich Spa were going to capitalise on their considerable number of chances in Tuesday night's last-gasp win at Bromyard Town.

An 82nd-minute equaliser from James Lemon was followed by Jack Davies' clinical finish seven minutes later, looking the Salmen's place in the semi-finals of the West Midlands Division One League Cup.

While the title favourites created opportunities aplenty, they were unable to put their rivals to the sword.

"To be honest, we dominated the game and completely outplayed them," said Crowther.

"We did our thing, but it got to the stage where I didn't think we were going to get the winner."

"But fair play to them [Bromyard]. They worked hard, got themselves in front, and then worked to keep their lead until the end."

With no game played last weekend, Spa went into Tuesday's trip to Delahay Meadow with fresh legs and their intent to attack from the start was evident, with chances falling to Brad Burgess,



Connor Collins, Lemon and Ben Tilbury, albeit to no avail, against the run of play, Bromyard hit

Jack Davies fires the winning Droitwich goal past keeper Alex Rhodes on Tuesday night. Picture by Mathew Mason.

from close range by Jason Wellings.

Collins hit the woodwork in response, while home custodian Alex Rhodes appeared unbeatable between the sticks as Bromyard remained in front at the break.

The progress of the Salmen could have been seriously boosted, had it not been for two saves from Oliver to keep out Jake Hollywell and Matt Middleton.

Spa continued to search for parity, going closer once more when Cory Rudd crashed a strike against the bar from long range, while substitute Jordan Cox should have done better from a promising position.

Eventually, the equaliser did arrive, and it was Lemon who provided it just in the nick of time.

Entering the closing stages of regulation time, the forward was on hand to guide the ball home from close range, before Davies went through on goal and

dispatched clinically to send the visitors through.

Spa now turn their attentions back to matters in the league, where they currently sit second on 31 points – three behind leaders Wellington Amateurs who have played three games more.

With a return to action against second-placed NC Dorking on Saturday at Walshes Meadow (3pm), Crowther believes the perception of his side has changed considerably since the season.

"It's been the case in the last few seasons where teams have seen us as something of a big scalp to take," he added.

"But that's something that is seen more so now, with how we've been playing in the league and after our FA Vase run earlier in the season. We've just got to keep doing our thing."

"We played Darlaston a few weeks ago and their league position is false, it'll be another good test. The lads know what they're like, but we'll treat it as just another game."

With no injuries to report, the Salmen will have a fully-fit squad available for selection against the Black Country visitors.

# Boards' team-work will be essential to end season on a high

**RUGBY UNION:** DAN Protherough is hopeful that his tight-knit unit at Bromsgrove will continue to ground out the points to complete a positive first season back in Midlands Premier.

The fifth-placed Braves strengthened their position with a last-gasp 19-16 win over Broadstreet last weekend, after tries from Josh Holt (2), Tom Sadler and a couple of conversions from Will Harris at Finsial Road.

It was a 10th victory from 17 games played, and Bromsgrove director of rugby Protherough is quietly confident of producing a strong run-in towards the end of the campaign.

"I don't want to look too far ahead, but we've pushed a lot of sides close and never really been out of any of the games that we've played so far," Protherough said.

by Ben Tyler  
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"Our focus is to get our heads down and keep going. What we've got is a squad of really good blokes, on and off the pitch, that has been put together."

"I hope the boys keep doing that. We've not played badly in any of the games that we've had since October."

The Braves chief was keen to give credit to Coventry side Broadstreet, who made Bromsgrove work hard for the win despite their lowly league position of 12th.

"It was a very tough game last weekend; they're a lot better than the league table suggest," Protherough added.

"Rumour has it they signed a number of players on loan before the game, and they made it a real battle."

"We were losing 3-0 at half-time after playing against the wind, so to go in with that scoreline wasn't too bad at all."

"We came back out for the second half and it was very even, but we got turned over and they scored after a 40-metre run."

"We hit back quickly with a breakdown try, and then we got ourselves in front."

"That with 11 men on the pitch at 14-13, the game was a nail-biter."

"They scored a penalty with four or five minutes to go. After that we kept them pinned in and after five or six attacking phases we scored with the last play of the game."

"We had to show a lot of character and belief as a group in order to come out on top."

Bromsgrove now have a weekend off, before returning to action with a trip to ninth-placed Burton on Saturday, February 15.



Ed Krawlecki looks to break the Broadstreet lead. Picture by Marcus Mingins 0620003MMR1 To buy our photos, visit www.buyphotos247.com

# Upbeat Monners seek home comforts after away woes continue

**RUGBY UNION:** DROITWICH coach Blair Hunter anticipates another close-fought encounter against Ludlow on Saturday when the two sides meet at The Glyn Mitchell Memorial Ground (2.15pm).

The Monners go into the fixture on the back of a 58-12 humbling away to Midlands One West title challengers Lichfield last weekend. Tries from Matt Handford and Nico Mason, plus a Josh Skinner conversion, provided the Droitwich points at Cooke Fields.

But Hunter remains confident that with a good backing this weekend, the Monners can get back to winning ways against the sixth-placed visitors, Ludlow won 39-31 when the sides met in Shropshire in October.

"If we play to our full potential and get the supporters down in their numbers, then it should be another close one," he said. "I can't see it being another game won by 50 points."

A number of teams have been steamrolled by Lichfield at their place."

Hunter admits that while the gap between Droitwich and second-placed Lichfield was evident last weekend, matters were not helped by an injury-stricken second half that depleted the Monners' numbers further.

He continued: "We had a disjointed side at 75 per cent strength. To have the score down to 20 points was not an achievement."

"But in the last 15 minutes we finished with 14 men on the pitch. We had four injuries [to Phil Horton, Pete

Knight, Handford and Skinner] and with all of our options from the bench used up."

"So to play a side that good with fewer numbers on the pitch, it was very tough. We competed but it was all one-way at the end."

"We were 24-12 behind at half-time, but we scored down to 20 points, but they were a class act throughout."

Droitwich are back on home turf on Saturday, and the Monners coach is keen to see the side add to their "away complex" in the coming months.

"The lads knew it would be tough last weekend, but it doesn't help having an away complex," Hunter said.

"If you look elsewhere, Worcester Warriors have had the same problem in the past three years."

"We're a different proposition at home, but even against the bottom six away we really struggle."

# Boys race away to Midland title

**ATHLETICS:** BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Athletic Club's under-13 boys' squad maintained their superb form by winning their Midlands Counties Cross Country Championship group.

The event at Prestwold Hall, Loughborough, includes 10 counties from the Midlands and South West, with the top four finishers from each club counting towards the final total.

The team of Matt Heslin (8th), Nathan Sanders (13th), Sam Hemby (14th) and Willem Hemby (23rd) were comfortable winners of their age category, with Northamptonshire's Birchfield Harriers second and third respectively.

B&R's under-13 boys point-scorers were well supported by teammates William Pridden (26th) and Spencer Mayne (119th).

Weston's impressive 6-1, 6-0 success in the penultimate match.

Despite suffering defeat in the final rubber, when Banner and Bracknell lost out 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, the successive straight-set victories were enough to give third-placed Bromsgrove the bulk of the points.

David Lloyd Bromsgrove A stay top of Men's Division One after seeing off sixth-placed Stourbridge 8-2.

George Southall and James Nolan got DL off to a flier by running away with the first encounter 6-2, 6-3 against

Richard Banno and Denham Williams, though the narrative pairing of Liam Handford and James Troth had a more difficult time in their 7-5, 6-2 defeat by Adam Tranter and Jack Hingley.

Handford and Troth recovered to fire their way past Banno and Williams 6-2, 6-2, followed by Southall and Nolan's 6-3, 6-0 thrashing of Tranter and Hingley.

DL remains top on points albeit having played four games more than their closest challengers, Bromsgroves, with a single home win over Park stay sixth on seven points.



Left to right, Willem Hemby, Nathan Sanders and Sam Hemby.

# Bromsgrove B boost top-2 bid

**TENNIS:** BROMSGROVE B's hopes of a top-two finish in Division Two of the Herefordshire and Worcester County Championships League remain alive after a 6-4 triumph over Madley.

Triumph over Madley and Hannah Weston were unable to give Bromsgrove off to a positive start in the second rubber 6-1, 6-3, 6-2, 6-7, 7-6, to the visitors' opening du.

The hosts recovered, however, with Ann Banner and Isabelle Bracknell winning the second rubber 6-1, 6-3, followed by Kenward and

Weston's impressive 6-1, 6-0 success in the penultimate match.

Despite suffering defeat in the final rubber, when Banner and Bracknell lost out 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, the successive straight-set victories were enough to give third-placed Bromsgrove the bulk of the points.

David Lloyd Bromsgrove A stay top of Men's Division One after seeing off sixth-placed Stourbridge 8-2.

George Southall and James Nolan got DL off to a flier by running away with the first encounter 6-2, 6-3 against

Richard Banno and Denham Williams, though the narrative pairing of Liam Handford and James Troth had a more difficult time in their 7-5, 6-2 defeat by Adam Tranter and Jack Hingley.

Handford and Troth recovered to fire their way past Banno and Williams 6-2, 6-2, followed by Southall and Nolan's 6-3, 6-0 thrashing of Tranter and Hingley.

DL remains top on points albeit having played four games more than their closest challengers, Bromsgroves, with a single home win over Park stay sixth on seven points.

# Spa: Fan-tastic show was for the Rousers faithful

**FOOTBALL:** EVESHAM United 0 Bromsgrove Sporting 6

Worcestershire Senior Cup

Report by Ben Tyler and Max Banner

BRENDAN Kelly has paid tribute to the travelling Bromsgrove Sporting faithful after crushing past Evesham in Monday's Senior Cup semi-final.

The "unplayable" Charlie Dowd scored a hat-trick, while Mike Taylor, Shaquille McDonald and a penalty from captain Richard Gregory ensured the Rousers' place in the final against the winner of Abchurch & Kidderminster Harriers.

Sporting manager Kelly admitted he was not expecting such a one-sided affair at the The Spire & Hartwell Jubilee Stadium.

"I think we spoke before the game about being unsure of what sort of challenge they would give us," said Kelly.

"They're doing well in their league, and

have a relatively new management team in charge, but it turned out to be an extremely comfortable evening."

"We managed to get minutes into players and overall it was a great win."

"We want to dedicate the win to our fans. They turned up in their numbers yet again, our away support at this level is unparalleled."

After a cagey opening quarter, Sporting grew into the game with half-chances falling for Greg Mills and Harry Higginson, before they eventually took a 25th-minute lead from the penalty spot.

A foul in by United defender Tom Chamberlain on Josh Quynor handed Gregory the chance to bury the spot-kick from 12 yards on his 99th appearance for the club.

Bromsgrove found a second 11 minutes later, when Kiern Westwood played through Taylor, who lashed into the bottom corner after holding off his marker.



get the all-important three points. Every single player put a shift in and getting that first goal was vital. I

It was three on 38 minutes, after an attempt from Mills inadvertently found the net of Dowd, who guided the ball into the net with his head.

Sporting added a fourth six minutes after the restart. Again it was Mills and Dowd who linked up once more, with the latter touching down the midfielder's cross before picking out the bottom corner.

Spa threatened to net a fifth when his half-volley struck the post, while Evesham's Daniele Bragoli and Paul Sullivan should have done better with efforts that failed to trouble visiting 'keeper

Max Beardon.

Dowd had his hat-trick 13 minutes from time when his 20-yard effort arched into the corner, out of reach of the despairing Leelan Robertson.

The rout was completed with nine minutes to play after McDonald received from Will Shorrocks before hammering the ball home from close range.

thought as a team we defended brilliantly and were worthy of the points at the end of the game.

On Monday night we travelled to Evesham in the Worcestershire Senior Cup for a semi-final which again was important to us.

When you play football, no matter what competition you're in, you want to win. You want to get to cup finals and again we were brilliant.

We were ruthless in front of goal, worked hard and again looked solid defensively. No disrespect to Evesham, as they have some good



Joseph Heywood keeps close tabs on his marker. 062002MMRS

son, but hope for a better outcome than the 4-3 defeat suffered in their previous meeting at the Recreation Ground last March.

■ BARNET Green Spartak will be looking to bounce back after a draw and a defeat when they head to second-placed Kidderminster Spartans in their Division Two fixture (2.30pm).

Gi Singh and Neil Martin's side sit ninth after a 2-0 midweek defeat at Coventry Alvis followed a 2-2 draw at home to Lane Head.

Ryan Palmer gave Coventry a half-time lead in Wednesday night's game at the Alvis Sports and Social Club, before Dillide Linton added a second in the closing stages to edge a close-fought encounter.

On Saturday, Spartak conceded an 89th-minute equaliser to Lane Head at The Pavilions.

Marcus Malcolm headed Barnet Green in front after 24 minutes, only for the effort to be cancelled out 13 minutes later.

The hosts regained the lead with 25 minutes remaining when Fred Rescoud nudged the ball into the net with his

# It's away the lads as Taylor strikes again

Banbury United 0 Bromsgrove Sporting 1

Southern League Premier Central

Report by Max Banner

MIKE Taylor's goal on the stroke of half-time was as different as the defensively resolute Rousers continued their stunning away form with a slender victory at Banbury on Saturday.

The Oxfordshire hosts started the game with intent at the Banbury Plant Hire Community Stadium, but were unable to truly threaten Sporting goalkeeper Dan Platt.

John Mills and Greg Kaziboni both struck early attempts wide for the Puritans, while Craig Fasanmade was unable to take his chance when being denied by Platt in a one-on-one.

It was a costly miss, as top scorer Taylor fired the visitors into the lead moments later in the 39th minute.

After outsmelling his marker, Richard Gregory raced forward to the edge of the penalty area before playing an in-perfect pass through to his strike partner, who guided the ball past the onrushing Jack Harding.

Taylor almost had a second four minutes later after a couple of attempts – the first of which



Greg Mills, right, wins the sprint race with Banbury's Lewis Wilson. Picture by Phil Baker.

was cleared off the line by Charlie Hawtin.

Giorgio Rasulo threatened to haul the hosts level with a free-kick that was batted away by Platt after the restart, while a succession of chances for Kaziboni, Ravi Shamsi and Fasanmade midway through the game also proved fruitless.

With the clock ticking down, Will Shorrocks and Shaquille McDonald both tested Harding, followed by a Taylor strike as Sporting secured a 10th away league win in 15 matches.

players, but you could tell we just had too much for them."

Looking forward to Saturday, we welcome Lowestoft to the VG. It's a long journey for them but it will be business as usual for us as another three points is up for grabs.

We'll be doing all we can to maintain our form from the last two games to keep our promotion target on track.

Earlier in the week, I was told that if selected, that Saturday's game will be my 100th appearance for the club, something I am very proud of.

The two years at this fantastic club

have been the best of my career, on and off the pitch.

I've met some friends here that I will have for life and have good relationships with the chairman, director of football, management team, players – past and present – and of course the best fans in non-League.

It is an honour to captain this club as we climb through the non-league pyramid and I will continue to give my all for as long as I'm here.

See you all on Saturday. Get behind us and get the Shed End rocking!



Fairfield's Ross Dempster, right, battles a Feckenham player for possession. 062002MMR12 Pictures by Marcus Mingins To purchase our photos, visit www.buyphotos247.com

shin, and it looked enough to see them through to a sixth victory of the season.

But a leveler with seconds remaining of normal time rescued a point for the league strugglers.

# Symonds hat-trick in vain as title-chasing Albion grab points

**SUNDAY FOOTBALL:** DIVISION ONE

The Kings Heath Albion were pushed all the way before defeating Meadow Park 4-3 in last weekend's standout fixture in the Bromsgrove & District League.

Andrew Court, Stephen Mason, Aaron Marshall and Tom James Ward all had target for the table-topsters, with Xavier Symonds scoring a hat-trick for Park.

Albion remain top on points albeit having played four games more than their closest challengers, Bromsgroves, with a single home win over Park stay sixth on seven points.

In the Premier Division, Winyates were second after a 3-1 thrashing of Austin Ex Apprentices, and the scoreline was repeated by league rivals in the Bromsgrove & District League.

Bartley Reds were on the receiving end of Tom James Ward (4), Jack Steele (3) and Jack Berry on target for Bromsgrove.

Longbridge Social are through to the final after winning 1-0 away to Chadlesley Ravens, thanks to Luke Wyatt's strike.

Longbridge will have to wait to learn

their opponents as semi-finalists Black Horse were out of the Rubery Athletic or Corinthians in the last four.

Rubery Legends have sunk to the bottom of the table after losing 4-1 in an enthralling battle with relegation rivals Alcester Town Sunday.

Longbridge Social are through to the final after winning 1-0 away to Chadlesley Ravens, thanks to Luke Wyatt's strike.

Longbridge will have to wait to learn

by leaders West Heath Alibars. Jason Brown (2), John Dingley (1), John Tullett and Conor Wesley ensured the Alibars remain the runaway leaders, five points ahead nearest challengers AFC Norton sit five points adrift.

Third-placed Cotton Old Boys swept aside Stoke Prior 3-0 in Division Two, thanks to James Gasson, Carl Parkinson and Jason D'Aguliar strikes.

Bromsgrove Partisans top ten past Grapevine & Norton in the group stage of the Rose Bowl Cup. Nick Badger finished with three goals in a Paul Halfpenny (2), Paul Badger, Sam Bunn,

Aaron Maycroft and Adam Pillinger also provided a clinical touch in the 10-0 rout, keeping Partisan top of Group A.

AFC Blackwell stay second after Ben Hewitt and Alex Wilson topped the past Easemore United in a 2-1 win. Joe Shaw netted the visitors' reply from the spot.

Bromsgroves are safely through the last four of the WA Harris Cup, courtesy of a 3-1 success at Rubery Memorial.

Adam Watson, Dan Griffin and Aaron Bunn were the scorers for the Division One outfit, setting up a semi-final meeting against either Rubery Athletic or Duke of York.



Number ten Joe Cairns heads home United's second. Picture by Jeff Bennett.



# Coronavirus puts football on hold for three weeks

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** COVENTRY'S Midland League sides face at least three weeks without any games after grassroots football was suspended on Monday.

The call was made by the UK government in response to the growing fears caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

As a result of the decision, the non-League game will be on hold until Saturday April 4 at the earliest.

Though some leagues decided to stop playing last weekend, five of Coventry's seven MFL sides played as usual.

GNP Sports' Division One meeting with Heath Hayes at the Coppice Colliery Ground was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch, while Coventry Plumbing's trip to Tipton Town in the Birmingham County Saturday Vase semi-final was waved off after the County PA postponed all matches.

■ **PREMIER DIVISION** leaders Coventry United marked Terry Anderson's 200th game in charge by brushing aside Stourport Swifts 3-1.

Anderson, who is assisted by Luke Morton, oversaw another confident display from his side to maintain their seven-point advantage at the top over Sporting Khalsa, having played three

## New boss moves quickly

**FOOTBALL:** NEW Racing Club Warwick manager Jason Pyott has wasted little time in strengthening his side.

On the back of disappointing defeats to Stourport Swifts (3-0) and Romulus (3-1) in his opening matches in charge of the Midland League Premier Division side, Pyott has drafted in seven new faces.

Striker Tyrice Richards was the latest recruit on Monday, joining from Midland League Division Two outfit Coventry Alvis where he netted 15 goals this season.

Barwell defender Reece Ford, formerly of Coventry City, will aim to shore up Warwick's back line,

and has been described by Pyott as being "one of the best attacking central defenders" he has seen in non-League.

Five players from Racing's academy have also signed. Versatile defender Callum Maspers, who has also turned out for fellow Premier Division side Coventry Sphinx this term, midfielders Joe Davison and Beckham Whalley, defender Jack Girling and goalkeeper Josh Pyott will add further depth and offer competition for first-team places.

Should non-League action resume after the current April 4 suspension, Warwick will next turn out away to Tivdale on Tuesday April 7.

games more than their rivals. Chris Camwell's ninth-minute opener, a first-time half-volley swept low into the far corner of the net, was the perfect way for United to begin proceedings at Butts Park Arena.

Joe Cairns then doubled the lead by glancing home a far-post header from Camwell in the 36th minute for his fifth goals in six matches.

Stourport pulled a goal back against the run of play when Matt Hanson chested down and fired home Mark Danks' free-kick from close range two minutes

later. The scores would have been level, but for Michael Quirke's stunning last-ditch tackle to prevent Joe Billingham before the break.

Quirke then rattled the Swifts crossbar with a header as his influential display continued, while United 'keeper Reece Francis was kept busy by efforts from Lewis Platt and Elliott Lees at the other end.

The game was settled with ten minutes to play when Luke Downes blasted home after Camwell's free-kick was rolled into his path on the edge of the box.



Ashanti Pryce netted to put Sphinx back into contention. Picture by Coventry Sphinx on Twitter.

A second yellow card for Stourport's Martin Slevin in the closing stages completed a frustrating afternoon for the eight-placed visitors, but another memorable one for the league's pacesetters.

■ **A SECOND-HALF** fightback from Coventry Sphinx helped snatched a point in a 2-2 draw with ninth-placed Long Eaton United at Sphinx Drive.

Alex Marshall's seventh-minute opener and a David Kolodynski strike 12 minutes before half-time put the visitors on course for a sixth away win this term.

But Sphinx had other plans. Pryce whipped a strike into the far corner of the net on 55 minutes to give his side some hope, before Colin Smith robbed Long Eaton goalkeeper Brandon Ganley of possession and poked home the equaliser six minutes from time.



# Yates calls for positive response



Left, Alex Addai in the thick of the action. Right, Kyle Hudlin shoots towards goal. Pictures by Richard King.

**FOOTBALL:** MANAGER Mark Yates has challenged his Solihull Moors side to embark on another run of form, after their five-match unbeaten streak ended in last week-end's 3-2 defeat at Dagenham & Redbridge.

After an initial three-match winless run since taking over from Jimmy Shan last month, Yates had overseen four wins and a draw from five games.

Despite taking the lead through Jordon Cranston in the 11th minute at the Chigwell Construction Stadium last Saturday, ten-man Solihull were unable to extend that unbeaten record to six matches in the National League.

George Saunders pulled the Daggers level just before the half-hour mark,

by **Ben Tyler**

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before Angelo Balanta's penalty and a Matt Robinson strike either side of the break put the hosts 3-1 ahead.

A straight red for defender Tyrone Williams 14 minutes from time left the visitors deeper in the mire before Adam Rooney netted a late consolation in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

Despite the result, Yates was upbeat for a strong end to the season in the ten games that remain, starting with Saturday's home game with Yeovil Town.

"It was disappointing that we stopped the run," he said.

"I thought we started great and were

positive, scored a good goal and had a couple more really good chances.

"And then we've conceded three sloppy goals in a mad 15 minutes.

"But there was lots of pleasing stuff, I said to the lads that all it changes is that there's a game less to get the points that we want to get. I don't want them to beat themselves up as they worked really hard.

"There are things that we've got to learn and do better, but it was a really positive attitude from the boys with ten men, and we kept going until the 95th minute."

Williams' dismissal means the 26-year-old will be missing for the next few games, to add to the club's existing lack of options in the backline. The club's appeal to a National League

commission to overturn the ban proved unsuccessful at the start of the week.

"Reiss [McNally] is having an operation, Nathan Cameron is back in training, so hopefully he'll have a good week and get somewhere near [a return]," Yates added.

"Tyrone is Mr Cool, he's so laidback and so in control of himself, but he took an elbow to the face and his reaction has cost us and him a four-game ban - it's harsh but it's a lesson he's got to learn quickly."

Moors made one change to the team that had stunned Notts County the previous midweek, with James Ball taking the place of Cameron Archer in the starting XI.

After a confident start, Moors went ahead when Cranston found the net via

the post from a well-worked free-kick routine.

The visitors looked good value for their lead, but were stunned when Saunders stole in at the far post to net Balanta's cross to equalise and then Balanta scored from the spot following a dubious handball by Kyle Storer.

To add to Solihull's woes, Robinson sunk a third when nicking the ball into the net from Will Wright's corner.

Moors were down but certainly not out and continued to pepper Elliot Justham's goal, with Storer's strike brushing the side netting and Williams' header forcing the keeper to claw the ball away from danger.

Williams' reaction to an inadvertent elbow resulted in his dismissal before Rooney struck with seconds remaining.



# Fairfield looking to build on Swifts win in Feckenham clash

**FOOTBALL:** FAIRFIELD Villa will look to continue their push up the Midlands League Division Two table when they meet top-four side Feckenham on Saturday.

Keith Draper's men were comfortable 2-0 winners in their trip to second-bottom Bolshall Swifts last weekend. The result, courtesy of Ross Dempster and Dan Ludlow goals in either half, at Rene Road lifted Villa into tenth in the table and now they host fourth-placed Feckenham at the Recreation Ground on Saturday (2pm).

With another difficult playing surface to contend with, direct football was the order of the day last weekend, an approach which worked in the Swans' favour as they created a plethora of early chances.

Former Northfield Town winger Jake Wicketts, making his debut, put the ball on a plate for Aaron Westwood to fire goalwards with a first-time effort, though Bolshall custodian Matthew Brennan was equal to the shot.

A long pass over the Swifts' defence brought the opener when Dempster latched onto the ball before finishing clinically for his third goal in a Fairfield shirt.

Further opportunities fell the way of Villa's Pete Jenney, who was denied by an excellent close-range save, while Dempster and Ludlow also sent attempts narrowly wide of the mark.

Frustrations spilled over when a free-kick was awarded in Bolshall's favour, a decision which left Dempster incensed and earned him a ten-minute spell in the sin-bin.

Fortunately for the visitors, they still went into the half-time break with a one-goal lead.

Eight minutes after the interval, Villa finally had a two-goal cushion when Laurence Martin fed a lofted through ball into the path of Ludlow and the midfielder nudged the ball into the net.

Substitute Alfie Bloomer became the second Swans player to be sent to the sin-bin, while David Delaney went close to adding a third of the game, only for his strike to be ruled the post.

■ REUEL Prescod stole the show for Barnt Green Spartak with a hat-trick in last weekend's entertaining 3-3 draw at rock-bottom Redditch Borough in Division Two.

GJ Singh and Neil Martin's side stay ninth following an encounter where Borough were pegged back three times by the clinical Prescod, who took his tally to 12 goals for the season.

His first, a low header, sailed into the net at the far post on 20 minutes, was followed by a well-timed run and sliding finish seven minutes after half-time.

While the hat-trick goal was somewhat fortuitous, given Maximum Court's howler to drop an over-hit cross into the striker's path, it brought the visitors back on level terms with 20 minutes to play.

Spartak almost took maximum points by the final minute, but Darrin Green drove clipped the outside of the post.

Charles Wilkinson, Will Skelton and David Phelan were the Redditch goalscorers, earning the league strugglers their first point of the campaign.

Barnt Green welcome 14th-placed Lane Head to The Pavilions on Saturday (2pm). The Bownick-based visitors will be some after suffering as 10-2 drubbing at Coton Green last time out.



Fairfield's Aaron Westwood cracks a shot at Matthew Brennan's goal. In the match at Bolshall. Pictures by Paul Smith.



Dan Ludlow fires home Fairfield's second of the afternoon.

# Barley put the boot in

**FOOTBALL:** MARK Owen lauded Cory Rude's show-stopping strike as "one of the best I've ever seen" following last weekend's draw at Wellington Amateurs in a top-of-the-table clash in West Midlands (Regional) League Division One.

Rude struck in the 67th minute to put Droitwich Spa 3-2 up at the Wickes Stadium, in an encounter in which the lead changed hands three times.

Connor Collins put Spa a goal in front on 12 minutes, before Matt Elmore and Mare Perry struck in the space of a minute to put the hosts 2-1 up.

Alex Dagnone then levelled just before the hour mark, followed by Rude's wonder goal that was ultimately cancelled out by Perry's header with minutes remaining.

A point apiece leaves Droitwich and Wellington level at the top of the division on 31 points, though Spa's +34 goal dif-

ference is considerably better than the Amateurs' +15 at present.

The Droitwich manager felt his side were deserving of a tenth victory of the campaign.

In the first 20 minutes we were out-standing, we could have been two or three goals up," Owen said.

We took the lead and looked comfortable until conceding twice in the space of a strange minute to go in 2-1 down at half-time. We addressed a few things at the break and came out a better side.

"Then we got ourselves level and Cory hits an unbelievable goal that was capable of winning any game - it's one of the best I've seen.

"We hit the post and then in the last five minutes we were punished. If you take the last five minutes out, then we were excellent, but we're happy with a point away from home."

