



Commentary box

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



IT IS amazing the difference two wins makes. A little over a week ago Clarence Park was a gloomy place to be, with the Trust and the board of directors disagreeing over funds and the team suffering a bad run of form.

Fast forward seven days and the smiles are back on the faces of the players and management at least.

Ian Dunn's arrival on Saturday helped and the big striker gave the sort of performance the Saints fans have been craving.

His work rate was phenomenal, he gave the Saints a presence up front and he was able to hold up the ball.

Most importantly he scored two goals with finishes of real conviction.

Ironically Steve Castle has more options up front at this present time than he has had all season.

I touched on it in the Maidenhead match report, but I think it is no coincidence that City's return to winning ways has coincided with Solomon Shields rediscovering his form.

It's no secret in the press box that I'm a big Shields fan. I like his energy, he is a real box-to-box midfielder and despite his small frame he still gets stuck in.

We saw last season when he joined on loan from Leyton Orient at around this time of the year what an impact he had on the team helping them go eight games unbeaten during February and March.

If he can hit that form this season and help the Saints achieve a similar run of results then the play-offs could be a real possibility for Castle's side.

WHENEVER I meet up with my old housemates from my time at University one of the first topics of conversation is usually how we are faring in the world of work.

Most of them tell me that they're doing the same thing week in week out and it's quite monotonous stuff.

I, on the other hand, tell them every time that I love my job. You never know what's going to happen each week and I really enjoy the banter that goes with covering a sports team.

However if I'd taken my friends along to Clarence Park last night in arctic-like conditions when at times you couldn't feel your toes and fingers and the football wasn't the prettiest I'm sure they'd have had me locked up!



Geirr Sethre, Jørn Aarsland, Per Christian Wolden, Steve Castle, Jørn Ask Olkvam, Terje Nilson. Photo by Robert Walkley.

THE Norwegian Branch of the St Albans City Supporters Club made their latest visit to Clarence Park to see the Saints beat Weston-super-Mare on Saturday.

These guys have been making the trip from Scandinavia to Hertfordshire for a number of seasons now but remarkably Saturday's Ian Dunn inspired victory was only the second time they'd seen the Saints win!

Now that's commitment.

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



Action from St Albans Ladies' 1-1 draw with Northampton Saints on Saturday. Photo by Krishan Bhungar. KB_4700.

Honours even

St Albans Ladies 2 Northampton Saints 2 DONNA Pringle scored a 60th minute goal to earn St Albans Ladies a point from a 2-2 draw with Northampton Saints.

St Albans had taken the

lead in the 24th minute when Claire Beattie slotted home but two goals in three minutes from Anita Bazini just after the half hour mark put Northampton in front.

The Saints held the lead until Pringle popped up to net on the hour mark to

ensure a share of the spoils.

This weekend St Albans travel to Horsham Ladies, push back is 12.30pm.

The Ladies are eighth in the league standings.

■ **St Albans Men I** continue to the lead the way

in EML Premier A following a 4-2 win over Dereham.

■ **Harpden Men I** also won 4-2 seeing off the challenge of fellow Hertfordshire side Letchworth.

Harpden are eighth in EML Premier B.

Exiles held to draw by Bishop's Stortford

Division 4SW

St Albans Exiles 1 Bishop's Stortford III 1

ST ALBANS Exiles made the long trip for the fixture against Bishop's Stortford III knowing that they were in for a difficult match after Stortford had beaten third placed Broxbourne the previous week.

Exiles fielded pretty much a full strength side, but were slow off the mark at the start of the match.

Stortford's game plan was pretty clear from the opening whistle, which was quick, long balls to their pacey front players.

Exiles attacked down both flanks with Dill on the left and the impressive James Cowan on the right. Attack after attack came through Cowan, who ran the Stortford defence ragged all game.

Despite several shots at goal Exiles were unable to find a goal. With goal machines White and Jones pretty off colour all game there was no sign of either side breaking the deadlock.

Exiles thought they had scored when White found the net from a penalty corner, but it was rightly ruled out for being too high.

With 10 minutes to go in the first half, Stortford were awarded a rather fortunate hit, and despite Fretter keeping out the initial shot, some poor defending saw the ball played across the 'D' and a sharp reverse stick hit smashed into

the goal.

Exiles did not panic and continued the waves of attack at the Stortford goal with little lucky running their way. At half time the Exiles found themselves 1-0 down, when really they should have been out of sight.

