

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF BISHOP'S STORTFORD RFC

STORTFORD

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
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FROM THE PRESIDENT: AL JONES



Good afternoon everybody. After the disappointment of our last home fixture against Sedgley Park, our 1st XV returned to winning form in spectacular fashion away at top of the table Rams last weekend. Our Blues also won in an evening fixture under the lights at Wanstead, so a successful week all round for the squad.

Today we welcome another of this season's highfliers as Rotherham Titans come to Silver Leys. The Titans have made a spectacular return to National One and currently sit third in the table, with a game in hand on both Rams and Richmond. They have only lost three times so far this season, but one of those defeats was to us after a rampant first half performance from our guys handed Rotherham their only home defeat so far this season. Until last week, that trip up to Yorkshire in October was probably our best game of the season and I have no doubt that Rotherham will be out for revenge today.

As ever, we are immensely grateful for the ongoing support of all of our sponsors.

Today's Match Day sponsors are Belcom, Mike Hayton has been a sponsor of the Club for many years now, and our Man of the Match sponsors are Forward Corporate Finance. As I have mentioned before, we have an incredible record when Rob Smith is here in Man of the Match duty, and hopefully that will continue today.

We are also joined today by Recruitability, the ever-present Ace of Lanes & Three Willows and the almost ever-present Nockolds. And, I'm delighted to welcome Darren Hayward from Nockolds and Bradley Lawrence from Group 1 as my guests today.

And last but definitely not least, we have Club Stortford here in force once again. It's always great to get the opportunity to thank Club Stortford for all they do for us, having raised huge sums for the 1st XV squad over the last decade so, Gentlemen, thank you, it's great to have you here today. I will prepare for inevitable phone

call from Charlie Dunsford when I am on my feet speaking at lunch.

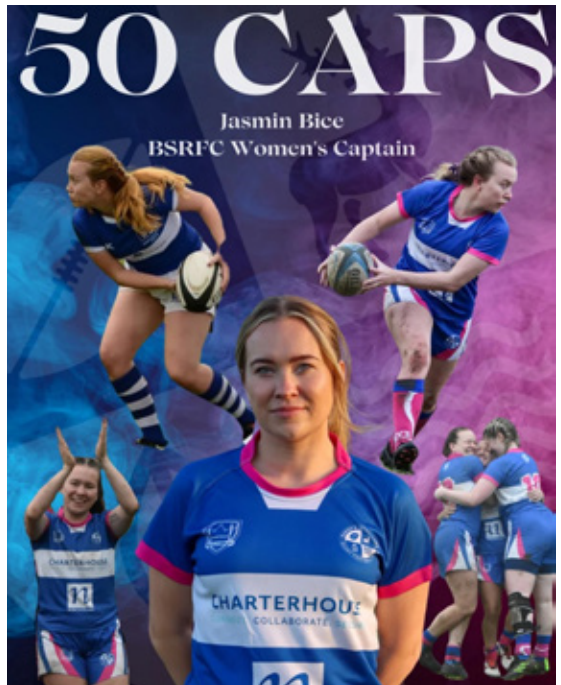
We are rightly proud of our success as a community Club and our ability to field 5 Men's sides, and the strength in numbers in our mini and youth sections.

I have mentioned our women's team a couple of times in my programme notes this season, and following victory at Witham a couple of weeks ago, the team have gone top of their league with a game in hand, with six wins from six this season.

Today I wanted to pay a special tribute to our Women's team captain, Jasmin Bice. Jas was part of the inaugural women's team set up by Carly Poyser in 2017, and has now become our first women's player to represent the Club 50 times. Many, many congratulations Jas, and thank you for your commitment to the Club.

I hope you all enjoy your afternoon at Silver Leys today.

Al





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TOM COLEMAN: HEAD COACH



Today we welcome back to Silver Leys a Rotherham Titans side who have certainly embraced the challenge of being back in National One.

They have proved to be a formidable opponent for every team they have faced, and they deserve huge credit for that. We clearly had a good day in our last meeting and played some good rugby, but that will count for nothing today and we know we will have to play better.

To have consistency in this league is incredibly difficult as each week you face a different challenge and a team with a different style. That's what has impressed me about Rotherham this season, every week they are present, in the fight, and quite often get the result they want. Let's hope today we can get to our best level and then we'll be in for a cracking game I have no doubt.