Droitwich started strongly in Shropshire, creating a number of chances as Jack Davies, James Lemon and Jordan Cox threatened to put the visitors in front.

Collins gave Spa a deserved breakthrough, burying a low strike, before going close to doubling his tally for the afternoon when clattering the frame of Owen Humphries' goal.

But a sudden switch in momentum meant the hosts were 2-1 ahead after 23 minutes.

Elmore took advantage of a mistake by Mike Seeley to steal in and plant the ball in the net, followed by Perry's close-range finish seconds later.

The Salterns re-grouped after the break and looked back to their best, hauling themselves level ten minutes into the sec-

ond half when Dagnone powered a header low into the bottom corner.

The leveler encouraged Owen's men to seek a second go-ahead goal of the afternoon, one which was provided in emphatic fashion by Rude, who blasted a 25-yard rocket against the underside of the bar and into the net.

Spa would have been well out of sight, had it not been for the endeavours of Humphries in the Wellington goal to deny the visitors time after time.

Indeed, it was this inability to secure a two-goal cushion that proved crucial when Perry was left in plenty of space to head home from a corner kick for 3-2, denying Droitwich a huge three points for their promotion hopes.

With no fixture this weekend, a visit to Bromsgrove in the Division One League Cup on Tuesday night (7.45pm) will provide Droitwich with their next taste of action.

# Droitwich C step up title challenge

**TENNIS:** DROITWICH C have tightened their grip on the Division Four East title in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Men's Winter League after a narrow 6-4 win away to Barnt Green on Sunday.

The third-placed hosts lost the opening rubber in straight sets when table-tennis Spas' Neil Bates and Jonathan Moran swept aside David Grinnell and Hamad Ahmad 6-2, 6-4.

A third-set tiebreak was needed in the second match between Green's Paul Gordon and Chris Linsell and the visitors' Kevin Hodges and Philip Walton, with the former sealing a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 victory.

Droitwich hit back immediately, when Hodges and Walton beat Grinnell and Ahmad 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 in another three-setter.

It guaranteed the bulk of the points for Droitwich, despite Bates and Moran's 7-5, 6-3 loss against Gordon and Linsell.

Elsewhere in the league, fifth-placed David Lloyd Bromsgrove B closed the gap to the top four after a convincing 8-2 rout of hosts Stourbridge C.

The away side were emphatic in the two opening rubbers, winning both in straight sets.

Richard Garbett and Martyn Langston dispatched Stour's Andrew Eaton and Toby McColo 6-3, 6-1 in the first, while Paul Farmer and Thomas Griffiths had few problems against Christopher Tewen and Christian Lewis in the second, winning 6-1, 6-2.

The hosts brought themselves back into contention when Eaton and McColo swept aside Farmer and Griffiths 6-3, 6-2, but they were unable to rescue the game. Tewen and Lewis won 6-2, 6-1 to Garbett and Langston in the final match.

Fourth-placed Stourbridge are two points in front of DL Bromsgrove on 22 points.

# Barley put the boot in

**POOL:** THERE were few shocks in the quarter-finals of the Pete Alcock Spring Cup and Paul Sheen Shadow Cup in midweek.

With the Droitwich Pool League taking a break from Mid-West Premiership action, Barley Mow kept themselves on track to retain their Spring Cup title by knocking out The Hop Pole with a 5-3 win.

The Dovey were also victors by the same scoreline, defeating DWMC, while Massons All Chalked Up, who sit in second place, eliminated The Star & Garter five frames to two.

Salt 'n' Ash's complete the line-up for the last four, having received a bye in the Shadow Cup. The Dovevale Arms edged The Pillar of Salt 4-1 in a final-frame decider to reach the semi-finals.

They will be joined by The Pillar of Dreams, who ran out 5-0 winners against Never in Salted.

Rifle No Mans and Wessie Wanderers received byes into the next round.

# New: We're the pride of Worcestershire

**FOOTBALL:** **Bromsgrove Sporting 7**  
**Redditch United 1**  
**Southern League Premier Central**  
Report by Ben Tyler and Max Banner

BRENDAN Kelly declared Bromsgrove Sporting "the pride of Worcestershire" after a crushing derby win over Redditch on Tuesday night.

Braces for Richard Gregory and Will Shorrocks, plus goals from Greg Mills, Mike Taylor and Shaquille McDonald wrapped up a comfortable win in the first competitive meeting between the two sides since Bromsgrove's rebirth.

While a big victory was always on the cards considering the downturn in fortunes for visitors Redditch this season, Kelly was quick to point out the symbolism of a victory against one of the mainstays of Step Three football.

"It's a great result for us and the

fans, considering the local rivalry," he said. "To score seven goals and earn the local bragging rights is a result of their efforts this season."

I guess you could say we're now the pride of Worcestershire. They're a well-established club at this level, so it's a great feat for us."

It took just two minutes for the deadlock to be broken at the Victoria Ground when Gregory's long ball found Shorrocks, who proceeded to repeatedly torment a Redditch defender before firing low, and with the help of a divot in the pitch, past keeper Kieran Boucher.

The Redditch shot-stopper recovered to deny Gregory and Taylor with smart stops inside the opening 20 minutes, before keeping out Mills' attempt with his feet.

The scoreline remained the same despite the one-way flow of traffic towards United's goal, as Taylor's shot from just inside the box rolled narrowly wide of the far corner.

The scoreline remained the same despite the one-way flow of traffic towards United's goal, as Taylor's shot from just inside the box rolled narrowly wide of the far corner.



Kings Langley goalkeeper Melvin Winter, centre, files in the air as the ball whizzes wide on Saturday. Picture by Phil Baker.

**Kings Langley 3**  
**Bromsgrove Sporting 1**  
**Southern League Premier Central**  
Report by Max Banner

SPORTING'S unbeaten run spanning more than two months came to an end after defeat in Hertfordshire on Saturday afternoon.

Harrison Crawford was a man posessed for the hosts, hitting a hat-trick at The Oakfield Fasteners Stadium in the first half.

Crawford began the scoring with a ninth-minute wonder strike from 20 yards.

Bromsgrove's plans were interrupted when striker Mike Taylor suffered an eye injury and had to be substituted 15 minutes, although his replacement

After being dealt their eighth defeat of the campaign, Villa attempt to pick themselves up and improve on their current standing 15th with a visit to second-bottom Bolshall Swifts on Saturday (2pm).

Fairfield were 5-2 winners in their last meeting in January 2018, thanks to a brace from Ellis Blakemore, Connor Collins (2), Shaue McNally and Bloomer.

■ BARNET Green Spartak exited the Birmingham Saturday Vase at the quarter-final stage after suffering a heartbreak against holders Tipton Town.

The 4-3 shootout defeat at the Tipton Sports Academy came after a 0-0 draw in 90 minutes, with Spartak left to rue their missed chances in a tie that they dominated.

A 35th-minute penalty from Reuel Prescod was kept out by Tipton keeper Ben Holden, who palmed the ball away

quarter-finals of the Worcestershire FA Junior Cup. Oil Smith's double and one from Luke Wicketts sent the Albionians on the way to a deserved 3-1 success, although they had to come from behind after conceding early.

West Heath were level within minutes of the opening goal when Wicketts worked his way through on goal before feigning a shot and dispatching the ball past the grounded goalkeeper.

Smith then put the visitors in front with a shot arrowed into the bottom right corner on the stroke of half-time.

Five minutes before half-time, Sporting eventually doubled their lead when Mills was brought down inside the area, allowing Gregory to slam the penalty into the bottom corner.

A third followed soon after, Gregory setting up Mills for an emphatic blast into the roof of the net via a deflection, putting the Roussiers in full control of the contest.

Redditch enjoyed a period of pressure after the restart and pulled a goal back as a result of their positive play when former Sporting man Tom Rankin swung a corner into a crowd of Reds players and Josh Endall eventually bundled home.

Bromsgrove hit back in style though, relentlessly bombarding the visitors' goal to strike four times before the game was out.

A Panenka dinked penalty by Gregory rolled out of reach of the grounded Boucher in the 62nd minute, before Taylor finally got on the scoresheet

with a delicate finish into the net two minutes later.

Substitute McDonald added to the drubbing with a fine drive into the

bottom-left corner eight minutes from time, followed by a dinked finish by Shorrocks in the 86th minute to complete the rout.

Richard Gregory's audacious Panenka was spot on for Sporting on Tuesday night. Picture by Andrew Maguire.

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Richard Gregory quickly restored parity.

He made sure he was in the right place at the right time to get on the end of an exquisite cross from Greg Mills, volleying home via deflection just before the half-hour mark.

The provider then had two chances to get on the scoresheet himself before the break, but saw both his swipes at the ball blocked, while Sporting keeper Daniel Platt had to stand tall to keep out Mitchell Weiss in first-half stoppage time.

Mills was again at the forefront in the early exchanges of the second half, firing a free-kick narrowly wide.

But Crawford restored the hosts' lead after directing Jorrell Johnson's free-

kick delivery into the net for his second of the game on 51 minutes, with matters made worse for Sporting after injuries to Leon Broadhurst and Jack Wilson shortly after.

Kings Langley's lead with a ferocious blast goalwards, only to be denied by Bromsgrove felt hard done by not to have been awarded a penalty when Daniel Platt was in the area, the midfielder leading the protests albeit to no avail.

But we had to just forget about the result as quickly as possible. We couldn't be too harsh on ourselves after a really good run. It's always a shame for that to come to an end but you can't win every match in this league and you are going to lose games.

It's important how you bounce back, and luckily for us we had the chance to put things right on Tuesday night against Redditch.

Obviously they were struggling in the league going into it and have lost a number of games consecutively. But it was a match that we needed and was a great result to score seven. The goal that we conceded was the only disappointment on the night but it was still a good way to bounce back.

The lads are hard at work in training looking forward to the Coalville game on Saturday. They're right up there and have aspirations of making the play-offs themselves, so it's going to be a tough game.

It was a tight one back in August and will be the same on Saturday, and I hope the fans will be there to cheer us on at the Victoria Ground to cheer us on.

entertaining spectacle at the South Bromsgrove 3G.

A through-ball from Tyler Rees set up Evans to finish expertly and open the scoring in the 13th minute, before the forward doubled his and Arrow Valley's tally with a carbon copy four minutes later.

Bromsgrove threw away the opportunity to bring themselves back into contention with a penalty miss ten minutes after the restart, with Leon Kanderkone also fluffing his lines for the visitors shortly after.

Fisher wrapped up the win in the 90th minute, keeping third-placed Arrow Valley's hopes of a title fight with their second-placed rivals.



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# Two teams seal place in national showdown

**NETBALL:** TWO of Bromsgrove School's teams are set to shine at the National Netball Finals after impressive showings in the regional qualifiers.

Bromsgrove's first team and Under-14s side will both head to the biggest competition in the schools' netball calendar on Saturday, March 14 at Stanborough School in Welwyn Garden City, following strong performances at last week's end.

The unbeaten first team won every match in their pool with relative ease.

before seeing off Rugby School 13-4 in the semi-finals and then Wrekin College 10-5 in the final to claim the West Midlands champions.

An equally impressive run was recorded by the under-14s, who won every pool game before beating Bablake School 12-7 in the final.

While an extra-time loss followed against King's Worcester in the final, after an 8-8 stalemate in the regulation period, Bromsgrove's girls were still qualified for the nationals as silver medalists.



Bromsgrove School's imperious first team.

# Boars aim to keep on right road in Street test

**RUGBY UNION:** HEAD coach Dan Protherough stressed Bromsgrove will not be taking lightly the lowly Broadstreet lightly when the sides meet at Pinfold Road West on Saturday (2.15pm).

The Boars narrowly edged the sides' previous Midlands Premier encounter, recording a 17-7 win in October, thanks to tries from Drew Harper and Jack Thorne, but were unable to run away with the scoreline against the stubborn hosts.

Cool-headed side Broadstreet will be buoyant following their 17-13 defeat of fourth-placed Bridgnorth in their last outing three weeks ago, and will be hoping to use the result to inspire them to another surprise victory against the Albionians.

Droitwich, meanwhile, have it all to do away to Midlands One West on Saturday (2.15pm).

The Monarchs, who are 11th, worked his way through on goal before feigning a shot and dispatching the ball past the grounded goalkeeper.

Smith then put the visitors in front with a shot arrowed into the bottom right corner on the stroke of half-time.

With the game very much still in the balance, a penalty for West Heath Arrow Valley's hopes of a title fight with their second-placed rivals.





Ben Tilbury's attempt almost extended Spa's lead, only for Willenhall to clear off the line. Picture by Mathew Mason.

## Collins has another day in paradise...

**FOOTBALL: DROITWICH** Spa extended their unbeaten run to eight games after a Connor Collins-inspired win over Willenhall Town last weekend.

The Saltmen's top-scorer claimed a hat-trick in a 4-0 home success, which kept Droitwich top of the Division One table in the West Midlands (Regional) League.

Droitwich are ahead of second-placed Old

Wulfrunians thanks to a far superior goal difference, but they also have three games in hand on their nearest rivals and Mark Owen's side now have a real chance to take a firm hold of the title.

They will hope to strengthen their claims on Saturday (3pm) at home to West Bromwich side Bustleholme, a team who Spa destroyed 7-1 earlier in the season.

# Past battles will help us in title fight – Kelly

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** BROMSGROVE Sporting's previous title challenges will prove useful in the club's battle for the Southern League Premier Central crown, says manager Brendan Kelly.

A 1-0 success over previous leaders Tamworth in front of 1,700 fans at the Victoria Ground last Saturday meant the Rouslers leapfrogged into top spot for the first time.

The win, courtesy of Leon Broadhurst's 58th-minute header and a string of memorable saves by the impenetrable Daniel Platt, completed a double over the title favourites this term.

Having guided Bromsgrove to this level with a play-off success in his first full season at the helm in 2018/19, the ease at which Sporting have adjusted to life at Step Three has left even Kelly at a loss for words.

"We had an idea of what we wanted to do, we knew that we weren't going to be looking over our shoulders at the start," he said.

"But to go into a top-of-the-table clash at this stage, and having acquitted ourselves well, the stats don't lie.

"[Tamworth] should and probably could have been out of sight but for Dan Platt making four or five big saves. They didn't take their chances and we took ours."

Although Bromsgrove's one-point lead at the top may well be short-lived, depending on the outcome of Tamworth's three games in hand, Kelly believes the squad's



Leon Broadhurst, right, leads the celebrations with Charlie Dowd after netting the winner. Picture by David Besley.

### Top of the table

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Bromsgrove	25	14	6	5	33	48
Tamworth	22	15	2	5	25	47
Peterboro Sports	23	12	6	5	26	42
Coalville Town	23	11	9	3	19	42
Royston Town	22	12	6	4	19	42
Banbury United	25	11	9	5	16	42
Rushall Olympic	25	12	6	7	14	42

experience of previous promotion charges will be invaluable in the coming months, starting with Saturday's trip to Kings Langley (3pm).

"Momentum is huge. We've been in this position before at lower levels, so that will help us no end," he said.

"We beat them [Kings Langley] in early December, but I felt it was a false result, it wasn't a 4-1 game.

"They created more chances against us than anyone else at the VG this season, so it was not a comfortable win. We'll have to be wary against them this weekend."

The long-awaited derby clash with Redditch United then follows

on home soil on Tuesday night (7.45pm), a match that appears a straightforward task for the Rouslers on paper considering the Reds' struggles at the bottom of the division. Kelly is wary, though, not to take their rivals lightly, regardless of their 19-match losing streak in the league.

"The way the league table is you'd think it's a banker but there are bragging rights at stake," he added.

"Both sets of fans won't be taking the game lightly, and we won't want to switch off with Coalville in mind the following weekend."

One player set to be involved in the next couple of games is striker Shaquille McDonald, who came off

the bench for the final 19 minutes in Saturday's win after returning from injury.

Defender Kyle Lincoln is also back in contention, with the pair providing their manager with plenty of food for thought in his selections.

"Shaquille is going to be like a new signing for us," Kelly added.

"He's been battling a niggling injury for a few months now but he's a massive boost. We can't just rely on Mikey [Taylor] and Rich [Gregory] to get us the goals.

"Kyle is back in full training, but with Leon and Tom [Taylor] doing really well, he'll have to fight hard to regain his place."

■ Match report – Page 29





## Boars' good run halted

Sam Bastock is pictured opening the scoring for Bromsgrove. Pictures by Andy Jepson.



Will Harris adds the conversion to Bastock's try.

**RUGBY UNION:** DAN Protherough's Bromsgrove will be looking to become the first team this season to halt Bournville's title juggernaut on Saturday at Finstall Park (2.15pm). Leaders Bournville have won all 13 matches in the Midlands Premier including a 26-13 victory in the reverse fixture in September. Fifth-placed Boars go into the fixture on the back of a narrow 18-12 defeat away to Sheffield last week. Sam Bastock and Ed Spalding registered first-half tries at Abbeydale Park, with Will Harris converting Bastock's opening score, to give Bromsgrove a 12-8 lead at the break. But the Boars failed to score a single point in the second half, and Sheffield stole the win with a converted try and penalty.

# All the pressure is on the Lambs, not us – Brendan

by Ben Tyler

ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** BROMSGROVE Sporting are under no pressure going into Saturday's top-of-the-table clash with title pace-setters Tamworth, according to manager Brendan Kelly.

The second-placed Rouslers have been a revelation in their first season at Step Three, holding their own and outshining some of the more established clubs at this level.

Having netted four goals in each of their last three wins, and being unbeaten in ten games in all competitions, Sporting are full of confidence for Saturday's game at the Victoria Ground (3pm).

And Kelly believes the Lambs will be the ones sweating the most going into the encounter, with Bromsgrove having won 3-1 at The Lamb Ground in August.

"The worst case scenario is that we end the match having taken three points off each other," he said.

"There is no pressure on us whatsoever. They're the firm favourites, but we've set ourselves up nicely with the confidence that's running throughout the squad at the moment.

"We're relaxed going into the game. I'm intrigued to see how they approach it – if they try to take three points off us, or if they settle for the draw."



Mike Taylor buries his second goal in Sporting's win at Biggleswade. Picture by Phil Baker. Report – Page 39

Bromsgrove chalked up a 13th win of the campaign last Saturday, defeating play-off chasing Biggleswade Town 4-2 at Langford Road. Mike Taylor's brace and goals from Richard Gregory and Tom Taylor put the visitors in control, prior to two late strikes from Kweku Lucan.

But Kelly is wary of the current limitations of his side and suggested new signings are in the pipeline.

"It's fair to say the squad is stretched at the moment," said Bromsgrove's manager.

"We've got 17 senior first-team players available, plus three or four from the youth ranks, so we'll be looking to build on our positive position with some new additions in the next few weeks.

"I'm really pleased with the turnaround from the lads over the Christmas period. To score four

in each of our last three games is amazing."

The Bromsgrove manager has confirmed the only doubts for the weekend are striker Shaquille McDonald and defender Kyle Lincoln. Having missed out against Biggleswade, they will both undergo fitness tests.

"Since that defeat to us, Tamworth have lived up to their favourites tag in the league," said Kelly.

"They've made a few changes, not wholesale ones but a couple, and have gone on a brilliant run.

"The manner in which we beat them didn't go down too well at their place. We ruffled a few feathers and there was a bit of an atmosphere at full-time.

"Similarly I think we're a lot better off now than we were last time we played them, so we're confident."



# Romans sign off season with cup success



LEFT: Alcester celebrated their victory in style after the full-time whistle in Solihull. Picture by Pete Ray. ABOVE: Craig Gasiewski, left, and Matt Seeley with the trophy

**FOOTBALL:** FIRST-HALF strikes from Karl Walker and Ross Dwyer ensured Alcester Town ended the season in style last weekend with a 2-0 win over Coventrians to secure the Post-Covid Lockdown Charity Cup. The Midland League Division Two club were firm favourites

by Ben Tyler  
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to lift the trophy against their Division Three counterparts, following a scintillating group-stage campaign and a great show of composure to oust AFC Coventry Rangers on penalties en route to the final, and did any-

thing but disappoint with their display in the showpiece game at Hampton's Field Lane home. And with news that the management team of Matt Seeley and Craig Gasiewski are set to remain in charge of the Romans, it is silverware which could well inspire Town on to greater things next term. It took just a matter of minutes

for Alcester to find the opener, as Walker beat Coventrians' keeper Ricky Blewitt to the ball with a looping header that nestled in the back of the net. With a number of shots on goal for Town's Josh Benton to deal with, it was not entirely plain sailing for the Romans. Luke Wilson twice threatened from free-kicks in the aftermath

of the breakthrough goal, but it all to do in the second half to avoid heartache at the full-time whistle. Fortunately for Alcester, the lack of threat from Coventrians meant it was a fairly straightforward half to see out, ensuring captain Drew Ricketts and Co. were able to hold the Cup firmly aloft come the final whistle.

the break, it was clear who had it all to do in the second half to avoid heartache at the full-time whistle. Fortunately for Alcester, the lack of threat from Coventrians meant it was a fairly straightforward half to see out, ensuring captain Drew Ricketts and Co. were able to hold the Cup firmly aloft come the final whistle.

# Legends head to Trico for charity game

**FOOTBALL:** THE STARS are set to align at the Trico Stadium on Saturday, when a Midlands Legends XI take on a Redditch United Legends side to raise funds for the Libby Mae's Little Angels charity.

by Ben Tyler  
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ager Brian Little, who secured the Villans' last silverware in 1996, for the fixture. Former Birmingham City players Clinton Morrison, Martin O'Connor, Lloyd Dyer and Graham Hyde are all set to star, while Mark Bellingham – a non-League goalscoring dynamo in his own right and father of England international and Borussia Dortmund sensation

Jude – is the other name with a Blues connection. Ex-Reds boss and player Darren Byfield, who has represented a number of Midlands sides including Villa, Walsall and Solihull Moors, will be joined by another Villan in Lee Hendrie – a one-time England international – while current United assistant manager Richard Sneekes and Daryl Burgess represent the West Bromwich Albion contingent in the squad. For Redditch, a string of former favourites from Exodus



From left: The Reds connection, Clinton Morrison and Darren Byfield - pictured here in 2016 - have previously turned out for United and will star again on Saturday.

Geohaghton, Liam McDonald, Scott Richards, Carl Heggs and Howard Forrington, to a current squad member in Asa Charlton, will be representing the home

side's hopes under popular manager Gary Whild. With tickets ranging from \$5 for adults, \$3 for over-65s and concessions, \$3 for under-18s

and students, and under-13s entering free of charge for the 3pm kick-off, it looks all set to be an enthralling spectacle for all in attendance.

# Bank show that little bit extra to take derby honours

**CRICKET:** THE SHOWDOWN between local rivals Redditch Entaco and Astwood Bank at Bromsgrove Road went the way of the latter in a thrilling Worcestershire League Premier Division encounter. Bank came out on top in the first derby between the two this term, winning by four wickets after hosts Redditch posted 287-9 from their innings. Astwood Bank moved

up to fifth after wrapping up victory with more than four fivers in hand, leaving Redditch marooned in ninth place. Entaco were first up at the crease after their rivals won the toss. Opener and skipper Adam Galle (9) fell early to leave the score at 17-1 before Oliver Mason (71) and number three Adeel Sajid (54) smashed 93 runs in a second-wicket partnership.

With the rapid run rate continuing through a 77-run stand between Sajid and Russell Southwick (57), Redditch looked well on track to post an unassailable score. But while Rizwan Chaudhry (27) helped Entaco's cause with a solid contribution, wickets began to fall at regular intervals as the hosts' innings slowly fizzled out – much in part to

efficient bowling from the likes of Dan Thomas (2-35) and Alan White (2-44). An opening stand of 63 between openers Tom Pedley (53) and skipper Rob West (17) ensured Bank began their reply in confident fashion, before Pedley joined Jake Browning (61) to smash 77 for the second wicket. Bowler Noman Mohammad Chaudhry (3-38) caused Astwood Bank no end of

problems, though the concession of 78 extras in all by Entaco's attack only aided the visitors' cause further. Browning eventually fell for the fourth wicket at 212-4, having put on 81 with Tom Underhill (28) to guide their side towards the winning path. It was then up to Alan White (17 not out) and Dan Taylor (50 not out) to see the game out, securing a fourth win

this term for Bank as their top-four aspirations continue to take shape. For Redditch, who are yet to record successive victories this season, it is another case of going back to the drawing board, starting with a home encounter with Colwall, who sit in seventh place, on Saturday. Bank, meanwhile, head to form Stourport-on-Severn, who are second, on Saturday.

**CRICKET:** REDDITCH Entaco's topsy-turvy season continued last weekend, after a fine bowling show helped Dan Protherough's side save face and secure a 68-run win over Colwall. The Bromsgrove Road hosts looked to be in trouble after being skittled out for just 132 in 43 overs in the Worcestershire League Premier Division fixture, but were bailed out by Ghulam Moayuddin's devastating figures of 5-15 to help demolish the visitors for 64 in less than 22 overs. Despite a spell of inconsistent



Ghulam Moayuddin was a menace with the ball in hand, sweeping aside Colwall's batsmen with ease in a five-wicket showing. Picture by Marcus Miggins.

further up the table. Winning the toss and batting first, Oliver Mason (25) and Haleem Basharat's (25) put on 42 for the opening Redditch wicket but soon wickets started to tumble. Michael Gooch (4-21) wiped out four of the top order inside the first ten overs to leave the hosts 52-4. That became 95-6 before Moayuddin (19) and Haris Ali Mohammed (12) did offer

some stubborn resistance if not an abundance of runs to halt Colwall's momentum. Appearing to take inspiration from his teammate Gooch's bowling display earlier in the day, James Wagstaff (4-4) snapped up four wickets in the space of only 15 deliveries to end Redditch's innings in 42.2 overs. But what the Colwall could do, the hosts could do just as well as teenage spinner Salil Mahmood (3-21) set in some early panic amongst the visiting ranks with the opening three wickets to leave them 49-3. The departure of opener and top scorer Fergus Cameron (24)

after he was run out at 55-4, signalled the beginning of the end in what became a complete capitulation. Paceman Moayuddin produced a spell of unplayable fast bowling not seen at Bromsgrove Road for many years. All five of his wickets fell in the space of six deliveries – including a hat-trick – to close the game, with the final Colwall six wickets tumbling for just two runs. With the chance to secure back-to-back wins for the first time this season, Redditch go to out-of-form Worcester on Saturday hoping to send their opponents to a fifth successive defeat.

# Kolodynski back with a big bang

**FOOTBALL:** VALLEY legend David Kolodynski continued his fine start to the new season by scoring his fourth goal in two games to help inspire Rugby Town to a 2-0 victory at Godmanchester Rovers last weekend.

by Ben Tyler  
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the 32-year-old to net the crucial opener in Rugby's latest outing. Following an opening half of several openings but no breakthrough, Rugby's all-time top goalscorer was the man to deliver once again after tapping in from a matter of yards following Danico Johnson's left-wing centre minutes into the second half.

And Valley's fortunes improved with just a quarter of an hour remaining, Kolodynski sent Keenah Rosser down the left flank and he produced the cross for Parker to touch home



Striker David Kolodynski, right, pictured here celebrating with Barry Fitzharris, has hit prolific form at the start to the season. Picture by Martin Pulley.

the decisive second. Rugby saw out the three points comfortably to go third in the table at this early stage of the season. With no midweek fixture this time around, all attentions now turn to the FA Cup preliminary

round, when Town visit Stone Old Alleynians of the Midland League on Saturday. League matters then resume with a return to Butlin Road to face GNG Oadby Town on Tuesday.

# Wes efforts in vain as Rugby hopes hit

**CRICKET:** A LOSING draw against Streety prevented Rugby from closing the gap to the top five in the Warwickshire League Premier Division last weekend. Having decided to field first in the Webb Ellis Road clash, the visitors battled a score of 269-5 – much in part to Imran Qadir's 130 ton and 62 from Craig Moore – leaving Rugby with a tough ask in their reply. While early struggles were overcome with a 73-run fourth-wicket partnership between middle-order duo Wes Landsdale (79) and Henry Parker (38), the rest of the batsmen could not provide a follow up and meant the hosts were forced to settle for seven points. Rugby struck quickly in Streety's innings, taking two early wickets to leave the visitors 7-2. But Moore and Qadir transformed the match with a 180-run partnership for the third wicket to leave Rugby on the back foot.

Neal McGrath led the bowling with 4-66 in a productive 12 overs, but lacked the support necessary for Rugby to truly threaten Streety's run chase. Sixth-placed Rugby go to Solihull Municipal, who are one place behind in the table, on Saturday.

