

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME OF BISHOP'S STORTFORD RFC

# STORTFORD

IN THE SPOTLIGHT  
**ISAAC  
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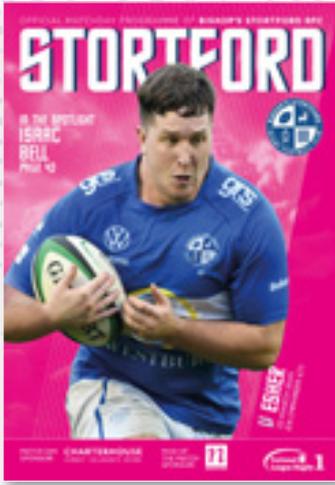
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# FROM THE PRESIDENT: AL JONES



After taking at least a point in each match from a tough run of games against the top 4 teams in the league, the 1st XV had a bonus point win on the road at Darlington last Saturday. With 5 games remaining in the season, we are getting to crunch time in National One.

Today we are delighted to host Esher back to Silver Leys. Although we enjoyed a good win at Moseley Road in dreadful weather conditions at the end of November, Esher have had some strong and eye-catching performances in early 2025 defeating Rosslyn Park, Birmingham Moseley and Darlington Mowden Park in successive weeks scoring plenty of tries into the bargain. We will need to be at our best today, but Ladies Day has brought some strong performances out of our 1st XV in recent years.

For well over a decade, we have handed the marquee over for one Saturday per season to **Ladies Day** and the apparent annual attempt to break the record for most Prosecco and Pimm's consumed in an afternoon. Among the chaos and entertainment however is a huge fundraising effort, this year to raise money for **'Red Kite'**, a charity based in Bishop's Stortford supporting all survivors of rape and sexual abuse in Hertfordshire & West Essex. I would like to thank and congratulate Dee Compton and her team for organising this year's event again and thank **Pelham Interiors** for their sponsorship of Ladies Day.

With the marquee otherwise occupied, we have a smaller pre-match lunch in the Stokes Room this afternoon.

I am delighted to welcome Sim Richardson from Bishop's Stortford Town Council and her husband Simon to the Club this afternoon along with Club Trustee Steve Marriott as my guests at lunch today.

Today's Match Day Sponsor is Charterhouse and Dave Doherty, a long-time sponsor of the Colts and our Women's Teams, and we are also joined,

inevitably, by The Three Willows & Ace of Lanes crew, and Nockolds.

Finally, I must mention the recent performances of a couple of our social sides.

The Chindits will be playing in the Herts County Finals here at Silver Leys on 26th April having won their semi-final a fortnight ago. The 1st XV are away at Leicester Lions that afternoon, so if you are not making the trip to Leicester, do come along and support the Chindits at home. And congratulations our Women's Team beat Clacton 80-0 to comprehensively win their league and promotion. Well done to both sides.

I hope you all enjoy your afternoon at Silver Leys today. And gentlemen, you enter the marquee today at your own risk.

*Al*

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# TOM COLEMAN: HEAD COACH



Good afternoon, all, welcome to our annual Ladies day event. What a day this has become in the club's calendar and I hope we can all get behind supporting another brilliant charity in **Red Kite**.

For the players, it has to be business as usual and our focus remains solely on getting a win first and foremost. Esher will be coming here with exactly the same mindset, and we have prepared for a really tough game of rugby against a very good side.

Last weekend we faced the difficult journey up north to play Darlington Mowden Park. I'm disappointed with some negativity that I've heard about that game and how we went about our business! In a game where all the pressure was on my team, I struggle to see how we aren't all delighted with the victory that the players managed to get? DMP were scrapping for their lives, and we expected a really tough game, and that's what we got. We managed some difficult

moments, injuries in the first half, some very poor refereeing decisions against us, but we took the game away from Darlington through our set piece, and that's what good teams do. It was an excellent five points to pick up on the road after a very intense block of fixtures.

The key over the next six weeks will be trying to manage bodies and ensure the players are full of energy when it comes to game day. This is always a really challenging period for every team but our desire to finish the season strongly is huge.