Last weekend's result was outstanding for us as a group and I really feel that can inject some greater confidence into the players. It was a proper game of Rugby, very attritional with the boys battling for everything and I was delighted

with their decision making throughout. It was an 80 minute performance and when the adversity came, especially when down to 12 players, it was an incredible effort! I know we are capable of that type of performance, and we really believed we could go to Rams and win that game. Our preparation was thorough throughout the week and the players showed us great energy and focus. They really wanted to put on a performance that the club and supporters would be proud of.

The challenge now is to back up that performance with a home win, something that we've been incredibly poor at this season. To win only two of our home games so far is not good enough and we have had some honest conversations about this and how we can change it. Certainly one thing that will help is your support and the noise you can create for the players. When they need a lift we want to hear you all getting behind them, it makes a big difference.

I hope you all enjoy the game!

Tom

THE COACHING STAFF



Left to right: Ryan Clarke, Cameron Boon, Tom Coleman, Rob Faiers, Jon Skelton, Ben Sheath.



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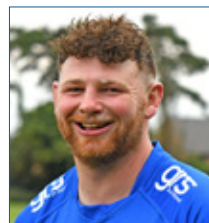
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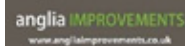
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CARDIAC RISK IN THE YOUNG



18 months ago, my family suffered a terrible loss when my brother-in-law died as a result of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest. He was 49 years old.

At the start of this season, our Rugby Club family lost our friend and teammate **Max Oliver**, again to a Sudden Cardiac Arrest, at just 31 years of age.



The Oliver family wanted to try and make something positive happen from their unimaginable loss and, with the help of Max's friend Spencer Kersey, set up a JustGiving page to raise money for **Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY)**.

Every week in the UK at least 12 young people die of undiagnosed heart conditions. Since its formation in 1995, CRY has been working to reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac death (YSCD). CRY supports young people diagnosed with potentially life-threatening cardiac conditions and offers bereavement support to families affected by YSCD.



Max Oliver

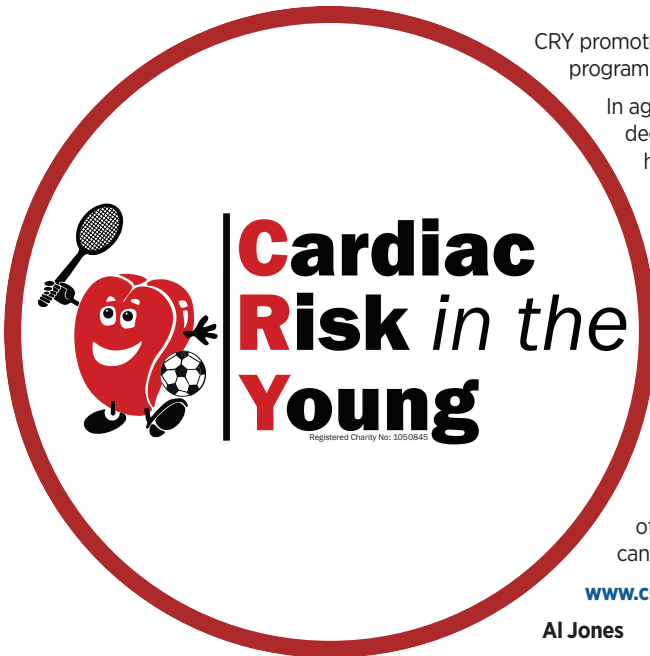
CRY promotes and develops heart screening programmes and funds medical research.

In agreement with the family, I decided to join with them and have the Memorial Fund for Max with Cardiac Risk in the Young as my President's Charity for 2024-25.

Within 2 months, £41,000 has been raised in Max's memory. If we can achieve £70,000, this would be sufficient to fund cardiac screening for 1000 young people. We hope that a number of the screenings would take place here at Silver Leys and as many of our young members as possible can benefit from the screening.

www.c-r-y.org.uk

Al Jones





Second half the Season has been seen the biggest tackle being the weather!

With the Minis having 7 age groups and approximately 300 players, we have a lot of players (and coaches) who are keen to strap their boots on and don their bobble hats for the crisp winter weather every Sunday morning.

Since our return from the festive break, we have struggled to get back on the pitches. This is due to the frozen or wet pitches that are holding us back. We would appreciate more sun dances to get the warmer weather to help us out.

We do, however, have a lot else to look forward in this second half of the season.

We have the U9s & U10s entered in the Herts County Festivals, these are great opportunities for the players to put all their hard work from training sessions into practice against a variety of other teams. We are hoping our U11 & U12s will also enter their county festivals.

We still have our Match Day Experiences taking place, so look out for our wonderful mini guards of honours and give them a cheer if you see them waving their flags and supporting the 1XV.