**CENTURIES** from Daniel McManus and Dale Coles, who both retired on 100 runs apiece, helped Bourton & Frankton's Sunday XI run riot in a friendly at Northamptonshire outfit Crick Lions.

Losing just three wickets and smashing 275 runs, B&F then looked equally impressive when turning their attentions to bowling, with Rikard Parns (4-18) and Mark Whitehead (4-25) showing their class to help dismiss the Yelvertoft Road hosts for just 86 runs. A trip to Willoughby's second Sunday team is now on the cards for Mick Waller's side.



# Panthers move into top spot Panthers dig deep to continue title chase

Langman leads way to help showcase title credentials

**CRICKET:** THE TITLE credentials of Stratford-upon-Avon continue to shine brightly, after a fifth win this term over Coventry & North Warwickshire continued their unbeaten start and pushed them to the top of the Warwickshire League Premier Division table.

Last weekend's eight-wicket victory extended a scintillating start to the 2021 season from the Panthers, who seemingly set better with every matchday that passes by.

In their latest rout, hosts Coventry were skittled for 181 inside 46 overs, and Gareth Langman (88 not out) and George Burford (34 not out) then steered Stratford home after captain Dexter Purser (51) had laid a solid foundation.

It proved a tough task for the Blisley Road home side to build momentum at the beginning of the innings, not least due to a number of early departures caused by Tom Grundy, who took 3-21.

The good work of opener Matthew Nobes (30) was built upon by middle-order duo Ankit Kaushik (34) and Raag

by Ben Tyler  
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Kapur (33) in a fifth-wicket stand of 46, to kickstart Coventry's run rate, while Harry Horsley (23) offered useful support.

Mike Brown (3-44), James Urquhart (2-40) and Purser (2-10) ensured that the home side were limited to a beatable score after taking a number of wickets late on.

An opening partnership of 113 between Purser and Langman quickly put Stratford in control, while the stand of 69 that followed involving Burford took the Panthers to within touching distance of the victory.

The visitors' number three then saw out the job, notching the runs necessary to hand Stratford a third successive win. All signs would point to the Panthers continuing that run against out-of-form Attock at Swans Nest Lane on Saturday, though Purser's side will have to guard against complacency to ensure their near-perfect start continues.



Bowler James Urquhart once again found success with another couple of wickets last weekend. Picture by Richard Smith Photography.

## Second title is worth the wait for impressive Matt

**ATHLETICS:** THE PROLONGED 2020-21 Tempo Events Winter 10k Series finally came to a close recently, with Stratford Athletic Club's Matt Burdus-Cook reigning supreme for a second successive year.

Having had to bide his time between national lockdowns at the tailend of last year

and at the beginning of 2021, racing advocates had been starved of any action until racing was permitted to a close again in mid-April, meaning the latest series could conclude.

And while changes to the format of races meant that the event of time trials were used to determine standings, the end

result was one to be proud of for all connected to Burdus-Cook and Stratford.

Leading a pack of 27 club members in the final races around Hinington, the reigning male champion showed his champion quality by winning the final of the five races that he participated in. Burdus-Cook also placed

second and third, while picking up a string of personal-best times during the event.

Though the series should have concluded three months prior, as per the normal October to February schedule, there is no doubting that the wait was worth it for the Stratford man.

In the M35 category, club-

mate Adrian Mason followed suit by coming out on top having improved his fitness levels and race times since the beginning of the series, while Andy Cox was champion at M45 level, having won three of the four categories he competed in.

John Butler was relentless in the pursuit of silverware

in the M75 races, placing first in all his final events to win the age group title.

And as far as Stratford's women were concerned, there was more success in the F25 category for Lara Bakewell, who secured her champion status by winning all three of her remaining races on the final day.



Alcester's Ross Dempster, right, wins an aerial battle. Picture by Paul Smith.

From left: Town goalscorers Toby Scott, Reece Jacobs and Ross Dempster. Picture by Alcester Town FC.

## Jacobs leads Town goal spree

**FOOTBALL:** A DEVASTATING show of finishing earned Alcester Town a second win from two in the Post-Covid Lockdown Charity Cup, dismantling Fairfield Villa 4-0 last weekend.

Number three Ed Smith (30) helped continue momentum and put on 60 runs with Bullock before the second wicket, at which point Dan Taylor (3-74) and Dan Thomas (2-53) came into their element.

The emergence of George Boaston (46 not out) and captain Greg Leighton (55) repaired the damage for Bromyard, the duo hitting seven sixes between them to guide their side to victory.

Astwood Bank welcome unbeaten Old Elizabethans to Salsbourne Lane on Saturday.

tie between the two Midland League Division Two clubs.

And that pressure on the Villa goal eventually paid dividends midway through the half, as Jacobs capitalised on a defensive lapse from the hosts to fire home.

Ex-Fairfield man Dempster punished his former side when picking out the back of the net following a free-kick minutes before the interval to make it 2-0.

Alcester's fortunes got better still in the second half despite Fairfield's resistance, as Jacobs' second of the afternoon and a late Scott strike completed the comprehensive scoreline.

Top-of-the-table Town will now host the Swans in Saturday's reverse fixture at Stratford Road, before welcoming Redditch Borough on Monday afternoon.

REDDITCH Borough picked up their opening point of the tournament, following a 2-2 draw with Solihull side Hampton.

After falling behind to Collins Ajayi's 17th-minute opener, Julian Workman's side rallied and pulled level before the half was out through Billy Garvey's penalty.

That equaliser provided enough incentive to chase another goal in the second half, and Knurum led finished following good work from Joel Bell put them ahead.

But the visitors ensured the spoils were shared when Jack Stevin levelled the scores with ten minutes to play at Metis Sports & Social Club.

Before taking on the Romans at the beginning of next week, Borough will head to Green Lane to face Coventry Alvis on Saturday.

by Ben Tyler  
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without a big batting challenge come the end of the innings.

The reply from Stratford was initially a laboured one, for while the hosts' batsmen were able to record respectable figures, the lack of any big-scoring partnerships hindered their progress at the crease.

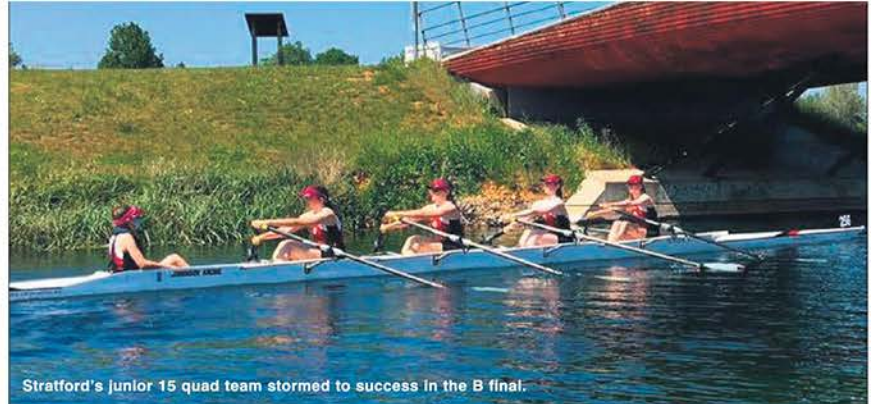
With wickets falling, a notable contribution from Gareth Langman (45), and a stand of 51 between Josh Hickman (25) and Luke Nardone (40) helped the Panthers shift into a higher gear.

Nick Pepper (35) and Colwell (40) then combined for 59 runs for the sixth wicket in rapid time to take the hosts close to their target score. Colwell's 40 came off just 29 deliveries, with four boundaries.

With both gone, Stratford stood at 225-7 and that became 236-8 when James Urquhart (2) was run out.

But Walker and Tom Grundy (Ono) were able to secure victory in the final over and break Attock hearts.

Stratford, who sit 24 points clear of second-placed Walmley after eight matches, will hope for a more straightforward affair away to Moseley Ashfield, who are fourth, on Saturday. Ashfield went down to Walmley by 91 runs last weekend.



Stratford's junior 15 quad team stormed to success in the B final.

## Positive day for young rowers

**ROWING:** DESPITE a lack of an audience to urge on Stratford-upon-Avon Boat Club's rowers, the junior squad impressed across all fronts at Eton Dorney last weekend.

In the the National Schools' Regatta, competed over a 2,000 metres Olympic distance, Stratford's two under-18 teams took part in the behind-closed-doors event across their rivals from other rowing schools and clubs nationwide.

The club's best result came from Alice Baines and Amelie Sartain in the Championship Double Sculls, in which the pair ranked 22nd overall.

For the junior 16s, a WJ16 coxless team recorded a 26th place finish in the time trial event against stern competition.

The rest of the J16 squad were in action in time trial events at the Junior Sculling Regatta, where Tomi Wilcock and Will Beattie advanced to the doubles B final and eventually finished second. Toby Sartain placed fourth overall in the C final of the single sculls.

Honour Keil and Harriet Holmes were fifth in the C final of the double sculls, despite threatening to finish higher.

Honour Keil and Harriet Holmes battled hard in the C final of the J16 double sculls.



Also in action was Stratford's J15 side, who were well represented in the A, B and C time trial finals.

Grace Beason and Ruby Brooker-Collins made their way into the C final of the double sculls after clocking 9mins 29secs in their heat, and, after a strenuous race, placed sixth overall in 10:42 over the full 2,000m course.

In the single scull event, Charles Happel appeared in the B final after a time of 8:37 in his heat, going on to narrowly finish behind the podium

place in fourth in a time of 9:32.

In the girls' category Uche Nwachukwu agonisingly missed out on a place in the final by six seconds after placing seventh in her time trial.

Finally, the quartet of Maddie Hall, Harriet Noyes, Kate Richardson and Amalia Richardson - coxed by Imogen Hill - raced in the B final after clocking 8:02 in their time trial. Undeterred after narrowly losing out on a place in the A final, Stratford finished three lengths clear to win in a time of 8:47.

by Ben Tyler  
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**CRICKET:** HALF-CENTURIES from Oliver Mason and Russell Southwick helped Redditch Entaco pick up points in a losing draw at Brockhampton on Saturday.

Chasing the Herefordshire hosts' score of 320-4 declared, Redditch battled on to the conclusion of their 50 overs to post a commendable 254-4 total.

Brockhampton batted first after winning the toss in the Worcestershire County League Premier Division clash and eventually found their rhythm after the fall of the second wicket.

Will Tanner (146 not out) immediately started exerting his influence with a stand of 79 alongside opener Tom Austwick (95).

Entaco were unable to dismiss the hosts' starting pair at what proved a tough day for Redditch's bowlers - Noman Mohammad Chaudhry leading the way with his two wickets for 93 runs.

Needing a fast response, the visitors imposed early on through top-order duo Oliver Mason (73) and Russell Southwick (75), but could not build enough momentum to truly threaten Brockhampton's sizeable total.

Redditch will search for a first win of the season in Saturday's home fixture with Pershore.









LEFT: Sporting striker Shaquille McDonald cracks a shot at goal in Saturday's defeat to Coalville. Picture by Andrew Maguire.

FAR LEFT: Tom Taylor, right, tussles for the ball with a Coalville player. Picture by Chris Jepson.

# Kelly: We need to bounce back

## Sporting boss warns Banbury will be big test after Coalville shocker

**FOOTBALL:** BROMSGROVE Sporting remain top of the table but boss Brendan Kelly says opponents Banbury United will be favourites for Saturday's clash.

Sporting's promotion challenge in the Southern League Premier Central stuttered last weekend after a 3-0 reverse at home to Coalville Town.

Loke Shaw's early opener, a goal from Tom McGlinchey on the stroke of the hour-mark and a late effort from Kairo Mitchell compounded a dismal Saturday afternoon for the Rouslers in front of a crowd of 1,075 at the Victoria Ground.

The Bromsgrove manager felt his side were made to pay for failing to trouble their opponents at any stage as they slipped to a seventh league defeat of the season.

And he will demand a response on Saturday against ninth-placed Banbury

by Ben Tyler  
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at the Banbury Plant Hire Community Stadium (3pm).

"It's not an excuse, but the injuries that we had did affect us on Saturday," said Kelly, who was without Gift Mussa and only had Leon Broadhurst and Jack Wilson on the bench.

"We were missing the players that were out – the big players that we're reliant on – and that played a part in us not getting a foothold in the game.

"Credit to them, though, they were better and did a job on us. Their game management was better and they've got more experience than us.

"But for us not to threaten at all, we assisted them in their win. We've played them twice already this season and

they've been a lot closer before, so it's concerning that we couldn't cause them problems. It was a really disappointing day. Players can't have any excuses now about keeping their place in the team."

Banbury, managed by former Oxford United player Mike Ford, were 2-0 winners at the Victoria Ground in the sides' meeting in August, thanks to Jaanai Gordon's first-half double.

The Partisans occupy ninth place in the table, eight points off the play-offs, but Kelly expects them to provide another huge test of his squad's promotion credentials.

"They popped us off the park with their passing last time we played them," said Sporting's boss.

"They were very clever on the ball, we didn't perform well that day. It might mean everything going into Saturday, or it might mean nothing at all.

"We're both better teams with the

players available to us compared to back then. It's always a tough place for teams to go, especially for us coming off the back of a defeat.

"They're certainly favourites after last time, so we need to provide a response to last weekend."

Saturday's loss was Sporting's second in their last three league outings. Shaw followed in Timothy Berridge's initial shot after it was parried by keeper Dan Platt for Coalville's tenth-minute opener, putting Bromsgrove on the backfoot straight away.

Greg Mills forced Ravens keeper Saul Deeney into making a stop with the first real sight of goal for the hosts, while Shaw remained a threat down the other end when playing in Adam McGurk for an effort that was diverted wide.

The next goal arrived in the second half when McGlinchey buried a low strike into the bottom corner.

With eight minutes remaining it was 3-0 when Mitchell stole possession inside Sporting's penalty area, before planting the ball into the far corner.

Kelly stressed Sporting need to get rid of their Achilles heel of conceding early on in games.

"It's the part of our game that concerns me most," he said.

"We did it on New Year's Day against Stourbridge, and more recently against Kings Langley, then we go and do it again. Maybe our concentration levels are not where they need to be.

"Against the good sides in this league we need to be solid and not switch off for ten or 15 minutes in games."

Kelly will welcome back Broadhurst and Wilson, two players who made the bench last weekend, but declined to give any further updates on their casualty list for the risk of aiding Banbury's preparations.



A Kiddersminster player attempts to drive through a couple of Droitwich players. Pictures by Marcus Mingins 0420002MMRS To order copies of our photos, visit [www.buyphotos247.com](http://www.buyphotos247.com)

## Bower's men get back to winning ways

**RUGBY UNION:** DROITWICH breathed a sigh of relief after putting their four-match losing run to bed against Kiddersminster Carolians last weekend.

A 10-7 win in Midlands One West was a much-needed one for Ryan Bower's side, considering the difficult period the club has gone through since his arrival in the Droitwich hotspot at the start of December.

Droitwich's first victory under his supervision, courtesy of a Josh Skinner try converted by Nat Maginnis, who later added a penalty, ultimately proved the difference on a boggy pitch at the Glyn Mitchell Memorial Ground.

■ Report – Page 38



Droitwich fly-half Chris Hooper attempts to halt an opposition player. 0420002MMR6

# Kelly praises Red-hot show in derby rout

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** A PIVOTAL weekend lies ahead for the Southern League Premier Central promotion race, according to Bromsgrove Sporting manager Brendan Kelly.

The table-topping Rouslers host fifth-placed Coalville Town on Saturday (3pm), looking to build on Tuesday night's 7-1 derby massacre of Redditch United, which was a perfect response to last weekend's 3-1 loss at Kings Langley.

Elsewhere, second-placed Tamworth head to third-placed Peterborough Sports and Hedgesford Town entertain fellow promotion hopefuls Stourbridge.

Kelly hailed his Bromsgrove side as "the pride of Worcestershire" after the midweek rout at the Victoria Ground, highlighting the result as the latest example of the resilience in the club's ranks.

"The character and mentality is something that I've wanted to work on at the club, even as an assistant when I first came to the club," he said.

"We've tried to strengthen in those ways and it's something that now comes naturally. We've become quite good at bouncing back whenever we have a defeat.

"I wouldn't say it was the hair-dryer treatment at half-time [on Tuesday], but I wasn't pleased with the first-half performance. It was a difficult one to combat, Redditch worked hard to try and



Mike Taylor roars in celebration after netting against Redditch. Picture by Chris Jepson. Match report – P27

mount a comeback and their work rate was impressive.

"We were a bit fortuitous with some of our goals, the first-half penalty was a bona fide challenge and the shot for the third changed direction after a deflection."

"It took us a while to get back in our stride, but certainly towards the end we were playing some brilliant football to watch."

One negative to come out of the win was a first-half knee injury to midfielder Gift Mussa, a result of a challenge with Redditch's towering striker Brandon Diau.

"He's received some treatment but we're awaiting a full assessment," said Kelly.

"Liam Spink put in a stand-out performance I have to say. He came in and filled the role in midfield really well."

"Jack Wilson, Leon [Broadhurst] and Jak Hickman are all doubtful for the weekend. They're big players to have missing out."

With another big challenge

awaiting the high-flying Rouslers this weekend, the Bromsgrove manager is urging fans to make the difference.

"To have had a crowd of just under one thousand on a wet Tuesday night is amazing," Kelly said.

"We just hope they'll keep coming back to spur us on through to the business end of the season. The game against Coalville is on a knife edge if you like, we snatched a point with two late goals back in August, and we narrowly lost in the [CSS League Challenge] Cup game [2-1 in November]."

"We're a better side than when we last played them, and I'm sure they'll feel the same. It'll be pivotal but it won't decide anything at this stage."

"Tamworth are playing Peterborough Sports, and then Hedgesford are playing Stourbridge, so it's a big league in the league."



# set the pace

**ATHLETICS:** THE UNDER-13 boys' team secured a clean sweep of victories as Bromsgrove & Redditch Athletic Club's juniors completed their West Midlands Young Athletes Cross Country League campaign at Wolverhampton. The heavens opened shortly before the U13 boys ran in the opening event, but the lads continued their great form of the previous three fixtures to comfortably win again and add to their Midlands Counties title.

Matt Bevin led the team home in third place, closely followed by Will Pridden in sixth, before Sam Hemby (11th), Nathan Sanders (12th), Willem Hemby (13th) and Josh Bevin (18th) cemented the team victory.

Over the four fixtures, Matt Bevin was third, Pridden tenth, Sam Hemby 11th, Sanders 13th, Willem Hemby 14th and Josh Bevin 15th.

On the day, other notable performances came from Natalie Hatfield in third place, Sophie Groom (17th) and Lauren Sykes (25th) in the U17 women's race to place their team second. Harrison Mayne (U17 men) finished eighth (fifth overall) and the U11 girls' team was fourth (sixth overall), led home by Rose Lewis in 24th.

The U11 boys were 13th on the day (fifth overall) as Gabriel Wagstaff took 15th place.

Hanna Dale and Phillips Taylor were 23rd and 24th respectively in the U13 girls' race and Lucy Hatfield was fifth (seventh overall) for the U15 girls.

# Stinton starts title defence

**POOL:** THE OPENING round of the singles knockout competition in the Droitwich Pool League started with a flourish on Wednesday night.

Eight players from six different teams are safely through into the quarter-finals of the competition, with Massons All Chalked Up and The Dovecliffe Arms both set to be represented by two of their players in the next round of the competition.

Mid-West Premiership leaders Barley Mow, The Star & Garter, DWMC and The Pillar of Dreams are the other sides who have sealed their progression into the last eight.

Current singles champion Matt Stinton, who plays for The Star & Garter, had no problem in starting his title defence, while Barley Mow's Nathan Gwin, Mason's Connor Harper and Sam Sanders, DWMC's Andy Lerner and Dovecliffe's duo Alan Moor and Rob Greenfield are also through.

Jake Cooper, of The Pillar of Dreams, then overcame a difficult opening-round tie to become the final player to advance.

With league action resuming next week, the quarter-finals and semi-finals of the singles tournament will be contested on the same night on Wednesday, April 29.

# DL in charge with whitewash

**TENNIS:** IT WAS A stellar week for David Lloyd Bromsgrove C after a whitewash victory over Wollaston B in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Men's Winter League.

The 10-0 win in Division Six East has pushed DL Bromsgrove up to fifth in the division while their second-placed rivals lost ground in the race for the title.

Jonathan Botha and Jamie Mason gave an indication of what was to come with a scintillating 6-0, 6-0 drubbing of Wollaston. Michael Scriven and James Perks, followed by a 6-2, 6-2 straight-sets win for David Lloyd Bromsgrove's boys against Harvey Rutter and Paul Wootton.

Boyd and Brookes were 6-3, 6-3 winners against Scriven and Perks, while Mason and Botha recorded a 6-3, 6-0 win in the final rubber.



Ross Attwood, in possession, kick-started Bromsgrove's comeback with two tries. Picture by Andy Jepson.

# More quality needed by hard-working Boars

**RUGBY UNION:** BROMSGROVE'S Dan Protherough says his side's 19-15 Midlands Premier loss at Burton last weekend was not for a lack of trying.

Trailing 12-0 at half-time to tries from Kamva Lunge and Will Simpson, who converted his own effort, the Boars turned the tables in the second half to go in front, courtesy of Ross Attwood's two tries, plus a conversion and a penalty from James Upton.

A late revival by the hosts put Burton back in front after Simpson scored and converted his second try of the afternoon.

Protherough felt the Boars could not be faulted for their endeavours at Peel Croft but they lacked the extra quality at key moments.

"It was a very tight game, they scored in the last few minutes to win it, but we had most of the ball and showed a lot of effort to go in front," said the director of rugby.

"We didn't show the quality needed to kill the game off, we just didn't go for the knockout blow. I don't think it was through complacency. It was a good overall effort and I can't fault them. If we showed a bit more quality, then we take those chances."

The result drops Bromsgrove down a place into sixth, ahead of a home game against eighth-placed Doncaster Phoenix on Saturday (2.15pm).

Doncaster are experiencing a similar kind of run to that of Burton prior to last weekend's game, having lost four in succession.

And in terms of recent history, the last meeting also stands in favour of the Boars having won November's reverse fixture at Castlepark 15-8.

Regardless of the Phoenix's current form, Protherough is certain his team are in for a battle at Finstall Road.

"As I've said before, there is very little chance of a lot of teams in this league," said the Boars chief.

The difference is always down to who lacks a bit of cutting edge, when we get chances we have to hope that we take them, and we've trained hard in order to do that."

With just six games remaining until the end of the season, Protherough says he has no clear target in mind for Bromsgrove.

"The tough condition we want, it was just to win every game, but we've just got to focus on the most immediate fixture - that's always how we approach things," he said.

# Droitwich's injury crisis eases to face Colindale

**RUGBY UNION:** BLAIR HUNTER says Droitwich are in a much-healthier position ahead of Saturday's crunch clash with Old Halesians (2.15pm) following a three-day respite.

The Monners were left in a state of disarray in the weeks leading up to their last fixture - a 33-12 home defeat to Ludlow - on February 8, when an injury crisis ruled out the bulk of the first-team squad.

But Droitwich coach Hunter says the club is now in a better state to host their rivals, who are one place above, in the battle between 12th and 13th in the Midlands One West table.

"We've been thankful for the few weeks

break with the injuries that we've had," he said. "In terms of the numbers of players that are back available, we're probably at 85 or 90 per cent now, compared to 25 or 30 per cent a few weeks ago."

So there is a much stronger position now after the rest and the recuperation, and thanks to the physios who were having to work overtime."

While the playing numbers have returned to a healthy level again, the Monners' preparations for the clash have been disrupted by the recent storms that

have blighted clubs up and down the land.

Hunter says that while the club's training has been a no-go, the coaches' coaching has continued to use alternative methods to work with the players.

Training has been extremely difficult for us to navigate," he added.

"I'm expecting a very tough test in a local derby," said Hunter.

The tough condition we want, it was just to win every game, but we've just got to focus on the most immediate fixture - that's always how we approach things," he said.

When Droitwich headed to Waseley Grove in November's league meeting, Old Hales 20-19 won with a last-minute score and the Monners are expecting a similar close-fought contest this weekend.

"I'm expecting a very tough test in a local derby," said Hunter.

The tough condition we want, it was just to win every game, but we've just got to focus on the most immediate fixture - that's always how we approach things," he said.

# Youngsters spot on to reach finals

D in Division 11 East of the Women's Winter League after being put to the sword by lead ers Stourport B.

The 10-0 away defeat spelled further trouble for DL Bromsgrove, who remain bottom on six points, eight points adrift of second-bottom Blackedown & Hagley B.

Nancy Berry and Sue Nickerson were unable to offer much resistance to Karen Booth and Evie Porritt in their 6-2, 6-0 opening loss, while team-mates Claire Colemeadow and Karin Roosenboom fared no better against Lydia Jackson and Helen Griffiths, going down 6-1.

By laying a second game in succession, Colemeadow and Roosenboom's 6-1, 6-0 defeat to Booth and Porritt meant Stourport B took the overall win.

New College provided Bromsgrove with a sizeable task in the quarter-final, and it ended 1-1 draw after regulation and extra-time. Penalty flicks were then

# Youngsters spot on to reach finals

required, as Bromsgrove converted two without reply.

In reaching the semi-finals, Bromsgrove were awarded a place in next month's finals, something which perhaps removed some of the incentive in their clash with Cheltenham College.

Cheltenham were 10-0 winners after scoring in the last seconds of the game. In the third and fourth place play-off, Bromsgrove said off Hazelgrove 1-0 to end the tournament on a positive note with the bronze medal.

Bromsgrove will now do battle against the best in the country at Cheltenham College in the U13 finals on Friday, March 6.



Bromsgrove are set to battle it out at the National IAPSL football finals.

# Boss Kelly left with eyebrows raised at emphatic win

**FOOTBALL:** Biggleswade Town 2 Bromsgrove Sporting 4 Southern League Premier Central

Report by Ben Tyler and Max Barrow

BRENDAN Kelly was taken aback by the manner of Bromsgrove Sporting's away win at Biggleswade Town last Saturday. The Rouslers had a 4-0 lead going into the final 19 minutes, thanks to a Mike Taylor double and efforts from Richard Gregory and Tom Taylor.

Although the Watersiders reduced the deficit, Kelly was delighted by a result which stretched Bromsgrove's unbeaten run in all competitions to ten games.

"You don't expect to be 4-0 up in any away game, let alone against an established team at a Step Three like Biggleswade," said the Sporting boss. "Though

their manager Chris Nunn left [in 2018] after 12 years in charge, they haven't gone downhill. Now he's rejoined they're back in with a shout of the play-offs."

So we're kind of pinching ourselves at the result. The Rouslers continued to be raised.

We were a little sloppy towards the end, but we were in the Christmas period we're happy."

The hosts started the game on top with Drew Richardson and Treymayne Charles wasting chances, while Charlie Pattison forced a low stop from Rouslers keeper Daniel Platt.

A similar save was made by Kyle Forster to deny Greg Mills at the other end, before Mike Taylor struck on the half-hour mark when he rounded the keeper and tapped home.

Gregory promptly added a second with a low volley into the net from strike partner Taylor's



Greg Mills, left, races for the ball with a Biggleswade player at Langford Road. Picture by Phil Baker.

centre, giving Sporting a solid lead at the interval.

The third goal arrived in the 66th minute when Josh Quaynor's free-kick was flicked on by Gregory into Tom Taylor's path, and he made no mistake in heading low into the corner.

And with a fourth arriving five minutes later, courtesy of a strike buried by Mike Taylor, Sporting looked home and hosed.

And despite Kevkei Lucan striking twice in the space of 12 minutes for the hosts, the Rouslers managed to see the game out.

# Let's get the Shed rocking once again

Hi all, hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year.

We ended the year on a high, and we've started the New Year in similar fashion.

The lads are on fire at the moment, scoring four in each of our last three games, and taking maximum points.

Confidence is very high amongst us all right now and long may it continue.

It's important that we don't get carried away. Our unbeaten run has been fantastic and it's a good feeling.

We welcome Tarnworth to the VG on Saturday and it'll be a bit test for us. We've already beaten them earlier in the season but in my opinion



Richard Gregory's weekly column from behind the scenes of the Victoria Ground.

they are the strongest side in the league.

They have quality all over the pitch with no real weaknesses.

It's a future we're all looking forward to though, for me this is what it's all about - a big local derby between two big non-league clubs who are well supported.

People need to realise how far we have come in the last three years and enjoy these games, and on that note we want you to all come down in plenty of numbers and get behind the boys.

We want to get the Shed rocking as we look to continue our unbeaten run.