As always, I would like to thank all the sponsors for their generosity throughout the season, it's a vital part of the team's success and we cannot thank you enough. Hopefully there will be an opportunity to share a drink with us all after the game today.

I hope everyone has a great day, give generously and remember to get behind the team!

COYB!

*Tom*

## THE COACHING STAFF



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



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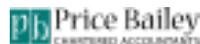
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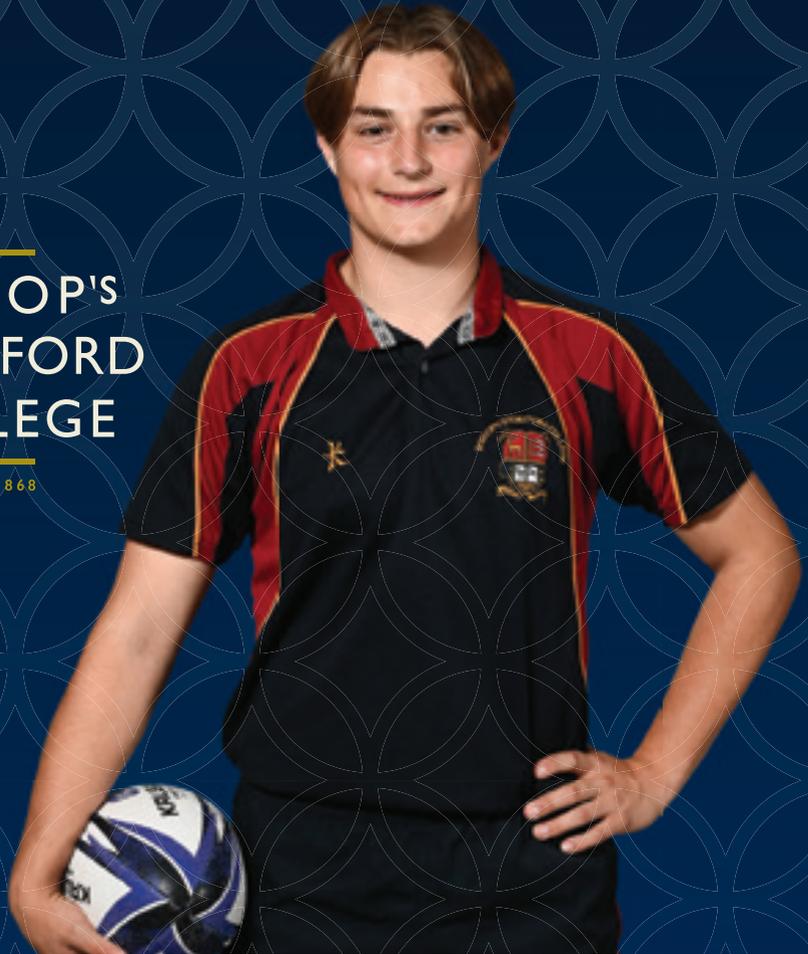
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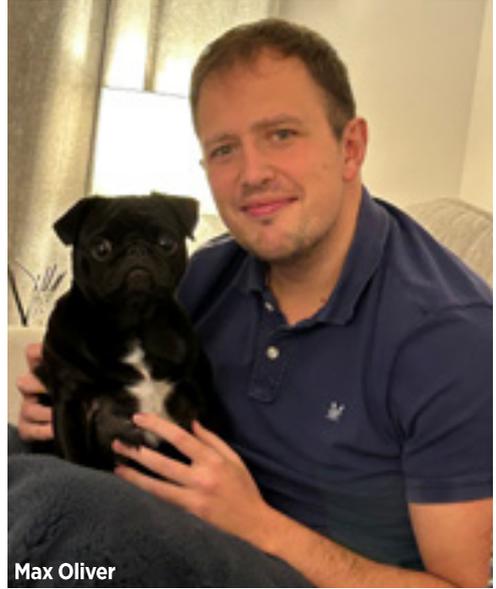
18 months ago, my family suffered a terrible loss when my brother-in-law died as a result of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest. He was 49 years old.

