

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUES.

5c. CHAMPIONSHIP CUPS,

1975-1976:

The 21 entries for the "Guinness National Cup" included only four non-League teams, but they did themselves proud. True, Bromley bowed out meekly at Vauxhall, 87-63, but Cambridge gave Malory a fright, before going down 66-64 at Lewisham, and both Epab Washington and Oxford University put out Division Two teams.

Oxford had a considerable contingent of possible American students on whom to call (including Mike Oristaglio, who played for Granwood Coventry in the League), and their home victory over St. Luke's Exeter was not too great a shock. Washington, however, not only disposed of Division Two title-contenders Stockport, but they did so in comprehensive fashion, 101-63!

In the Second Round both non-League "upstarts" fell against First Division opponents, although both could be pleased with their performances. Oxford, in particular, were proud to have held Doncaster to a 14-point margin, as Oristaglio was still on his way back from holiday! On the other hand, the Panthers were missing Ian Day and Paul Beasley.

Meanwhile, Leeds did well to hold Embassy to an eight point margin, while Pirates gave an indication that their League form did not indicate their true ability, as they followed up victory at Nottingham with a win at home to Malory, to become the only Division Two team in the Quarter Finals.

Those quarter finals went very much to form, but there was an amazing match at Adwick, where both sides eschewed the notion of defence, as the Panthers beat Cleveland 146-109! Steve Pound inevitably top-scored, with 48, but he was closely followed by Steckis (43) for Strongarm, while Campagna and Kloppenberg both hit 30.

So the semi finals featured the top four teams in the League, and to no-one's surprise Embassy and SCP just happened not to be "drawn" against each other. The pairings were Embassy against Wilson Panthers and Cinzano versus Granwood.

Two neutral venues were selected for the games - Sutton Coldfield, equidistant between Doncaster and Islington, and Stevenage, half-way between Crystal Palace and Coventry. So, Embassy and Doncaster played each other at Stevenage, while Coventry and Palace met at Sutton Coldfield!

Despite expectations, though, the semis proved something of an anti-climax. Di Fernando and Assinder were both missing for Granwood, and Palace stormed to a highly convincing 95-66 victory. Doncaster had no such absentees, but Embassy had learned the lessons of their League defeat at Adwick, and though the Panthers became the highest-scoring team against them, the Cup holders came through 114-98.

The semi-finals did, though, show that basketball was beginning to draw the crowds, as the Panthers took a full coach of 50 fans to the game at Stevenage, with many others making their own way down the A1 by car.

On the other hand, the Centre staff were evidently not yet used to competitive spectator sports, as they expressed concern that the amount of noise might "disturb the squash players next door"!

Further evidence (if such were needed) of the growth of the sport came at the Empire Pool, Wembley in early April, with the largest-ever crowd to watch basketball in England - a full 7,000.

In addition, BBC TV had agreed to record the match, to put out highlights in the following week's "Grandstand" programme.

The downside of this, though, was that (as can be seen in the photo below) current broadcasting rules, which banned any form of advertising, meant that the teams' shirts had to be adapted to avoid any mention of "Cinzano" or "Embassy".



Nigel Acres (10) defends the basket against Cinzano's Bob MacKay. The 1970s' style "portable" basket supports can clearly be seen in the background! (Photo: North London Photo Service)

After Jim Guymon's disappointment at missing the free throws which handed the Cup to Embassy twelve month's earlier, he had been quoted as saying "I've been a bum before, and I've been a hero. And I'll be a hero again, and a bum again. It's that kind of game."

His words proved prophetic, as this time the hero came to the fore.