Ross Dempster puts away his second goal of the game to round off an impressive debut for his new side. Picture by Phil Smith.

# Dempster starts with a bang on Villa debut

**FOOTBALL:** THE SEMI-FINALS of the Presidents Cup are in sight for Fairfield Villa after a comfortable 3-0 win at Alcester Town last weekend.

New signing Ross Dempster scored twice, while Laurence Martin also netted in the victory at Stratford Road, and The Seaxs will now face one of either Knowle, Coventry Abies or Northfield Town for a place in the final.

Alcester started the game on top but fell behind when a Fairfield corner led to a goalmouth scramble and Martin bundled home.

The goal kept Fairfield afloat despite the difficult pitch and they earned some of the strong wind after the game, signed from Paget Rangers, fired home his first of the afternoon on 15 minutes.

A strong run by Keith Draper resulted in a stunning left-footed direct which tested

Town keeper Dan Handley, while Alfie Bloomer went close by putting Villa out of sight when his shot was deflected just wide from Dempster's cut-back.

The second goal arrived in a similar vein as Fairfield continued to create the better opportunities, with Alcester sporadically providing a reminder of their threat.

Although Dempster wasted a golden chance in the early stages of the second period, he made amends on the hour mark with a classy finish.

Fairfield turn their attentions back to Midland Football League Division Two when they host 11th-placed Barnet Green Spartak on Saturday (2pm).

The Seaxs, who are stuck in tenth, last met Spartak in January 2019 in a thrilling 6-2 victory, with Ellis Bakewell and Connor Collins both netting thrice that day at the Recreation Ground.

**FOOTBALL:** MARK Owen feels his Droitwich Spa side should be awarded the three points after a floodlight failure cut short Tuesday night's fixture at Silk Hunters.

The Salmons were leading 2-0 in the West Midlands (Regional) League Division One clash at Long Lane Park with just 13 minutes left to play, thanks to second-half goals from James Lemon and Matthew Hunt.

But with efforts to fix the lights to continue play proving futile, the game was abandoned.

A league panel will now decide what happens.

Spa manager Owen explained: "The feeling from the ground was that because more than 70 per cent of the game was played, the result should stand."

"But I don't know completely, it will go to a league panel so we await the decision from them."

"In the first half it was a difficult pitch to play on with it being soft in places and the strong wind to contend with."

"The way we like to play was made very tough even though we had a lot of possession but we just test their keepers."

"We played better in the second half

range crashed against the crossbar, but Droitwich returned with a well-deserved three points.

Owen said it was the perfect example of why no team in the division can be under-estimated by his high-flying side.

"Every team is fighting, from top down to bottom. I stressed this to the lads that there are no comfortable games in this league," he said.

"At this time of year the pitches are size and the games are more even because of it."

"Last year we probably would have drawn that game, so overall we deserved the win, but it would have been nice to win more comfortably."

A home game against seventh-placed Willems Town awaits on Saturday (2pm), with a fully-fit squad available to the Droitwich manager.

"Willems started the season with six wins from six but dropped off after that," said Owen. "But they're still had some good results, albeit a mixed bag, so it could be a very difficult game."

"We'll plan like we always do for it. It's nice to be back at home and hopefully we get the win."

# Garmson stars to fire Athletico into cup quarter-finals

**SUNDAY FOOTBALL:** Two of Rubery's Bromsgrove Sunday League sides have continued their progress in this year's WA Cup after victories in differing ease last weekend.

Rubery Athletico dumped out Northfield Athletic with a 4-1 rout to reach the quarter-finals of the competition.

Adam Garmson starred with a brace, while Caleb Hargreaves and McLaughlin, Michael Mansfield and Rob Shaw also earned their names to the scoresheet for the rampant hosts.

Penalties were required to ensure Rubery Athletico's place in the second round, however, following a 2-2 draw with Studley Rangers.

Duke of York are also through after Tom Keogh scored twice in their 2-0 triumph over Horncastle.

In the only Bromsgrove Charity Junior Cup tie, Wargates advanced at Catshill's expense with a 5-2 win.

finish and Nick Lawson's top-in.

But the game suddenly turned on its head after the interval.

Daniel Southall pulled a goal back to unsettle Rubery, before Daniel Brookes levelled to take the game to penalties.

Memorial goalkeepers James Williams was then the hero with a couple of saves to ensure Memorial won the shoot-out 3-0.

West Heath progressed through to the semi-finals of the Worcester Sunday Minor Cup after Chris McGarry and Jason Gibbons goal gave them a 2-1 win at Droitwich Spa Rangers.

Callow End sealed their place in the semi-finals of the Worcester Nursing Junior Cup after beating Connor Internationale 2-0 with Jon Mann and Kymon Evans both on the scoresheet.

Broughs' 12-match winning run has continued as James Williams won a cup defeat to Perrywood AFC - the first loss suffered by the Division One leaders this season.

Meanwhile, Miles Newman's strike was enough to ensure Bromsgrove Corinthians' progression in a 1-0 victory over Vae in the 11th round.

Austin Ex Apprentices had an away day to remember after returning from their Bromsgrove away tie to a 2-1 win at Quinton Athletic with a 7-2 victory.

Carl Martin and Josh McInerney both netted in the 4-2 victory over Halesowen.

Carl Martin and Josh McInerney both netted in the 4-2 victory over Halesowen.

name to the scoresheet while an own goal also went in the visitors' favour.

The extensive list of scoring recorded after the match included Adam Easemore United's Gardner-Bennett pointless for lowly Ashton, who remain second bottom.

Black Horse remain top of the table, despite a draw 0-0 draw with third-placed Cheltenham College.

Hizza Unton's Lewis Amos was at the double to help his side on the way to a Division One victory over Kings Heath Albion.

Harry Nicholls was also on target at Elizabethan as the visitors rise to third in the standings.

In Division Two's sole fixture, AFC Noddy title holders Bromsgrove Athletic won 3-0 against Tarnworth.

Jason Tunnington struck both goals to

overcome Chaddesley Ravens Dynamo 2-1.

Leaders Bromsgrove Partisan run riot after pulling a 4-0 victory over Easemore United in Division Three. Braces from Nick Baker, Adam Pillingier and Adam Deeks, plus Adam Deeks' hat-trick, helped Bromsgrove to a 5-0 win over Kings Heath Albion.

Powell, completed the 8-0 scoreline to keep Partisan top of the pile.

Title challengers AFC Blackwell remain hot on their tails, however, following their 4-1 away win at Grapetree & Norton.

Cheltenham College's 4-2 victory over Kings Heath Albion was the show at the basement side, with Luke Rowlands scoring the other Blackwell goal.

Cheltenham College's 4-2 victory over Kings Heath Albion was the show at the basement side, with Luke Rowlands scoring the other Blackwell goal.



## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

RICHARD DUFFY'S first-minute opener set the tone for **Congleton Town's** 2-0 defeat of **Vauxhall Motors** as Mick McGraa's men lost ground in the race for the Premier Division title.

With table-topping **Avro** seeing off **Irlam** thanks to Lous Potts' 52nd-minute winner, the Motormen were punished for their slow start when Duffy found the net with the first corner of the game, Shakeel Jones-Griffiths netting the other after the break.

Late drama at **Longridge Town** saw Jack Arrowsmith and Ben Finley rescue a 2-2 draw against **Winsford United** while Steven Yawson's double was enough to clinch a 3-1 win for **Kendal Town** at the expense of **AFC Liverpool**, Brandon Croskell-Robinson netting the other.

**Northwich Victoria** saw off **Barnoldswick Town** 2-0 after Damola Sotona and Kuda Chingwaro goals, keeping the Vics right in the promotion chase, while **Litherland REMYCA** had Luke Denson and William Dunne to thank for second half strikes that downed **Squires Gate** 2-0.

**Wythenshawe Town** continued the trend of 2-0 victories, courtesy of their defeat of **West Didsbury & Chorlton**, and Jack Price's quickfire response could not draw **Padiham** back into contention in their 2-1 loss to **Charnock Richard**.

Niall Cummins' goal edged **Bury** past **Burscough** 1-0, with Jawad Jebrin's effort also earning victory for **Lower Breck** by the same scoreline against **Ashton Athletic**.

Elsewhere, Matthew Davies' late winner for **Prestwich Heys** saw off the **Isle of Man** by a single goal.

**BEN TYLER**

# STENSON'S MAJOR BORO BOOST

IT WAS another case of home comforts for Nuneaton Borough, after Luke Benbow and Matty Stenson strikes extended Jimmy Ginnelly's promotion chasers' unbeaten record at Liberty Way this term.

With both home goals coming in the first half, Diamonds skipper Luke Massingham reduced the arrears with 25 minutes to play, though Boro always looked likely to keep

## NUNEATON BORO 2 AFC RUSHDEN & D 1

By Ben Tyler

a firm grip on the points and third place.

From the first whistle, Nuneaton set out to attack and asked early questions of Dean Snedker, Charlie Dowd and Stenson both going close with drives.

So when the deadlock was broken on 12 min-

utes, it came as little surprise, with Camron Williams rewarded for his solo run and lay-off when Benbow rifled home.

Borough's tally was doubled six minutes from the interval, when a ball over the top resulted in Stenson finding the net.

Stenson could have had another before the break, had his rebound from Benbow's free kick been enough to thwart

Snedker – as the visitors looked increasingly likely of having a mountain to climb.

They would pull themselves back into contention thanks to Massingham's whipped header directly from a throw-in midway through the second half, though a lack of follow up resulted in Diamonds falling short.

STAR MAN: Matty Stenson (Nuneaton)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

COMEBACK kings Congleton Town made ten-man Lye Town rue their lack of composure in a Vase classic.

Peter Williams cancelled out Josh Hesson's opener for Lye. The latter promptly doubled his tally, before teammate Sam Hall added his name to the scoresheet from a corner to put the Flyers 3-1 up after just 26 minutes.

Thomas Pope did the lord's work for Congleton, reducing the arrears in first-half stoppage time, inspiring Town to

## CONGLETON TOWN 4 LYE TOWN 3

By Ben Tyler

level through George Sankey on 51 minutes.

The drama did not end there as Hesson ended his afternoon on a sour note with a straight red card, prior to Ethan Hartshorn's dramatic last-gasp winner from the edge of the box.

STAR MAN: Ethan Hartshorn (Congleton)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★



# Josh takes brake off for Sports

OUT-OF-SORTS Leamington were powerless to prevent a Josh McCammon-inspired Peterborough Sports from taking all three points at Your Co-op Community Stadium - making it six games without victory in National League North.

With conditions initially denying expansive football, the hosts had the first real chance of note just after the half-hour mark, when, in the midst of a goalmouth scramble, Rackeem Reid thrashed wildly over the bar.

Sports found themselves at the forefront of all the attacking play thereafter, so McCammon's stunner to break the deadlock came as a well-earned reward.

Switching the ball onto his left foot, the midfielder made it look simple to pick out the top corner from just outside the penalty area a minute before the break.

It was that man McCammon again who doubled Peterborough's lead ten minutes into the second half, when the Sports

star fortuitously deflected Dan Jarvis' initial effort over loanee Callum Hawkins and into the Brakes' net.

Kidderminster were similarly not at the races in a tightly-contested affair at Aggborough, going down by a single goal to Gloucester City.

A lively start suggested an intriguing afternoon was in store for two of the league's recent strugglers, with Gloucester going closest through Dominic McHale's low driven effort, prior to Krystian Pearce being denied on the line by Trent Mahorn-Rendall.

Zak Brown clattered the post seconds later for Harriers, but that was the closest either side came to breaking the deadlock in the opening half.

The second half was only six minutes old when Matt McClure put City ahead, nudging home from close range after Michael Gyasi's shot deflected into his path.

The scoreline could have made for worse reading for Harriers, but for the woodwork denying McHale in the denying stages, a result that makes it five defeats in the last six league outings for Kidderminster.

## AFC Rushden & Diamonds 1-3 Stourbridge -

### Report

**Express & Star**

A FEW HOME truths were required during the half-time break to avert the course of proceedings at the Hayden Road admits joint-manager Leon Broadhurst, prior to Stourbridge's eventual 3-1 success over AFC Rushden & Diamonds.

The Glassboys had second-half saviours Reece King, Alex Moore and Dexter Walters to thank for ending a three-match winless streak in both the league and FA Trophy, a run that looked set to continue after trailing on seven minutes to Jack Connor's flicked finish.

Speaking on what was required to turn the tide in Northamptonshire, Broadhurst said: "We just got into them about what wasn't working, where we could play the ball in better areas.

"Once we got up the pitch an extra five yards, the midfielders were winning more of the second balls and matching the forwards for their pressing.

"I'm not going to say it was all hunky dory, but there were a few home truths which had to be said at half-time.

"It'll be nice to just get back on home soil now most importantly, against Hednesford, who are scrapping for their lives.

"We've played 11 of our 16 league games away from home, more than anyone else in the division, and we have a point to prove against them [having lost and drawn versus the Pitmen in the league and FA Trophy]."

Going behind galvanised the visitors, but they just could not grasp the foothold in the game that they so craved despite several chances falling to Joe Hull and Jason Cowley in particular.

Levelling within seconds of the restart from King's header, Moore was then on target moments later when turning home in a goalmouth melee.

It was one-way traffic from thereon in, so it should have been little surprise when a third Stourbridge goal, courtesy of Walter's flick at the back post, sealed the deal for Leon Broadhurst's men five minutes from time.



# Saltmen determined to kick on

by Ben Tyler

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**FOOTBALL:** MARK Owen says it is full steam ahead for his Droitwich Spa side after a stop-start first half of the season.

The Saltmen went top of Division One of the West Midlands (Regional) League for the first time this term after beating Wrens Nest 5-2 in mid-December - proving a memorable point in an unusual campaign which has resulted in Droitwich only completing ten league games prior to Christmas Day.

Assessing the first 'half' of the 2019/20 season, in which the club achieved a best ever run to the second round of the FA Vase and progression in the Division One League Cup, Owen says momentum has built nicely to allow the club to have a successful end to the campaign.

"As I said at the start of August, the league is the most important thing for us this season," said the Droitwich manager.

"We've just caught up now with our games on most of the other teams in the league. Being top at Christmas was massive for us to have a strong second half of the season.

"The FA Vase was very important for the club and helped massively, both financially and in promoting the club in the area."

Despite a backlog of fixtures now facing Spa, albeit an issue that will affect most of the other teams in the division, the Saltmen boss is confident the busy schedule will prove beneficial in keeping his team sharp for the remainder of the season.

"It's been such a lay-off for the lads with all of the fixtures missed that I think it will help us to get back to sharpness," Owen said.



James Lemon's leveller was in vain in November's 2-1 defeat to Lye Town in the FA Vase, but the Droitwich manager says it proved an important day for the club.



Perhaps unsurprisingly Mark Owen has singled out the final win in the club's FA Vase run against Whitchurch Alport as one of his stand-out moments this season. Pictures by Mathew Mason.

"We're going to be playing every four days in January, it is a backlog but it should help us in many ways.

"We can't get ahead of ourselves. I'm delighted with how 2019 has finished by going top of the league table, the lads have been terrific but it all means nothing at this stage."

Two names which have cropped up more than any other are the prolific strike pairing of Connor Collins and James Lemon, who found the net 30 times between them prior to Spa's final game of the year against Wyrley (December 28).

Regardless of the outstanding contribution made by the pair, Owen is more inclined to pay tribute to his entire squad for their efforts in the first half of the season, adding:

"Collectively in terms of goals scored we're up there in the charts and the opposite for goals against."

"Most of the goals have come from Connor and James, Jordan (Cox) has also done well in recent weeks, and they'll take the plaudits, but there are players behind them that make their job easier."

"Players like Cory Rudd, Lewis [Phillips], Alex Dugmore and Seels [Mike Seeley] - everyone has played their part - so I can't pinpoint just one player."

With a chance to reflect on the first half of the season before heading into the 2020 fixtures, Owen was quick to name two games which have defined the current campaign so far.

"Against Whitchurch Alport [in the

FA Vase], everyone was surprised by how we managed to play considering we knew we were going up against it," he said.

"We lost against Lye Town, but to see the ground full of that many Droitwich supporters - I think we took in the region of 150 fans to the game - it really showed the potential of the club and the fanbase."

"It also showed how far we've come in such a short space of time and then the overall highlight was going top for the first time this season before Christmas."

Droitwich kick off 2020 with a trip to strugglers FC Darlaston on Saturday (2pm), prior to a midweek visit to Sikh Hunters on Tuesday (7.45pm).



# Four-midable Cairns fires leaders to stylish victory

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** JOE Cairns scored for a fourth successive match to send Coventry United on their way to a 3-1 triumph at South Normanton Athletic.

The forward curled home a 32nd-minute opener in sublime fashion to settle the visitors down after an open start to proceedings at Lees Lane.

Goals from Tyler Haddow and Chris Camwell put United in control before Martin Smyth pulled a goal back.

United's 18th league win of the season keeps remain four points clear of second-placed Sporting Khalsa, albeit having played two games more, in the Midland League Premier Division.

Both sides enjoyed a number of half chances at the beginning of the first half, with Coventry's Jake Holt going closest on the half-hour mark with a strike that clattered the post.

But a few minutes later United were ahead with a clever finish from the well-placed Cairns, who planted the ball into the top corner after some pinball inside Athletic's penalty area.

Haddow then doubled the visitors' advantage on the stroke of half-time, prodding home after a free-kick was fumbled by the goalkeeper.

Two minutes after the restart Camwell met Riley O'Sullivan's centre for 3-0 and the provider nearly turned scorer with a shot that ricocheted off the post.

Smyth reduced the arrears 15 minutes from time, though it made little difference to the one-way traffic from Coventry on the hosts' goal.

United went to Coventry Copsewood in Tuesday's MFL League Cup last 16 tie before the visit of Stourport Swifts on Saturday (3pm).

■ COVENTRY Sphinx fought back from conceding the first goal and having a player sent off to record a 3-1 win on the road at Haughmond.



Number ten Tyler Haddow prods home United's second. Picture by Jeff Bennett.

For all of the midweek reports, head to [www.coventryobserver.co.uk/sport](http://www.coventryobserver.co.uk/sport).

John Woodward and Shaun Thomas' troops fell behind to Steve Hole's 15th-minute strike at Sundorne Road in Shrewsbury before losing Louis Guest to a straight red card.

A sublime finish from Ashanti Pryce restored parity for Coventry 11 minutes after the break, when the striker turned past his man, took a couple of touches out of his feet and flashed a left-footed strike into the bottom-right corner.

Coventry then went ahead in the 69th minute when Colin Smith slipped the ball into the far corner of the net.

Callum Woodward flicked home Joel Grandison's centre minutes later for 3-1 to put the gloss on a ninth league win this term.

Sphinx, who are up to 13th, hosted Boldmere St Michaels in midweek prior to another Sphinx Drive fixture against Long Eaton United on Saturday (3pm).

■ A STALEMATE with Studley helped GNP Sports recover from their Leicester Road nightmare and take a valuable point on Saturday.

GNP had been thumped 7-1 by Division One leaders Leicester Road in their previous outing, so there was a sense of relief when Aaron Dickens provided a second-half leveller to cancel out Dave Edwards' opener and snatch a point against the third-placed visitors.

Shamir Alam's side, who are tenth, played host to Hinckley AFC on Wednesday ahead of their trip to Heath Hayes on Saturday, kick-off 3pm.

■ COVENTRY Copsewood were defeated 2-0 by Uttoxeter Town on an emo-

tional day for their Staffordshire opponents at Allard Way.

Uttoxeter were playing their first fixture since the sudden death of their manager Dean Arnold, an occasion which both teams marked with a minute's silence before kick-off.

Uttoxeter took a 22nd-minute lead when a poor clearance gifted the ball back to the visitors, and Kyle Esplin tapped in from close range.

A free-kick from Nick Brandish crashed against the bar and out before the interval as Copsewood pressed for an equaliser.

But Uttoxeter added a second midway through the second half, with Alex Britt slotting home to wrap up the points.

Copsewood lie 15th in the table and face a tough task away to Leicester Road on Saturday (3pm), following their midweek MFL League Cup exploits against Coventry United.



## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

A SOLE Aaron Dwyer goal proved enough for **Macclesfield Town** to maintain their stronghold at the top of the Premier Division table after ousting **Wythenshawe Town** by a 1-0 scoreline.

The Silkmen hit the front on 18 minutes after a mazy solo run from the right flank resulted in the ball being planted into the far corner, a strike enough to down the high-flying hosts.

**Burscough** prevailed 6-4 in a ten-goal thriller against ten-man **AFC Liverpool**, with Declan Daniels firing a hat-trick in weekend's standout result.

**Litherland REMYCA** picked up their first win this term against **Prestwich Heys** after James Hammill's 82nd-minute winner edged a 4-3 thriller.

Title challengers **Irlam** lost ground after a 2-1 defeat at **Northwich Victoria**, courtesy of Matty Birchall's goal at the death, while **Congleton Town** were held to a 2-2 draw at **Barnoldswick Town** after Kasom Shah's late leveller.

Michael Grogan and Daniel Mitchell netted in a last-gasp 2-0 victory for **Skelmersdale United** at **Lower Breck**, with **Runcorn Town** picking up a much-needed 3-0 triumph over hosts **Squires Gate**.

Four different goalscorers were on target as **Ashton Athletic** downed **Avro** 4-0, and there was a similar story at **Padiham** where Jamie Ramwell's double wrapped up a 3-0 success against **Winsford United**.

In First Division North, **Bury AFC** stormed to the top of the table after a 5-2 comeback at **AFC Darwen**, leap-frogging **Golcar United** in the process.

**BEN TYLER**

# Winless Kiddy go to Brack and ruin

**KIDDERMINSTER 0**

**BRACKLEY 2**

**OUT-OF-FORM** Kidderminster Harriers succumbed to two first-half goals in a disappointing 2-0 defeat to Brackley Town at Aggborough Stadium.

Jordan Richards gave the visitors the lead inside the opening ten minutes, which Twariq Yusuf doubled in the final seconds of the half, meaning Harriers remain winless in four National League North games.

After an early injury to Saints' skipper Gareth Dean broke up the play during the early exchanges, a ninth-minute opener from Richards provided further frustration for Russell Penn and Co.

The Brackley midfielder capitalised on Harriers' failure to clear Dean's initial hooked cross by lashing into the top-left corner on the half-volley, deceiving motionless Kidderminster custodian Luke Simpson.

It was a breakthrough which woke the hosts up momentarily, with Mark Carrington's drive from the edge of the area and a Nathan Cameron far-post header both kept out by former Harriers' favourite Danny Lewis.

After a lull in the game following the opening quarter, a Yusuf strike on the stroke of half-time made it even more of an uphill struggle for the Aggborough outfit.



■ Omari Sterling wasted chance

Capitalising on further inadequate defending, the Town winger picked out the far corner of the net in spite of Simpson's despairing dive.

A lively start to the second period saw Brackley's Lee Ndlovu arrow a shot wide of the far post, while Keziah Martin will perhaps feel he should have done better when diverting off target from Sam Austin's lay-off.

But from there, the half did not progress as it may have been expected to, with a real downturn in the number of clear-cut chances from either side.

The only Kidderminster attempt on target came from substitute Omari Sterling, who should have done better when finally pulling the trigger after the hosts had applied some concerted pressure in Brackley territory.

■ **WILL** Grocott's double sealed Stratford's resounding win over Warwickshire neighbours Nuneaton Borough.

Despite Nuneaton's strong start, it was the hosts who hit the front after 12 minutes when skipper Grocott fired through a crowd of players, his shot leaving keeper Tony Breeden motionless.

That breakthrough gave Paul Davis' side the incentive to snatch a second on the half-hour mark through Ashley

**STAR MAN:** Will Grocott (Stratford Town)

**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

## STRATFORD TOWN 4 NUNEATON BORO 0

**By Ben Tyler**

Sammon's long-range stunner following a short corner.

A third goal after 64 minutes killed off any hopes of a comeback when Ahmed Obeng picked out the far corner of the net. It was Grocott who wrapped things up when he scored into an empty net seven minutes from time.

# CLARKE KEEPS TIGERS AT BAY

**GLOUCESTER CITY** continued their revival under boss Mike Cook with a hard-fought draw against arch-rivals Bath City.

The Tigers' Jake Jackson had a first-half penalty saved, but it was an otherwise drab affair in blustery conditions.

Bath's Robbie Cundy went close when his

**GLOUCESTER CITY 0  
BATH CITY 0**  
**By Ben Tyler**

header drifted narrowly over the bar.

And the pressure continued to build in Gloucester's third – as they narrowly survived a penalty-box scramble after a corner on the half-hour mark.

A defensive mistake sent Jackson through with only keeper Ryan Clarke to beat.

Clarke brought him down. But Jackson drove the resultant spot-kick too straight and Clarke made amends by making the save.

Freddie Hinds almost gave Bath a half-time lead, nodding James

Morton's searching ball from midfield wide.

Joe Raynes terrorised the Tigers throughout and he fed Adam Mann whose drive was saved.

Bath sub Ryan Brunt had the best chance to win it late on, but he curled Raynes' cutback over the bar.

**STAR MAN:** Joe Raynes (Bath City)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



# Diamond geezer Dean's the hero

**BARWELL 1  
AFC RUSHDEN & D 2**  
By Ben Tyler

A STRING of key saves from Dean Snedker and some admirable endeavour ensured AFC Rushden & Diamonds stopped the rot with a maiden win for the campaign.

Going into the fixture on the back of three successive defeats and seven games without victory, some early threat from Canaries' forward Tiago Nassunculo may well have put some jitters amongst the travelling support, who had their goalkeeper to thank for being equal to the fierce tenth-minute strike.

Slowly growing into the contest, the away side dealt the crucial opening blow after 32 minutes when Miguel Ngwa capped off a rapid breakaway by dispatching past Barwell's Andrew Wycherley with aplomb.

It could have been so much sweeter for Andy Burgess' men, had sub Jenson Cooper kept his effort on target from a prime shooting position, while an Anthony Agemoh-Davies block to deny Max Brogan kept Rushden ahead.

Two minutes into the restart, skipper Nathan Hicks was rewarded

for his perseverance when firing home on the rebound after his initial attempt from Ngwa's centre had struck the crossbar.

And while Brady Hickey gave the hosts a glimmer of hope with a far-post header with 13 minutes to play, it was the resolute Snedker who stood tall to hand Rushden the all-important three-point haul.

STAR MAN: Dean Snedker (R&D)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★☆☆

## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

TOM Douglas' late strike helped **AFC Liverpool** capitalise on Vauxhall Motors' FA Vase involvement and cut the gap to the leaders to six points, following a 1-0 victory over **Bury AFC**.

In a cagey game, it was a moment of brilliance from the hosts' star man that decided it, as Douglas made it seven for the season with a sumptuous lob 12 minutes from time.

Benito Lowe and Gregory Wilkinson were on target as **Wythenshawe Town** continued their perfect start to the campaign in a 2-0 success at **Avro**.

Leapfrogging their opponents into third, debutant Lowe had the simplest of finishes on eight minutes to put Town in front, with the travelling support being made to wait until the 86th minute for substitute Wilkinson to settle affairs once and for all.

**Northwich Victoria** delivered a confident performance to heap further misery on strugglers **Burscough** in a 3-1 triumph.

Making it six successive league wins, Northwich looked in control ever since Matthew Dudley's 37th-minute diving header, with Ryan Jackson and Harvey Whyte adding to the tally after the break to render a late reply futile.

**Prestwich Heys** kept up their top-six challenge courtesy of a last-gasp win over **Ashton Athletic**.

Adam Farrell provided the cruel blow in the third minute of second-half stoppage time to ensure Athletic remain winless.

Elsewhere, Lewis Short and Arron Johns goals were enough to see off **Winsford United** in a 2-0 win for visiting **Congleton Town**.

**BEN TYLER**

# Harriers game off after horror break

A SUSPECTED leg break to on-loan defender Matt Preston caused a shock abandonment at Aggborough, after just ten minutes of Kidderminster Harriers' National League North clash with Alfreton Town.

It was a late challenge by the visitors' Conor Branson on the right side of the Harriers half which resulted in the horror injury, a grim sight that was enough to force goalkeeper Luke Simpson and Preston's fellow Kidderminster teammates to look on with heads in their hands.

The 26-year-old centre-back was appearing in his seventh fixture for his new side, following his temporary switch from National League Solihull Moors in January – and just two weeks on from a man-of-the-match display versus Premier League giants West Ham United in Kidderminster's narrow extra-time defeat in the FA Cup.

