

A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUES.

9a TABLES, 1979-1980

SENIOR MEN

ROTARY WATCHES NATIONAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE							
Division One							
	Pl.	W.	L.	For	Agt.	Pts.	
1	Crystal Palace	18	18	0	1936	1498	36
2	Team Ziebart, Doncaster	18	14	4	1751	1673	28
3	Team Fiat, Coventry	18	14	4	1788	1644	28
4	Ovaltine Hemel Hempstead	18	12	6	1686	1634	24
5	Kelly Girl International, Kingston	18	10	8	1836	1702	20
6	Sunblest, Sunderland	18	9	9	1672	1683	18
7	Stockport Belgrade	18	5	13	1763	1874	9 (1 pt. ded.)
8	ATS Giants (Manchester)	18	3	15	1533	1754	6
9	Blackpool	18	3	15	1612	1839	6
10	Team Talbot, Guildford	18	2	16	1592	1837	4

"Normal service" was resumed, as Crystal Palace strolled to another League title, completing a third season without defeat.

Doncaster, who effectively used just six players throughout the season, succeeded in clinging on to finish second, but they were pushed all the way by Fiat, who finished level on points.

Newly-promoted Hemel Hempstead picked up sponsorship from Ovaltine, and, already with a strong squad, they benefited from the demise of near-neighbours Milton Keynes by picking up a number of their players. "Pawprint", at the time, couldn't decide whether to refer to them as Hemel Keynes or Milton Hempstead! One of the few clubs from that time still to be playing in the League today, the irony is that they are now based ... in Milton Keynes.

The other two promoted teams fared somewhat less well, with Guildford saving Blackpool from finishing last.

Kingston (newly relocated from Central London YMCA) maintained their tradition of exotic names, as they took the court as "Kelly Girl International", which raised a few laughs in the decidedly non-PC late seventies.

Division Two							
	Pl.	W.	L.	For	Agt.	Pts	
1	Nottingham	14	11	3	1267	1155	22 Not promoted
2	Camden & Hampstead	14	11	3	1487	1376	22 Not promoted
3	Leeds Athletic Institute	14	11	3	1346	1218	22 Not promoted
4	Brighton	14	8	6	1342	1290	16
5	Exeter	14	7	7	1311	1286	14 Withdrew
6	Team Hemeling Birmingham	14	3	11	1334	1467	6
7	National Panasonic Plymouth	14	3	11	1351	1396	6 Withdrew late
8	Brunel Ducks, Uxbridge	14	2	12	1253	1444	4

The closest ever finish to a season in any division saw three teams tie at the top of Division 2.

Nottingham clinched the title, on countback, ahead of Camden & Hampstead and Leeds AI, but none of the three was rewarded with promotion, much to the disgust of the Champions.

Following their relegation, Exeter had lost the sponsorship of St Luke's College, and finished with an even 7&7 record in Division 2. Facing higher travel costs than most other teams in the division they felt that they had no option but to withdraw at the end of the season.

Plymouth, who had finished one place off the bottom, courtesy of late entrants Brunel, also withdrew, to avoid high costs putting them out of business, late in the close season.

League Qualifiers	
Colchester Moels	Admitted to Division Two
Liverpool	Admitted to Division Two
Solent Stars	Admitted to Division Two
GH Bristol	Admitted to Division Two. Withdrew late
Loughborough All-Stars	Re-applied Div. 1 - not admitted

Four teams were admitted, which would have increased Division 2 to 11 teams, but one of them, Bristol, pulled out before the season started, leaving just nine competitors for 1980-81.

SENIOR WOMEN

	Division One Women	Pl	W	L	For	Agst	Pts
1	Tigers DSC (Hemel)	14	14	0	1094	734	28
2	Cleveland Eagles	14	11	3	957	798	22 <i>Withdrew</i>
3	Langham Wisps	14	8	6	1022	902	16
4	Crystal Palace	14	8	6	907	861	16
5	Corvus Luton	14	8	6	894	903	16 <i>Withdrew</i>
6	Solent	14	5	9	945	1069	10
7	London YMCA	14	2	12	694	939	*3
8	Coventry Cagers	14	0	14	672	99	0 <i>Withdrew</i>

Tigers won their third League title in five years, preventing Cleveland Eagles from making it three in a row, but the enduring rivalry between the two top teams was about to end, as the North-easterners withdrew from the league for the following season.

Also departing, in a delayed mirror image of the Men's League the previous year, were founder-members Corvus and recently promoted Coventry, who had failed to win a game in the top flight.

	Division Two Women (North)	Pl	W	L	For	Agst	Pts
1	Brinnington Lapwings	10	9	1	720	590	18
2	Nottingham Wildcats	10	8	2	720	528	16 <i>Promoted</i>
3	Sheffield Hatters	10	6	4	656	596	12 <i>Promoted</i>
4	Birmingham Sportsco	10	5	5	532	616	10
5	TSB Norwich	10	2	8	494	577	4
6	Kings Lynn Phoenix	10	0	10	437	652	0

	Division Two Women (South)	Pl	W	L	For	Agst	Pts
1	Avon (Northampton)	10	7	3	694	645	14 <i>Promoted</i>
2	Ipswich Bobcats	10	6	4	589	584	12
3	Frome Comets	10	5	5	730	681	10
4	Malory (Lewisham)	10	4	6	684	708	8
5	Waltham Abbey	10	4	6	662	670	8
6	Ovaltine (Hemel)	10	4	6	623	694	8

Ten of the twelve teams in the regionalised Division 2 had proved competitive, and three of them were promoted, to replace the three who were pulling out from Division 1.

I suspect that Brinnington Lapwings' failure to go up was due to their own choice, rather than a decision from above, as they had won not only the Northern section of the League, but also the National Trophy and the post-season Play-off Championships.

<u>NBL2 WOMEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 1980</u>							
<u>Semi Final</u>				<u>FINAL</u>			
Brinnington Lapwings	(1N)	60+59	}				
Ipswich Bobcats	(2S)	55+53	}	Brinnington Lapwings			78+60
Avon (Northampton)	(1S)	58+60	}	Nottingham Wildcats			71+54
Nottingham Wildcats	(2N)	66+75	}				

These Championships were far more relevant as a guide to final League standings, as they brought together the top two teams from each of the North and South sections.

Northern Champions Brinnington completed the "treble", as they beat Northern runners-up Nottingham in the Final, after the East Midlands team had eliminated Southern Champions Northampton in the two-leg semi-final.

League Qualifiers	
Doncaster Panthers	Admitted to Division Two North
Ilkeston Swifts	Admitted to Division Two North
Islington Falcons	Admitted to Division Two South

With two teams moving into Division 1 from Division 2 North, and one from the South, there were three direct replacements admitted.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 1980.

<u>ROTARY WATCHES CHAMPIONSHIPS 1980</u>			
<u>Semi Final</u>		<u>FINAL</u>	
Crystal Palace	(1) 98 }		
Ovaltine Hemel Hempstead	(4) 75 }	Crystal Palace	93 }
			}
Team Ziebart Doncaster	(2) 84 }	Team Fiat Coventry	85 }
Team Fiat Coventry	(3) 100 }		
		<u>3rd/4th</u>	
		Team Ziebart Doncaster	84 }
		Ovaltine Hemel Hempstead	75 }

The Championship Finals at Wembley followed an incredibly similar pattern to the year before.

Doncaster once again lost the semi-final to a Fiat team that had finished below them in the League, but recovered to take the 3rd place game the following day.

Fiat once again lost in the final – and again to Crystal Palace, though this time the victory gave Palace the first ever League, Cup and Championship “treble”.