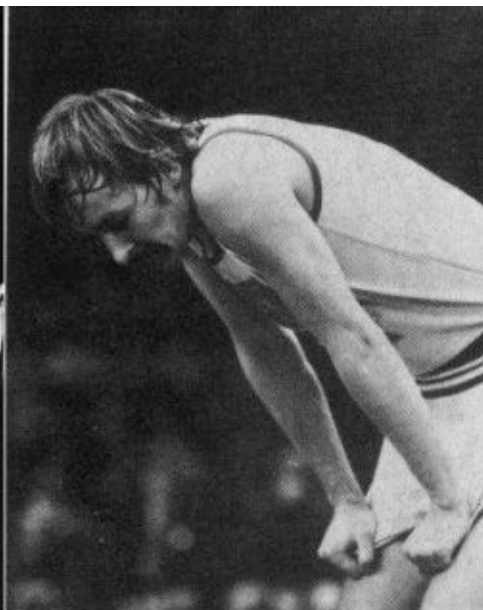
Both teams began nervously, perhaps overawed by the occasion and the huge crowd, but it was Embassy who settled first, with Schmitt hitting 18 points in the first eight minutes. Even so, with eleven minutes played, the teams were level at 27.

As the players began to relax, the scoring rate increased, but with both coaches loath to use their benches, so did the foul count.

Walton and Schmitt were both on four fouls before the interval, but most importantly Guymon picked up two fouls in a minute to also move onto four. Cinzano led 50-45 at the interval, but the game was still wide open.

Sprogis had had a quiet first half, with just eight points (four of them in the last minute), but he exploded into action at the start of the second half, scoring Embassy's first ten points to give them a 54-55 lead.

During this time Guymon was sitting, frustrated, on the bench, to avoid an early exit from the game, but now he was forced into action, with 15 minutes to avoid picking up his fifth foul!



The contrasting faces of victory and defeat. Jim Guymon clutches the "George Williams Trophy", and the MVP award, as Peter Sprogis can only clutch his shorts. (Photos: North London Photo Service & R.J. Coles)

Not only did he succeed, but he began the revival which would clinch the Cup for his team.

Six points, two assists to Saiers, and four more points, and Guymon had put his team 68-59 ahead.

Soon afterwards both Gerrish and Turpie fouled out for the holders, and their grip on the trophy was growing ever weaker.

With the pressure on rebounds eased, Cinzano were able

to set up more and more fast breaks, and suddenly their lead had extended to 92-72, and they coasted to their ultimate 108-88 success.

For the second time in their four consecutive Final meetings, SCP had avenged a one-point defeat one season with a 20-point victory the next!

Guymon's 23 second half points took him to a game-high 39, supported by 27 from Martin Hall, 19 by Saiers, and 10 from Paul Philp. Steve Schmitt had 32 for Embassy, followed by Sprogis on 29, but their only other player in double figures was Dave Shelley, with 11.

GUINNESS NATIONAL CUP, 1975-1976				
First Round 29th November	Second Round 17th January	1/4 Final 7th February	Semi-Final 28th February	FINAL 3rd April
	ATS Giants	(1) 75 }		
	Loughborough All-Stars	(1) 88 }	Loughborough All-Stars (1) 76 }	
			} Cinzano SCP	95 }
	YMCA Metros	(1) 82 }	Crystal Palace (1) 100 }	}
	Crystal Palace	(1) 111 }		}
Epab Washington (x) 101 }				} Cinzano SCP 108
Stockport Belgrade (2) 63 }	Epab Washington	(x) 80 }		}
	Granwood Coventry	(1) 115 }	Granwood Coventry (1) 83 }	}
			} Granwood Coventry	66 }
	Avenue	(1) 78 }	Avenue (1) 64 }	
Vauxhall Motors (2) 87 }	Vauxhall Motors	(2) 59 }		
Bromley (x) 63 }				
	Embassy All-Stars	(1) 79 }		
	Larsen Lions, Leeds	(1) 71 }	Embassy All-Stars (1) 97 }	
Nottingham (2) 81 }			}	
Guildford Pirates (2) 84 }	Guildford Pirates	(2) 71 }	} Embassy All-Stars	114 }
			} Guildford Pirates	(2) 59 }
Malory, Lewisham (2) 66 }	Malory, Lewisham	(2) 68 }		}
Cambridge (x) 64 }				}
				} Embassy All-Stars 88
Oxford University (x) 97 }				}
St.Luke's Exeter (2) 80 }	Oxford University	(x) 81 }		}
	Wilson Panthers, Doncaster	(1) 95 }	Doncaster Panthers (1) 146 }	}
			} Doncaster Panthers	98 }
	Birmingham Bulldogs	(2) 57 }	Cleveland Strongarm (1) 109 }	
	Cleveland Strongarm	(1) 70 }		