Referee Sam Mulhall was left in the precarious position of

deciding whether to take action against perpetrator Branson whilst the Aggborough medical staff gave urgent and thorough treatment to Preston on the far side of the pitch, or whether to wait and assess the situation.

Ultimately, it was a case of the latter, with both sets of teams taken off the pitch and back into the dressing rooms as the severity of the injury became clear.

With the defender eventually stretchered off the pitch to rapturous applause all round – a gesture that was returned by the Harriers man even through the pain barrier – it took a further 30 minutes before it was announced that the match had been abandoned with the fixture set to be re-arranged.

Preston was due to stay on loan with the Aggborough outfit until March 22 to boost his match fitness following a spell on the sidelines.

He signed for Solihull Moors in the summer after being released by Barnet.



IN SATURDAY'S ONLY Premier Division outing, unbeaten **Wythenshawe Town** ensured they keep the heat firmly cranked up on leaders **Vauxhall Motors** following a straightforward 3-0 success over **Northwich Victoria**.

Cutting the gap to their rivals to seven points, Town's Darius Palma got the hosts up and running midway through the first half after dispatching Aaron Dwyer's fizzing cross from close range.

The all-important two-goal cushion would eventually be provided 19 minutes from time when Brad Byrne fired into the bottom-left corner from the spot after Benito Lowe had been felled in the penalty area. Palma was on hand to wrap up another impressive three-point haul from substitute Jordan Burton's centre, and with it a seventh successive shut-out for goalkeeper Elliot Wynne and his defence.

First Division North strugglers **South Liverpool** gave their patient fans something to be cheerful about after eliminating Premier Division front-runners **Vauxhall Motors** from the Macron Cup.

Despite trailing to Motors' skipper Thomas Mitchell's thumping header on 40 minutes, Darryl Mvalo hauled the visitors back on level terms in first-half stoppage time. Sub Bobbie McDonnell almost had the deciding say for Vauxhall but for the crossbar rescuing the away side.

If the visitors had a reprieve, then so too did the hosts, Ben Dufton-Kelly hacking the ball off the line in injury time to ensure penalties were necessary before an eventual 4-2 defeat in the shoot-out.

**BEN TYLER**

# Sutton Coldfield Town 2-3 Sporting Khalsa -

## Report

**Express & Star**

JUBILANT Sporting Khalsa manager Ian Rowe has vowed to replicate the club's stunning away form on home turf after yet another success on the road at

Speaking in the wake of the 3-2 derby success, the Lions boss made a call to arms to stop the rot at Guardian Warehousing Arena, and said: "We've been poor at home, we've lost three at home and four including the FA Cup against Boldmere.

"Away from home we've lost one in the Trophy in the last minute, again against Boldmere, another game we should've won.

"If we can replicate that at home we give ourselves every chance. It was important we won today to keep in touch with the others at the top.

"A couple of them have dropped points after playing each other, so we have to stay in the mix."

It was very much the dream start for the visitors when a defensive mishap by Town allowed Toumani Sidibe to steal in on goal and plant into the roof of an unguarded net on seven minutes.

There was further jubilation just two minutes later when Harry Cunningham's fine sliding challenge fell kindly to Miracle Okafor, who gratefully accepted the invitation to wrap a shot around Jono Brown and into the bottom-right corner of the net.

A near-miss from Sporting's Liam Armstrong appeared to prompt a revival of fortunes for the hosts, with only the crossbar denying Stuart Hendrie from halving the deficit.

There would be no stopping Ceesay Dampha's sumptuous drive into the postage stamp though, ten minutes before the break.

It seemed to be game over when Andrew Parsons confidently rifled the ball low into the corner from 25 yards out with 15 minutes to play, though a tense finale was ultimately provided when Stuart Hendrie turned the ball home late on.

**WALSALL WOOD** remain the early-season trendsetters atop the Premier Division table after continuing their unbeaten start in a 3-1 triumph over **Lye Town**.

Hayden Purves' strike on the stroke of half-time sent Wood into the interval with the advantage after Adam McGurk had cancelled out Joshua Hesson's opener. Matthew Hughes then gave the hosts a coveted two-goal cushion, a position they would not relinquish.

Staying hot on the tails of the leaders are **AFC Wulfrunians**, who put **Shifnal Town** to the sword in a 5-0 drubbing. Aaron Bishop and Tom Ray converted in the opening half, with Brad Sharman, Hayden Reeves and Tom Poole also netting in a dominant Wulfs showing.

Luke Childs' double came either side of contributions from Sam Fitzgerald and Max Dixon in **Lichfield City's** straightforward 4-0 success at **Racing Club Warwick**, the win keeping them in third.

**Stourport Swifts** slipped to a 3-1 reverse at **Stone Old Alleynians**, while **Highgate United's** Ryan Harkin, Charlie Shaw and Connor Mooney starred in the 3-0 defeat of **Wolverhampton Casuals**.

**Studley** are now four matches unbeaten after seeing off **Whitchurch Alport** 3-1, and **Tividale** got back to winning ways in a 2-1 success over basement side **Market Drayton Town**.

**Atherstone Town** and **Bewdley Town** both needed just a single goal to see off **Romulus** and **Darlaston Town** respectively, with **Worcester City** following suit against **Utttoxeter Town** to notch only their second win this term.

**BEN TYLER**



# Glassboys are dealt a late blow on Boxing Day

A late blow was dealt to Stourbridge in their 1-1 Boxing Day stalemate with Bromsgrove Sporting, after Ammar Dyer's stunner denied Leon Broadhurst and Stuart Pierpoint's men.

On an afternoon when the Glassboys were the better of the sides and looked good value for all three Southern Central Premier points, the leveller eight minutes from time ensured the hosts were left to ponder a point.

In a statement of their intent, Stourbridge went close several times in the opening exchanges, Jason Cowley narrowly clearing the bar against his former side, while Alex Moore later missed with a repeat attempt. Cowley again threatened to break after being threaded through by Stanley Obinna Anaebonam on 40 minutes, but his shot lacked direction and failed to get the better of Bromsgrove shot-stopper Ollie Taylor.

But, with two minutes before the interval, Moore swept home clinically after a right-flank move at an opportune moment in the game.

The second half opened in similar fashion with both Cowley and Moore offering threats to the visiting rearguard, the latter drawing a stunning stop.

It seemed a matter of when, not if, Stourbridge struck, Cowley firing just past the post on the hour mark as the hosts' dominance continued.

But with the game closing, a half chance resulted in the equaliser when Dyer picked out the back of the net, limiting Stourbridge to just a point despite the hosts rallying late on.

Stourbridge: Price; Lyttle, Kettle, Knight, Burton; Prosser, King, Moore, Walters [Knights, 79]; Obinna Anebonam [Styche, 83], Cowley.

Bromsgrove: O. Taylor; Dawes, T. Taylor, McGrath, Dyer; Curtis [Newell, 58], Sebbe-Njie, Smalley; Tolley [King-Harmes, 53], Sweeney, Pais [Edmunds, 67].

## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

JEROME WRIGHT'S instinctive finish was enough for **Wythenshawe Town** to edge a 1-0 scoreline against **Charnock Richard** to climb atop the Premier Division table.

In a hard-fought battle between the two, Town were made to work hard for their deciding goal, going closest through a Matty Bryan effort from close range that had to be cleared off the line seconds into the restart.

But when Wright timed a run to perfection to nudge Deane Smalley's whipped cross home at the far post, Wythenshawe had the know how to navigate the remainder of the game at Mossie Park.

Fellow promotion rivals **Vauxhall Motors** were victors by the same scoreline in Friday night's clash with **Padiham**, courtesy of Jordan Deer's 42nd-minute half-volley.

The Motormen also had skipper Tom Mitchell to thank for a crucial goalline clearance 13 minutes from time, ensuring his side collected a 16th three-point haul for the season at the Storks' expense.

A brace from **Prestwich Heys'** Dylan Fitzgerald was not enough to claim all three points in a 2-2 stalemate with **Northwich Victoria**, with Matthew Dudley levelling late on after Ryan Jackson had given his side a fifth-minute lead from the spot.

**Winsford United's** Nathan Cotterell and Adam Barlow both registered in their 2-0 victory over **Irlam** to go 12th, whilst **FC Isle of Man** and **Avro** both tasted success over **Barnoldswick Town** and **Litherland REMYCA** respectively - both by 1-0 scorelines - in the only other games of the afternoon.

BEN TYLER

## NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

THERE WAS late heartbreak for **Golcar United** on their travels to the Dransfield Stadium after **North Ferriby's** Daniel East struck at the death to send them home empty handed in a 3-2 thriller.

Having both trailed and responded twice against the league leaders, Ashley and Gavin Connor's men would have no response to the sickening blow with effectively the last kick of the game.

Slater Barkham-Barnes and Kayle Price both levelled after Niall Tilsley and Danny Clarke struck for the hosts before the late drama.

Ryan Douglas and Lee Ridley turned the tide in a 2-1 win for **Winterton Rangers** 2-1 at **Hallam**, having trailed to Scott Ruthven's opener, while fellow high-fliers **Garforth Town** found life fairly comfortable against **Silsden AFC** in a 3-1 win.

Daniel Coupland, Nick Thompson and Sam Barker netted for the Miners, with Talent Ndlovu claiming a late consolation.

**Knaresborough Town** and **Penistone Church** had a weekend to remember after romping to victories over **Albion Sports** and **Bottesford Town**, winning by scorelines of 4-1 and 4-0 respectively.

**Handsworth** survived late pressure at **Thackley** to see out a 2-1 success after Aiden Chippendale's 88th-minute spot kick gave the hosts late hope.

**Eccleshill United's** Jack Crook and Matthew Sykes were the deciding factors in a 2-1 victory over **Yorkshire Amateur**, a scoreline which **Goole AFC** matched against **Frickley Athletic**.

BEN TYLER



**ALVECHURCH 1  
NUNEATON BORO 3**  
By Ben Tyler

# STORER'S SUPER SHOW GETS BORO BOUNCING

ALVECHURCH were subject to a double free-kick show from Nuneaton Borough's Kyle Storer, en route to an eventual loss.

The January arrival had an afternoon to remember, not least for his dead ball prowess, netting two goals from range in the space of six first-half minutes, and then later laying on the clinching goal for captain Scott McManus.

With the first real attempt of the game on 15 minutes, Storer wasted no time in registering his first goal since his return to Jimmy Ginnelly's side, planting the ball in the bottom-right corner beyond Dan Jezeph.

Then, moments later

from a similar position, the 35-year-old performed heroics once again, this time wrapping the ball around and over the wall into the far corner.

Alvechurch got back in it on 37 minutes when Jamie Soule thrashed home the rebound after Tony Breeden had originally denied Jed Abbey, while Danny Waldron will feel he should have done better

when twisting and turning his way through on goal, only to be denied at the last by Borough's custodian after the restart.

Jezeph was required to pull off a show-stopping save to keep out Charlie Dowd's dipping volley, prior to McManus' stabbed finish on 80 minutes from Storer's flat corner kick.

**STAR MAN:** Kyle Storer  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆

# Enoru is the man for the moment

**BARWELL 2  
ROYSTON TOWN 1**  
By Ben Tyler

A SPIRITED display from ten-man Royston Town meant Steve Castle's side could take some pride, if not a point, on their outing to Leicestershire.

Beck-Ray Enoru required just five minutes to make his mark on proceedings, crashing home a sumptuous drive low into the corner after the ball broke his way on the penalty-area edge, whilst Tiago Nassunculo and Brady Hickey both threatened to double the Canaries' lead.

Then, on 25 minutes, the most contentious moment of the game arrived when Connor Furlong was shown a red card for

an apparent lunge.

The Crows were seemingly left with a mountain to climb when Hickey drilled a free kick through the visitors' wall and beyond Louis Chadwick on 33 minutes to rub further salt in the wound.

Despite the hosts' numerical advantage, the game became non-eventful either side of the break, with few moments of note to mention prior to Nassunculo's glancing header going wide on 70 minutes.

With Barwell seemingly having the points wrapped up, an Adam Murray's strike seven minutes from time suddenly prompted some late intrigue going into the closing stages.

But with all Royston substitutions already used, and with goalscorer Murray forced off injured, Town couldn't give themselves a dream ending despite a valiant effort.

**STAR MAN:** Beck-Ray Enoru (Barwell)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆



# Moors made to pay for sloppy start - Ryan

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** SOLIHULL Moors midfielder Ryan Barnett felt an uncharacteristic slow start proved most costly in last weekend's 4-3 defeat to Weymouth.

The SportNation.bet Stadium hosts found themselves 3-1 down at the break after Bradley Ash's double added to Josh Leslie-Smith's eighth-minute opener and restored the Terras' two-goal advantage following a Joe Sbarra goal. Josh McQuoid made it 4-1 and Sbarra's second and a stoppage-time Andrew Dallas goal were too little, too late for Neal Ardley's side.

It means Moors remain winless after three games of the new National League season on two points, with Barnett intent on securing a first victory at Aldershot Town on Saturday.

"To give away sloppy goals like that, it's just not how we're set up to defend," said the 21-year-old.

"But the way we came back is something that can be taken as a positive.

"We can't dwell on it, the performances have been there so it's just about the results now."

Solihull were left shell-shocked by the visitors' early goal which came with Weymouth's first attack - a sensational strike from Leslie-Smith that picked out the far corner of Marcus Dewhurst's net.

On 21 minutes, it was two when a defensive mishap allowed Ash to fire home.

Ardley's men did find a response through Sbarra's stabbed finish seven minutes before the break, only for Ash to net again in first-



Callum Maycock comes under pressure in Saturday's outing. Picture by Tom King.

half stoppage time.

Moors looked dead and buried after McQuoid added goal number four with an instinctive finish, though the response of the hosts suggested otherwise.

Sbarra blasted home Justin Donawa's centre with 20 minutes to go, before seeing a hat-trick-

clinging penalty saved before the rebound was eventually turned home by Dallas.

"I think if you look at the first half-hour and the way we started, I don't think that's the kind of standard that we've set ourselves in the early part of the season," Barnett continued. "But if you look at the

way that we come back into the game, we created so many chances in the second half and put them under pressure - they didn't really have a sniff until after the break for their fourth goal.

"I think if we just started the game in the way that we finished it, we would have been clear winners."

## Karvelas shines in K&D success

**CRICKET:** SKIPPER Jack Grundy paid tribute to star bowler Ari Karvelas for his role in Knowle & Dorridge's six-wicket triumph over West Bromwich Dartmouth, after the South African took three wickets.

K&D are still in the hunt for second place in Birmingham & District Premier Division One ahead of this Saturday's season finale, in which the Station Road outfit will need maximum points at Barnt Green while hoping Leamington lose to newly-crowned champions Berskwell.

Karvelas (3-11) and Co. put on a sensational bowling display last weekend to skit-

tle visitors West Bromwich for just 98 runs in the 26th over, and the hosts then required just 18 overs to get the job done.

"Ari got a really important wicket in the first over and that really set the tone," Grundy said.

"We've all seen teams struggle to chase low totals at some point, but fortunately this never looked likely to be one of those occasions and our batting was pretty composed.

"Leamington unfortunately keep winning as well, so all we can do is beat Barnt Green next week and see where we end up - hopefully in second place."



Ari Karvelas played a pivotal role in K&D's victory.

## Mason's departure leaves a big hole to fill says Sporting boss

by Ben Tyler  
sport@bromsgrovestandard.co.uk

**FOOTBALL:** ROUSLERS manager Brendan Kelly admits he has been left "devastated" by the departure of assistant manager Andy Mason, who announced he was stepping down from his role at the Victoria Ground and retiring from the game last week.

Mason has been a part of the set-up at Bromsgrove Sporting ever since accepting an offer to join the club's coaching staff in 2017, when he first became acquainted with Kelly - then an assistant to legendary Rouslers manager Paul Smith.

A year later in March 2018, Mason's role was upgraded in becoming Kelly's right-hand man in the wake of Smith's shock resignation - a role the duo have held ever since - guiding the Rouslers to successive promotions from the Midlands League Premier Division and Southern League Division One Central, before overseeing a successful first campaign at Step Three of the non-League ladder in 2019/20.

Having lost a key cog in the management team and a secondary voice in both the dressing room and on the touchline, Kelly says that he will continue to hold his now former number two in high regard.

"I'm devastated that Andy has come to this decision, but I completely understand why

and respect his choice," said the Bromsgrove boss.

"He has played an integral part in the club's rise in recent years and has had longevity in the football industry, which is a difficult thing to achieve these days.

"When Mason came through the door at Sporting as a coach, we immediately clicked and hit it off, in terms of how we viewed the game, our thinking was the same.

"The transition from me to manager and him to assistant was probably the smoothest any of us could have asked for, we excelled as a management team, we were open and honest with each other and had the same goals - many of which we achieved.

"Andy will be the first to admit he is set in his ways and is quite old school, but it worked, his methods of coaching worked and the statistics prove that.

"He was a fans' favourite and always made time for the Sporting faithful."

The news comes after Bromsgrove's 2020/21 Southern League Premier Central campaign was officially drawn to a close, as per a Football Association announcement which confirmed the worst fears of Step Three to Six clubs in immediately curtailing the season.

For Kelly and Co, the task of building for the new campaign has been made tougher by the need to appoint a new assistant manager, although the timing of the decision has at least provided the club's hierarchy with plenty of time to plan their next move



Andy Mason oversaw three promotions with the Rouslers in all - the first in 2016/17 as a coach, before further successes in 2017/18 and 2018/19 as assistant manager. Picture: Tom Fuszard.

accordingly.

While Mason can now enjoy retirement with his wife Laura, the connection with the club will remain, he reiterates.

"It's been a fantastic four years and I've thoroughly enjoyed it," he said.

"Three promotions in my four years has been incredible to be part of.

"I have decided the time is right for me to retire and make some changes.

"I'd like to wish all the very best to Brendan, for the great



The outgoing Rouslers assistant [left], pictured here after Bromsgrove's thumping 7-1 win over Redditch United in January 2020, is regarded highly by Sporting boss Brendan Kelly [right]. Picture: Andrew Maguire.

manager he is and will become, to all of the players that have served me well for the last four years - including all of those that have come to the club - and the best of health and best wishes to all of the Shedders and fans.

"The good news is that there is a return to football in June, I hope the fans will come back and continue enjoying their football.

"I will be following the success of the club closely, as it will always have a place in my heart."

Chairman Mike Burke also passed on his well wishes, adding: "Andy has been a huge part of the success of Sporting over the last

few years.

"He became instrumental in the smooth transition to the new management set-up, with him becoming assistant to Brendan. This ensured the continued progress on the pitch, at what could have been a vulnerable period for the club.

"From a personal point of view, he also became a good friend, so although it is sad he will no longer be part of the team he will always be a part of the club."

"I look forward to sitting alongside him in the Thomas Jones Stand come matchday when we're allowed."



# Bromsgrove B sign off season with whitewash

**TENNIS:** BROMSGROVE B finished their Herefordshire and Worcestershire Women's Winter League campaign on a high note after whitewashing Stourbridge B 10-0.

As the first side in Division Two to complete all of their fixtures, Bromsgrove, who currently sit in second, have given themselves the best chance of a solid finishing position.

With the rest of the league yet to fulfil their remaining matches, the likelihood is that Bromsgrove will slide down the table having only won half of their fixtures in this campaign.

Regardless of where they eventually finish, their final outing was one to remember as Hannah Weston and Kelly Kenward recovered from losing a first-set tiebreak to beat Eleanor Taylor and Helen Walker 5-7, 6-2, 6-2.

Ann Banner and Joan McGregor built on their teammates' opening win by dismissing Janet Williamson and Jean Brayshaw in straight sets 6-1, 6-4, followed by a similar success against Taylor and Walker 6-1, 7-5.

The rout was then completed when Weston and Kenward saw off Williamson and Brayshaw 6-2, 6-4.

In Men's Division Three East, Bromsgrove B were on the receiving end of a whitewash as they slipped to a 10-0 defeat at Worcester C.

Bromsgrove dropped to sixth after being leagued by their opponents, who got off to the best possible start when Frank Carroll and Alex Hills beat Ashley Rutter and Philip Boardman 6-4, 6-1.

A 7-5, 6-3 defeat for the visitors' Stephen Jones and Max Feltham spelled further trouble for Bromsgrove as they lost to Martin Haslam and Kieran Groom, followed by a 6-3, 6-1 loss for Jones and Feltham against Carroll and Hills in rubber three.

The visitors' misery was compounded by Haslam and Groom, who gave them their way to a 6-4, 6-3 success over Rutter and Boardman to confirm the whitewash.

It seemed to be the week of the whitewash, as David Lloyd Bromsgrove B men's team swept aside hosts Barnet Green B 10-0 in Division Four East.

Green's Paul Goodwin and Will Scarle were no match for Richard Garbett and Cormac O'Connor in their 6-2, 6-4 opening defeat, while Hammond Ahmad and Chris Linsell had no answer against DL's Martyn Langston and Thomas Griffiths in rubber two, losing 7-5, 6-1.

Langston and Griffiths beat Gordon and Scarle 6-1, 7-5, before Garbett and O'Connor finished off with a 6-2, 6-0 triumph over Ahmad and Linsell.

DL Bromsgrove now lie second, six points behind Droitwich C with two matches in hand, while Barnet Green stay second bottom.

A 5-5 thriller meant it was honoured even in Division Ten East between Droitwich Men's F and Wombourne.

Droitwich F were hoping to boost their top-two ambitions with a victory heading into the encounter, with both sides currently joint second on 37 points, albeit with Sunday's hosts having played a game more.

Wombourne drew first blood when Andrew Saunders and Adrian Jeavons beat John Jenkins and Mark Venables in straight sets 6-3, 6-2.

A 6-1, 6-2 victory for Jonathan Carter and Daniel Ballard against the visitors' Mick George and Owen Barton then followed, levelling the tie.

Successive defeats for George and Barton meant Droitwich assumed the upper hand for the first time as Jenkins and Venables outthrew their opponents in a tiebreak, winning 6-4, 2-6, 7-6.

But when Saunders and Jeavons turned the tables in the final match, coming out on top 6-4, 7-5 against Carter and Ballard, the points were shared.

**Send us your sports news and pictures Email sport@bromsgrovestandard.co.uk**

# 'Outstanding' effort rewarded in county finals

**SWIMMING:** HEAD coach Matthew Lowe labelled Bromsgrove Swimming Club's recent showing at the Worcester County Championships an "outstanding" success.

In all, the club, were represented by 33 swimmers and returned with 45 medals in all – 21 golds, 15 silvers and nine bronze medals.

Lowe was delighted by the commitment levels of the club's swimmers at the Championships, hosted by WY Active Wolverhampton for two of the weekends, and at Pridewell Leisure Centre in Worcester for the second leg of the tournament.

He said: "For such a small, inclusive club, our swimmers have produced outstanding results at the County Championships.

"I don't just measure their success in terms of the number of medals won, but also by the number of finalists featuring our swimmers and the string of personal best times achieved."

Over the course of the three-week tournament, 15-year-old Ashleigh Green stood out as one of Bromsgrove's shining lights, scooping the Junior Girls County title after winning six medals in all.



She was champion in the 100metres and 200m individual medley races, plus the 100m backstroke for her age group.

Green added to her success with silvers in the 50m backstroke and breaststroke, plus a bronze medal in the 100m butterfly, to finish as the club's best performer.

**Bromsgrove's swimmers excelled at the recent County Championships.**

Thirteen-year-old Krystof Wood also impressed, winning gold in the 50m and 100m backstroke and 50m breaststroke finals, followed by silvers in the 50m and 100m freestyle, 100m breaststroke and 100m individual medley.

Henry Foster (11) also returned with a considerable haul, taking gold medals in the 50m and 100m freestyle, to add to a silver in the 100m butterfly and two bronzes in the 50m backstroke and butterfly events.

Fellow 11-year-old swimmer Oliver Stell was a winner in the 50m and 100m backstroke, plus a bronze medal in the 100m individual medley.

14-year-old George Troth, 14, scooped gold in the 50m breaststroke and silver in the 100m equivalent, while Chelsea Miller, 16, was silver and bronze medalist in the 100m breaststroke and butterfly finals respectively.

The club's medal chase was completed by 13-year-old Emily Bower, who scooped a bronze in the 100m freestyle.

# Monsters need to stake up the fire for tonight test

**By Ben Tyler**  
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**RUGBY UNION:** BLAIR Hunter says he is not underestimating the size of the task when Droitwich RFC were to Stoke-on-Trent this Saturday (3pm).

A postponement to last weekend's home clash with Old Halesonians meant the Monsters only completed two Midlands One West fixtures in the last month – their previous outing being the 33-12 defeat to Ludlow on February 8.

With the potential for some nastiness in the Derbyshire derby after the four-week break in play, adding to the erratic nature of seventh-placed Stoke's results this season, the Monsters are wary of a difficult task ahead at Hartwell Lane this weekend.

"Stoke are a very tickle side; when they're red hot they're a really good side," Hunter said.

"They've had a strange run of results,

Boars' hopes washed out

**RUGBY UNION:** BROMSGROVE RFC were one of the unfortunate sides to miss out on Midlands Premier action last weekend.

The sixth-placed Boars' scheduled home fixture with Doncaster Phoenix fell victim to the weather. It was a fate suffered by the Northamptonshire rivals 48-12 in November's contest.

A trip to second-bottom Kettering on Saturday offers Dan Protherough's side the chance to put an end to a two-week break

In play at Waverley Road (3pm). If the previous meeting between the two sides has anything to go by, then the visiting Bromsgrove faithful will be confident of an 11th win of the season having beaten their Northamptonshire rivals 48-12 in November's contest.

That day, a Tom Sadler hat-trick, plus tries for Ross Lockhart, Jamie Atkin and Rob Atwood, gave the Boars plenty to shout about at Pinstall Road.

"But training has been good since then, so we're confident for the weekend."

Droitwich's well-documented injury crisis has eased, any full return to fitness has been curtailed by a lack of matches while the Monsters are set to be without four of their backs this weekend, with Hunter stating the squad is "at 75 per cent" strength.

See Stoke as a long journey. We've had instances such as last year where delays getting to the ground have caused players to arrive ten minutes before kick-off and not get a proper warm-up in.

# I'm right on track after Oulton shakedown

**Inside track**

**REDNAL** motorist Tobias Owen is gearing up for his second season in motorsport. In his latest column for the Standard, he assesses his pre-season preparations and identifies his aims for 2020.

MY first year of car racing was a steep learning curve.

I've had time to process it over the winter break and identify what I need to do to go faster. I've watched a lot of footage back, both my own on-board footage and that of quicker drivers, to see where I can improve my technique.

The BRSCC MX-6 Championship operates both at A group and a B group. Since I'm still fairly new to the tournament, I'm expecting to once again be racing in the latter, but this time I'll be aiming to be near to the front.

As well as to scoring points in every race that I finish, which is an ambitious goal but certainly one that's achievable.



Tobias Owen is putting in the hard yards to ensure he is fit and firing for his second season in motorsport. Picture by KRP Photos.com

Last week, I was at Oulton Park in Cheshire to give my car a pre-season shakedown and get my head back into racing mode.

Despite a number of stoppages due to the slippery conditions on the track, I managed to get a few long runs in towards the end of the day and was happy with the progress made.

Unfortunately, the car developed an oil leak late in the day which now needs to be fixed in time for the start of the season, but that was only a dampener on an otherwise successful day.

I also welcomed some University of Birmingham students, who are part of their university's racing team competing in the Formula Student

# David Lloyd step up title challenge

**TENNIS:** DAVID Lloyd Bromsgrove A bolstered their promotion hopes after dismantling Buxley A in a 10-0 whitewash in the Herefordshire & Worcester Senior Women's Winter League.

Cuttall Green A (14 points) currently top Division Three East, having played two games more than DL Bromsgrove (28 pts).

DL's Karen Swindells and Elisabeth Johnston had to go through three sets to get the better of Buxley duo Lesley Perrin and Nancy Sylvester in a 7-6, 4-6, 7-6 encounter.

There was less trouble for Wendy Gorman and Linda Russell though, easing to a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Lucinda Odell and Karen Vernon in rubber two.

The same DL pairing again came in the fore against Perrin and Sylvester, this time only dropping a single game in their 6-1, 6-0 win.

Bromsgrove's demolition job was completed by Swindells and Johnston who won 6-3, 6-1 triumph against Odell and Vernon confirmed maximum points.

In Division Two of the open mixed doubles, Lesley Barr Green A were shocked by David Lloyd Bromsgrove A in an 8-2 humbling on home turf.

