BISHOP'S OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

vs RICHMOND

NATIONAL LEAGUE 1

COME ON YOU BLUES





Saturday 20th January 2024 Kick-off 3pm

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It gives me immense pleasure to welcome Richmond and all our supporters to Silver Leys this afternoon for our first home match of 2024. I hope you all enjoyed the festive season and managed to stay healthy! It is understood, that as we begin the second half of the season, we are looking for an uplift in our performances and of course our results. Last week in Plymouth whilst losing we were very unfortunate not to get any points from the game and it was good to see our approach with the ball going through the hands more and our three tries coming from the wingers. If this approach continues, we will ensure we see an improvement in our results. It promises to be a very entertaining game especially as we shared 90 points in our previous game. Unfortunately, Richmond scored 50 points to our 40.

Guests at the President's table this week see Adam Akhurst speaking to you all. Ada. coaching and supporting his son in the Mini and Youth teams. He was an instigator in starting our successful Touch Group a few years ag and has been around the club for some time he is also coordinating our Vice Presidents. We are delighted to have Dave Doherty at the club. Dave whilst running Charterhouse was a great benefactor to the club and a few years ago was selected by the RFU at their Annual Awards Ceremony as the 'Sponsor of the Year'. No mean feat as the other candidates included Bath's main sponsor. Dyson. Dave has taken a back seat in running the Company but has continued to support the club on a personal basis and make very generous donations to the club. Other quests at the president's table are Dave McFie who is the main coach of our successful Colts. team and is the source of many of our Blues and Chindits players in recent years. It is a reliable source of players for our Senior teams. The most recent former Colt to play in the club's 1st XV was Murray Davidson who made his debut last week at Plymouth.

We also welcome Carly Poyser who was instrumental in getting our women's teams off the ground. We had several attempts to get them started but we had no success until Carly became involved. Whilst we have good years

and other less successful years it is good to see them blossoming now. An excellent credit for Carly's organisational skills.



Our Man of the Match award sponsor this week will be presented by Mark Burton and Hannah Stoner of MCB Finance. Other sponsors hosting tables this week include Three Willows/Ace of Lanes (Dave and Brian), Price Bailey (Simon), Weldon Beasley (Hugo), HD Print (Ed), GR8 Tool Hire (Josh), and Recruitability (Wendy and Lucy). We also welcome the Oval Club who have reserved several tables this week

Please note that Tom Banks is running the London Marathon for Brain Research UK. Tom's last head injury/concussion was against Rosslyn Park on October 22 resulting in him having to retire from rugby. If you wish to sponsor Tom, you can scan the QR CODE below. We also welcome Richard and Rhona Norden who will be on the Colonels table.

To remind you all, our current Colts team has successfully won all their National Cup matches and will meet Rosslyn Park at home on 12th February in the last eight of the Competition. We hope that all can come up and support them in their attempts to emulate our previous success in this competition.





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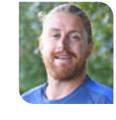


Happy New Year to all our wonderful sponsors, supporters, players and club members, It's great to be back at home for the first time in over a month since the disappointing result vs Blackheath. A much needed break over Christmas has allowed us to take some time away from the club, review where we are at and reset for a massive second half of the season.

I'm not going to lie, we're not where we wanted to be at this point in the season, but we all know there's a lot of rugby still to play. It's a place we have been in before and we know what it takes to get us further up the league table.

Rest assured we are working extremely hard as a group and will continue to do so to get us back to playing the winning rugby we all want to see. Today we welcome Richmond to Silver Leys, a team who have quality and experience throughout. We played out a high scoring 40-50 loss in the first meeting between the sides, and we know the challenge they will present. You may see a few familiar faces back in the match day squad today, moral is high within the squad, and we can't wait to put in a performance you will all be proud of.

Elsewhere the Blues continue their excellent league form with a tremendous away win at Ampthill last week, they too face Richmond in



the shape of their 'Saxons' which is their 3rdXV. Having a competitive 2ndXV only pushes the players to perform better each week, and that lads who perform well for the Blues will be rewarded.