WOMEN'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP CUP, 1975-6:

The Women's National Cup attracted twenty-three entries, two more than their male counterparts, which was perhaps a reflection of the fact that the Women's National League was only in its first season, and had just six members.

Turnford Tigers and Cleveland Eagles were the clear favourites to contest their fourth consecutive final, with one or other of them having been in every final since 1970. Unfortunately, "Basketball" magazine did not give the results from the second round, but I do have just enough information to produce the flow-chart below.

The whole competition went very much to form, and, just as Embassy and Palace contested their fourth Men's Final in a row, so Tigers and Eagles faced up for the fourth successive season, in the Women's Final at Pickett's Lock, Edmonton, on 24th April.

Turnford had already won the inaugural Women's League, beating Cleveland twice in the process, but the Eagles had won the two previous Final encounters, and they were determined to make it three in a row.

The holders had the better of the opening exchanges of a highly defensive game, and after 16 minutes they led 18-12, but when their only true "inside" player, Marion Millen picked up her fourth foul it enabled the League champions to close the gap to 22-19 by the interval.

Midway through the second period, Eagles were looking good, as Linda Madden began to score from outside, and they led 36-27. But then Millen finally committed her fifth foul, and Turnford reintroduced ex-England centre Shirley Storey to play alongside Pauline Gardner and Joan Last, giving them a formidable inside presence.

Eagles still led 38-31 in the thirteenth minute, but that was their last field-goal of the game, and Turnford dominated the boards to such an extent that they put together a 16-2 run, to give them their first League and Cup "double", at the first attempt.

National Women's Cup, 1975-6				
First Round 6th/7th December	Second Round 31st January	1/4 Final	Semi-Final 7th March	FINAL @ Pickett's Lock
	Southgate	(1) }		
	Turnford Tigers	(1) }	Turnford Tigers	97 }
Brighton Red Devils	(x) 22 }			} Turnford Tigers 72 }
Waltham Abbey	(x) 47 }	Waltham Abbey Griffins (x) }		} }
			} Waltham Abbey	35 }
Chelmsford Comanches	(x) 51 }	Solent Shrimps (x) }		} Turnford Tigers 47 }
Solent Shrimps	(x) 71 }			} }
		Corvus Corix (1) }	Corvus Corix	41 }
Nottingham	(x) 95 }	Nottingham (x) }		} Corvus Cornix 60 }
Billingham	(x) 58 }			} }
		Darlington Vee Gees (1) }	Darlington Vee Gees	22 }
Kirby Sports	(x) 44 }	Kirby Sports (x) }		} }
Sheffield Hatters	(x) 38 }			} }
Avon Wanderers	(x) 59 }	Avon Wanderers (x) }		} }
Chelsea Coll. (Eastbourne)	(x) 40 }		} Avon Wanderers	38 }
		Dartford College (x) }		} Cleveland Eagles 67 }
				} }
		Cleveland Eagles (1) 153 }	Cleveland Eagles	130 }
		Birmingham Falcons (x) 38 }		} }
Bourneville Aztecs	(x) 29 }			} Cleveland Eagles 40 }
Rochdale KCA	(x) 54 }	Rochdale KCA (x) }		} }
		Wilson Panthers Doncaster (x) }	Rochdale KCA	46 }
				} London YMCA Bobcats 50 }
		London YMCA Bobcats (1) 79 }	London YMCA Bobcats	53 }
Luton	(x) 45 }	Highbury Hellcats (x) 27 }		} }
Highbury Hellcats	(x) 63 }			} }

NATIONAL JUNIOR CUP, 1975-6

The National Junior Cup produced something of a shock in the First Round, as both the previous season's finalists failed to progress.