One of the most exciting part of the rugby season is always the Tours. They feature heavily in the brighter months ahead, with our U12s who will embark on their first solo tour. They will be showing what BSRFC are made of at the annual Leicester Tigers Tour weekend. We also have our huge annual minis tour taking place in April – this season, we are heading to Kent to take on team building activities and playing some much-needed rugby on the last day. All with the theme of ‘Movies’ This is organised by our U10s, they are seeking sponsorship if you fancy having your name in lights, please get in contact – minischair@bsrfc.co.uk

Hoping for a warm second half of the season!





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TODAY'S OPPONENTS



The Rotherham rugby club was founded in 1923, two years after Stortford was founded in 1921. However, it was only in the 2018/19 season in Division One that our clubs finally played each other, as that was the first league where clubs from the South and the North got the opportunity to play each other.

The Titans entered league rugby in 1987 but unlike ourselves, progressed rapidly through the Northern League structure and reached the top tier of English Rugby in 2000 to play in Premier Division One. They were immediately relegated down to Tier 2 then known as National Division One (and not the Championship as Tier two is known today). They won that league in 2001/02 but were denied promotion to Premier Division One (now the newly named Premiership) for not fulfilling the entry requirements. This led to considerable legal wrangling and false claims, until a RFU commissioned inquiry cleared Rotherham of any misconduct. They again won promotion from National Division One to the premiership in the 2002/03 season.

However, Rotherham were relegated again from the Premiership in 2003/04 after failing to win a game that season (but did adopt the "Titans" name as part of a sponsorship deal for their Premiership season). They went on to play thirteen consecutive seasons in National Division One (Tier 2) and the Championship (the name taken by National Division One in the 2011/12 season for Tier 2).

It was only after the Titans were relegated from the Championship in the 2017/18 season that Stortford played them for the first time in National Division One in 2018/19. Rotherham won both games that season winning 20-22 at Stortford in December 2018 and 41-35 at home in April 2019.

The next season was the Covid curtailed season, with Stortford winning 30-14 at home in November 2019 and 24-31 at Rotherham in March 2020 in the last weekend of games before the season was closed down. Rotherham were relegated that season to National Two North after just finishing in the bottom three but were promoted last season to play Stortford again in National One this season.

Stortford have another connection with Rotherham; Andy Long played 10 games for Rotherham in 2003/04 season when they were in the Premiership, although they lost all their games that season despite Andy's presence.

Zak Poole
(Captain)





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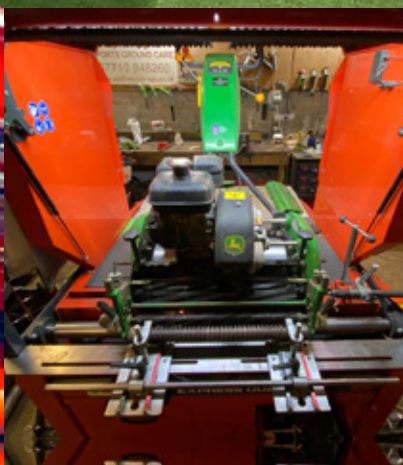
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WOMEN & GIRLS: SALLY HOWELL



Witham Women 5 | 78 BSRFC Women - Match report

On a blustery Sunday afternoon, Bishop's Stortford Women's XV travelled to

Witham for their second fixture of 2025 in the Women's NC 3 Midlands (East) league. Unfazed by the unforgiving weather, the squad brought their A-game and lit up the field with a performance to remember.

From the opening whistle, Bishop's Stortford asserted their dominance. Within just five minutes, fullback Harriet Creasy opened the scoring, cutting through Witham's defence to notch up the first five points. Fly-half Rebekah Coppen confidently added the extras, and the scoreboard flashed 0-7.

Barely catching their breath, Witham found themselves on the back foot once again as Coppen turned scorer. Powering through a sea of defenders, she crossed the whitewash for Stortford's second try, extending the lead to 0-12.

The relentless momentum continued, with No. 8 Keira Chadburn weaving her way into Witham's 22. With Creasy in perfect support, a slick pass sealed the third try, converted once again by the ever-reliable Coppen, bringing the tally to 0-19.

The tries kept flowing. Chadburn struck again under the posts, setting up another straightforward conversion from Rebekah (0-26). The 28th minute saw a dazzling display of teamwork as replacement back-row, Charlotte Wheeler, offloaded to Chadburn, who sprinted in from Witham's 22 to score her hat-trick try. Coppen's metronomic kicking added another two points, stretching the lead to 0-40.