Thanks again for your continued support and getting behind the lads on a Saturday. A special mention to Stortford faithful who made the trip down to Plymouth last week, we could hear your support throughout the game. A couple of big moments in the game ultimately went the way of Plymouth and with that the game, but promising signs, which we need to build on for this week. Catch you after the game for a well earned beer or two!

Come on you Bishop's.

Marcus

THE COACHING STAFF

Below, left to right: Cameron Boon, Konrad McKenzie, Ian Simpson, Darren Orbart.









Below, left to right: Manu Vunipola, Rob Faiers, Ryan Clarke, Jon Skelton.













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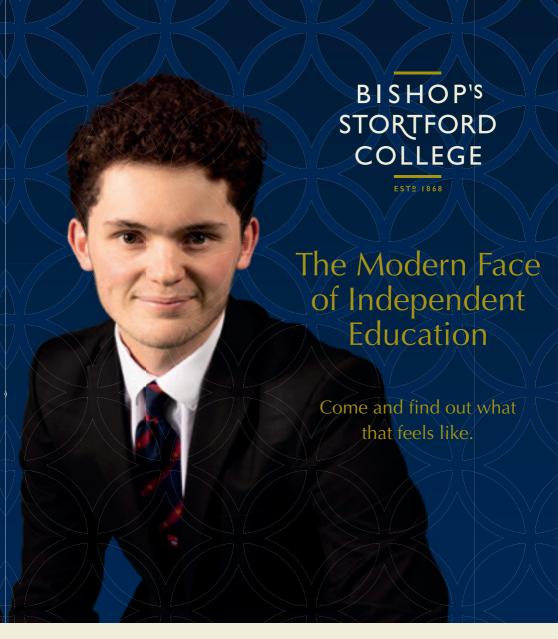


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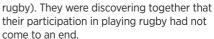
Touch Rugby

"I am so tired! But, that was so much fun." We had just finished our weekly training session and were making our way across the field towards to the clubhouse. "I've not played rugby in so many years and thought my chance had gone forever." Came another voice who joined our conversation. "I'd never played before but discovered that rugby is a sport I should have got involved in much earlier in my life."

Writing in a rugby club programme; none of this, or the feelings of those expressing them come as much of a surprise. For many of us they represent something of what makes rugby so good. They are the foundation of what makes any rugby club successful. A platform that brings different, and disparate, sections of the community together focused on rugby. A foundation that allows us to invest in the values that rugby of all forms, and at all levels, holds dear.

What may be surprising is that this was following a non (well, in truth, minimal) contact session of touch rugby. The people involved in the conversation were 2 women (one brand new to rugby, and an ex-county player) and 2 men (one an England touch

international, and the other someone who had injury limit any further participation in contact



As a club we have had a Touch Rugby section for approaching a decade. We play every Wednesday night throughout the year (not just the contact rugby season). Touch Rugby is minimal contact (a touch is all that is allowed), mixed ability (we have people who have never picked up a rugby ball and people who represented England), mixed gender and open to all.

For those of you who have decided more exercise needs to part of you New Year regime, why not give it a go. We promise a warm welcome, a place to exercise and the chance to take part in the sport you already love.

If you want more details drop me a line on **07880 928644** or through my club email address, **touchchair@bsrfc.com**

Gaz Tracey Touch Section Chair





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Richmond FC is the second oldest rugby club in the world having been formed in 1861 and like Blackheath was a founder member of the Rugby Football Union. Bishops' Stortford now has Division One league fixtures with both Blackheath and Richmond and can therefore by playing these sides consider themselves to be in very distinguished company in the league. Stortford can also consider their progress through the RFU league structure and the migration from the amateur game to the professional game as especially serene compared to Richmond's adventures.

Richmond started their league career in Courage League Division Two in the 1987-88 season and after moving up and down between Division Two and Division Three it was with the advent of professional rugby in 1995 and Ashley Levett financing the club that led to their promotion to the English Premiership in 1997. The interest for Stortford at this time was the big

money signing by Richmond of local boy Ben Clarke from Bath. Richmond's time in the Premiership ended dramatically by going into Administration for the 1999-2000 season and then reforming as an amateur club at the bottom of the league structure. They then progressed from Herts/Middlesex 1 to London 2 South in four seasons from 2000-01 to 2003-04.

