

# Puck in business

## Lions show teeth on return to ice after 10-year wait

**Lee Valley Lions 2  
Haringey Greyhounds 3**  
*English Division One*

AFTER a break of 10 years the Lee Valley Lions returned to British ice hockey on Saturday and showed they are there for the long haul as they narrowly lost to local rivals Haringey Greyhounds in their English Division One match.

The Lions, taking to the ice under the watchful eye of coach and former Lions player Eddie Joseph, had reasons for optimism as they took an early lead with a goal from Kevin Murphy, assisted by Tom Davis after three minutes.

Lions then struck again after 15 minutes with a shot from Scott Beeson, assisted by Darren Wakeling.

The scoreline reflected Lions' dominance in the first period as they easily outplayed their local rivals, despite refusing to bolster their side with non-British trained players.

However, the second period saw the Haringey Greyhounds fired up and determined to put their mark on the game. Overseas player Craig Metcalf opened the scoring for the Greyhounds with a powerplay goal in the 29th minute, before another import, Eric Ojala, levelled.

A further goal from Metcalf established their lead only 30 seconds later.

The third period saw a more even passage of play between the two sides. But despite several spirited attempts, the Lee Valley Lions were denied the opportunity to put the puck in the back of the net.

The Lions' defence held up well, however, preventing the Greyhounds from adding further to the scoreline.

The Lions' next English Division One game at the Lee Valley Ice Centre is against



Solent & Gosport on Saturday, face-off 5.45pm.

**LIONS MAN OF THE MATCH:** Lions' netminder Stefan Nubert put in a superb performance despite facing no less than 45 shots on goal.

**SQUAD:** Nubert, O'Neill, Davis, Goddard, Bellamy, Osborne, Hodge, Braithwaite, Courtney, Witney, Coyston, Scott-Joseph, Sampson, Abdullah, Wakeling, Beeson, Murphy, Gomes, Shrubsole, Alley, Swaine, Murphy.

● **Off ice at last...** Above, Lee Valley Lions go on the attack in their first match in a decade against Haringey. Pic courtesy of Julianne Bonner/[www.leevalleylions.co.uk](http://www.leevalleylions.co.uk)

## Ice to be back for O'Neill

PAUL O'Neill finally made a dream come true when he made his debut for Lee Valley Lions on Saturday – more than a decade after his fantasy was put on ice.

The 28-year-old, who grew up on Upper Clapton Road, first took to the ice at Lee Valley when he was just seven.

And after training with the youth team right the way up until his late teens, he finally looked to have broken into the first team when he began training with the seniors.

But just as he was about to fulfil his dream, the club disbanded when he was poised to make his debut. As a result, he was

forced to go and play for Haringey – ironically the club's first opponents on Saturday.

"I trained with them but I was too young to actually play," said O'Neill. "I came back out of retirement purely to play for Lee Valley. It's where I've been playing all my life."

O'Neill has not played competitively for several years, but was coaxed out of retirement to play for his club. Indeed, such was the appeal of the proposition, he even came back from his holiday in France a day early.

However, despite the sentimental reasons for playing –

O'Neill was playing in front of his father, who first took him to the rink more than 20 years ago – Lions are not here just to make up the numbers.

They took an early 2-0 lead in front of more than a hundred spectators and it took two imported players – paid overseas stars – to wrestle the initiative.

"Everyone thought we were going to be the whipping boys, but we showed that we can compete," he said. "We didn't have any paid players – in fact, we had 12 under-19 players on our team. But Haringey had to take us seriously and they came out at full strength."