

Rocks' plans are dashed

RYMAN PREMIER: East Thurrock United's hopes of being more refreshed than their visitors for tonight's home game with high-flying Margate were ruined when the Kent club's weekend match at home to Leyton was washed out by a waterlogged pitch.

Rocks themselves had no scheduled game, but Margate's inactivity cost them top spot as fellow Kent outfit Bromley took over the leadership with a 1-1 draw at Horsham.

Rocks themselves are too close for comfort to the relegation zone and, if they are to get any reward tonight, will need to keep a close eye on the visiting side's former Billericay Town striker Danny Hockton, the top scorer in the Premier so far this term.

● **TILBURY** are gradually moving clear of potential danger in Ryman Division One North and have picked up a useful point in each of their last two matches.

They are due at Essex rivals Wivenhoe tonight, but a word of warning to fans planning to make the journey is that tonight's hosts had their home game with Great Wakering washed out on Saturday.

And, with more heavy rain falling yesterday, play might not be possible if further poor conditions prevail.

Harris nets goals title

FOOTBALL: Neil Harris has become Millwall's record ever goalscorer after netting in the Lions' 4-0 League One win over Rotherham on Saturday.

The 29-year-old, who hails from Rayleigh, bagged the first goal of the game.

And that was enough to see him overtake Teddy Sheringham as the club's most prolific ever forward.

"It was a magical moment for me," said Harris, who has now scored 94 league goals for Millwall.

"It was so special especially in front of the fans who gave me such a good reception again."

Blues' twos get a rain check

FOOTBALL: Southend United's reserve team trip to Luton Town has been postponed.

The Shrimpers' second string were due to take on the Hatters this afternoon, but the match has now been called off as Town's first team face an FA Cup third round replay with Queens Park Rangers this evening.

Hullbridge hosting top dogs



■ Watching brief — Canvey's Dave Kreyling (left) gets a good view as fellow central defender Kevin Dobinson rises above his Waltham Abbey rival during Saturday's 1-1 draw at Park Lane. Tonight Gulls host Bowers and Pitsea in the Essex Thames-side Trophy. **Picture: MAXINE CLARKE XGJ7C14**

ESSEX SENIOR

HAVING held up Concord Rangers' Essex Senior League title charge with a 3-3 draw on Saturday, much-improved Hullbridge Sports aim to hurt the leaders tonight.

They host top dogs Brentwood who are level on points with Rangers, but have a superior goal difference with four games in hand.

Canvey based Concord themselves have a tough challenge tonight when they travel to Southchurch Park to Southend Manor.

In the Essex Thames-side Trophy, Senior League Bowers and Pitsea go to Park Lane to take on Ryman Division One North Canvey island.

Gulls boss John Batch is likely to continue his policy of using squad players for outside cup competitions, but there are special admission rates for tomorrow's game.

Adults will be admitted for £4 with £2 concessions and £1 under-12s.

Ricketts move shocks Martin

SOUTHEND United chairman Ron Martin has expressed his shock at Michael Ricketts joining Blues' Championship rivals Preston North End.

The former England international was released from Roots Hall earlier on in the season after making just two substitute appearances following doubts about his fitness and attitude.

But that has not put promotion chasing Preston off offering Ricketts another life-line, much to Martin's surprise.

"Michael has all the physical potential you could wish for in a footballer," he said.

"But whether he has the right mental attitude to go alongside that is questionable."

Ricketts' early release from the club also reduced the payment his agent Simon Kennedy received.

And that means a Football League report released last week, which suggested the Shrimpers spent £122,000 on agents, was not entirely accurate.

"Michael's agent didn't end up

CHAMPIONSHIP

■ By CHRIS PHILLIPS

getting the full amount," confirmed Martin.

"But I always think money spent on agents is worth it if it means you get the right players in."

The Shrimpers' spending saw them ranked 13th in the Championship, while their Essex rivals Colchester were again bottom having not spent anything on agents.