Stortford played Richmond home and away in London 1 in the 2006-07 and 2007-08 seasons and lost all four games by considerable margins. We did not play them again until the home and away fixtures in the Covid truncated season of 2019-20 after our promotion to National One in 2017 and Richmond's relegation to that league from the Championship in 2018-19. Stortford were convincingly beaten at Richmond in January 2020 but had finally been able to give them a game in October

2019 when we lost narrowly at Silver Leys 17-18 even if the game was not quite as close as this score would suggest. Richmond



were promoted in the 2019-20 truncated season back to the Championship but of course there was no league rugby played in 2020-21 and they were relegated again from the Championship to Division One in 2022-23 to renew our playing acquaintance with them this season.

Recently our Blues have been a little more successful against the two Richmond reserve sides - the Saxons and the Vikings. It is always enjoyable to visit the Athletic Ground in Richmond and there always appears to be a continuous stream of passenger jets overhead to watch on their way to land at Heathrow to distract Stortford supporters if the match gets too one sided!





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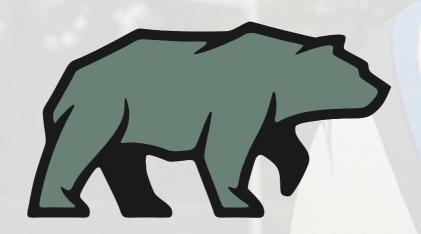
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Match Report: BSRFC Women v Tabard Women

Returning refreshed from the Christmas break, Bishop's Stortford Women suffered a disappointing loss during their first game of 2024, losing 15-31 to visitors, Tabard, at home.

It was a tough first half for the ladies in blue which saw them 0-17 down at half-time, but the successful recruitment drive over the summer and a slew of burgeoning talent enabled them to keep the pace and pressure up during the second half to secure three tries before the final whistle

With Jasmin Bice benched due to injury. Yasmin Knott stepped out onto the pitch as Captain, and Harriet Creasy, having had a successful first half of the season playing for both BSRFC women and for Essex County U18s, made her debut as Vice-Captain.

A starting line-up of 14 players for Tabard dictated that BSRFC also drop a woman for fairness, and Tabard secured a swift first try followed by a conversion moments after the starting whistle was blown. This set the tone for the first half of the match with Stortford struggling to find their space and push through the defensive line.

A mid-half penalty awarded to the home team enabled number 8. Eva Rakudic, to drive through the field and make the ground that Stortford had been desperately trying to find: however, despite their best efforts at the try-line, they were unable to secure the points they were looking for. With the half time whistle looming, and after a fraught first half, Tabard secured two tries in quick succession taking the score to 0-17.

Having sustained a number of injuries during the first half. Stortford returned to the pitch undeterred, and Charlotte Wheeler delivered the first try for the home side with a perfectly executed pick-and-go from the back of the scrum, making the score 5-17.

Buoved by the taste of success, and with Tabard flagging due to lack of subs. the team continued to demonstrate their grit and determination, and Rhiannon Doherty, on her debut performance for the club, secured the team's second try (to the raucous applause of the crowd) with a speedy break from the 22m along the touch line, bringing the score to 10-17.

Despite some excellent scrummaging and lineouts from the forward pack, Tabard's strength and relative size advantage enabled them to secure two further tries with an easy conversion taken from between the goal posts. In the face of adversity, and with the referee disallowing a contentious try from second row, Yasmin Knott, Stortford continued undiscouraged, and a final push from Eva Rakudic saw the last try of the match secured, and the score brought to 15-31.

Players' player: Harriet Creasey (15) Coaches' player: Charlotte Wheeler (16)





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Results from 13th January 2024

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM
Birmingham Moseley	32 - 33	Rosslyn Park
Blackheath	27 - 29	Leicester Lions
Cinderford	24 - 23	Darlington Mowden Park
Plymouth Albion	39 - 23	Bishop's Stortford
Rams	28 - 7	Sedgley Park
Richmond	22 - 21	Taunton Titans
Sale	10 - 47	Chinnor

Fixtures for 20th January 2024

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM
Bishop's Stortford	VS	Richmond
Chinnor	VS	Sedgley Park
Darlington Mowden Park	VS	Blackheath
Leicester Lions	Vs	Plymouth Albion
Rosslyn Park	VS	Rams
Sale FC	VS	Cinderford
Taunton Titans	VS	Birmingham Mosley