To their credit, Witham refused to fold. Their determination paid off in the 33rd minute, when they powered over for their first points of the day, bringing the score to 5-40.

After halftime, Stortford resumed their dominance. Wheeler crossed the line with characteristic flair, and Coppen's conversion made it 5-47. Shortly after, Becks O'Mahoney showcased her blistering pace as a winger, flying down the touchline

to touch down for the team's eighth try, pushing the lead to 5-54.

From the restart, Sarah Harvey took charge, weaving through Witham's defence and scoring beneath the posts for 5-61. Wheeler was far from finished, using her agility and power to add another to her tally, making it 5-66.

As the clock ticked down, scrum-half Donna McDonald seized an opportunity at the back of a ruck, darting over the line with a stretch that earned Stortford their 11th try of the game. The score soared to 5-71.

The final flourish came from Harvey, who crashed through the defence to cap off an incredible team performance. Coppen's conversion sealed a triumphant 5-78 victory for Bishop's Stortford.

From the first whistle to the last, this was a match defined by passion, precision, and teamwork. BSRFC Women's XV demonstrated their collective strength and left no doubt that they're a force to be reckoned with this season.

- **Forward of the match: Lunette Opperman** (available for sponsorship)
- **Back of the match: Rebekah Coppen** (sponsored by SHH Training)

Matchday squad:

1. L. Opperman; 2. B Jones; 3. C Kempton; 4. A Madigan-Rowe Ramos; 5. Y Knott (VC); 6. L Cushway; 7. L Jordan; 8. K Chadburn; 9. D. McDonald; 10. R Coppen; 11. B O'Mahoney; 12. J Bice (C); 13. E Sauvary; 14. A Borman; 15. H Creasy; 16. K Wheatley; 17. C Radukic; 18. C Wheeler; 19. F Fudge; 20. S Harvey; 21. A Vernon; 22. S Schutte



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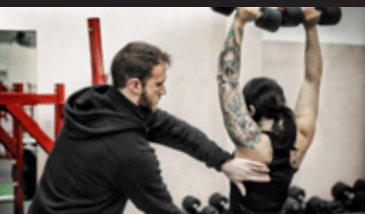
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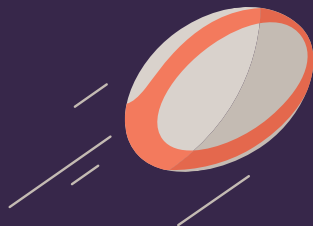
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NATIONAL 1: RESULTS, FIXTURES, TABLE

Results from 8th February 2025

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM
Blackheath	19 - 22	Plymouth Albion
Darlington Mowden Park	22 - 29	Esher
Rams	25 - 34	Bishop's Stortford
Richmond	31 - 14	Ding Crusaders
Rosslyn Park	52 - 33	Sale FC
Rotherham	24 - 7	Leicester Lions
Sedgley park	20 - 28	Birmingham Moseley

Fixtures for 15th February 2025

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM
Birmingham Moseley	vs	Rams
Bishop's Stortford	vs	Rotherham
Ding Crusaders	vs	Rosslyn Park
Esher	vs	Blackheath
Leicester Lions	vs	Richmond
Plymouth Albion	vs	Sedgeley Park
Sale FC	vs	Darlington Mowden Park

NATIONAL LEAGUE 1 TABLE											
Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TBP	LBP	Points	Adj.
Richmond	18	15	1	2	560	343	217	11	0	73	0
Rams	18	13	0	5	528	319	209	14	4	70	0
Rotherham	17	14	0	3	523	357	166	9	2	67	0
Rosslyn Park	18	12	0	6	595	464	131	12	2	62	0
Plymouth Albion	18	11	0	7	474	424	50	12	5	61	0
Blackheath	17	10	0	7	482	392	90	8	4	52	0
Birmingham Moseley	16	9	0	7	395	389	6	8	2	46	0
Bishop's Stortford	17	7	0	10	419	424	-5	9	5	42	0
Sale FC	17	7	0	10	366	433	-67	6	6	40	0
Dings	18	6	1	11	461	552	-91	10	1	37	0
Sedgley Park	18	6	1	11	427	451	-24	6	4	36	0
Esher	17	6	0	11	461	643	-182	10	1	35	0
Leicester Lions	18	3	0	15	331	539	-208	5	5	22	0
Darlington Mowden Park	17	1	1	15	330	622	-292	5	2	13	0



