

A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUES.

7c. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP CUPS 1977-1978.

Nor content with having changed the traditional knock-out format of the Cup, by introducing quarter-final Pools, the Association decided to tinker some more for 1977-8.

Instead of eight teams qualifying for two Pools at the quarter final stage, we were now to have just seven teams, qualifying for one, larger Pool, with the top four to qualify for the semi-finals.

GUINNESS NATIONAL CUP, 1977-1978		
First Round	Second Round	Quarter Final Qualifiers
	Miles Mustangs, Morley Cinzano SCP	(2) 77 } Cinzano SCP (1) 134 }
	Derby CFE Team Fiat, Coventry	(2) 64 } Team Fiat, Coventry (1) 104 }
Brighton Epab Sunderland	(x) 55 } (2) 76 }	Epab Sunderland (2) 100 } Embassy Milton Keynes (1) 122 }
Bromley Leatherhead	(2) 51 } (2) 91 }	Leatherhead (2) 56 } Wilson Panthers, Doncaster (1) 59 }
	Stockport Belgrade London 'Y' Metros	(1) 83 } London 'Y' Metros (1) 86 }
K.C.A.Telefusion Hemel Hempstead Lakers	(2) 107 } (2) 87 }	K.C.A.Telefusion (2) 92 } B&K Motors Loughborough (1) 100 }
	Seensee Sonics ATS Giants	(2) 107 } ATS Giants (1) 126 }

Of the non-league teams, only ambitious **Brighton** chose to enter.

1/4 Final Pool		
Cinzano SCP	125	B&K Motors Lough. 76
Cinzano SCP	96	ATS Giants(@ Manch.) 69
Cinzano SCP	93	London 'Y' Metros 72
Team Fiat, Coventry	129	ATS Giants 111
Team Fiat, Coventry	98	Cinzano SCP 106
Team Fiat, Coventry	108	London 'Y' Metros 103
Embassy Milton Keynes	103	Cinzano SCP 121
Embassy Milton Keynes	77	Team Fiat, Coventry 79
Embassy Milton Keynes	102	B&K Motors Lough. 89
Wilson Panthers, Don.	99	Cinzano SCP 89
Wilson Panthers, Don.	84	Embassy Milton Keynes 114
Wilson Panthers, Don.	90	Team Fiat, Coventry 106
London 'Y' Metros	84	Embassy Milton Keynes 91
London 'Y' Metros	102	B&K Motors Lough. 89
London 'Y' Metros	82	Wilson Panthers, Don. 73
B&K Motors Lough.	80	Team Fiat, Coventry 84
B&K Motors Lough.	87	Wilson Panthers, Don. 91*
B&K Motors Lough.	94	ATS Giants 91
ATS Giants	83	Wilson Panthers, Don. 101
ATS Giants	87	Embassy Milton Keynes 99
ATS Giants	88	London 'Y' Metros 87

1/4 FINAL TABLE			
	P	W	L
1 Cinzano SCP	6	5	1
2 Team Fiat, Coventry	6	5	1
3 Embassy Milton Keynes	6	4	2
4 Wilson Panthers, Doncaster	6	3	3
5 London 'Y' Metros	6	2	4
6 B&K Motors Loughborough	6	1	5
7 ATS Giants	6	1	5

Semi-Final		FINAL	
31-Mar @ Wembley		01-Apr @ Wembley	
Cinzano SCP	94 }	Cinzano SCP	89
Wilson Panthers, Doncaster	66 }		
Team Fiat, Coventry	80 }	Team Fiat Coventry	87
Embassy Milton K.	79 }		

WOMEN'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP CUP 1977-1978:

National Women's Cup, 1977-8			
First Round	Second Round		1/4 Final
12/13 Nov.	3/4 Dec.		17/18 Dec.
Sheffield Hatters (2) 54 }			
Ipswich Bobcats (1) 69 }	Ipswich Bobcats (1) 2 }		
Dartford Dodgers (x) 54 }	Billingham Isis (x) 0 }	Ipswich Bobcats	47 }
Billingham Isis (x) 60 }			
		STC Wisps (Southgate)	112 }
Lings Northampton (x) 61 }			
Bromley (x) 38 }	Lings Northampton (x) 47 }		
Birmingham Falcons (x) 15 }	Wilson Panthers (x) 50 }	Wilson Panthers	34 }
Wilson Panthers (x) 47 }			
		Cleveland Eagles	59 }
Liverpool Ajax (2) 50 }			
Scandinavian Homes Solent (2) 71 }	Scandinavian Homes Solent (2) 66 }		
Highbury Hellcats (x) 59 }	Highbury Hellcats (x) 40 }	Scandinavian Homes Solent	42 }
Chelmsford Comanches (x) 52 }			
		Tigers (Hemel Hempstead)	98 }
		Norwich Coe-Stars	48 }
		Corvus Cornix	94 }
		Radcliffe Wildcats	56 }
		YMCA Bobcats	81 }

Semi Final Pool	P	W	L	Pts	Final @ Wembley	
Cleveland Eagles	4	4	0	8	Cleveland Eagles	60
Tigers (Hemel Hempstead)	4	3	1	6	Tigers (Hemel Hempstead)	59
London "Y" Bobcats	4	2	2	4		
STC Wisps (Southgate)	4	1	3	2		
Corvus Cornix (Cambridge)	4	0	4	0		

JUNIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP CUP 1977-1978:

With the introduction of a Junior National League, of seven teams, and the increasing influence of Senior NBL teams on the Junior set-up, there was a marked reduction in the number of entries into the Cup, from 33 in 1976-7 to 21 in '77-8.