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

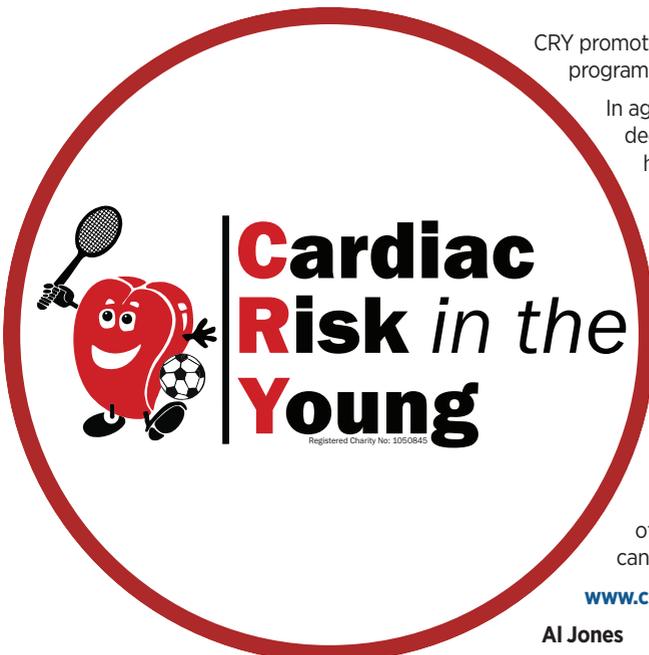
CRY promotes and develops heart screening programmes and funds medical research.

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](http://www.c-r-y.org.uk)

Al Jones



# COLTS UPDATE: DAVE McFIE



As of Sunday the 16th the colts A-team have booked their entry into the County cup final with an emphatic 66-8 victory over the

Fullerians rugby club of Watford. A great start to the game paved the way as they were 40-3 up 10 minutes before half time. Showing a fast-flowing direct style of rugby the colts A-team produced what is the best performance of the season and it would be hoped they can produce this same again, especially on finals day.

The B-team have their own semi-final on the 30th of March at home to Royston rugby club and if successful it would round off a fantastic end to a turbulent season. Again, the Colts have been blighted with some significant long-term injuries and an abundance of school fixtures meaning the club lose the availability of some of its bright young talent.

The Colts have again seen several boys progress into the club senior sides where they get to play alongside many of the boys who have moved on from colts over the past few seasons. With the Blues moving into a formal RFU league next season it will be great to see the possibility of

more opportunities for young colts playing in the league with the Blues to further advance their aspirations of playing in the 1st XV.

There is a continued battle for players time with many of the local rugby playing schools, but the frustration has further been exacerbated this season by the private schools playing school competitions on Sundays which directly affects their availability for the club. Whilst it's understandable that the players want to play for their schools the people who are allowing this really need to organise and compete in competitions which don't affect on club Sundays!

I personally am not sure this is going to be beneficial to the long-term future to grass roots rugby. Those young boys who don't have direct connections to clubs through friends or family will just not turn up and play men's rugby after school. It's great to see many young players getting future honours through the private school pathway but hopefully the organisers can see that unless it's managed and organised well there will be many young men just disappear from adult rugby as they will have no connections in clubs.

For now the future is bright for young talent at our great club and long may this be so!





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# TODAY'S OPPONENTS



The club was formed in 1923 when four rugby enthusiasts agreed to start a club. One of the founders was Welsh and a Newport Rugby Club fan; the Esher club colours of yellow and black hoops were selected as they are the same colours as Newport.

When the new league system was introduced in 1987 Esher were placed in London One, but were relegated in the first season and did not win promotion back to that league until 1993.

Esher were first promoted to the national leagues system for the 1997/1998 season and finished fourth in what was tier 4 National League Two South. They led the league for most of the season in the following year and finished second. They won promotion to National Division Two in the following 1999/2000 season (National Division Two was the tier 3 level, equivalent to National One in those days).

The club set a new points record when winning National Division Two in 2006/2007 and were thus promoted into the second tier, National Division One.

National Division One was reorganised into the Championship and National One after the 2008/2009 season. Esher did not finish high enough in the National One table to make the cut for the new Championship league and were effectively relegated into National One for the 2009/2010 season (the new tier 3). During this season they broke the world record for a competitive match score when they beat Manchester 148-0 and also won promotion to the Championship and back into tier 2 rugby that season.