BISHOP'S STORTFORD

BLUE AND WHITE

- 1 Tristan Smith
 - 2 Isaac Bell
 - 3 Toby Hill
 - 4 Hamish Ferguson
 - 5 Frazier Kiff
 - 6 Harrison Langworthy
 - 7 Ollie Jones
 - 8 Will Rogers
 - 9 Chris Bolton
 - 10 Mike Cooke
 - 11 Alex Gilham
 - 12 Austin Pope
 - 13 Tom Mills
 - 14 Josh Stannard
 - 15 David Hayes
- REPLACEMENTS
- 16 Alex Rayment
 - 17 Seb Brownhill
 - 18 Sam Johnson
 - 19 Charlie Briers
 - 20 Jack Biard

Head Coach:

Tom Coleman

Forwards Coaches:

Cameron Boon

Defence Coach & Blues Head Coach

Ian Simpson

Scrum & Throwing Coach:

Rob Faiers

Head Strength & Conditioning:

Ben Sheath

Lead Medical:

Ryan Clarke

Head Physio:

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11 James Cooke

12 Calum Barrett

13 Lloyd Hayes

14 Tomasi Tanumi

15 Ronnie Du Randt

REPLACEMENTS

16 Jack Bergmanas

17 Zach Toerien

18 Andrew Foster

19 Harry Newborn

20 JB Bruzulier

Director of Rugby:

Harvey Biljon

Assistant Coach:

Matt Smith

Head Physio:

David Swift

Club Doctor:

Chris Myers

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ASSISTANT REFEREE 1:

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MATCH REPORT: JOHN ALLANSON



Plymouth Albion 24 Bishop's Stortford First XV 21

Stortford battle hard and gain a bonus point, pushing an aggressive Plymouth side very close, but ill-discipline and crucial misses from the kicking tee lead to ultimate frustration.

The visitors put in a strong first half, with both sides looking to run the ball and it was Stortford that scored first, with Chris Smith punishing a lazy Plymouth chase back to touch down a Dan Powell kick after 10 minutes. The conversion attempt went wide, as did a penalty 3 minutes later, after one of many offside decisions against both sides. The home side took the lead with 20 minutes gone with winger, Craig Duncan touching down following an attacking lineout from another offside penalty and Tom Putt converting. Stortford were back in front almost immediately, with Sam Johnson recovering the restart kick and Alex Gilham catching a clever Powell chip ahead on the full and dodging his way over. Tom Mills converted. The lead changed hands again, 7 minutes later, sandwiching another converted Plymouth try from hooker, Rhys Williams from a quickly tapped penalty, after Stortford's scrum came under a bit of pressure, being penalised twice in succession. Stortford fought back, though and were good value for a 14-18 halftime lead, after Tom Mills added two penalty goals on 31 and 38 minutes.

The second half started well for the visitors, with another Mills penalty after 3 minutes, following a few phases of attacking play. That gave them a 7 point lead, but from that point on the game started to slip from their grasp, with frequent penalties conceded, their cause not being helped by the loss to injury of skipper, Will Rogers with 48 minutes gone. Stortford needed to produce some typically dogged defending, as Plymouth increased the pressure and a yellow card to Mills after 50 minutes for a deemed deliberate knock-on lead immediately to an unconverted try for Williams from a driving maul, after the penalty was kicked to touch. As the home side turned up the attacking heat even more, the penalty count against Stortford, almost inevitably rose. More great defence, however, kept their line intact until the 74th minute, despite further yellow cards to Ollie Jones after 64 minutes (side entry at a breakdown) and Mills after 73 (became a red for a second deliberate knock-on). The latter was followed immediately by a fourth Plymouth try which went unconverted, but took them into a crucial lead. Facing no more than 14 men for the last quarter of the game, the home side, almost inevitably, dominated the final stages, but were unable to break down again Stortford's hugely committed defence.

With grateful thanks to David Ellis for providing the timeline notes on which the above was based!



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IN THE SPOTLIGHT: HAMISH FERGUSON



If you asked a regular Stortford supporter to name the player who had started in all Stortford Division One games this season, would they name Hamish Ferguson? Hamish has started all Stortford games in the second row this season except for the Plymouth home game (when he started in the back row wearing the number 6 jersey, but was substituted in the first half and came back on in the second half into his usual spot in the second row).



So, if a regular Stortford supporter did not name Hamish as the player who started all Stortford's game this season, would that be because Hamish is not noticed on the field or is it because he turns in a workman like performance every time he plays? Tom Coleman is unlikely to select players so regularly for the side if they are not making such an important contribution to the team's performance.