As a result, over half the entrants (eleven) received a bye into the second round, with the remaining ten teams pairing up in the first round to see which five would join them. In the table below teams from the junior national league are shown in purple.

JUNIOR NATIONAL CUP 1977 - 1978				
First Round	Second Round	1/4 Final	Semi-Final	FINAL
Hemel Hempstead Lakers	71 }			CentYMCA; 26-Mar.
Hampstead	70 }	Hemel Hempstead 50 }		
		St Lukes Exeter 62 }	St Luke's Exeter 65 }	
			} Cinzano SCP 107 }	
		Cinzano SCP 139 }	Cinzano SCP 101 }	
Hackney Downs	84 }	Hackney Downs 80 }		
SCP Eagles	47 }			Cinzano SCP 110
		Wilson Panthers 74 }		
		B&K Loughborough 64 }	Wilson Panthers 78 }	
			} EPAB 80 }	
		EPAB 101 }	EPAB 84 }	
		Nottingham 98 }		
Watford Royals	55 }			
Camden Amber	65 }	Camden Amber 75 }		
		Brighton 78 }	Brighton 64 }	
			}	
		Havering 63 }	} Avenue 91 }	
		Avenue 142 }	Avenue 89 }	
Pres. Kennedy (Coventry)	58 }			} Avenue 91
Barrow Thorns	89 }	Barrow Thorns 72 }		
			} Barrow Thorns 63 }	
			}	
Hereford Phoenix, Grimsby	48 }	St Saviours 67 }	} Team Fiat 64 }	
St Saviours (E. Port)	83 }		}	
		Stockport Belgrade 59 }	Team Fiat 65 }	
		Team Fiat 64 }		

Although the League teams did not enter the competition until round 2, there was no further segregation, as six of the seven found themselves paired up, with two of the survivors then meeting in the quarter final. Even so, the strength of the league teams (and the benefit of the regular competition that they enjoyed) was shown by the fact that three of the semi-finalists were league members.

Non-league Barrow Thorns had an exceptional run, putting out strong opponents President Kennedy (Coventry) and St Saviours (Ellesmere Port), and at home in the quarter final they gave Team Fiat a real scare before the Midlands team scraped through by two points.

Avenue were the non-league team to make the biggest impact on the competition, but this was hardly surprising as they had contested seven out of the previous nine Finals.

TELEVISED TOURNAMENT 1977:

With their experience of European basketball, Crystal Palace identified that there was a niche in the market for a competitive tournament during the Christmas/New Year break. This Tournament would not only provide an opportunity for fans to savour some high quality international games, but would also help many of the competing clubs by keeping their players in match trim for the second half of the season – whether domestically or in Europe.

Their European contacts enabled them to attract a top class field for this inaugural event, with representatives from Yugoslavia, Portugal, Italy, Belgium and the USA, to compete against three of the top English sides.

In the event, Sunair Ostend were unable to turn up, and at the last minute a Leatherhead "Select" team was brought in to replace them.

The other important aspect of the Tournament was that it was the first one ever to be televised in Britain, for which both Crystal Palace and the BBC deserve due credit.

"TELEVISED INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT"

29-31 December 1977

Red Star Belgrade	(Yug)	96 }			
Philadelphia College	(USA)	84 }	Red Star Belgrade	100 }	
				}	Cinzano S.C.P.
					102 }
Cinzano S.C.P.	(Eng)	107 }	Cinzano S.C.P.	103 }	}
Benfica Lisbon	(Port)	79 }			}
					}
Embassy Milton Keynes	(Eng)	73 }			}
Wilson Panthers	(Eng)	89 }	Wilson Panthers	70 }	}
				}	Cinzano Milan
					97 }
Cinzano Milan	(Ita)	102 }	Cinzano Milan	110 }	
Leatherhead Select	(Eng)	81 }			
			Embassy Milton Keynes	100 }	
			Leatherhead	86 }	Embassy Milton Keynes
					106 }
					3=
					Red Star Belgrade
					100 }
					5=
			Philadelphia College	104 }	
			Benfica Lisbon	100 }	Philadelphia Col.
					84 }
					3=
					Wilson Panthers
					82 }
					5=
					Leatherhead
					92 }
					7
					Benfica Lisbon
					91 }
					8

The event proved a huge success, not just for the quality of competition (which was excellent), but also for the manner in which it brought together players, officials, administrators and fans in a unique environment.

The "WICB" (as it was to become) rapidly established itself as a key element not only of the basketball calendar, but also of the social one!