

Esher survival hopes smacked on the chin

By Richard Spiller

Esher 22 Chinnor 24
National League 1
Friday, March 10

DEFEAT by Chinnor on a freezing Friday night has left Esher with just four matches to save themselves from relegation.

Leading 22-5 at half time, the Surrey side's slump may cost them much more than the game, a particular blow in their centenary year.

Having lost the opening nine matches, following promotion last year, Es won six of the next eight outings to give themselves a fighting chance of survival. But just one victory from the last five outings has wrecked that recovery. They must win at least two of the last four matches – starting with a trip to basement boys Hull on March 25 – to have a chance of escaping the drop.

It all started so encouragingly for Esher on Friday, taking the lead after just four minutes.

Chinnor responded within five minutes, a turnover on the right allowing full-back Will Feeney to clear to the 22m line. That provided the ideal opportunity for the Oxfordshire club to underline the forward power which would prove instrumental to their success, a driving maul enabling hooker Reece Marshall to go over, although the conversion was wasted.

Chinnor dominated many of the line-outs but Esher made the most of one success on 20 minutes, moving the ball across to the right for young wing Joe Parkes to dive over for his second try.

Es' pack were hampered by the loss of Lorcan Dow to the sinbin and although



Sam Morley, taken earlier this season against Birmingham Moseley. Picture: Leo Wilkinson.

they saw off that threat, a kick to the corner and more outstanding mauling from the visitors set up replacement hooker Max Darlington for the score, Tom Price finding the posts this time to make the gap just five points with a quarter of the

match remaining.

Esher could find no way to regaining the momentum now and although Morley produced an outstanding covering tackle to deprive Jason Worrall five metres from the line, it was only a temporary

let-off. With five minutes left, the pressure ratcheted up to such a degree that another maul was collapsed by Rouse – costing him a yellow card – and a penalty try awarded, putting Chinnor into the lead which they refused to relinquish.

Athletes' Herculean success

By George Mallett



Saturday saw a host of Hercules Wimbledon Athletic Club athletes represent Surrey at the UK Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships at Prestwood Hall near Loughborough.

There was success right across the age groups with Isabella Harrison setting the tone in the Under-13 Girls race with an impressive 19th place finish. Her performance helped Surrey to a silver in the team competition as Kitty Scott of Aldershot, Farnham and District AC won individual bronze leading the Surrey team. All four scorers finished inside the top 35, with Surrey having three additional runners in the top 100.

Also in the Under-13s was Hercules' Thomas Whorton. Like Harrison, Whorton has enjoyed a prolific 2023, and on Saturday he finished 46th, completing the Surrey scorers and helping the county to team bronze.

In the other Junior age groups Theo Webb continued his return from a stress fracture in the Under-17 Boys. Webb was part of a Surrey side that finished eighth but had eight in the top 100, the Hercules athlete finishing 98th.

For the first time in recent years Hercules' Senior Men had three representatives in the nine-strong Surrey team, more than any other club. Fred Slembeck, who won County bronze earlier this year, led home the Hercules contingent in 41st, his best finish in three appearances at the competition.

Behind him, 11 years on from his previous county selection, then for Shropshire, George Mallett closed out the Surrey scorers in 83rd. Having faced a highly testing week at work, brother Ed finished in 149th, 10 years on from last representing a county, then as a Shropshire County Champion from 2011 to 2013.

Athletes will now look to the upcoming 12 Stage Road Relays in April, where Hercules will attempt to win a first Senior medal in recent history.

Mistakes sharply punished by local rivals

CORINTHIAN-CASUALS' mistakes were emphatically punished as they fell to a 4-1 defeat to local rivals Carshalton Athletic.

The visitors dominated proceedings on a gusty afternoon in Tolworth and they got off to the best possible start as Femi Akinwande bundled home from a corner despite complaints from the home team on whether the ball crossed the line or not.

Casuals then went on the hunt for an equaliser after a disappointing start to the game. The

By Finlay Stubbs

goal almost came when Joe Halsey found Finlay Lovatt at the front post who flashed over from close range. However, Carshalton continued to apply pressure from set pieces and grabbed their second as Crossley Lema was picked out by his captain, Tom Beere, and powered his header home.

Casuals started the second half on the front foot and almost halved the deficit as Sahid

Kamara curled his effort just past the post. Despite the strong start to the half, the hosts were then dealt a blow as substitute Jared Myers was sent off after he brought down Akinwande and the referee deemed him to be the last man.

The red card seemed to create gaps in defence which Carshalton were able to exploit as Calvin Ekpiteta cut inside his marker and fired his effort home despite goalkeeper Callum Coulter's best efforts. It went from bad to worse

for Casuals as Chinedu McKenzie-Atumuto latched onto a through ball and slotted past Coulter to get the visitors their fourth.

The hosts then grabbed a late consolation as Morgan Williams fired his long-range effort past the returning Danny Bracken, who was serenaded by the home fans at full-time.

Next up for Casuals is a home game against a play-off chasing Enfield Town side as Justin Fevrier's side look to escape the drop.

Crucial victory for Blues

By Tim Harrison

Could this be Chelsea Women's most significant result of the season?

Manchester United were beaten 1-0 at a sunny Kingsmeadow last weekend, despite Reds manager Marc Skinner's howls of outrage at the refereeing.

The reigning league champions shepherded the game to its conclusion, and now sit top of the table again, writes Jane Grove.

Manager Emma Hayes, under the weather with a bug going the rounds at Chelsea's Cobham training ground, was delighted, reserving special praise for Jessie Fleming, who impressed playing just behind striker Sam Kerr.

Kerr it was who got the only goal after former United favourite Lauren James conjured up a looping assist from the halfway line which the forward chested down then chipped over stranded keeper Mary Earps.

Skinner was angry that ref Cheryl Foster had denied his team two penalties, but the ref was well placed and saw no reason to point to the spot.

He admitted, however, that his side needed to be more ruthless in the box. Chelsea have a week to get over their illnesses before travelling to Reading in the FA Cup. Meanwhile, Chelsea's men march on towards respectability after beating Leicester City 3-1, and now host Everton at the Bridge this weekend as pressure eases on Graham Potter in the manager's chair.

Much to play for as season concludes



Wallington Little League

IT was the penultimate league game of the season - and credit where credit is due, there is still plenty to play for.

The final game of the final league fixture will be between the top two teams; Wallington Tornados (Coral/Red) and Beddington Park Blizzards (Blues). The winning team will finish top of the second half of the season and will book their place in the play-off final unless BPB win who will then be

By Patrick Hutchison

crowned 2022/23 champions after winning the first half of the season already.

Beddington Cyclones (Greens) will be looking to get their highest placed finish after being victorious against Wandale Thunder, a result which may have shocked some but not those having paid attention to recent Cyclones performances.

Wandle Thunder (Yellows) will be looking to surpass their points tally from the first half of the season. Regardless of whether this is achieved or not they can take comfort in being the first team to beat Beddington Park Blizzards. They also have talisman Harry Phillips chasing down Callum Hams for the top goal scorer award with just two goals separating them.

Hackbridge Hurricanes (Whites) have been unfortunate

with injuries this half of the season but just to see Jack Parry back on the pitch after sustaining a collarbone fracture feels like a win. This is a team with fantastic togetherness and a true credit to the league.

Grange lightning (Blacks) might feel slightly unlucky with how their second half of the season has gone. Performance-wise they have improved but not often enough have they had luck on their side.