NATIONAL LEAGUE 1 TABLE											
Team	Р	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TBP	LBP	Points	Adj.
Chinnor	15	12	0	3	533	244	289	11	2	61	0
Rams	15	11	0	4	465	356	109	12	2	58	0
Plymouth Albion	15	10	0	5	430	320	110	9	3	52	0
Rosslyn Park	15	9	0	6	452	398	54	8	2	46	0
Sedgley Park	15	9	0	6	389	417	-28	6	2	44	0
Birmingham Moseley	15	8	0	7	397	394	3	6	5	43	0
Richmond	15	7	0	8	416	427	-11	10	5	43	0
Darlington Mowden Park	15	7	0	8	338	369	-31	7	3	38	0
Blackheath	15	7	0	8	358	345	13	5	4	37	0
Cinderford	15	7	0	8	317	423	-106	2	2	32	0
Bishop's Stortford	15	5	0	10	352	427	-75	7	4	31	0
Leicester Lions	15	5	0	10	301	434	-133	4	3	27	0
Taunton	15	3	0	12	414	528	-114	11	4	27	0
Sale FC	15	5	0	10	288	368	-80	3	3	26	0

BISHOP'S STORTFORD

BLUE AND WHITE



- 1 Seb Brownhill
- 2 Alex Rayment
- 3 Toby Hill
- 4 Fraizer Kiff
- 5 Harry Charter
- 6 Alex Wardell
- 7 Ollie Jones
- 8 Will Rogers(c)
- 9 Chris Bolton
- 10 Dan Cole
- 11 Chris Smith
- 12 Austin Pope
- 13 Francis Moore
- 14 Alex Gilham
- 15 Nick Hankin

REPLACEMENTS

- 16 Ryan Jackson
- 17 Jevaughn Warren
- 18 Henry Peck
- 19 Connor Lloyd
- 20 Jake Morris

Head Coach:

Marcus Cattell

Forwards Coaches:

Rob Faiers Cameron Boon

Blues Lead Coach & Forwards Coach:

lan Simpson

Attack & Backs Coach:

Manu Vunipola

Head Strength & Conditioning:

Konrad McKenzie

Lead Medical:

Rvan Clarke

Rydii Clarke

Team Manager:Darren Orbart

Performance Coach:

Jon Skelton

REFEREE:

Owen Taylor

ASSISTANT REFEREE 1:

Andrew MacNeaney

ASSISTANT REFEREE 2: **Dr Jon Petzing**

RICHMOND FC GOLD, RED AND BLACK



- 1 Luke Spring
- 2 Garin Lloyd
- 3 Archie Maggs
- 4 Jake Monson
- 5 Max Murphy
- 6 Miles Wakeling
- 7 David Massey
- 8 Mark Bright(c)
- 9 Luc Jones
- 10 Ted Landray
- 11 Hamish Graham
- 12 Tom Hitchcock
- **13** Henry Cheeseman
- 14 Chidera Obonna
- 15 Alex O'Meara

REPLACEMENTS

- **16** Barnaby Vaughan
- 17 Henry Wills
- **18** Matt Marsh
- 19 Lewis Dennett
- 20 Will Kaye

Coaches

Rob Powell, Ian Kench, Nic Rouse

Medical

Michelle Cuthbert

Team Managers

Liam Burnett, Kaitlin Youens-Brown

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Plymouth Albion 39 Bishop's Stortford 23

Stortford started brightly but squandered early territory with loose kicking. This was compounded by the concession of two successive penalties for offside at breakdowns, resulting in a 5m lineout from which Plymouth drove over for an unconverted try after 8 minutes. Stortford countered and Dan Cole put 3 points on the board 4 minutes later. The visitors enjoyed a further period of possession in Plymouth territory and Chris Smith was next on the scoreboard, touching down out wide from a clever grubber kick from debutant centre. Tom Mills to take his side into a one point lead with 27 minutes gone. The hosts fought back to score two further unconverted tries in quick succession on 35 and 37 minutes. though. The second was a real body blow, coming from a clumsy Stortford knock-on well inside the Plymouth 22 and the home side taking full advantage of the opposition's failure quickly to cover the mistake, with speedy interpassing between three or four forwards breaking the line to feed their left wing for him to run some 70m to touchdown. They almost repeated the feat 2 minutes later and were prevented only from a further try under the posts by a tremendous chase and tackle from Mills. They therefore had to content themselves with a penalty goal, which took them into the break 20-8 up.