Playing a part in another DL success was Goodhill, who began her partnership with Liam Hatfield with a 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 win over Martyn Langston and Rachel Scott.

Green's James Flynn and Beth Harris had no answer to David Lloyd hosts Henry Myatt and Johnston – the other female player to appear twice at the weekend – in a 6-3, 6-3 defeat.

Langston and Scott were beaten for the second time out to Ludlow at The Glyndwr Memorial Ground in a 33-12 defeat last weekend, with tries for Chris Lawley and Joey Roberts, plus a Chris Hooper conversion, not enough to overcome the fifth-placed Linney Men.

With Droitwich dropping to second-bottom in the table, the visitors' home side can draw themselves out of their current predicament in the remaining games, despite having a heavily-depleted squad to work with.

"We've got to go out and play. We've got an obligation to turn up and give it our all and honour our remaining fixtures," said the Monsters coach.

"We'll do our very best, despite having

# Barley Mow extend lead

**POOL:** THE IN-FORM sides in the Mid-West Premiership continued to pick up points in Wednesday's round of fixtures.

Leaders Barley Mow have extended their advantage to 22 points, courtesy of an 8-1 demolition of 12th-placed Star & Garter.

Closest rivals Masons Chalked found their encounter with fourth-placed Salt 'n' Ales more difficult in a 6-3 victory.

Never in Salts redoubt the second-best triumph of the night with a 7-3 rout of Rifle No Mans, who are 11th, to move within 15 points of Masons with a game in hand.

In one of the week's highlights, DWMC emerged victorious against The Dovey after three-and-a-half hours of play. The seventh-placed visitors had to dig deep to leave with a 6-3 victory that strengthens their push for a top-six finish, while The Dovey remain ninth.

Ten-placed Wessex Riders lost 6-3 by The Doveydale Arms, who stay fifth, with the Pillar of Dreams a place behind in sixth after a narrow 4-3 victory over eighth-placed The Hop Pole.

# Colts hit by Storm Cira

**YOUTH FOOTBALL:** ONLY two games involve Bromsgrove's Storm Colts survived Storm Cira in the Midlands Junior Premier League last weekend.

The U16 Colts of Bromsgrove Preparatory School's team at the Foremark Hall Invitational tournament in South Herefordshire.

The Under-18s' team were history-makers after becoming the first Bromsgrove side to win an away tournament at the Invitational, while the U11 girls' netball team swept seven of all before their final.

For the boys, a successful group stage began with a 1-1 draw against Belper, followed by 3-0 and 1-0 wins against Sutton Coldfield and Atrincham respectively to top the pile.

# Himbleton can't wait for summer

**CRICKET:** HIMBLETON chairman and first-team player Stuart Dickenson predicts a successful summer of cricket ahead as the preparations for the 2020 season continue.

The club's first team maintained their status as Division Two of the Worcestershire County League last term in the first campaign since a restructuring of the league, courtesy of a tenth-placed finish.

The Meadow Boys' second team will again step up in Division Nine, hoping to build on a promising finish of sixth in 2019.

Dickenson says hopes are high, not least because of a rise in interest from players willing to turn out for the club.

"It's great that we have a growing membership, particularly in the cur-

rent climate," he said. "We were at a tipping point where we couldn't be confident of raising three teams on a Saturday, so the next logical step was to give Sunday cricket another go."

"We want to make sure all of our members get the opportunity of a game at the weekends and it will also, importantly, offer a route to adult cricket for the younger members."

In a minor shake-up of the first XI, Sean Jenkins will captain the side in place of Richard Suggen.

Caspar Jones and Gavin Wright will continue their roles as captain of the second and Sunday XIs respectively.

Traditional social cricket, which will again be hosted by Antony Kent, on a Wednesday will remain a staple

at the club over the summer.

With a sum of \$5,000 raised to install an artificial wicket on the club's premises at Harrow Lane, Dickenson was thankful for the donations received and said the quality of training sessions will be improved as a result.

He added: "With a growing membership playing cricket at a good level, an expanding fixture list and a great social atmosphere, I believe we have all the ingredients here to create a wonderful summer of cricket."

Sean Jenkins will take up captaincy duties for Himbleton's first XI this season. Picture by Marcus Mings.



# Droitwich injury crisis is worst 'we know' – Blair

**By Ben Tyler**  
ben.tyler@bultvannmedia.com

**RUGBY UNION:** BLAIR Hunter promised Droitwich will fulfil all of their remaining fixtures, despite being in the middle of an injury crisis that has rocked the Midlands One West club to the core.

The Monsters lost out to Ludlow at The Glyndwr Memorial Ground in a 33-12 defeat last weekend, with tries for Chris Lawley and Joey Roberts, plus a Chris Hooper conversion, not enough to overcome the fifth-placed Linney Men.

With Droitwich dropping to second-bottom in the table, the visitors' home side can draw themselves out of their current predicament in the remaining games, despite having a heavily-depleted squad to work with.

"We've got to go out and play. We've got an obligation to turn up and give it our all and honour our remaining fixtures," said the Monsters coach.

"We'll do our very best, despite having

"So we'll collectively breathe a gasp of relief next weekend with the break; hopefully we'll be able to welcome some players back in a couple of weeks."

With a trip to eighth-placed Newbold-on-Avon awaiting on Saturday (2.15pm), Hunter admits he is far from optimistic considering the current state of the Droitwich squad.

"With the injury of injuries that we have, it's a case of strapping players together to get a team out there," he said.

"I'm worried for Saturday, four or five of our best quality players are out and half of the side will be from the second team."

"As a club we struggle more than most – we only have 22 or 23 players suitable for the first team throughout the club."

"Club morale is good, but we're struggling and need a break for a few weeks to try and recover."

"On the flip side a lot of players have played first-team rugby that wouldn't have otherwise, though it's been highlighted

that the step up is too great for them. They've been the first to hold their hands up and admit that themselves, but they'll do everything to help the team and we greatly appreciate their efforts. But it is hard to dress up performances at the moment."

In Saturday's defeat, the Monsters dominated the possession stats but were unable to get the better of Ludlow's defence, leading Hunter to pay testament to the quality of their rivals' backs.

"Considering we had 80 per cent of possession and lost, which was frustrating, we started very slow," he said.

"We weren't in the game for the first 20 or 25 minutes and felt behind quite quickly. For the rest of the game we were in troy-coring positions, but committed too many basic errors."

"I talked to their coach after the game and we both agreed that Ludlow had a fantastic defence, especially in the second half."



Bromsgrove's U11 boys team were unbeaten en route to a first-ever hockey title for the school in the tournament at Foremark Hall.

The girls' U11 netball team only failed to win their opening match before reigning supreme after a devastating rout to the final.

# Boys create history for school while netballers also take trophy

**SCHOOL SPORT:** IT WAS double delight for two of Bromsgrove Preparatory School's teams at the Foremark Hall Invitational tournament in South Herefordshire.

Going up against Beeston, the other group winner, Bromsgrove's young guns ran out 3-1 winners to lift the school's maiden title.

The head of boys' PE and games swept seven of all before their final.

The success is a continuation of their previous victories at U9 and U10 level, adding "These boys are having another exceptionally successful year."

They are a great group of boys who are superb role models for the school both on and off the pitch, and have illustrated their strength in a range of sports."

After an opening 3-3 draw with Foremark Hall A, Bromsgrove's netball team were unstoppable,

blitzing The Elms 10-0. Foremark B 12-0 and Warwick Preparatory School 3-0 in the group games.

Unsurprisingly, Bromsgrove topped the group to earn a semi-final with Radcliffe College, and a 9-2 victory set up a re-match with Warwick Prep in the final.

Again, the outcome remained the same with Bromsgrove the victors, securing a stunning success in extra-time to win the tournament.

The girls' U11 netball team only failed to win their opening match before reigning supreme after a devastating rout to the final.



# Bromsgrove no match for dominant leaders

**TENNIS:** BROMSGROVE C suffered a 10-0 hammering at the hands of Pershore B in the latest round of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Women's Winter League.

Division Four East leaders Pershore demonstrated their class against their rivals Bromsgrove, dropping just one set in the encounter and winning two thirds of their games played.

Rebecca Smith and Lorraine Russell were no match for the visitors' Manon Van Seiers and Clare Hain, going down 6-1, 6-1, while Isabelle Bracknell and Stephanie Armstrong also fell in straight sets 6-0, 6-1 to Jane Warner and Ginny Lowe.

While Smith and Russell were able to

take the third rubber to three sets, they remained on the losing side in a 6-3, 2-6, 6-3 defeat to Warner and Lowe.

Ralph and Van Seiers then combined the whitewash, running out 7-5, 6-2 winners against Bracknell and Armstrong to extend their lead to eight points.

In Division Four East of the Men's Winter League, Droitwich C emerged 6-1 victors away to Hereford B in their final match of the season.

Droitwich currently top the pile on 38 points after their seven games, clear of nearest challengers David Lloyd Worcester B (28pts, four played) and Bromsgrove C (28pts, 6 played).

The visitors' Ben Steel and Richard Clive ran out 7-5, 6-4 winners in the

opening rubber against David Meek and Michael Boseman, though Kevin Hodges and Philip Walton slipped to a 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 defeat at the hands of Bewdley's Roderick Maiden and Andrew Minchin.

Meek and Boseman then handed out a 6-4, 6-3 defeat to Hodges and Walton, setting up a winner-takes-all scenario in the final of their group.

Droitwich's Steve and Clive made no mistake with a straightforward 6-4, 6-1 triumph against Maiden and Minchin, ensuring their side took the bulk of the points.

David Lloyd Bromsgrove D suffered a 10-0 drubbing away to Far Forest A in Division Nine East.

In a top-versus-bottom clash, Bromsgrove's Ken and Thomas Muir made a promising start when winning 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 defeat at the hands of Bewdley's Roderick Maiden and Andrew Minchin.

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RGS Dodderhill's team pose with their bronze medals.

# Fairfield relish chance to take on league leaders

by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bulwarmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** MIDLAND League Division Two rivals Fairfield Villa and Barnet Green Spartak are bracing themselves for the weekends ahead against stern opposition.

Keith Draper's Villa head to The Trevor Brown Memorial Ground in Boldmere to take on a youthful Solihull United side that have swept nearly all before them, putting them at the top of the table for most of the season.

The Swans were beaten 3-1 in October's reverse fixture at the Recreation Ground, despite Solihull's Bryan Anderson seeing red. Dan Ludlow's goal proved fatal for Arman Khoshkhoo netting a hat-trick in that encounter.

Fortunes have been looking up since then however, as Fairfield have won four, drawn once and lost just three times in their subsequent eight league games, leaving them in ninth place.



Fairfield will need to keep close tabs on Arman Khoshkhoo, pictured shielding the ball. Picture by Paul Smith.

Barnet Green Spartak sit one position below in tenth and face an equally testing challenge in the Les James Challenge Cup against Peckham.

While the two teams have enjoyed contrasting fortunes in the league, with the Millers up in fourth and Spartak consolidating mid-table, a fixture of a place in the last four of the competition will not prove a real lifeline in Saturday's quarter-final clash at The Pavilions (2.45pm).

The winner of the tie will face Division Three opposition in the shape of Inkberrow or Coventry Plumbers in the semi-finals. They are also due to stage their last-eight tie on Saturday.

In terms of recent history, GJ Singh and Neil Martin Green have the upper hand having won the previous encounter 2-1 at Peckham in September.

Then, Mark Steele and substitute the Josh Pitters found the net against ten-man Peckham, with Ben Elliott netting the reply after Jack Donnelly's red card.

■ Table-topping Droitwich Spa hope to kick on from a double-postponement when they host Team Dudley on Saturday (3pm) in Division One of the West Midlands (Regional) League.

By the time the two sides get under way at Walsley Meadows, the Salmen will have gone two weeks without competitive action, having last turned out in the 3-1 success over FC Darlington.

Both last Saturday's trip to Willehall Town, and Wednesday night's home game with Wyley, fell foul to the weather.

Mark Owen's side have been keen to press on with their title bid, but have been limited to just 15 league matches this term.

They still have three games in hand on nearest challengers Wellington Amateurs - who sit level with the Salmen on 24 points - but Spa have been above and beyond the rest of the competition so far.

Droitwich will be confident of continuing their stint at the summit having romped to a 5-2 thrashing of Team Dudley in late November, with James Lemon (2), Jordan Cox, Jack Davies and Matthew Hunt the visitors' goalscorers that day. Jack Bailey and Beckham Brazier were on target for Dudley at Priory Road.

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Your support will make all the difference

THIS Saturday we look forward to another home game in our search for promotion against a decent side in Hitchin who took points from us earlier in the season.

Although they don't really have a great deal to play for at this stage, they have a good, young side with plenty of energy in their ranks, so we will all need to be at our best to take three points.

We've trained twice this week and the boys are looking forward to the game even more so because of Storm Dennis deciding to interfere with our match at Hefnesford last weekend.

We have 12 cup finals left now until the end of the season and we will try our very best to win every single one of them.

After that, matters in the league and promotion race will take care of itself.

With that said, not only do we need as many of our fans there as possible this weekend, we are all of you to be encouraging us and be loud in your support throughout the next few weeks as it really does give us that extra push.



Back row from left: Liam Jones, Felicity Warburton, Joshua Warburton and Grace Moore, front, were their coach. Picture by Rich Morrish.

**JUDO:** HEAD instructor Rich Morrish has paid tribute to his triumphant martial artists after a successful first contest of the year.

Kazuko-Kan Judo Club returned from the Millard Arena Closed Championships with six golds and a silver in all, leaving Morrish beaming with pride at the efforts of the youngsters.

"Considering it was their first competition of 2020, the boys nailed it," he said.

"It shows that the hard work they put in pays off for them, and I couldn't be prouder to be their coach."

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# Sophie and Megan lead medal haul

**JUDO:** DROITWICH Spa Judo Club's fighters returned from their latest outing at Kingsbury Leisure Centre with six medals.

In total, the club accumulated two golds, three silvers and a bronze between the five fighters who attended the competition.

Sophie Brown, fighting in the under-55kg section, and Megan Skilern, who competed in the ladies' esquires division, both ended the afternoon with gold medals around their necks, while it was very

much a family affair where the club's silver medals were concerned.

Shay Hall (under-25kg) and Lauren Hall (under-36kg) were both runners-up in their categories, while Aaron Hall scooped a silver and a bronze in the esquires and the over-55kg boys' sections respectively.

Back row from left: Head coach Thomas Ewins with Sophie Brown, Aaron Hall, Megan Skilern and Lauren Hall, and Shay Hall (front row).

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# Leam wants more from free-scoring houseers

**FOOTBALL:** LOWESTOFT Sporting 6 Lowestoft Town 0 Southern League Premier Central Report by Ben Tyler and Max Banner

BRENDAN Kelly admits he is still searching for more from his players, despite Bromsgrove's six-goal rout last Saturday.

Hat-tricks from forwards Shaquille McDonald and Richard Gregory helped the Rouslers to yet another convincing victory - their 17th in the league this term.

It was the second match in a row the Rouslers had scored six, having also beaten Evesham United 6-0 in the Worcestershire Senior Invitation Cup.

"The scoreline suggests we steamrolled Lowestoft, but based on the standards that we have set we were below that," he said.

"There's a culture at the club, from the

players more so than me, to set high standards for every game.

"We've had smoother games, but it was still a great result."

"We created over 20 chances against Lowestoft and were comfortable winners, but we knew that we've played better."

It took just five minutes for Bromsgrove to break the deadlock, courtesy of a penalty that was rifled home by Gregory after Lowestoft goalkeeper Luis Tibbles had wiped out Mikey Taylor.

Eight minutes later, the Rouslers had their second, again provided by Gregory, who was making his 100th appearance for the Bouslers.

Latching onto the ball 20 yards from goal following Taylor's lay-off, the forward fired a low drive against the inside of a post, ricocheting against the opposite post, before ripping the back of the net.

While Taylor had made himself a nuisance to the Lowestoft defence, he was



Charlie Dowd brings the play forward for Bromsgrove against Lowestoft. Picture by David Besley.

unable to shake off a knock that had been sustained from his earlier clash with the Lowestoft keeper and was replaced by McDonald in the 18th minute of the game, the scoring continued after the break.

McDonald was the first player to complete his hat-trick rubber minutes into the half, wrapping a free-kick over the wall and into the bottom corner.

After the longest period in the game without a goal, it was 6-0 in the 72nd minute after Gregory's net-left footed finish inside the penalty area from McDonald's cross.

Three minutes later, McDonald had his



McDonald's win against FC Darlington. Picture by Mathew Mason.

James Lemon, left, jumps for joy after netting his hat-trick goal in

Crowther, "The important thing is that the lads keep doing everything they're doing at the moment which has put us in this position."

"It'll be nice to get a run of games



James Lemon, left, jumps for joy after netting his hat-trick goal in.

Crowther, "The important thing is that the lads keep doing everything they're doing at the moment which has put us in this position."

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# Lemon treble turns tide

**FOOTBALL:** ANDY Crowther admits he was blown away by James Lemon's three-minute hat-trick for Droitwich Spa last weekend.

The Salmen ran out comfortable 3-1 winners against FC Darlington, having been a goal down at the break against the rock-bottom visitors at Walsley Meadow.

Three goals from Lemon between the 51st and 54th minutes quickly transformed the game, however, putting Spa back on top of West Midlands (Regional) League Division One.

Assistant manager Crowther felt it was only a matter of time before his side turned the scoreline around but he was delighted with Lemon's finishing.

"To be honest, I've not seen anything like it since I've been here," said Spa's

"They were three very good goals from him as well. In the first half we were completely dominant, but conceded a sloppy goal after five minutes."

"I was confident that we'd turn things around, though. The half-time team talk was straight to the point: they were controlling the play but were sloppy in our finishing."

"We always thought that once we got our first, then the rest would follow, and that showed in the three minutes at the start of the second half."

The first opportunity created in the game found the back of the net in Saturday's clash, much to the surprise of the hosts.

A Darlington free-kick delivered into the Droitwich penalty area was turned in by Ryan McAllister, despite the best efforts of goalkeeper Matt Oliver and Matty Hunt on the goal-line to keep the ball out.

The early goal rocked Spa, who failed to turn their control of possession into clear-cut chances.

With the opportunities they did create, Hunt, Ben Tibbory, Cory Dodd and top-scorer Connor Collins were all unable to get the better of the Boltmakers' Arman Morris between the sticks.

A penalty miss provided further agony for the Saltemen. Following a foul on Jordan Cox, Collins' well-struck shot was well kept out by Morris before half-time.

But when play got back under way, the Saltemen showed the golden touch

that has put them in prime position to lift the division title.

The equaliser came when Collins' powerful shot was tipped into the path of Lemon by Morris, the striker making no mistake with the follow-up.

And a matter of seconds later, Spa were in front when Lemon added his second with a composed finish inside the penalty area.

Soon it was 3-0, with the forward racing into the box and unleashing a strike that flared into the top corner.

Darlington were understandably rocked by the quickfire trio, and were unable to issue a response as Droitwich continued to test Morris' goal time and again, albeit without adding to their tally.

With three goals in hand over second-placed Wellington Amateurs, who dropped points in a 5-3 loss at Bromyard Town, Droitwich have been urged to not let their focus drop in Saturday's trip to eighth-placed Willehall Town, who ground-share at Wednesfield (3pm).

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# Dempster double makes difference in Fairfield thriller

**FOOTBALL:** ROSS Dempster scored twice as Fairfield Villa earned a morale-boosting victory away to Coventry Alvis last weekend.

The Swans were 3-2 victors at Alvis Sports & Social Club, where Scott Smith also found the net, though they did have Matt Jackson sent off.

As a result of the victory, Fairfield have jumped up to ninth in the Midlands League Division Two, level on 20 points with eighth-placed Alvis.

With the sides having played out a 4-3 thriller in their previous meeting in March last year, this time in favour of Coventry, there were high expectations of another entertaining encounter.

And so those sentiments were proved as a blistering start by the visitors.

It took Dempster eight minutes to hit the back of the net, glancing a header past a Alvis star in the goal.

It helped add to the positivity growing at Spa, whose first team have stepped up their preparations for the new campaign as a week by using indoor nets at Worcester Grammar School.

New players interested in joining the club are invited to join the training twice every Wednesday between 8pm and 10pm. For more information, call the club chairman Martyn Davies on 07949 225665.

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# Bromsgrove A celebrate as champs

**TENNIS:** BROMSGROVE A have lifted the Division One title in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Women's Winter League after a dramatic 6-4 win away to Manor Park A.

After losing two of their opening three rubbers, a straight sets victory in the final match was required to take the overall win and mathematically confirm their status as champions.

Manor Park's Hannah Griffiths and Jill Wilcomb put Bromsgrove on the back foot from the start, beating the visitors' Rachael Mack and Katherine Smedley 6-1, 6-4.

Sally Franks and Tina Manning hauled Bromsgrove back on level terms after a 6-3, 6-1 triumph over Alison Kirkwood and Bethany Pye.

A second-set tiebreak was won by Bromsgrove to take the game to a deciding third set, albeit for the hosts' Griffiths and Wilcomb to edge their encounter with Franks and Manning 6-1, 5-7, 6-4.

Requiring a win in straight sets to edge the match and subsequently secure the title, Mack and Smedley came up trumps against Kirkwood and Pye with a 6-2, 6-2 victory.

In Men's Division One, leaders David Lloyd Bromsgrove A made the title safe with an emphatic 8-2 triumph against Droitwich A.

All did not need to be going to plan, however, as Matthew Baker and Lee Cowan beat James Nolan and George Southall 7-6, 2-6, 7-5 to hand Droitwich the opening rubber.

James Troth and Michael Langston hit back for DL Bromsgrove in another three-setter, coming out 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 victors against Benedict Buckley and Mark Jones.

Nolan and Southall built on their teammates' success by seeing off Buckley and Jones 6-2, 6-2, while Troth and Langston sealed a tiebreak win over Baker and Cowan 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 to confirm silverware.

Droitwich remain sixth in the table.

# Masons title push halted

**POOL:** MASONS Chalked Up lost further ground in their Mid-West Premier 1 title bid after a shock 5-4 defeat away to The Hop Pole.

In the stand-out result of the week 27 fixtures, Hop Pole added yet another upset to their tally this season – having inflicted the only defeat on The Barley Mow so far – to strengthen their hold of eighth place.

Leaders Barley Mow extended their advantage to 31 points with only three matches left to play following a 7-2 success against The Pillar of Dreams (sixth).

Salt 'n' Asho's are closing in on third-placed Never in Salted ahead of beating The Dove (ninth) 6-2.

The gap between third and fourth has been cut to just two points, after NIS's 6-3 reverse at fifth-placed The Dove's Arms.

Rifle No Mans have dropped to the foot of the table after their 6-3 loss to DWMC (seventh), as The Star & Garter beat second-bottom The Pillar of Salt to move from the basement spot to 11th.

# School retains national crown

**NETBALL:** REIGNING champions Bromsgrove School kept hold of the National Independent Schools Cup after a thrilling 64-47 win over London-based Alloys's School.

Bromsgrove returned from the University of Hertfordshire's sports village in Hatfield as champions again, providing them with a major boost ahead of the English Schools' national finals this weekend.

A fast start meant the scoring began almost from the centre press, and both teams exchanged goals at regular intervals to set the tone for the final.

After building a first-quarter lead, Bromsgrove did not relinquish their stranglehold on the game to see off victory and leave them in good heart for Saturday's English final, hosted by their rivals School in Welwyn Garden City.

# Monners stoke fires for survival push

**RUGBY UNION:** BLAIR Hunter says last weekend's 22-10 victory at Stoke on Trent can be the catalyst for Droitwich's survival bid in Midlands One West.

Four unconverted tries, two from Phil Horton and one each from Nico Mason and James Horrocks – plus two penalties from Gregor Grogan – earned the Monners to a sixth victory this term and just their second this calendar year.

"We're hoping that this result can be the trigger for our season," said the Monners coach.

For everyone else in the division it was an unexpected result. For us it was a massive relief. We've been under the cosh since Christmas through injuries, unavailability and becoming a team that we couldn't put over.

"We still didn't have a fully fit squad to go to Stoke, but we managed to go and win."

"We were playing in very windy conditions; there were a couple of conversions from just in front of the posts that we couldn't put over."

"It's quite a drive up there and it can be quite draining, but we got there, prepared well and got over the line."

"Our defence was magnificent. They had passages of play for five or six minutes at a time – which is a long time in rugby – but we just defended and forced them into errors, they had no plan B or C."

Hunter said the squad will be at 85 to 90 per cent in terms of availability to travel to Newbold on Avon on Saturday (3pm), with the picture in terms of injuries becoming a lot more positive.

Droitwich will, however, be without Chris Hooper and Mason for the rearranged trip, with the pair having already made prior arrangements.

Newbold claimed a straight-forward 33-0 victory in October's reverse fixture but the Monners were 15-10 victors on

their last trip to Parkfield Road last March and were one of only two sides – the other being Dudley Kingswinford – to win on Newbold's pitch in the 2018/19 season.

"Considering we beat them there last year, they'll be looking for a revenge mission," said Hunter.

"The players that massively pride themselves on this home form, but considering that their is another game that's coming up just in front of them, they also have some players out as well."

"We just didn't show up when we played them earlier this season. We were there in the right frame of mind that day and they took us to the cleaners."

# Starting pay for losses in concentration

## But no need to panic says Kelly

**FOOTBALL:** Bromsgrove Sporting 1 Barwell 4

Southern League Premier Central Report by Ben Tyler and Max Banner

POOR concentration and confidence levels were culpable for Saturday's humbling, says Bromsgrove manager Brendan Kelly.

Barwell extended their unbeaten league run to six matches after blowing away Sporting in a scintillating second-half display at the Victoria Ground.

Goals from Kai Williams, Brady Hickey and Omotolani Omotola won the game for the Canaries ahead of Bromsgrove. Leon Broadhurst cancelled out Tristan Dunkley's opener with a close-range header.

Kelly says the nature of the result and the performance have irked him in the days since the defeat, but there is no

need to get too carried away despite the frustration.

"It's a mix of two things – confidence and concentration – I don't know what's happened to us lately," he said.

"I was really annoyed after the game, I kept saying to the lads about how we've put ourselves in this great position, so we can't just throw it away."

"But there's no need to hit the panic button, you look where we are in fourth in our first season at this level."

"It's just frustrating because the results in the other games involving teams around us have gone our way but we didn't capitalise."

Both sides had half chances early on, with Sporting's Jack Wilson forcing a save from Max Broadhurst, while Barwell's Matty Smith hit the post.

Barwell hit the front once again in the 53rd minute when Williams had the finish match his unstoppable run down the wing, picking out the bottom corner of the net.



Kieren Westwood, left, charges into a 50-50 for the ball with Barwell's Eliot Putman. Picture by Richard Bowcott Event Photography.

of the penalty area. But just four minutes later the scores were level. The equaliser arrived in fortunate fashion too, as Greg Mills' inswinging corner was pointed away by Bramley onto the head of Broadhurst, who nodded in from a yard.

Mills went close to adding a goal of his own when ripping the side netting with a strike from just inside the penalty area, but Barwell hit the front once again in the 53rd minute when Williams had the finish match his unstoppable run down the wing, picking out the bottom corner of the net.

Barwell's alarming defending led to the Barwell opener on 26 minutes, as Dunkley turned the ball home from the right side

# U11s move into second

**YOUTH FOOTBALL:** A THRILLING 3-2 away win has sent Bromsgrove Sporting Colts U11s up to second place in the U11 Lile Group in the Central Warwickshire Youth League.

Goals from Akintunde Akingbala, Jack Bate and Harrison Biddlestone edged their encounter with South Redditch Eagles, keeping the Colts level on six points with Meadow Park Saints having played a game more.

Bromsgrove Sporting Colts U11s were no match for Bodley St. Michaels Blades in U14 Division One, Marjorie Daley was Sporting's goalscorer in the 4-1 defeat, a result which keeps them seventh.

A top-two finish remains on the cards for the U15 Colts in U15 Division Five after a fine 3-0 home triumph against Hampton.

With a game in hand on second-placed Barley Reds, who are currently three points in front, Sporting have every chance of catching their rivals if they win their final game of the season this weekend against seventh-placed Sheldon Royals.

The U15 Shamrocks returned from their away trip to Solihull with a slender 1-0 victory in U15 Division One South.

Sitting third and just three points behind leaders Hampton Hawks at the halfway stage of the season, Bromsgrove remain with a real shout of lifting the league title.

The two sides go head-to-head this weekend in a fixture that could prove decisive come the season's end.