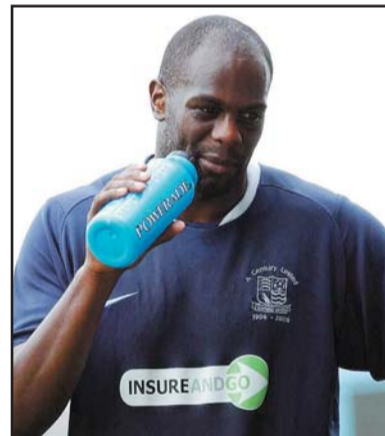
Shrimpers supremo Martin also insisted that none of the club's players would be leaving during the transfer window.

In-form winger Jamal Campbell-Ryce is the latest to be linked with a move away from Roots Hall, with both Watford and Charlton Athletic rumoured to be preparing a £250,000 bid.

But Martin will not be selling any of the squad and that includes star striker Freddy Eastwood.

"No-one will be leaving during the transfer window," he confirmed.

"We need everyone in our fight



■ Preston North End move — for ex Blues striker Michael Ricketts

against relegation, but if we show the same commitment as we did in the secondhalf against Derby County on Saturday then we have a chance, especially with our fans who have been absolutely fantastic.

"The support we had at Barnsley last week was the best I've ever seen and it would be great to keep that going."

Benson targets goals against Grays



■ Deadly — hitman Paul Benson

FORMER White Ensign striker Paul Benson will hope to continue his great scoring feats for Dagenham and Redbridge when they bid to step up their bid for promotion to the Football League with victory in tonight's Conference derby at Grays.

Two seasons ago Benson was plying his trade part time with Ensign and training as an accountant, but Daggers boss John Still's decision to pluck him from obscurity and move him up five levels has proved a massive hit.

Last season, his first at this level, Benson suffered serious

CONFERENCE

injury. But now he's really proving his worth and scored his 16th goal on Saturday.

It enabled the Victoria Road side to gain a 1-1 draw at Morecambe and maintain a three-point advantage over Oxford United, who were held 2-2 at Grays.

That sharing of the spoils was the seventh in 13 matches at the New Rec for Justin Edinburgh's men this term — they've won just two — and, unless they can start turning draws into victories, Grays could well still be dragged into the relegation dogfight.

Coach Derek is American football idol

FOOTBALL: David Beckham may have become the latest high profile footballer to try and raise the popularity of the sport in the United States.

But his plans are nothing new as coach Derek Godwin, who hails from Southend, has been working in America since 1993.

At nearly 70-years-of-age, he has just been awarded the Louisiana Soccer Association Coach of the Year Award and the Region 3 (13 States) Coach of the Year Award by US Youth Soccer and is now in the running to become US Youth Soccer National Coach of the Year.

Godwin, who was born in Southend, is the son of former Southend United player Cecil and attended Southend High School for Boys during his youth.

He played for the Royal Navy, Combined Services, Woking, Hendon, Waterlooville and many others during his own career and also appeared internationally for Singapore.

He went into coaching after his playing days and was very successful — winning the British Empire Medal for his services to youth soccer from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

But Godwin, whose grandson Louis Green currently plays in goal for Great Wakering, ended up in America following a request from his daughter Tracey, who married a US serviceman.

There he immediately turned around a struggling soccer programme into one of the best in the State of Louisiana and has gone on to educate players and coaches around not only this state, but also the entire USA.

Now he is the head soccer coach for men and women at Louisiana College, despite having triple heart by-pass surgery last January, and is looking to turn around another struggling collegiate soccer programme.

Hogan at U's for rest of season

FOOTBALL: Young West Ham striker Hogan Ephraim has extended his loan spell at Colchester United until the end of the season.

The 18-year-old has made six substitute appearances for the Championship side since originally moving on a one-month switch in November.

And, having agreed to adding another month to the deal in December, Irons boss Alan Curbishley has now given permission for the player to remain at Layer Road for the rest of the season.

He made his full debut in Saturday's 3-2 derby defeat at Ipswich.

Following Ephraim's departure until the end of the season, new signing Calum Davenport has been handed squad number 27.

Hammers reserves host Fulham tonight at Bishop's Stortford.

Towers visit Swifts

BASKETBALL: Next weekend sees Southend Swifts' under-16s in action at home to London Towers on Saturday.

The senior team make their final trip west when they face University of Wales in Cardiff and Cardiff Celts on Sunday.

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