They played in the Championship for two seasons before being relegated back into National One and tier 3 for the 2012/2013 season. Esher now boringly remained in National One for seven seasons.

Stortford played Esher in Stortford's first two seasons in National One doing the double on Esher in 2017/2018 season and finishing seventh in the table (and above Esher who finished ninth).

In the 2018/2019 season Esher won at Stortford 26-29 in October 2018 and Stortford won the return fixture 27-14 in February 2019.

Esher were relegated from National One at the end of this 2018/2019 season but were promoted back to National One for 2022/23 season when they won National Two South in 2021/22.

Esher only stayed in National One this time for one season. Stortford beat them 38-30 at home in December but Esher won 30-13 in April at their place (when they were staging a late season rally to avoid relegation). They finally finished twelfth with 9 wins and 53 points and were just pipped by Taunton with 9 wins and 57 points.

Esher then gained promotion from National Two East last season beating Barnes in the promotion race and are now back in National One so we are playing them again in league rugby.





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# WOMEN & GIRLS: CHLOE CAPP



## Match report | BSRFC Women 86-0 Clacton Women

As the winter blues start to melt away, BSRFC Women took to home turf to advance their promotion campaign. The vibes were immaculate, the sun was shining, and the prospect of a league-winning game was in the air.

The game started with a bang as BSRFC Women took the kick-off. However, the ball was not in Clacton's court at all. A fumble of the ball allowed Stortford to turn the ball over almost immediately, giving captain Jasmin Bice the opportunity to run over the try line right from the whistle. Fly-half Rebekah Coppén then secured the extra points with a successful conversion.

It didn't stop there - it didn't even slow down. The home side showed off their fancy footwork, pace and determination, passing the ball out wide to winger Grace Rhoden, who eloquently placed the ball over the line, followed by another successful conversion from Coppén. It was flanker, Larissa Cushway who added to the scoreboard next - her first try in a Stortford jersey - setting down directly under the posts for an easy 7 points.

Coppén showed that she's not just an expert in kicking, with a brilliant dummy pass that gave Stortford metres in the opposition's half. Feeling the pressure from a dominant blue side, Clacton conceded the first penalty of the game. Scrum-half, Donna McDonald took the quick tap and made a beeline for the posts, where she confidently placed the ball.

Clacton restarted the game with a strong kick, but an unfortunate knock-on from BSRFC led to the first scrum of the game. The home team demonstrated the strength of their pack, maintaining an excellent scrum. Clacton attempted to pick-and-go from the 8 but ran into a formidable blue fortress.

As the ball made its way through Clacton hands, Bice perfected her turnover technique on a missed pass, enabling number 8, Kim Welsh, to bulldoze her way through Clacton's defensive attempts before placing the ball over the try line, followed by another conversion by Coppén.

The blue side continued to showcase their teamwork, when McDonald, Coppén and Bice ran up to the try line, passing the ball between them to ensure that Coppén secured the sixth try, which she humbly converted. With all the rugby being played in the opposition's 22, it wasn't long before the next penalty presented itself. A high tackle by the opposition resulted in advantage for the home team and Rhoden scoring her second try.

At the restart, Walsh continued to show that she's a force to be reckoned with, catching the ball from the kick and making impressive ground. Before she herself could be grounded, she popped the ball out to McDonald who outmanoeuvred a frustrated Clacton side, scoring under the posts. Another golden boot opportunity from Coppén added the extras to bring the score to 54-0 at half time.

The second half did not disappoint; although some unfortunate handling errors resulted in a penalty for Clacton, who kicked the ball into touch for the first lineout of the game. They couldn't maintain possession for long against Lorell Jordan's famous 'jump and steal', and some well-rehearsed team play allowed Stortford to make their way back to the try line for a hat-trick from McDonald, once again converted by Coppén.

The next restart landed straight into the arms of Ellie-Jayne Cappuccini, returning to the pitch for the first time after a long-term injury. In a strong pack effort, the ball made its way back into the hands of Sarah Harvey, who raced to the try line with Jordan hot on her heels to add another converted try to the scoreboard.