# Confident Fairfield ease way into cup final

**FOOTBALL:** FAIRFIELD Villa are well and truly up for the Presidents Cup after a resounding 3-0 away victory over Coventry Alvis booked their place in this year's final.

Alfie Bloomer's 35th-minute strike put the Swans ahead at Green Lane in last Saturday's semi-final, and Dominic Streves' crucial second seven minutes later left Fairfield with one foot in the final.

Then, with 15 minutes remaining, Ross Dempster put the seal on Villa's progression to give Keith Draper's side a real shot at claiming silverware this season.

The other semi-final between Knowle and Northfield Town is scheduled to be played on Saturday March 21.

Fairfield had won 3-2 at Alvis four weeks previously and Draper's Swans started brightly in last weekend's cup contest.

Left-back Keith Draper – not to be confused with his manager on the sideline – let fly a left-footed free that arrowed wide of the target, while Bloomer cut inside and flashed an effort past the post.

And Fairfield went ahead ten minutes before the break when the well-placed Dempster guided the ball home at the far post from a right-wing cross.

Defender Chris Hill almost doubled the advantage after seeing his header cleared off the line but it was 2-0 moments later.

Striker Streves latched onto an incisive through-ball and, after touching the ball out of his feet, he guided his shot into the bottom corner.

The visitors had the ball the net twice more, only for the offside flag to deny Bloomer and Dempster.

Fairfield will be hopeful that the excitement generated by their cup exploits can fuel a strong finish to the Midlands League Division Two season, starting with Saturday's home game with Bolehall Swifts (3pm).

Ninth-placed Villa won the reverse meeting against the Swifts, who are 15th, by a 2-0 scoreline in January, thanks to efforts from Daniel Ludlow and Dempster.

■ THERE WAS no such joy for Barnt Green Spartak on Saturday after a disappointing 1-1 defeat away to Hampton in Midland League Division Two.

Spartak ended the game with ten men following Chris Bishop's red card, but a right corner of the net opened set the tone for a disappointing day at the office for GJ Singh and Neil Martin's men.

Daryl Francis doubled the advantage for Hampton in the 26th minute as Cameron Seiwright and Matthew Harris netted in the 70th and 87th minute respectively to earn a straight-



Ross Dempster, centre, manages to carry the ball away from two Coventry Alvis players. Pictures by Paul Smith.

pointing 1-1 defeat away to Hampton in Midland League Division Two.

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Daryl Francis doubled the advantage for Hampton in the 26th minute as Cameron Seiwright and Matthew Harris netted in the 70th and 87th minute respectively to earn a straight-

forward victory for the Field Lane hosts, Finlay Gaylor issued Barnt Green's reply with a fine shot using the instep of his foot that whirled sumptuously into the top-right corner of the net.

Green, who are 11th in the standings, are back on the road against Swans with a trip to FC Stratford (3pm).

Saturday's visit to The Arden Garages in Hampton will pose a real challenge against top-half opposition, as Spartak have won their first victory since January 4.

# Boars left frustrated with draw despite comeback

by Ben Tyler  
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**RUGBY UNION:** DAN Protherough says Bromsgrove were unfortunate not to record an 11th Midlands Premier win this season after a second-half comeback earned them a point in a 19-19 draw at Kettering.

In a literal game of two halves, the Waverley Road hosts stormed into a 19-0 lead after scoring three tries, two being converted, without reply.

But a lightning of admirable proportions led to tries from Josh Holt (12) and Will Harris, who boosted two of the three conversions, to claim a hard-fought point.

Boars director of rugby Protherough says his side did well to recover from their poor showing in the opening half, and were unlucky not to take victory in the end.

"We didn't get off to the best start; we were slow against a team that are fighting and scrapping for their lives down the bottom," he said.

"We were caught cold and there were a couple of tries that we were unlucky with the bounce of the ball."

"It was a case of getting the lads to realise that while the opposition were playing really well, we were off our game."

"We had to sharpen up, because



Tom Millen sits a Kettering player on his pants during a surging run. Pictures by Andy Jepson.

every team in this league is a tough test. You have to turn up and be ready to go with the right attitude.

"Too many players were not performing to their usual levels, but it was a very different game in the second half."

"I think we should've won it in the end. To come back the way we did and go close to taking the points was admirable."

"With no match this weekend, the Boars chief says the fragmented fix-

ture list is something which has been of great frustration to himself and his players.

"Since Christmas, bar the three games at the start of the year, it's been hard to put a run of games together."

"It's been a disrupted second half to the season. We'd all rather be playing."

"If you want to be up there in the league then you can't afford to slip up."

The second half was far quieter but Dempster thumped a header into the roof of the net, while Collins wrapped up the hat-trick on the half-hour mark with another delightful top-corner finish.

Collins made it 6-0 at half-time to put the hosts in cruise control.

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**SUNDAY FOOTBALL:** SUCCESS in the cup and the league gave the top two sides in the Midlands Premier Division plenty more reasons to be cheerful.

Black Horse advanced to the quarter-finals of the WA Harris Cup after making light work of Division Three's Northwood in a 7-2 rout at The Coppice.

The Redditch outfit will now do battle with the 10th-placed Northwood in the last eight on a date yet to be announced.

Division Three's Emsworth United retained their place in the final group game in a tight 3-2 reverse at home to Duke of York, who stay fifth.

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match, third-placed Longbridge Social recorded a 3-1 success against Quinton, who are sixth, in the Midlands Premier Division.

Rubery Legends have leapfrogged Kings Heath Concord and moved off the foot of the table after a vital 3-1 away win in Division Two.

In Division Three, Emsworth United retained their place in the final group game in a tight 3-2 reverse at home to Duke of York, who stay fifth.

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Division Three Studley Rangers are out of the Kidderminster Hospital Miners' Cup after a 3-0 defeat at home to Dudley Rangers.

Dudley Rangers, Daniel Smiles was the visitors' scorer.

hopes in the Worcestershire FA Sunday Premier Cup were ended in agonising defeat in a 5-4 penalty shoot-out defeat at home to CBH Fasteners.

A 1-1 draw after 90 minutes and extra time then saw the two sides meet in the shoot-out to claim a semi-final place.

Alcester Town Sunday have kept alive their hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals of the Centenary Cup after a 5-3

home win against Rubery Memorial in their second Group A game.

Braces from Tom Hawkins-Daniel and Ben Hill stole the show for Alcester, while Benjamin Briggs netted the way.

Alcester Town Sunday have kept alive their hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals of the Centenary Cup after a 5-3

home win against Rubery Memorial in their second Group A game.

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timed their progress in this season's Worcester Nursing Sunday Junior Cup after edging out PT Eagles 2-1.

Cornor Cashmore's double led the way for Crown Internazionale in a 4-3 win against Bromsgrove Partisan in the Presidents Cup Group A.

Stuart Cox and Craig Barnett also scored for the visitors in the final group game in a 4-3 win against Bromsgrove Partisan in the Presidents Cup Group A.

International's group rivals Kings Head Alton picked up a slender 1-0 win over Alton Norton to also ensure a perfect start.

Austin Ex Apprentices picked up their opening points in Group B with a home walkover against Meadow Park.





**LEFT:** Sporting's Jack Wilson goes down under a Hitchin player's challenge.

**FAR LEFT:** Charlie Dowd is surrounded by two opposition players.

Pictures by Chris Jepson.

# Kelly: The title has gone now

**FOOTBALL:** BRENDAN Kelly says Bromsgrove Sporting's involvement in the Southern League Premier Central title race is over after last weekend's 2-1 home defeat to Hitchin Town.

The Rouslers dropped to fourth in the table after their second home defeat in three games and their eighth overall this season, leaving them five points behind leaders Tamworth having played two games more.

Layne Eadie's 50th-minute penalty and an Alex Marsh strike 11 minutes put the Hertfordshire visitors 2-0 ahead on Saturday, before Will Shorrocks replied with 16 minutes to play.

Kelly was unable to hide his frustration after Bromsgrove's fifth league defeat on home soil this term, and believes his side are now out of the picture for automatic promotion.

"I think that's us out of the running for the title now," he said.

"Even though the title has slipped

by **Ben Tyler**  
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away from us, we still want to finish as high as we can.

"I think the frustration comes from us having worked so hard to get into the position that we've been in, only for us to let ourselves down with our home form.

"It was just the manner in which we lost on Saturday and the way in which we played. It was alarming that the lads didn't seem to want it enough.

"You look at Peterborough dropping points in midweek and the fact we haven't capitalised on that kind of result, it's just disappointing."

Having already signed Gibraltar international Reece Styche prior to the Hitchin game, the Bromsgrove manager says he is eyeing up to four new players to aid the Rouslers' promotion charge. Top scorer Mikey Taylor faces six weeks on the sidelines with injury but Styche,

signed from Hereford, will slot in.

"It's difficult timing," said Kelly. "If you want to bring in some quality, then you've got to pick and choose. Some players are involved in title and promotion charges, and some are involved down the other end of the table.

"We're looking at probably three or four new signings. It has to be done in order for us to evolve.

"It was a difficult one for Reece to come into on Saturday at two goals down, he was feeding off scraps but worked hard for us.

"He'll be an asset to us, he's clever in how he plays and as long as we create chances for him then he'll convert them.

"He had some interest from some Step Two teams, and once it became common knowledge he was available then he had quite a few calls. I'm delighted to have him on board. He wants to be a part of what we're building here and is a proven goalscorer.

"With Mikey [Taylor] out, we need

that physicality and he brings that too."

While incomings are expected, Kelly anticipates some departures.

"People can keep saying that we're overachieving, but to not be up for it is alarming, some lads are playing for their futures now," he said. "It's nothing personal but it's necessary.

"There are characters at the club who I thought had exactly that. Some have seemed to switch on and off throughout the season, and some went hiding.

"No one seemed to want the ball played into them and to show the bravery required.

"Credit to Hitchin, they deserved to win, but to be second in the table at home, I was hoping we'd come out as winners."

Sporting took the chance to shake off their weekend hangover with a 4-0 friendly win at Boldmere St Michaels, with goals from Richard Gregory (2), Lewis Chester and Styche.

Kelly described it a "good exercise". "A couple of the lads did themselves

justice, some didn't, some alarmed me more, so it was definitely worth doing," he said.

"It was good to get Saturday out of our system, but now we know there's a bigger test ahead this weekend."

Bromsgrove will look to bounce back with a trip to Nuneaton Borough on Saturday. Boro won 3-1 when the sides met in October and currently sit ninth (3pm).

Both sides go into the clash on back of defeats after Nuneaton ended Redditch's 25-match losing streak after going down 3-2, Kelly says a response is of the utmost importance.

"We're wounded, they're wounded, so it should be an entertaining game," he said.

"We owe ourselves one after the way we played against them at home.

"Even more frustratingly, we've won roughly 66 per cent of our away games, but only about half of the games at home, so we need to carry on that stat on the road and get back to basics."



# Spa boss resolute as virus casts shadow over future



by Ben Tyler  
ben.tyler@bulivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** MARK Owen is confident that Droitwich Spa will manage the current break in play well having already battled against adversity throughout the campaign to date.

With a question mark over the future of the sport at both professional and grassroots level due to the coronavirus epidemic, it remains to be seen whether clubs nationwide will be afforded the opportunity to see the season through to its conclusion.

For Droitwich - sitting pretty at the top of West Midlands (Regional) League Division One with a 13-point lead over nearest rivals Old Wulfrunians and a far superior goal difference - it would be a huge shame for the Saltmen to miss out on a likely promotion.

Owen is remaining upbeat throughout the current crisis though, and says the club will deal with whatever challenges that come their way.

"I think with us being used to playing away from home - be it at Walshes Meadow in Stourport or further afield in Malvern or Walsall - the club are used to planning for these kinds of situations," said Droitwich's manager.

"Playing away from Droitwich has helped us in that way. We won't be missing out on any kind of additional revenue.

"All we can do is function as best as we can in terms of keeping players fit and being ready to play whenever we're able to resume the season."

Spa were one of the few sides



Collins fires a volley goalwards in Saturday's win at the Victoria Ground in Bromsgrove.

in action last weekend prior to Monday's announcement of the indefinite ban on football, beating Gornal Colts 4-2 at Bromsgrove Sporting's Victoria Ground.

At the fourth different venue Droitwich have played a home game this term, goals from Alex Dugmore, Ben Tilbury and a Connor Collins brace - taking the forward up to 30 goals for the season - put the runaway leaders one step closer to lifting the division title.

The contest was very much a game of two halves as far as the scoreline was concerned, with all four of the Saltmen's goals arriving in a blistering first-half

display, while the visitors from Dudley replied with two consolation strikes after the interval.

Collins stabbed home the opener midway through the half to the delight of the 195 spectators in attendance, followed by his second with another close-range finish on 36 minutes.

Defender Dugmore made it two goals in as many games with a near-post header two minutes later, while Tilbury had the simple task of diverting the ball into an empty net from James Lemon's unselfish assist.

While Droitwich remained on top and continued to create chances, Gornal goalkeeper George

Roberts became something of a force of nature after the break and kept the scoreline down with a string of saves.

The Colts hit back through Levi Salmon's simple finish 15 minutes into the half, while a second consolation in the 75th minute from Michael Eva helped the visitors save some face.

Owen admitted his surprise at the manner in which his side tore Gornal apart, having expected a tougher proposition in the lead-up to the game.

"In the first half we were absolutely outstanding - their 'keeper had to make five or six high class saves to keep us from scoring more," he added.

"It was disappointing to concede as we controlled the game. Other than the two that went in, Matt [Oliver] didn't have a save to make.

"Going into the game people thought Gornal would make it a really tough game for us. When it's 4-0 at half-time, it's one of those things where it's easy to be settled.

"It was fantastic to see so many people there and to have the experience in a big, open ground at Bromsgrove."

Keen to mention the landmark moment for his hot-shot forward Collins, the Spa boss says it is little surprise that the striker has bedded in so well at the club.

"We played against him for a number of years previously, so we knew what he was capable of," said Owen.

"We knew what he would bring so it's no surprise really. Him and James [Lemon] have struck up an excellent bond and have brought the best out of each other."



Wayne Oliver has been on the club's board since 2019 after five years in the Saltmen dugout. Picture: Marcus Mingins.

## Bright future on the horizon for Spa

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** DIRECTOR Wayne Oliver says the future is beginning to look brighter for Droitwich Spa, as the wheels begin to set in motion for Andy Crowther's side to return to the town.

The Saltmen have been in exile at Stourport Swifts' Walshes Meadow ever since the summer of 2017 - something which has forced fans to travel roughly ten miles away from Spa's original King George V Fields home.

However, with news of an approved plan to construct a stadium and community 3G playing surface - in addition to refurbished facilities on the existing King George Playing Fields site on Briar Mill - being announced in December, the cogs have slowly been turning in the weeks that have followed.

Oliver, previously a manager with the West Midlands (Regional) League Division One club, gave a positive update on the state of play and expects the early stages of Spa's vision to take shape in the coming months.

"We're hoping that work on the main project, which is the development of the 3G and the floodlit grass pitch, will start during the spring," he said.

"The application for the Football Foundation grant has now gone in, together with the commitment from Wychavon District Council, that should see us get a start date which we're very positive will now happen - it's getting real.

"Droitwich has previously played at Kings George V Fields, which is owned by the Fields in Trust, man-

aged by Wychavon Leisure and funded by Wychavon District Council, so there are lots of hurdles to get over before we can put a spade in the ground."

The club have made their desire to produce a hub for the community's sports teams - from the men's, women's, veterans and youth football teams at Droitwich Spa, to the town's hockey and boxing clubs amongst others - clear from the start, with this transparency offering real hope of excellent sports facilities finally being delivered to the town.

"Everyone has been fantastic and are working to make it happen, we'll see what the spring brings," Oliver added.

"We don't deserve anything unless we can put something in ourselves - whether that be in a monetary or physical sense - there are a few sports clubs that use the facilities down in Droitwich, obviously we'll be looking to increase the usability of the site to involve more people and groups as well as ourselves."

From a football point of view, the Saltmen have been at the right end of the table for a number of years now, with promotion to the Premier Division seemingly a matter of when, and not if.

Unsurprisingly then, those in the Droitwich boardroom are bearing the long-term standing of the club on the field into consideration with the forthcoming development.

"You're always second guessing and taking a gamble with the level of the facilities," Oliver continued.

"If you get one promotion, the required facilities have to be better again and the same for a second promotion."

"In five years' time, we could be two, three leagues above - we could be two leagues below where we are

now, so you have to be wary.

"It's one of those things where we've got to look to the future, to be progressive and that's what we're trying to do - especially with the football side of things.

"We're in no rush, we've got a great relationship with our current landlords over at Stourport where the first team play and that's sufficient for our league requirements at the moment.

"We have waited for a long time for the redevelopment of the site so we want to get it right and not rush it through."

Whilst it is of great frustration for the footballing world, particularly in non-League, for play to be grounded below National League North/South, the Spa director is firmly of the belief the good times will soon return.

"The lads are in contact with each other on a weekly basis via Zoom, they can't train as a group at the moment but are all individually working," said Oliver.

"It's frustrating, it'll be difficult to keep teams together - be it Droitwich or other clubs - when things get started again."

"Football has to come secondary to what we're experiencing at the moment, we have to take things as they come when things pick up again."

"The West Midlands (Regional) League tend to follow the Midland Football League, who have said there are no fixtures until the end of February."

"From a club and a players point of view, it'd be helpful if a decision was made one way or another so we know where we stand."

"It would be nice to get that clarification from the leagues and FA, but we'll have to sit around and wait for any decisions."



# Opening pair give Boars an ideal platform

by Ben Tyler  
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**CRICKET:** A CENTURY stand between openers Connor Smith and Jayden Levitt helped Bromsgrove over their way to a 112-run victory at Pelsall in their Birmingham & District Premier Division Two curtain-raiser last weekend.

A combination of quickfire scoring from the visitors – albeit with a blip approaching the midway point of the innings – and efficient bowling at Walsall Road gave the Boars the perfect return to competitive cricket.

Bromsgrove started convincingly after being put into bat by the hosts, storming to 104

before the fall of the first wicket at the start of the 14th over.

The departure of Levitt (45) preceded the fall of Smith (53) and Alex Milton (0) in the following over, with Richard Kimberlin (5) also having a short stint at the crease.

Stumbling their way to 145-6 after both Deon Patel (13) and Alex Wilkinson (1) failed to reinvigorate their side, the introduction of tail-enders Freddie Fallows (49) and captain Mark Evenson (38 not out) was just the tonic the Boars needed.

Fallows put on a score of 67 with supporting act Ashley Newfield (28) to take Bromsgrove over the 200-run mark, before Evenson picked up the pieces after the pair were removed as the innings closed on 290-9.

Pelsall quickly lost Jake Lee

(0) and Navdeep Poonia (0) in an early stumble.

While momentum did build slowly, Fallows (2-18) and Newfield (2-35) ensured that the hosts remained on the backfoot.

Evenson then came to the fore to skittle out three Pelsall players for 27 runs conceded, to help dismiss the home side for 178.

Wolverhampton will be the visitors in Bromsgrove's of the 2021 home league fixture of the 2021 season at St Godwalds Park.

BARNET Green were in emphatic form, securing landslide victories over Moseley and Knowle & Dorridge in Division One and the Graham Williamson Trophy respectively.

Opener Jacques Banton smashed 110 from just 132 balls at Moseley's Streetsbrook Road



Jayden Levitt helped Bromsgrove get off to a strong start in their league opener. Picture by James Hickin Photography. Inset, Jacques Banton starred with bat and ball for Green over the weekend. Picture by Tony Marsh/Cric Pix.

home on Saturday, with Dominic Harding hitting 59 to put the Griffs to the sword en route to a score of 261-6.

Banton was just as impressive with the ball in hand, taking three wickets from seven balls, while Robbie Shurmer (3-11) and Harry Bates (2-19) earned notable mentions to see off the

hosts for just 87 runs in the 24th over.

A day later, the Green remained in equally ruthless mood, skittling Knowle & Dorridge for just 109 runs at Station Road – Adam Hines sparking the hosts' downfall with a four-wicket haul for 28 runs conceded.

It then took the visitors just 17

overs to storm to the nine-wicket win, Ben Chapman-Lilley (18 no) and Banton (74 no) chalking up a partnership of 99 after Edward Pollock (12) fell at 12-1.

Barnet Green host Ombersley in Saturday's league outing, before welcoming Berkswell in the Graham Williamson Trophy the following day.

## Impressive Villa look to build on perfect start in cup

**FOOTBALL:** MANAGER Keith Draper has challenged his Fairfield Villa side to build on their winning start to the Post-Covid Lockdown Charity Cup, after edging Coventry Alvis 1-0 in last weekend's opener.

Pete Jenvey's first-half header decided the contest at Green

Lane, securing a first win in a competitive fixture in the 2020/21 season for the Swans.

For the Fairfield boss, a three-point haul in the competition's opening match was a mere bonus – with the performance the biggest priority.

"It was nice to get a winning

start, but more pleasing was the attitude and application of the boys who worked their socks off," said Draper.

"It's a start, but we have to keep our intensity and work rate up to keep improving."

Swans midfielder Jenvey provided the first example of his

threat when he cracked the post midway through the half, after beating his marker to the ball.

Then, despite Alvis growing into the game, Villa went ahead when Jenvey launched himself at Sam Hawker's centre and found the net with a powerful 28th-minute header.

Jake Marsden played a key role between the sticks for the visitors after the interval, maintaining Fairfield's slender advantage as Coventry took control of proceedings.

With the game approaching its conclusion, James Wynne struck the Alvis post, before

being denied on the goal-line moments later.

A home fixture now awaits against Alcester Town on Saturday. Town defeated Redditch Borough 2-1 in their curtain raiser, thanks to strikes from former Fairfield man Ross Dempster and Mickey Wright.



Dan Ludlow, centre, is swamped by Alcester players. Picture by Paul Smith.

## Fairfield homecoming wrecked by Romans

**FOOTBALL:** A FIRST outing at the Recreation Ground in six months brought no good fortune for hosts Fairfield Villa, after being outclassed by Alcester Town in last weekend's Post-Covid Lockdown Charity Cup meeting. Keith Draper's men were beaten 4-0 by their fellow Midland League Division Two rivals in the second match of the end-of-season competition, as two goals from Reece Jacobs, and one apiece from Toby Scott and ex-Swans favourite Ross Dempster settled affairs.

It was a setback which Villa perhaps did not envisage having edged Coventry Alvis in their opening fixture, with Alcester finding chances much easier to come by in a convincing win.

Goalkeeper Charlie Leake made his debut as one of three Fairfield changes, while Luke Dugmore and Dan Ludlow both returned to the starting XI.

With both sides impressing, it was the visiting Romans who scored first as Jacobs capitalised on a defensive lapse to fire home midway through the half.

Then, with half-time looming, Dempster picked out the back of the net following a set-piece to double Alcester's advantage.

Following the restart, Draper was intent on making the best of the situation and introduced five substitutes to assess the other members of his squad.

While Fairfield continued to compete, Town made the points safe when Jacobs and Scott struck late on.

Sitting third in the group behind Alcester and Knowle – the only sides with 100 per cent records – Villa will now head to Stratford Road for the reverse fixture with Town on Saturday, before visiting Hampton's Field Lane home on Monday afternoon.

# Ton-derful show from Levitt fires Boars to top spot

by Ben Tyler  
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**CRICKET:** A DEVASTATING batting display from opener Jayden Levitt proved the difference as Bromsgrove made it two wins from two by defeating Wolverhampton by 56 runs on Saturday.

The 34-year-old's unbeaten 152 helped the Boars see off the visitors with ease at St Godwalds Park to sit top of the Birmingham & District Premier Division Two.

Batting first after skipper Mark Evenson won the toss, the hosts made a steady start in the opening six overs, losing Connor Smith (15) at 31-1 to a delivery from Atif Sheikh (2-77).

But what followed was simply breathtaking, as star-man Levitt and number three Ashley Newfield (63) smashed a partnership of 194 to put Bromsgrove in control.

A couple of wickets fell in quick succession after Newfield's departure at 225-2, though Richard Kimberlin (13 not out) offered some useful support in the middle order as the Boars finished on 297-4.

The visitors struggled initially in reply, with Gareth Williams (2-36) picking up a couple of early wickets, as star-man Levitt and number three Ashley Newfield (63) smashed a partnership of 194 to put Bromsgrove in control.

The visitors struggled initially in reply, with Gareth Williams (2-36) picking up a couple of early wickets, as star-man Levitt and number three Ashley Newfield (63) smashed a partnership of 194 to put Bromsgrove in control.



Jayden Levitt acknowledges his century en route to an unbeaten 152. Picture by James Hickin Photography.

Ultimately though, efficient bowling from the Boars secured another impressive win, with Smith (3-43) and Evenson (2-14) the two other standouts.

A home game against Dorridge, who won their first game of the season last time out against Pelsall, now lies in wait on Saturday.

**IN DIVISION One,** Barnet Green fell to a first defeat of the season, losing by three wickets to Ombersley.

The Green never really got going. Amrinder Brar hit 94 but he only found support from skipper Darrel Williams (18) in a stand of 52 as they managed a

final tally of 229-9. Ombersley flew out of the traps with an opening partnership of 72 between Jack Haynes (57) and Joshua Dell (30) which set the tone for the remainder of the innings.

And while Harry Bates (3-53) and Williams (2-41) did their best to halt the visitors' charge, Gareth Andrew (38 no) steered Ombersley towards victory with 24 balls remaining.

There was positive news, however, in the form of Berkswell's concession in the quarter-finals of the Graham Williamson Trophy, meaning the Green will host West Bromwich Dartmouth in Sunday's last-four clash – a day after the two sides go head-to-head in the league.

**MARTYN Davies'** five-wicket haul and a Darryn Bancroft half-century guided Droitwich Spa to a second maximum-points victory in as many games, sending Spa top of Worcestershire County Division One.

The hosts sealed a comprehensive 119-run win over visitors Hagley at St Peter's Playing Fields.

After deciding to bat, Spa racked up a score of 211-9, led by big-hitters Bancroft (56) and Connor Grant (44) in the middle order.

What the visitors' Jonathan Miles (4-65) could do, Davies (5-32) could do even better, skittling out the majority of Hagley's mid-to-late order batsmen after captain Max Young (3-28) had shone early on.

Droitwich now hope to continue their 100 per cent start at Chaddesley Corbett on Saturday.



# Clarke getting busy to boost Reds squad

**FOOTBALL:** MATT Clarke has started to assemble his Redditch United squad for the new season by recruiting Barbados international Curtis Jemmitt-Hutson, Chay Tilt and Lewis Hudson.

Jemmitt-Hutson, who started his career at Cardiff City, has switched from Welsh Premier side Barry Town United and has been part of the Barbados squad for the Concacaf Gold Cup qualifiers.

The 26-year-old pacey winger is expected to be available for his first run-out with the Reds on Saturday when AFC Wulfrunians visit the Trico Stadium for a friendly.

Manager Clarke has also snapped up



winger Tilt from Stourbridge plus full-back Hudson from Coventry United.

A former West Bromwich Albion trainee, 23-year-old Tilt has also played for QPR, Macclesfield and Tamworth and will add further attacking options. Clarke says it's a statement of intent to have a player of Tilt's quality.

"We are very happy to have secured Chay for the coming season," said the Reds boss.

"Players of his quality would not have been available to us in the past but there is a real buzz around here at the moment and it's a credit to the whole club that a player like Chay wants to be with us. Chay will compliment our style and is someone who has real pedigree at this level."



Lewis Hudson signs for the Reds, watched by boss Matt Clarke. Inset, Curtis Jemmitt-Hutson. Picture by Redditch United FC.

Energetic full-back Hudson has already shown Reds fans what he can do, having featured in the end-of-season Red Recruitment Cup when he slot in after loan player Branden Horton returned to Doncaster Rovers.

Hudson has also had spells at Rugby Town, Racing Club Warwick and Coventry Sphinx.

Clarke added: "Lewis is a very exciting young player who will add great quality to our side."

"Lewis is extremely fit and knows the game well as he is also a full-time UEFA Licensed coach."

"We were very lucky to have a fantastic full-back in Branden and after returning to Doncaster he made his EFL debut weeks later. I firmly believe

Lewis has the ability to progress up the leagues too. He will have a fantastic platform here to build his reputation."

The Reds started their pre-season programme against Lye Town last night (Thursday). Tickets for the Reds' home friendlies are £5 adults and £3 children.

**STRIKER** Anthony Dwyer has made a U-turn over his move to Alvechurch.

The former Mansfield, Stourbridge and Stafford Rangers front-runner had agreed to join from Hednesford Town but has now had a change of mind and decided to play closer to his Nottingham home.