Stortford started the second half strongly and were rewarded after 3 minutes with another penalty goal to Dan Cole, followed only 3 minutes later by a second try to Smith, who intercepted a loose Plymouth pass on halfway to sprint in for an unconverted try. The home side bounced back quickly, with a fairly soft try down a poorly marked blind side from a lineout maul inside the opposition 22 after 10 minutes. Plymouth's 13 was yellow-carded for a late tackle as Nick Hankin ran the ball out of defence on 15 minutes and it was the fullback himself, who took advantage by slicing through the hosts' defence only 2 minutes later to touch

down under the posts to reduce his side's deficit to only 2 points, as Cole added the conversion.



Stortford continued to exert pressure on the 14 men, but it was at this crucial juncture that the game swung completely in a 10 minute period from the 25th minute. This started when the visitors botched a golden opportunity for a try from an attacking lineout, so a potential 7 points lost for the visitors and the home side rubbed salt in the wound on 31 minutes by scoring a try out wide with the left wing taking advantage of a missed Stortford tackle to touch down again. Only 3 minutes later, Plymouth were awarded a penalty try, after an attempted clearing kick from the base of a Stortford defensive maul was charged down and the home forward following up was tackled of the ball. So a further 7 points added to complete an effective 21 points swing and Connor Lloyd onto the naughty step for the remainder of the game. Stortford battled on and gave as good as they got in the remaining 7 or 8 minutes, but the game, which so recently had seemed within their grasp had well and truly gone.





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Dan Powell



Dan Powell joined Stortford in the 2021-22 season from Plymouth where he played for four seasons. Dan started his rugby club career at Exmouth in 2017 and had been an England u18 trialist in the 2015-16 season. Dan comes from Sidmouth on the South Devon coast which is closer to Exeter than Plymouth and is even further west as Stortford supporters going down there for our away fixture with Plymouth well know.

Dan played for Plymouth against Stortford in February 2019 and was very impressed with the Stortford style of play despite being on the losing side in that match. The arrival of Covid would delay a planned move to Stortford until the 2021-22 season. In that season he turned out about twenty times for Stortford initially at full back and then later in the season filled in as a utility back. His season was then curtailed by an injury at the end of the Sale home fixture in February. However, the highlight of the season was the Sidmouth Massive (the Powell family in their new blue and white scarves) importantly

turning up in force at Taunton to ensure Stortford held on to draw the game 29-29. Dan

played outside half that day and contributed to the score with several successful place kicks.

In the 2022-23 season Dan played at full back in 12 games and he scored three tries against Rosslyn Park away and two tries against Cambridge away but unfortunately was on the losing side on each occasion. This season he has established himself again in the side at full back this November and December but no tries from full back so far this season.

In 2018 he played in Perth, Western Australia at fly half for the Southern Lions side so it is good to know that player movements between UK and Australia is not one way with Chris Bolton and Ryan Jackson also having played rugby in Australia.

For this game today against Richmond, Dan has requested a mention for Ed Welch on his 65th birthday. Ed is making the long trip up Bishop's Stortford not just to see Dan play but he does also have an invitation to the pre-match lunch.

Dan is sponsored by R C Borham and it is very appropriate for a West Country boy to be sponsored by a farming equipment supplier.



Fraizer Kiff



Fraizer joined Stortford at the start of the 2022-23 season from Moseley and featured in the "Welcome to the Club" article with the other new season starters in the program for the Cambridge home game in September. These new starters included Chris Bolton, Connor Lloyd, Harrison Langworthy, Ryan Jackson, Toby Tierney and Will Rogers. Fraizer joined the club as a second row forward but his appearances were curtailed that season by injury. Frazier is a mobile second row forward and was selected in the back row in the first home game against Hull. He then only turned out for another three First XV appearances in the season.