At the start of the season Hamish was being substituted in the second half but more lately has been putting in a full 80 minutes on the field. Hamish presence is important in both the lineouts and the scrums and reflects his workman like attitude to the game. In fact, his latest photo appearance in the club's Twitter/X account sees Hamish being assisted by fellow forward Henry Peck cleaning the changing rooms after the Sedgley Park game. You do not get more workmanlike than that.

Hamish is 6ft 4ins tall and weighs in at 116 Kilos (approx. 18 stones) so he is a natural second row forward. He was born in Nottingham and moved to Scotland (his father's country of birth) when he was 17. It is down to his father that he is called "Hamish Ferguson" but he is far from 100% Scottish. In fact, his mother was born in the Old Harlow area so he has English blood as well.

He played two years for Currie Chieftains in Edinburgh at the start of his senior rugby career before moving to Stirling and then played another two seasons of Scottish League rugby for Stirling Wolves. He then went to Australia in the summer of 2024 and played for Warringah Rats on the North Beaches area of Sydney. It is a great location to play rugby.

At Warringah he had a chance meeting with a friend of Will Rogers who had been told that Stortford were looking for second rows. Hamish got in touch with Tom and signed up with Stortford for the new season. He says English National One league rugby is a lot more intense than league rugby in Scotland. The question now is will he manage to play in all the Stortford games this season in his first season at Stortford?

Hamish is sponsored by Russell Property and also drives the Stortford Club community mini-bus in his community liaison role at the club.





Did you know **Club Stortford** has raised over **£467,000** to help the 1st XV team over the last twelve seasons? Now in our 13th season, it's hard to believe we started as a small working party to support the squad after our promotion to National League Rugby in 2013/14. It was the brainchild of Charlie Dunsford, Russell Cattell and others from the club. Many members have worked tirelessly both at the forefront and behind the scenes throughout the last 13 years and we want that to continue. At our recent AGM **Charlie Dunsford** and **Jamie Baker** were duly elected to take up the ongoing challenge as the New President and New Secretary.



Club Stortford works closely with the 1st XV coaching team to provide funding for expenditure beyond the resources of the main club and our Mission Statement remains a simple one;

- **To ensure BSRFC continues our journey in National 1s League Rugby – this includes the 1st & Blues as one squad**
- **To cultivate new homegrown talent throughout the club drawing from the - minis - youth - colts - development squad.**

We continue to be on the hunt for new members who can help us to broaden the extent of our support for the squad. Both individual and corporate membership options are available, and come with exclusive Club Stortford ties, 2 x Club Stortford pre-match lunches, match reports after each league game and other perks like access to Six Nations and Autumn Internationals tickets. There will also be regular updates for Club Stortford Members from Tom Coleman, our new head coach. Alongside this, you'll get discounts to local restaurants like Zara. Get in touch with our secretary **Jamie Baker** on **07922 422 489** for more information or to join.

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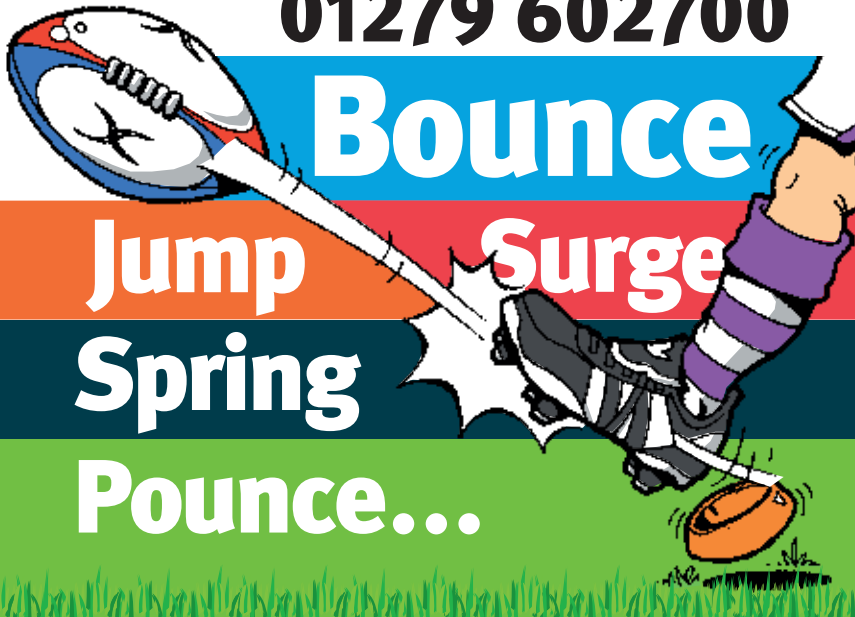