Both Avenue and holders Doncaster had lost the bulk of their previous teams to the Senior game, and Avenue went down at cross-town rivals Metros by 36, while Panthers lost by seven at little-known Birmingham outfit Quaife & Lilley.

The two teams who had dominated the previous seven seasons, with ten Final appearances between them, including three meetings in the Final, were thus out of the equation.

A new era was dawning in Junior basketball, and it was indicated by the fact that Crystal Palace fielded no less than three teams in the competition, and it was the Falcons, coached by Roy Packham, who reached the Final, to meet Nottingham, the beaten 1974 Finalists.

Several names who were to become well known in senior basketball first sprang to prominence in that Final - Richard Rudd, Paul Stimpson and Ken Nottage, all playing for SCP.

It was the Falcons who opened more confidently in the Wembley curtain-raiser, opening a 7-0 advantage, before Dave Gilbert and Chris Forde pulled Nottingham back into contention, to trail just 29-28 two minutes from the break. Falcons raised their game again in those closing minutes of the half, to lead 39-29 at the interval.

Palace threatened to pull away early in the second period, but again the Nottingham duo struck back, and with thirteen minutes to play the scores stood at 49-41. Gilbert and Forde, however, were the only two players who could find the basket with any regularity for the East Midlands outfit, and when the Londoners succeeded in closing them down the contest became one-sided as Falcons cruised to an 81-53 victory, and their first Championship success.

Rudd led all scorers, with 23 points, followed by Stimpson (who picked up the MVP award) with 16, and Falcons' captain Dave Smith (12).

Nine of Palace's ten players recorded points, while only seven could find the basket for Nottingham, led by Gilbert (18) and Forde (15).

No-one could have suspected at the time, but Crystal Palace's domination of Junior basketball throughout the second half of the decade had just begun.

JUNIOR MEN'S NATIONAL CUP, 1975-1976							
First Round	Second Round	1/4 Final	Semi-Final	FINAL			
	Birmingham Bulldogs	71 }					
Rolls Royce Derby	48 }	Columbans, St. Albans	50 }	Birmingham Bulldogs	66 }		
Columbans, St. Albans	75 }						
High Wycombe Pirates	50 }			SCP Falcons	85 }		
Sutton & Crystal Palace	111 }	Sutton & Crystal Palace	42 }				
				SCP Falcons	127 }		
Guildford Pirates	28 }	SCP Falcons	75 }				
SCP Falcons	85 }						
					SCP Falcons	81	
Quaife & Lilley (B'ham)	64 }						
Wilson Panthers, Donc.	57 }	Quaife & Lilley (B'ham)	69 }				
		Brookside B., Middlesbro'	35 }	Quaife & Lilley	66 }		
EPAB Washington	57 }				Quaife & Lilley	59 }	
Ellesmere Port Pioneers	69 }	Ellesmere Port Pioneers	65 }	Ellesmere Port P.	50 }		
		Sheffield Scorpions	59 }				
		Prado (Kidbrooke)	66 }				
Enfield Vikings	73 }	Enfield Vikings	67 }	Enfield Vikings	64 }		
Westcliffe-on-Sea	44 }				Nottingham	74 }	
		Stockport Belgrade	62 }	Nottingham	82 }		
		Nottingham	70 }				
Greenwich Pilgrims	75 }					Nottingham	53
Camden Amber	78 }	Camden Amber	72 }				
				London YMCA Metros	73 }		
London YMCA Metros	119 }	London YMCA Metros	120 }		Watford Royals	62 }	
Avenue, Edmonton	83 }						
		Watford Royals	96 }	Watford Royals	83 }		
		SCP Eagles, Crawley	85 }				

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"Basketball Review 1980-1981", ed. Richard Taylor

"Pawprint" magazine, Vol. 1; 1975-1976

Have you spotted any errors?
 Do you have any of the missing Women's scores?
 Have we missed anything important?
 Contact us at webmaster@pawprint75.co.uk