BSRFC Women showed no signs of slowing or tiring, especially when outside-centre, Elise Sauvary, got the ball and darted down the pitch to score the next try. Shortly afterward, Harvey thundered down toward the tryline for the final points of the game, once again converted by Coppén, and bringing the full-time score to 80-0.

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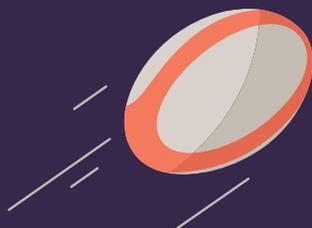
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# NATIONAL 1: RESULTS, FIXTURES, TABLE

## Results from 15th March 2025

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM
Blackheath	39 - 33	Rams
<b>Darlington Mowden Park</b>	<b>12 - 41</b>	<b>Bishop's Stortford</b>
Esher	15 - 26	Leicester Lions
Richmond	54 - 0	Plymouth Albion
Rosslyn Park	29 - 22	Birmingham Moseley
Rotherham	38 - 29	Sedgley Park
Sale FC	54 - 38	Dings Crusaders

## Fixtures for 22nd March 2025

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

NATIONAL LEAGUE 1 TABLE											
Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	TBP	LBP	Points	Adj.
Richmond	22	18	2	2	713	409	304	15	0	91	0
Rotherham	22	18	0	4	694	481	213	11	3	86	0
Rosslyn Park	22	16	0	6	735	552	183	15	2	81	0
Plymouth Albion	22	14	0	8	582	566	16	14	5	75	0
Rams	22	13	0	9	627	458	169	17	6	75	0
Blackheath	22	14	0	8	692	498	194	12	5	73	0
Sale FC	22	11	0	11	531	542	-11	10	6	60	0
Birmingham Moseley	21	10	1	10	508	503	5	10	4	56	0
<b>Bishop's Stortford</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0</b>
Sedgley Park	22	8	1	13	550	582	-32	9	5	48	0
Dings	22	8	1	13	596	715	-119	13	1	48	0
<b>Esher</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>-297</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>
Leicester Lions	22	5	0	17	461	601	-140	7	6	33	0
Darlington Mowden Park	22	1	1	20	380	854	-474	6	3	15	0



# BISHOP'S STORTFORD

BLUE AND WHITE

- 1 Tristan Smith
- 2 Alex Rayment
- 3 Henry Peck
- 4 Harry Charter
- 5 Frazier Kiff
- 6 Harrison Langworthy
- 7 Sam Johnson
- 8 Will Rogers(c)
- 9 Chris Bolton
- 10 David Hayes
- 11 Alex Gilham
- 12 Austin Pope
- 13 Jack Biard
- 14 Tom Mills
- 15 Dan Powell

## REPLACEMENTS

- 16 James Isaacs
- 17 Seb Brownhill
- 18 Toby Hill
- 19 Chris Smith
- 20 Dec Murphy

**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:**

Ryan Clark

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## BLACK AND GOLD

- 1 Jacob Morris
- 2 Joe Vajner
- 3 Henry Pearson
- 4 Hugh Sloan
- 5 Dan Cooke
- 6 Olly Norris
- 7 Matt Mahoney
- 8 Alex Mclean
- 9 Henry Mortimer
- 10 Sam Morley
- 11 Johnny Keh
- 12 Owen Waters
- 13 Myles Rawstron Rudd
- 14 Fergus Donelly
- 15 Harry Faulkner

### REPLACEMENTS

- 16 Sam Westmacott
- 17 Caleb Ashworth
- 18 Adam Bullet
- 19 Tom Walker
- 20 Jack Blackmore

#### Team Manager:

Liam Crellin

#### Coach:

Christopher Wilkins

#### Team Manager:

Peter Winterbottom

#### REFEREE:

**Alan Chandrachud**

#### ASSISTANT REFEREE 1:

**Steven Randall**

#### ASSISTANT REFEREE 2:

**Gavin Scott**

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Due to printing deadlines, the Esher team shown is the team from last week's game.