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The Oval Club was formed in 1998 by some Bishop's Stortford Rugby Football Club members who wanted to find a way of raising funds to improve the playing facilities of the Club with the mission statement:

'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 on-going 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
Steven Wasley - Secretary
John Power - Treasurer
John Robinson
Mark Caulfield
Mark Smith

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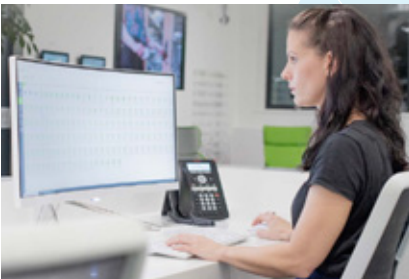
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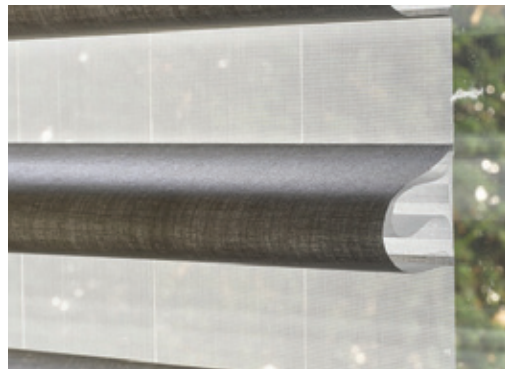


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FULL DETAILS INSIDE



Northgate End flats and offices to be sold as a job lot

Sinead Carr
sinead.carr@independent.co.uk

East Herts Council (EHC) is ready to sell off 12 vacant flats and commercial space in Bishop's Stortford as a job lot for a quick sale.

A "credible offer in writing" has been made for the freehold of the whole block at Northgate End.

The homes and business premises were built alongside the £20m multi-storey car park, which opened in June 2022. They cost the authority £100,000 a year to manage.

The ground floor of the four-storey building is occupied by HRGO Recruitment and Launchpad, the council's co-working, office and meeting space which moved from Charringtons House to make way for the Old River Lane development.

But the flats have been tenanted for more than two and a half years.

At a meeting last night (Tuesday), Cllr Carl Brittain, EHC's executive member for financial sustainability, was due to recommend that "the entire freehold be sold to a sole

purchaser". An officer will ensure the deal represents "best consideration".

As well as saving management costs, the cash-strapped council needs to sell the property - 1 to 15 Limekiln Lane and 1 Link Road - to avoid borrowing to buy bin lorries as it begins a new waste contract.

The executive will consider three options for the site. Some discussions about financial modelling will take place in private because of commercial sensitivities.

The multi-storey was built to free up the Causeway car park for the Old River Lane project for shops, offices and housing on the site.

Cllr Brittain was set to tell his Green and Liberal Democrat colleagues that in May 2022, the Old River Lane Board wanted to sell six "affordable flats" to a housing association.

The only offer was declined because of "conditions which were not achievable or acceptable".

At the same time, it hoped to offload

► Continues on page 3

Driver cut free after crashing into road works truck on M11



The driver of this car was taken to hospital after having to be cut free from the wreckage when he crashed into a stationary road works protection vehicle on the M11 near Bishop's Stortford. **see page 3**

Picture: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

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OFF THE PITCH: DROP GOALS



Why are there no drop goals kicked in the modern game?

The last time I saw a drop goal kicked at Stortford was in the Sale home game back in November 2022, when the Sale outside half was forced to kick a drop goal conversion (when the ball fell off the tee as he was attempting a conversion!) Sale eventually won the game 33-35, so it was a significant drop goal but obviously not a drop goal for the usual three points if it had been kicked in open play.

So why are players no longer kicking drop goals from open play? This is connected to why sides are not taking “easy” penalty goals but kicking for touch and going for rolling maul tries from lineouts.

The attacking side has the lineout throw, so can set up the optimal situation in the lineout for a rolling maul to score a possible five points try (which could become seven points with a successful conversion). This is a far better result than just a three points penalty. In addition, the try will be added to the four tries required for a bonus point.

In the home game against Chinnor in November of last season, Chinnor declined a number of easy penalty kicks as Stortford defended tenaciously in the second half, trying to prevent Chinnor from getting their fourth try and the bonus point. Chinnor eventually achieved their target of a fourth try and the five point league win in the last minute. That season in the return match at Chinnor, the four try bonus point was not a concern for the home side as they racked up eighty points and never even considered taking penalty goals.