Meanwhile, the Church are in friendly action on Saturday when they make the trip to Bewdley Town

## Rodd seals Euros spot

**SWIMMING:** REDDITCH Swimming Club's Amella Rodd marked her return to racing for the first time in nearly two years by qualifying for the European Junior Open Water Championships.

Rodd joined the best young marathon swimmers from across the country for the qualifier held at Llandegfedd Reservoir near Pontypool over 7.5 kilometres. In harsh conditions and swimming without wetsuits, a number



Amella Rodd

of swimmers had to withdraw due to the cold temperatures but Rodd was part of a group of six to break away after the first 1.5km lap.

Swimming a very tactically aware race, she took control at 7km with an injection of speed that left her remaining three rivals behind and crossed the line first in one hour 35 minutes.

This was Rodd's first open water race since last representing GB at the Junior European Championships in Prague in 2019 when she finished 18th. Winning in Pontypool means she will represent GB in Paris in the 2021 championships in Paris over 10km.

"It is great to be racing and competing again in open water events," said Rodd, who also swims for Ellesmere Titans. "I have another four weeks of hard training now before flying off to Paris, which I am really excited about."

by Ben Tyler  
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**FOOTBALL:** A RALLYING cry has been issued by Redditch United midfielder Kieran Day, in the wake of last weekend's first qualifying round exit to Stamford AFC in the FA Cup.

The Reds' dismal record in the qualifying rounds of the competition in recent years continued, as Cosmos Matwasa and Ed Cook scored in either half to give the Daniels a 2-0 victory last Saturday and send the Reds crashing out at the first hurdle.

With no midweek fixture against Merthyr Town due to the Martyrs' replay with Hamworthy United, United will now go in search of a response against Biggleswade Town at the Trico Stadium on Saturday, with Day intent on bouncing back.

"We need everyone to turn up now and show the fans what we're made of. We need to step up and get some results because it's not been good enough - everyone can see that," said the 27-year-old.

"I thought we dominated the ball,



Reds captain Tom Rankin, right, battles for the ball at Stamford. Picture by Richard Curtis.

particularly in the first half. We gave away another silly goal which seems to keep happening."

"But we have dominated without creating too much going forward. There's something missing which I can't put my finger on at the moment."

In the second half we came out looking sharp and played well in the opening 15 minutes. In the last 20 minutes we were all over the place. The gaffer had to make a couple of changes so it was disappointing."

"We enjoyed a lot of the ball compared to previous games, so we've got to be better in possession and with our decision-making, but I really do hope we can play more of that style."

It took 13 minutes for hosts Stamford to hit the front at the Zecco Stadium, when Matwasa fizzed a shot past helpless goalkeeper Kieran Boucher.

Tiago Nassunculo made himself a constant threat for Redditch and made an opening for himself before being denied by Dan Wallis.

With the Northern Premier League Division One Midlands hosts continuing to threaten, it was no surprise when Cook dispatched a far-post header on a right-flank delivery for 2-0 on 73 minutes.



Alvechurch's Nick Kinina, right, keeps tabs on Tamworth's Jack Concannon in last weekend's FA Cup tie. Picture by Luke Davies.

**JAMIE** Ashmore and Josh Ezewele netted the goals to seal Alvechurch's progression in the Southern League Cup against Barwell on Monday night.

The duo netted in the first half to make it a fairly straightforward evening for Ian Long's men at Nuneaton Borough's Liberty Way home, helping atone for their 3-1 humbling by Tamworth in the FA Cup two days earlier.

Tyrell Waite, Dan Creaney and Orrin Pendley scored for the Lambs, rendering Luke Yates' reply meaningless at the Lamb Ground. A missed penalty by Anthony Dwyer at 1-0 down and further spurred chances proved costly for the Church.

A trip to Royston Town follows on Saturday as league action resumes, before a fourth away day in succession at Coalville Town on Tuesday night.

## Sajid ton not enough as Entaco left frustrated by Colwall

**CRICKET:** REDDITCH Entaco were frustrated to have to settle for a winning draw at Colwall, despite Adeel Sajid blasting a superb century.

The visitors were dismissed for 232 runs in the 45th over at Stowe Lane, with Sajid in scintillating form to score 117.

Andrew Robertson (97) and Pergus Cameron (65) then led Colwall to 188-5 in reply.

Redditch took 13 points, leaving them marooned in ninth place in the Worcestershire League Premier Division ahead of Saturday's finale at home to 11th-placed Worcester.

Sajid's most successful partnership of the afternoon came with Oliver Mason (32) as the pair hit 99 runs before the fall of the third wicket.

Struggling to find useful support thereafter, Entaco's talisman laboured

to drag the away side over the 200-run mark before eventually falling at 211-7, becoming the second man to be dismissed by Robertson (4-63).

Redditch's bowlers struggled in reply, Robertson and Cameron sharing an opening partnership of 167 but the visitors gradually tightened their grip - Sahil Mahmood (2-24) and Noman Mohammad Chaudhry (2-45) both registering impressive numbers from a

combined total of 27 overs bowled.

**ASTWOOD** Bank duo Daniel Brookes and Dan Thomas produced a bowling masterclass to secure a five-wicket home win against Stourport-on-Severn and a top-five finish in the process.

The fifth-placed Bank finish the season at Brockhampton, who sit sixth, on Saturday.

Bank batsmen Andy Williams (35 not out) and Conner Adams (25 not out) then secured a win inside 29 overs. Brookes (4-26) and Thomas (4-37) had been a thorn in Stourport's side all afternoon, with Dan Taylor (2-18) taking the remaining wickets for the Sambourne Lane hosts.

The fifth-placed Bank finish the season at Brockhampton, who sit sixth, on Saturday.

## Sajid's efforts in vain as Kingfishers falter

**CRICKET:** ADEEL Sajid found little support in Redditch's batting line-up as they slipped to a two-wicket defeat in their Worcestershire County League Division One fixture at Stourport-on-Severn.

Sajid, batting at three, top-scored with 41 as Redditch, put into bat, finished their 50 overs on 162-9.

Oliver Mason (18), Yassar

Altaf (15), Dan Protherough (12), Marlon Lokenath (11) and Haris Ali Mohammed (17) all got starts but couldn't stick around as Greg Massingham (4-21) and Lee Waldron (3-40) worked their way through the innings.

In reply, Stourport also lost wickets at regular intervals but Edward Baylis proved an immovable object, finishing

with 62 not out. Ryan Derrick supported him with a vital 33 to nudge the hosts towards their target and they got home in the 44th over.

There were two wickets apiece for Mohammad (2-11), Noman Mohamad Chaudhry (2-31), Sahil Mahmood (2-36) and Mohammad Zahid (2-43).

Redditch, who lie seventh in the table, entertain

Brockhampton on Saturday.

**ASTWOOD** Bank were skittled for 109 as they went down by seven wickets in their away fixture at Pershore.

Having been put into bat, Bank's batters struggled. Alan White led the scoring with a patient 33 batting at seven after Sam Thomas had hit 21 but it was a survival mission

by then with the score 48-5.

Mike Green was the destroyer in chief with 7-32.

Pershore lost three wickets cheaply but Charlie Norton (45 not out) and James Kinder (34 not out) put on 64 in an unbeaten fourth wicket stand to steer them to victory.

Bank sit sixth and are at home to Bromyard on Saturday.



## BARWELL 2 NEEDHAM MKT 0

By Ben Tyler

SECOND-HALF strikes from Beck-Ray Enoru and Layton Ndukwu ensured Barwell finished a stellar campaign on a high.

Both sides enjoyed early chances, the Marketmen being the first to register an attempt when Jacob Lay's third-minute stab forced an excellent block, before Marcus Garnham stayed alert to collect Kyle Rowley's free-kick.

It took until the half-hour mark for another chance of note, this time falling to the Canaries when skipper Brady Hickey sent a darting header towards the top corner that required tipping away.

Needham will feel they should have taken the lead

# NDUKWU'S STRIKE PUTS CANARIES IN CONTROL

had Luke Ingram sent his shot either side of the keeper from Jake Dye's drilled centre.

Seth Chambers and Dye both went close with efforts before the break.

Ingram displayed more profligacy after the interval, somehow sending over the mark from a matter of yards after a corner-kick routine had initially broken down. The Canaries

would promptly make that miss prove costly, when Enoru buried on the hour mark after latching onto a set-piece delivery from the right of the penalty area.

The points were made safe in the 68th minute following Ndukwu's sumptuous curling effort into the top corner.

**STAR MAN:** Marcus Garnham  
(Needham Market)

**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★☆☆

## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

A RUTHLESS display of finishing from **Avro** cemented their promotion play-off place after a 4-0 thumping of **Barnoldswick Town**.

Louis Potts headed the hosts into a 20th-minute lead, one which was doubled through Michael Afuye's barnstorming effort on 32 minutes. After the interval, regular service resumed thanks to Jamie Rother's maiden strike for the club, moments before Liam Ellis confirmed Avro's runners-up position before the hour mark.

A shock defeat for closest challengers **Wythenshawe Town** helped Avro's cause further, going down 3-1 at **FC Isle of Man** to condemn the visitors to third place.

Ben Holmes' first-minute opener and Simon Thelwell's 80th-minute goal clinched a 30th victory this term for champions **Vauxhall Motors** in their 2-0 triumph at **West Didsbury & Chorlton**, while **Bury AFC's** Connor Comber struck a hat-trick to put **Winsford United** to the sword in a 5-1 romp.

**Charnock Richard** showed a valiant fight, but were ultimately downed 3-2 by **Prestwich Heys** after Dylan Fitzgerald's 75th-minute winner.

There was another goal show taking place at **Congleton Town** – where Tom Pope's 94th-minute leveller claimed a point in a 4-4 thriller versus **Longridge Town**.

**Kendal Town** edged past **Ashton Athletic** 2-1, and a sole Kuda Chingwaro goal won the day for **Northwich Victoria** at relegated **Burscough**.

**Litherland REMYCA's** Elliot Taylor netted to edge **Lower Breck** 1-0, with **Padiham** making easier work of their 3-1 success over **Squires Gate**.

BEN TYLER





Richard Gregory, right, celebrates his winner for Halesowen

# Sweeney treble tops in rousing Rouslers' finale

## NON-LEAGUE ROUND-UP

A TOPSY-TURVY encounter at The New Eyrie saw Bromsgrove Sporting complete a sensational last-gasp comeback, courtesy of Dan Sweeney's hat-trick at Bedford Town.

In a result that was sympto-

monds, making it seven unbeaten for the Pics.

Bernard Mensah's early second-half strike was not enough to haul Redditch United back into contention in their 2-1 defeat at Leiston, while there were also defeats for Stourbridge and Hednesford Town, going down 1-0 to Barwell, and 2-0 to St Ives Town respectively.

In the Northern Premier

League, Alex Kiwomya's composed 36th-minute finish was enough to decide Stafford Rangers' Premier Division clash against FC United of Manchester.

With player-manager McGrath's opener cancelled out by Diadier Camara on 19 minutes, Sweeney scored the first of his treble to send Sporting into the interval in front.

But when Bedford's Connor Tomlinson and Jack Keeble turned the tide late on, it would clearly take something special to rescue the game for Bromsgrove – step forward Sweeney to net twice in the final four minutes in a stunning finale.

It was all square at Liberty Way as table-toppers Tamworth kept atop their perch in a 1-1 draw with Nuneaton Borough.

Alex Jones rifled home before the break to give the Lambs a priceless lead, though Kane Richards rescued a point 18 minutes from time.

Alex Fletcher, Sam Mantom and Kieran Cook were all on target in Rushall Olympic's 3-1 defeat of Rushden & Dia-

League, Alex Kiwomya's composed 36th-minute finish was enough to decide Stafford Rangers' Premier Division clash against FC United of Manchester.

A Josh McKenzie-inspired Sporting Khalsa hit five past Dereham Town to continue their promotion push in the Midlands Division, while there was no separating Boldmere St Michaels and Coleshill Town in an entertaining 2-2 draw – Kai Tongue netting twice for the visitors.

Richard Gregory's deflected free-kick edged Halesowen Town past Chasetown by a 1-0 scoreline, and Bedworth United were involved in a goalless draw at Cambridge City.

Sutton Coldfield Town encountered misery on their travels, conceding twice in the opening 13 minutes en route to a 3-0 loss at Shepshed Dynamo.



## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

A MATTHEW BRYAN-inspired Wythenshawe Town found success on the road at fellow high-fliers AFC Liverpool, providing their opponents with a third defeat of the term in a 3-1 triumph.

The highly-anticipated clash did not disappoint, unbeaten Town deservedly taking the lead when Bryan timed his run to meet Sam Sheridan's deadly delivery. And just seconds into the restart, it was two, Bryan again on hand to head home.

Benito Lowe's bullet header effectively wrapped up affairs on 63 minutes, rendering Luke Stephens injury-time response meaningless.

Vauxhall Motors had to settle for a point away after seeing Lewis Buckley's 47th-minute drive cancelled out by Barnoldswick Town's Alexander Grice.

Avro made light work of West Didsbury & Chorlton in a 3-0 success and Winsford United were 3-2 victors over Squires Gate in the weekend's thriller.

Ashley Wood finished off a well-worked move on 16 minutes, to add to Nathan Cotterell's opener with the game merely seconds old. While James Boyd halved the deficit for the hosts, Jack Hart's 53rd-minute drive settled matters, despite Nathan Cliffe's 70th-minute reply.

Comeback kings Congleton Town stunned Litherland REMYCA 2-1 to go eighth, as Richard Duffy and Oliver Griffiths' late goals cancelled out Nathan Comess' first-half opener for the visitors.

Thomas Killfin claimed an injury-time point for Kendal Town in a 1-1 stalemate at Charnock Richard, while Morgan Homson-Smith's 26th-minute chip was enough for Longridge Town to see off Ashton Athletic.

BEN TYLER



# Reds indebted to a pair of crackers

**TWO** sensational strikes were to be required at The Trico Stadium to avert the course of proceedings, as Max Sheaf and Reece Flanagan rescued the Reds in a breathtaking last-gasp comeback.

Trailing to Oliver Greaves' dink over United keeper Kieran Boucher in the 27th minute, it looked as if it could be one of those days for the hosts until the stunning late intervention.

With Redditch hampered by the early departure of Bernard Mensah through injury, the opening goal from the visitors came as a further blow just after the midway point of the half.

Finding himself through on goal and with Boucher advancing, Greaves had the presence of mind to nudge the ball gently over the goalkeeper and into the net.

With that lead remaining going

## REDDITCH UNITED 2 MICKLEOVER 1

By Ben Tyler

into the interval, Matt Clarke's men appeared to shift into another gear and mounted constant pressure onto their opponents, going closest through Ryan Boothe's saved one-on-one attempt.

It was clear it was going to take something special to beat Sports' Jonathan Hedge and it was Sheaf who rose to that challenge, planting the ball in the far corner of the net.

If that strike was the precedent, then Flanagan duly set a new standard with his barnstorming half-volley that left Hedge beaten all ends up for the winning goal.

STAR MAN: Max Sheaf (Redditch United)

ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

## Stunned Harriers left at Darlo's Beck and call

JACK Bearne's late intervention was unable to inspire a Kidderminster Harriers fightback, as Russell Penn's men were left empty-handed in a 2-1 reverse against high-flying Darlington.

Play-off chasing Harriers lost ground in their fight for the top seven in the National League North against a Mark Beck-inspired Quakers side at Aggborough, with the visiting forward twice putting the hosts to the sword either side of the break.

Kidderminster started the stronger of the two sides, three times going close through Kane Hemmings in the opening exchanges, but almost fell behind when Darlington's Jack Lambert cracked the woodwork.

It was an opening which seemed to inspire Darlo, so it should have come as little surprise when Beck bent an effort into the far corner to give his side a timely lead four minutes before the break.

Beck worked his magic again on 67 minutes, providing the finishing touch to Kaine Felix's bursting run and cross.

Hemmings conjured a moment of inspiration to drag the hosts back into it, putting the ball on a plate for Bearne to slide home and halve the deficit - one which would remain at the final whistle.

REDDITCH saw a first-half lead wiped out at the death by a resurgent Kings Langley in a thrilling draw at The Trico Stadium.

The Reds raced into a sixth-minute lead through debutant Joel Ambalu who latched onto a precise through ball from Ashley Sammons and, with his second touch, deftly placed his effort past keeper Martin Bennett.

A minute later that lead was almost doubled, Adam Page seeing his effort cleared off the line.

Jorell Johnson had the best chance for the away side, rising highest to meet a free-kick but diverting his header narrowly wide.

The Reds were comfortable in possession and deservedly extended their advantage before the break, Sammons seeing his initial effort saved, before meeting the

REDDITCH U 2  
KINGS LANGLEY 2  
By Ben Tyler

rebound to fire low into the corner.

Gareth Pride's introduction livened up the travelling side who saw the woodwork tested from Matthew Ball's swerving free-kick.

With 25 minutes remaining, Kings Langley salvaged some hope when Mitchell Weiss was given the space to lash superbly into the top-left corner.

Prolonged Kings Langley pressure looked to have come to no avail, but deep into stoppage time captain Gary Connolly prodded home in a goalmouth scramble to punish Redditch and ensure his side left with a point.

STAR MAN: Ashley Sammons (Redditch)  
ENTERTAINMENT: ★★★★★

Leamington fared better in their home encounter with Scarborough Athletic, claiming a 1-1 draw at the Your Co-op Community Stadium.

Boro, fresh from their 4-2 win over Kidderminster in midweek, edged the first-half chances and deservedly opened the scoring through Michael Coulson's thunderbolt on 36 minutes.

Behind at the break, Paul Holle-ran's men did not need long to haul themselves back onto level terms though, netting within five minutes of the restart when Adam Walker finished following Rackeem Reid's mesmerising run.

That goal gave the Brakes the incentive to chase the lead, and while going close through Jack Edwards' header and a Devon Kelly-Evans curler, they had to be content with a point.



# Ton-derful pair power K&D in top-three chase

**CRICKET:** CENTURIES from Alex Phillips and Hamza Shaikh helped Knowle & Dorridge claim a winning draw against Leamington to continue their top-three chase last weekend.

The duo combined for a stunning 161-run second-wicket partnership as the Station Road hosts finished the Birmingham & District League Premier Division One clash on 287-2.

And while visitors Spa were able to see out their innings at 230-7, K&D took the greater share of the spoils, leading skipper Jack Grundy to sing the praises of his hot-shot batsmen.

"It was quite challenging at the top of the innings and Alex and Amir [Khan] did really well

by Ben Tyler  
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to see off the new ball," he said. "Alex then really accelerated superbly in the middle of the innings and for him to keep going and finish with 139 allowed Hamza to play how he did.

"For Hamza to then score a hundred off 80 balls was extremely impressive.

"He must have scored 40 off the last four overs by stepping across and flicking the ball or pulling over the leg side."

After Khan (32) and Phillips (139) opened with a stand of 93 runs, it was the latter's combination with number three Shaikh (100no) that really set

the game alight for Knowle & Dorridge. In all, the pair provided 23 boundary hits, with seven sixes ramping up their score as Leamington were put to the sword.

With Phillips eventually seen off at 254-2 by Oliver Currill (1-102), the run rate did not slow for the 15 balls that remained as the hosts finished strongly.

In reply, Leamington opener Luke De Souza (50), skipper Jonathan Wigley (58) and Currill (50) provided the bulk of the runs for their side, with two of the three danger men taken out by K&D's stand-out bowler Adam Williams (3-35).

Sat in fourth, Knowle & Dorridge can leapfrog third-placed Smethwick with a win on away soil on Saturday.



## Loan ace Harry out to shine

**FOOTBALL:** NEW Solihull Moors man Harry Boyes is keen to step it up to the next level, following his loan move from Championship side Sheffield United.

The 19-year-old, a forward-thinking full-back by trade, has signed until January 3, 2022, and will be looking to build on a positive spell at National League North side Bradford Park Avenue last season.

Attracting the attention of manager Neil Ardley following

his performances at the Horsfall Stadium, in addition to some eye-catching performances for the Blades' table-topping under-23s side last term, the former Manchester City academy product says he cannot wait to get going with Moors.

"I'm really excited to be here, the lads have welcomed me and I'm looking forward to playing and doing my best for the club," said Boyes.

"I enjoyed playing men's football [for the first time] last sea-

son with Bradford Park Avenue, so I want to kick on again here and see where it can take me.

"I'm an attacking full-back, I love to get forward, get crosses in and I love a good shot as well.

"I want to win, I hate losing – that's one thing I don't want to do – I'll do everything I can to win for the lads."

The deal includes no recall option for his parent club Sheffield United, whilst cup permissions are yet to be confirmed between the two sides.

## More to come for Donington vows Delves

by Ben Tyler  
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**MOTORSPORT:** SOLIHULL'S Liam Delves says he will be looking up, rather than down the Pirelli Junior Superstock Championship rankings, following the opening two races of the new season.

The 21-year-old claimed finishes of fifth and tenth at Oulton Park to get off to a positive start to his debut campaign in the Championship, ahead of this weekend's round at Donington Park.

Despite having found an improvement in the rankings tough to come by in the second race of the weekend, Delves believes there is more to come from him and team JR Performance Racing next time out.

"That was not the result either me or my team was looking for, but we have claimed a good points haul which place me seventh in the overall Championship," he said.

"We now head into the World

## Liam on a charge



Liam Delves made an assured start to the season at Oulton Park. Picture by David Yeomans Photography.

Superbike Championship round, where my class has three races, and I am confident we can move forward in the rider standings."

Qualifying in eighth last weekend, a troubled start in the first race led to Delves crossing the line for the first lap in tenth.

However, having overtaken Jack Bednarek, the Solihull race ace contin-

ued to grow in confidence as he went in search of the leading pack.

With misfortunes for the race leader and a number of other competitors crashing out early, Delves took full advantage by moving through the rankings and beating Luke Verway for fifth position.

There was, however, a more laborious feel to race two, as a lack of

progress from the third row meant Delves had little in the way of overtakes. He did, however, get ahead of Sam Laffins to break into the top ten, followed by the overtakes of Simon Reid and Louis Valleley to move into eighth.

But with the pair recovering to regain the places, Delves had little time to respond before the chequered flag.

## Grundy sees the positives

**CRICKET:** SIZEABLE points tallies will keep Knowle & Dorridge on the right track in Birmingham & District Premier Division One, says skipper Jack Grundy after a winning draw with Barnt Green sent his side fourth.

K&D now sit on 121 points in the table, four points above their fifth-placed rivals, but they could have been better off had the hosts found enough in the tank to dismiss the Green last weekend.

Defending a score of 199-8, led by opener Alex Phillips' 67, Knowle & Dorridge's bowlers then performed superbly to reduce the visitors to 17-5.

But they couldn't take the final couple of wickets as Barnt Green finished on 78-8.

"You always want 24 points, but if you keep picking up 15 or 16 points from winning draws – especially against teams as strong as Barnt Green – then you'll be fine over the course of a season," said Grundy.

"When you have a team struggling at not many for five, you back yourselves to bowl them out.

"But once they had the survival mindset it was very difficult to shift them."

K&D head to Shrewsbury, who sit second from bottom, on Saturday.



# Brogan gets the Canaries chirping

A LITANY of missed chances for Barwell failed to prove costly as Max Brogan edged a hard-fought encounter at Kirkby Road.

The Canaries' first opportunity came through James Rowland, who forced Josh Hill to tip over the crossbar midway through the first half.

At the other end, Liam Castle had to be alert to keep out Joe Neal following a quickly-taken free-kick.

A breakthrough came just after the half-hour when Brogan converted from Elliot Percival's delivery from the left wing,

The opener allowed the hosts more freedom going forward and so it was no surprise when chances fell to Brogan before the break, drawing two further saves from Hill.

Sam Squire found himself with a rare opportunity on 62 minutes which Castle was equal to, while Hill

**BARWELL 1  
BIGGLESWADE TOWN 0**

**By Ben Tyler**

was again on form to deny Rowland with a superb stop.

Biggleswade's Enoch Andoh should have done better after stealing possession following a Barwell defensive mishap, with the same also true of Edwards – who could only send an effort straight at the keeper from Tristan Dunkley's through ball.

Andoh somehow fluffed an equaliser after Neal stabbed the ball goalwards, a miss that would ultimately haunt the visitors when it seemed easier to score, the forward stepping over the ball as it rolled wide.

**STAR MAN:** Max Brogan (Barwell)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

# Magic Marcus is Marketmen hero

A SUPERHUMAN showing from goalkeeper Marcus Garnham handed nine-man Needham Market a share of the spoils at the Trico Stadium.

In a drab first half, the first real action came as a result of a straight red card for the Marketmen's Callum Sturgess, who reacted in the aftermath of a foul on the hosts Kieron Dawes.

Then, with seconds remaining of the opening half, Garnham produced heroics to deny a thumping header from Ryan Boothe and tip over magnificently.

There was still time for the visitors to attempt to make a breakthrough with Callum Page latching onto a forward ball, rounding Kieran Boucher only to see his strike nudged wide by the Reds' shot stopper's fingertips.

Seven minutes after the interval,

**REDDITCH UNITED 0  
NEEDHAM MARKET 0**

**By Ben Tyler**

Needham's keeper was at it again to deny Boothe from close range from Lewis Hudson's left-flank cut-back.

The key moment came when Daniel Sweeney won and then missed a penalty ten minutes into the half, with Garnham guessing the right way to turn the ball away.

With a second yellow card shown to Harvey Sayer and the Reds piling on the pressure, a speculative turn and strike from distance from Dennis Digie looked destined for the top corner, only for Garnham to touch the ball onto the crossbar to earn the visitors a point.

**STAR MAN:** Marcus Garnham (Needham Market)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★



**BARWELL 0  
TAMWORTH 2**  
By Ben Tyler

# LATE LAMBS GOALS BEAT LACKLUSTRE CANARIES

A QUICKFIRE late double from Eoin McKeown and Alex Jones sealed another all-important three points for table-toppers Tamworth at the expense of Barwell.

The hosts were the only team looking likely of breaking the deadlock. In the opening half, Jamie Willets forced an early header goalwards that the goalkeeper was equal to, whilst Dan Creaney flashed an effort narrowly wide of the mark after 12 minutes.

With Jamie Jellis's attempt proving the final effort of a poor half, a Creaney nod past the post just after the hour mark seemed to sum up a very

non-eventful game. But with five minutes remaining and just moments after George Cater sent narrowly wide in a bid to make the breakthrough, the aforementioned Lambs man linked up with Calum Cockerill-Mollett to tee up McKeown for a diving header that crept inside Andrew Wycherley's post. Then, just three minutes later, Cater was on

hand to set up the insurance goal that wrapped up a 20th victory this term for Tamworth.

In the 90th minute Cater played the ball through to Jones who dispatched clinically low into the bottom-left corner of Wycherley's goal, keeping the home side five points clear of Leiston.

**STAR MAN:** George Cater (Tamworth)  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** ★★★★★

## NORTH WEST COUNTIES

LOUIS POTTS' hat-trick show delivered an assured victory for leaders Avro in a 4-0 romp of **Squires Gate**.

Volleying the opener, the hosts' star man doubled the lead shortly after the interval before thrashing home a 68th-minute header to wrap up a fine afternoon.

Finding time to lay up an assist, Potts then teed up Sullivan for a back-post header ten minutes from time.

**Vauxhall Motors** kept up the pace thanks to first-half goals from Conor Harwood and Michael Burkey to down **Barnoldswick Town** 2-0, moving further clear of third-placed **Wythenshawe Town** who went down to a Joel Melia-inspired **Padiham** 1-0.

**Burscough's** second-half revival proved in vain after being ousted 3-2 by **Litherland REMYCA** - who had Nathan Comess to thank for goals either side of the break.

**AFC Liverpool** found themselves on the end of a 2-0 defeat to **Ashton Athletic** that sees Matt Potter's men stay fifth, after Joseph Nicholson's stoppage-time goal sealed all three points.

**Northwich Victoria's** Matthew Dudley set the tone in his side's 2-0 defeat of **Winsford United**, with Ryan Jackson wrapping up affairs in the 82nd minute at Wincham Park.

Jack Arrowsmith was at the double for **Longridge Town** with a goal in either half to see off **Charnock Richard** 2-1, despite Nathan Nickeas netting a quickfire leveller for the visitors.

And it took a late leveller from Max O'Connell to earn **Lower Breck** a 1-1 draw at **Kendal Town**, who'd went in front through Joseph Dickson.

**BEN TYLER**