The second half pretty much mirrored the first half, with Cowan attacking at every opportunity.

However, the slack final pass and shot let the Exiles down.

The pressure had to tell and eventually with 10 minutes left quick, first time passing from Lister to Jones fed White in the 'D'. He was able to slip the ball to the fast moving Cowan who slammed the ball into the net.

Exiles pressed for a winner and took a few chances at the end. Stortford had one last attempt to take all three points with a penalty corner after the final whistle was snuffed out by a combination of Fretter in goal and Dorsett.

Exiles will retain second place in the league but have crucial fixtures against leaders Potters Bar and third placed Broxbourne II in the coming weeks.

Exiles will need to improve if they are to maintain the momentum of the first half of the season.

Exiles: Fretter, Bird, Winter, Allen, Dorsett, Lister (c), Reeves, Dill, Cowan, White, Jones, James.

Oakwood swimmer bags three golds

SWIMMING: AT THE St Albans District Primary Schools inaugural Trials Gala, held at St Albans High School for Girls on Saturday night, Chloe Arnold from Oakwood Primary School put in a superb performance to bag three golds, and the 2010 Trials Gala Cup presented for the best performance of the gala.

Over 70 Year 5 and 6 swimmers, from 20 schools, participated in the gala run by the St Albans District Schools Swimming Association.

The Trials Gala, used for selection of the team to represent St Albans District at the Herts Primary Schools Championships in April, saw some extremely good swims and personal best times from the swimmers.



Chloe Arnold with Andrew Ellis, chair of the St Albans Schools Swimming Association. Photo supplied.

■ Some of the **sport** stories you can find on our website this week



■ St Albans City left-back Peter Smith talks to the *Herts Advertiser* about winning his third successive Player of the Month award



On the road to recovery

■ James Lindie tells the *Herts Advertiser* about his return to fitness after six months on the sidelines with a broken ankle and ligament damage Visit www.hertsad24.co.uk

Plus...
Regular updates from all the latest sporting events in the *Herts Advertiser* area

Gaffney the last gasp hero as OA U16s edge past Hitchin

Old Albanian U16s 24 Hitchin 22
THE Old Albanian U16s secured a well earned victory on Sunday at Woollams against league leaders Hitchin.

The home team started brightly and dominated play from the whistle with the forwards and backs working well together.

After turnover ball at a ruck Dom Crisp at fly-half got his backs working with a sweetly timed pass inside from Harry Kentish to Nick Robinson, who has recently returned from duty with London & South East, saw Robinson in under the posts. The try was converted to make it 7-0.

The OA boys weathered some sustained pressure from the visitors and counter attacked through an impressive dart by scrum-half Lyle Stewart.

Once again Robinson was at hand to score an impressive try out wide on the left with the extras added to make it 14-0.

Hitchin scored a penalty just before the break to make the score 14-3 at the interval.

The second half was a different story.

The visitors regrouped and came out strongly scoring two converted tries taking advantage of some careless defending.

The OA boys countered scoring a penalty of their own to level the scores at 17-17.

The game was now anyone's for the taking. Hitchin's strong right winger made room for himself chasing a kick ahead and scored an impressive try which went unconverted.

The OA forwards now took control of the game. Inching forward with a succession of drives around the base of the ruck, the ball was spun wide to lock Lewis Gaffney who crashed through the defence to score.

Most importantly the try was converted to give OA a 24-22 win.

OA after new talent

CRICKET: OLD ALBANIAN Cricket Club are looking to move their adult cricket forward this year in line with their up and coming colts section which boasts over 300 junior members and whose U10's landed a county trophy last year for the first time.

Old Albanian is based at Woollams which boasts great pitches, full-time groundsman and catering staff and the iconic pavilion to enjoy post game successes.

The club is in the process of appointing a club coach to work with the junior sections as well as guide and direct the men's teams.

There is the opportunity for other coaching work for any interested qualified coaches.

OA are looking for cricketers who want to be based at this wonderful facility, who want to play Division Two, Six or 10 cricket with the hope of a promotion season for all teams.

The club is especially keen to talk to any spinners or top order batsmen who fancy a new challenge.

Please contact Graham Dill 07932 627769 or email grahamdill@hotmail.com for an informal chat.

Nets start at Redbourn on Wednesday, February 17, at 9pm.