He had made 17 appearances for Moseley in the 2021/22 season and played for Moseley against Stortford in the convincing Stortford 33-3 win in the November of that season.

Before joining Moseley Fraizer had played for Exeter University and featured in their BUCS games and played with Luke Berry during his time in Exeter. He had also been on the bench for Exeter University in a match against a Leeds Beckett side that included Conor Lloyd. It was his first appearance for Exeter and Leeds won the game 50-15 but Conor is very unlikely to have reminded Fraizer of this score!

This season Fraizer has played eight games in the second row for the First XV and scored his first try for the club in the home win over Taunton. He also picked up his first yellow card for Stortford in the win against Darlington

Mowden Park. Unfortunately, he also had to leave the field injured at the end of the Blackheath game but will be back in action this January.

Kiff is not a common Midlands surname - it has German Westphalian origins, but Fraizer is not aware of any German ancestors.

Fraizer is sponsored by Hilton Coachworks but despite being a second row he should not be confused with our marquee which is now also sponsored by Hilton.





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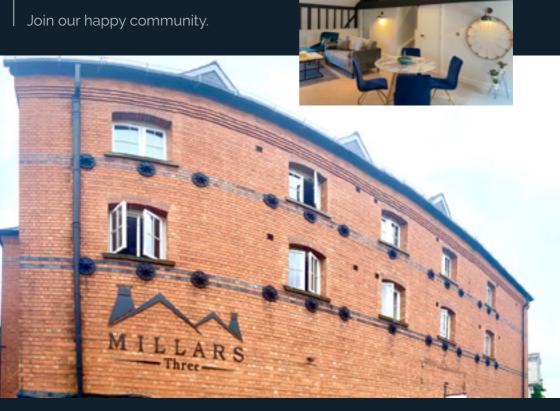
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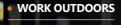




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The Oval Club was formed in 1998 by some Bishop's Stortford Rugby Football Club members who wanted to find a way of raising funds to improve the playing facilities of the Club with the mission statement:



'To contribute towards promoting the highest possible standard of rugby throughout Bishop's Stortford Rugby Football Club'

The Oval Club is an autonomous body and entirely independent of the Rugby Club's operations. None of the Committee members hold a position or appointment in the Rugby Club's infrastructure. The Oval Club does not seek to influence decisions of the Rugby Club. It responds to requests for financial assistance for projects which have been approved by the Rugby Club's Executive Committee and which fall within its mission statement.

Funds are raised by monthly contributions from the Members two thirds of which are set aside for Rugby Club projects with the other third reserved for social events for Members.

To date The Oval Club has raised over a quarter of a million pounds with the Rugby Club receiving more than £200,000.

The Oval Club makes contributions to the Rugby Club for one off projects which are of long term value and not part of ongoing budget requirements. Often these contributions have been made to the Club to enable it to secure grants from the Rugby Football Union and other sources.

So far, major contributions have been made towards the cost of:

- Flood lighting the main pitch,
- Floodlighting the back field pitches,
- Pitch repair and maintenance,
- Improvement of the playing surfaces, including the purchase of a verti-drainer,
- Drainage of the back field pitches,
- Rabbit fencing.

- Replacement of goal posts,
- · Refurbishing the changing room showers,
- · Purchase of physiotherapy equipment,
- Playing equipment and travel costs for all teams,
- Supporting youth and mini through tours, kit and additional playing facilities,
- Junior coaching courses.

On the social side there are annual Members' events. Currently these are:

- A self-supporting golf day at one of the local golf clubs,
- An Annual Dinner and Forum.
- First team home and away lunches.

Through its contributions The Oval Club plays a considerable part in helping the Rugby Club enhance its playing related facilities for the use of all sections and members of the Club, including Senior Sides, Ladies & Girls, Colts, Youth, Mini and Touch Rugby

Anyone who is interested in joining The Oval Club should contact a member of the Committee below.

THE OVAL CLUB COMMITTEE:

Robbie Kerr - Chairman John Robinson - Secretary John Power - Treasurer Mark Caulfield Mark Smith

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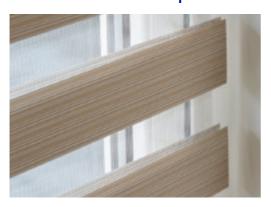
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Willie John McBride CBF



In October last year my wife and I went to Belfast to spend time with some friends who we had met on holiday some 8 years before. When we first met them one of the friends had mentioned she had worked in banking with Willie John McBride many years previously and I jokingly said I would love to meet such a rugby leaend!