So, the combination of the extra points for a converted or unconverted try, combined with the try going towards an extra bonus point, means the value of kicking an easy penalty goal for a lead is not really a serious consideration during a game. It is also far

easier to kick an unopposed penalty from a kicking tee rather than attempting an opposed drop goal from open play (which means an attempted drop goal is of even less value). In addition, a successful penalty or drop goal means a mid-field restart and the surrender of a good try scoring field position.

This could also explain why these days there are more long-range penalty attempts when a successful kick does not surrender a large amount of field position if the kick is successful.

Going for touch from a penalty also indicates an attacking mind-set and is a psychological statement of intent, whereas a penalty or drop goal attempt will reflect a defensive mind-set.

It also used to be an option to attempt a drop goal, forcing the referee to end the playing advantage from a penalty award. However, these days players are more likely to use a cross kick to achieve this, as a successful drop goal would not deliver the desired result (it would remove the option of the “kick for the corner” lineout).

The drop goal and easy penalty are still a good option. At the end of games when the score is close, a successful drop goal can decide a game, for example when Jonny Wilkinson’s winning drop goal at the end of the 2003 World Cup famously won the World Cup. As a Welshman I much preferred JPR William’s drop goal in the drawn final test of the 1971 Lions NZ tour.



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MATCH DAY EXPERIENCE

Behind the scenes with the 1st XV...

As part of the Club's ethos 'to be a strong and successful rugby club united from Senior to Minis', trusted and valued by our community BSRFC Head Coach **Tom Coleman** along with Club captain **Will Rodgers** and the rest of the 1st XV Squad, provide an insight for our Mini and Junior Members into what goes on behind the scenes as the players prepare for a National League 1 Match.



The day kicks off with a Q&A in the 1st XV changing room, followed by training, games and warm-up sessions with the minis coaches and injured players. They then form the "Players Tunnel" alongside the "Blazers" to welcome both the opposition and the 1st XV onto the pitch before the game. Their experience culminates with Post Match Photos alongside the Players.



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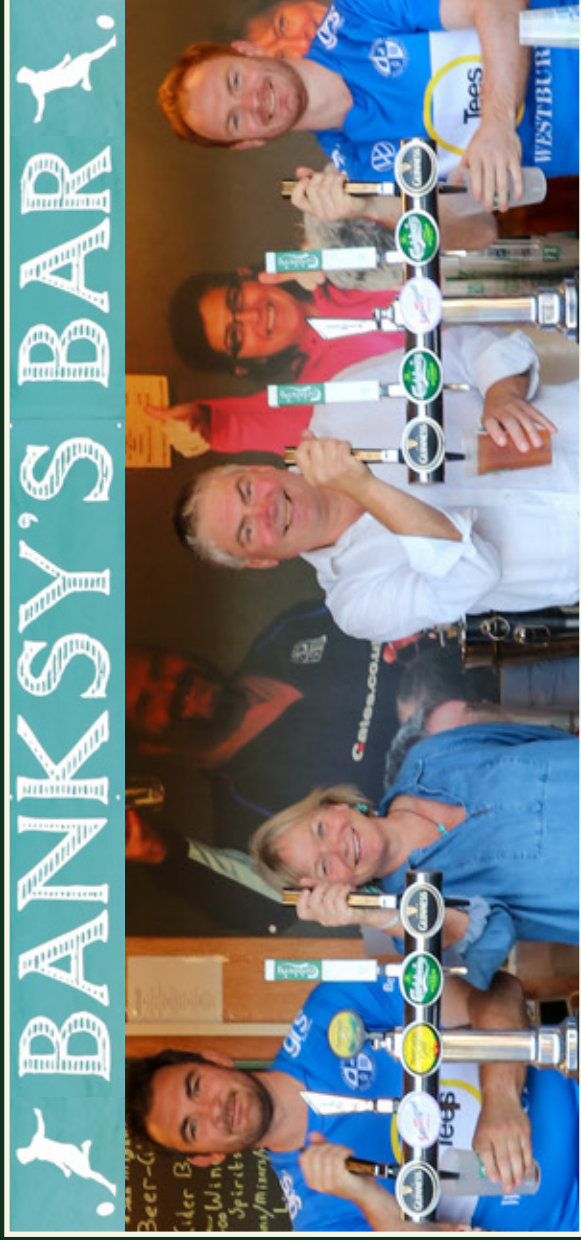
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