Fast forward 8 years when we spent 3 days touring wonderful parts of Northern Ireland: The Giants Causeway, the Bushmills distillery and Port Rush golf club to name a few.

On our way to fly home from Belfast International airport our hosts diverted to an address in Ballyclare: on arrival our host knocked on the door. We were greeted by a tall blond lady and from where I was standing. I could see a large chap further down the entrance hall. As he moved forward and I entered it became clear it was the one and only WJM.

I must admit to being somewhat overwhelmed, and even emotional to be in the presence of such a rugby icon. I had no Idea this had been organised and here I was in Willie John's home.

We spent just over an hour talking rugby, he was very relaxed and very at ease. As you would expect we touched mainly on his rugby career, far more important and very much more significant than mine! We covered his international career with Ireland, the Barbarians and of course the Lions tours.

He also talked passionately about the game then and now. He is frustrated by the style of current Northern Hemisphere rugby - particularly the kicking game against the more open expansive Southern Hemisphere style, particularly the current All Blacks, He was clearly able to draw comparisons with the expansive style of the game that was played in the '70's and particularly by the Welsh, Lions and the Barbarians. He expressed concern over the current issue with head injuries and the large number of players now taking legal action against World Rugby for failing to protect players and as a result those players are now suffering from CTE (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy) which is caused by repeated blows to the head. He also drew a comparison between his playing days and now with the players now having medics when he just had Elastoplast.

As we met towards the end of 2023, he made reference to the 50th anniversary of the famous 1973 Barbarians v All Blacks match played at the Cardiff Arms Park. The great atmosphere, the incredible spectacle but also that only 8 of the 15 that played that day were still alive to attend a reunion. Now sadly, that figure is just 7 with the recent news of the passing of Welsh legend JPR Williams of whom Willie spoke very highly.

He referenced the 1971 Lions tour of New Zealand, still the only side to win a series there. But it was the Lions series in SA which he captained in 1974 that clearly was his most memorable.

It was memorable despite the challenges of Apartheid and all that brought, coupled with some players refusing to tour but it also meant meeting the physical challenges that the SA sides presented. This included violence on the pitch that included late tackles, dirty play and Lions players being targeted during some of the provincial games and in the Tests. Despite the South African physical advantage and having

SA referees for all the games, the Lions became known as "the Invincibles" and returned undefeated. Even the drawn final Test was controversial as a Lions winning "try" at the end was ruled out with a Lions player over the line.

Famously Willie introduced the "99" call on the tour. Originally it was to be a "999" call but that was too slow to shout out. It meant that the Lions would act as one and fight unsporting behaviour with more of the same. He also explained how in the first games of the series he encouraged the pack and particularly the front row not to take a backward step! The Lions were to meet fire with fire and to adapt their style and collective endeavour to cope with the size advantage of the South Africans.

He then talked about how the game has developed in the last 50 years - some for the better, potentially safer with greater emphasis on player welfare through development of the laws. I think though, my words not his, that his generation really did enjoy the no holds barred rucks, racking and mauls and occasional dust ups.

Towards the end of our time together and with a plane to catch. I was curious that I couldn't see any rugby memorabilia. So, I cautiously ask Willie where he kept all the many rugby mementos, "Oh just through here" he said. We both went to the room adjacent to the lounge where we had been sitting. Typical of the man there were quite a few team photos and a few shirts but considering his wealth of international appearances relatively very few!

Anyway, I could have talked all night but all good things have to come to an end. He walked me to the door with pictures taken outside. there were handshakes, my hand being dwarfed by his and at my request a, man hug, reminding me just how big and powerful he still was even at the age of 83. Before I met this legend of rugby, I had decided he would be the perfect gentleman: tough, knowledgeable, interesting, thoughtful, and likeable. He was all of those and much more.

If you have ever dreamt of meeting your sporting great as I now had just done, it was an honour, a great pleasure and privilege. Thank you, Willie John McBride CBE.





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