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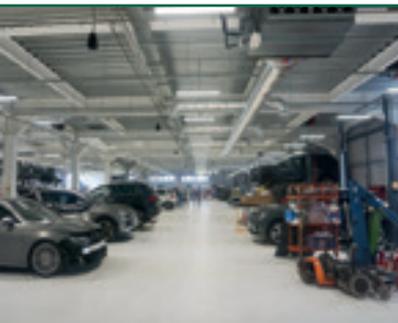
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# MATCH REPORT: JOHN ALLANSON



## Darlington Mowden Park 12 Bishop's Stortford 1st XV 41

Stortford started slowly, but took a 7 point lead after as many minutes, when Jake Morris was given room to round his opposite number and sprint under the posts, after a well-timed incursion into the line from blindside wing, Chris Smith caught the home defence off balance. It was Smith himself who scored a second try 5 minutes later, when David Hayes showed great composure to hold up the ball inside the DMP 22, after a move had threatened to peter out, which had been set up by a piece of sleight of hand in the form of a flicked pass behind his back from the scorer. Far from piling on the pressure from this strong start, Stortford became a bit sloppy and invited the home side into the game, paying the price after 21 minutes, when DMP mounted a few phases of hard-driving play and were able to crash over the line for an unconverted try. With both sides committing numerous errors, the game had little pattern for a while, but the visitors finally managed to impose themselves again with 34 minutes gone, when Smith again touched down out wide, after a short period of sustained pressure on the opposition line.

Stortford again started slowly after the break and had to withstand a spell of early aggression from the home side, before Declan Murphy finally forced a turnover on Stortford's 22, by putting his opposite number under pressure at the back of an attacking scrum after 13 minutes. It took a remarkable 30 metre lineout drive to complete the turnaround, allowing Alex Rayment to touch down the bonus-point try, after a huge drive was sustained through two switches of direction. The conversion attempt went just wide and Stortford's lead was soon narrowed to only 12 points, when some sloppy defence

out wide allowed DMP's big right wing to run in untouched, after some smart handling in their midfield and Gary Law added an excellent conversion from out wide. It was now the visitors' turn to strike back quickly, with Will Rogers leading from the front, making some thirty metres through the heart of the defence from the restart kick. Another dominant lineout drive followed, but the home side was this time able to halt the maul, only for the ball to be switched quickly down the backs for Smith to go over on the opposite wing for his third try. Morris added his second 5 minutes later, with quick hands along the line again stretching the home defence, which had doggedly resisted a number of strong thrusts up the middle. Alex Gilham was unfortunate after 29 minutes to be deprived of a try, when the referee blew up for violent play well off the ball by a DMP player, before the newly-arrived replacement winger was able to touch down, having run clear of the defence after leaping high to intercept a long pass around halfway. The severity of the offence was such that the culprit was red-carded and Stortford's 7th try was not long-delayed, when pressure from the resultant penalty allowed Tom Mills to score from a neat Austin Pope chip kick under the hosts' posts. The conversion took the score to 12-41 with more than 10 minutes remaining, but the game rather petered out after that, with Stortford and their many travelling supporters happy to come away with 5 valuable league points from a rather fitful performance.



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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT: ISAAC BELL



Isaac joined Stortford this season from Loughborough University and has been selected for eleven games. His appearances have been curtailed this season because

of a number of injuries. He has had a broken rib, a dislocated collar and is currently recovering from an ankle strain. He is, however, very hopeful of being available for today's Ladies' Day match. Isaac has scored two tries for Stortford, one against Darlington and one against Rams. The two tries could be described as typical hooker tries scored from the back of driving mauls. These days hookers are expected to score many such tries and it shows how the modern game has developed with hookers scoring as many tries as wingers.



Isaac was introduced to the club by Tristan Smith who played with Isaac at Loughborough University. Another good example of front row union solidarity.

Isaac is 22 years old and is 180 cm (5ft 11 ins) tall and weighs 105 kilograms (16 ½ stones) which are just about the spot-on physical dimensions for a hooker. Isaac says he has always played rugby as a hooker.

Isaac hails from Somerset in the West Country rugby area and started his career at Winscombe RFC. Winscombe play in the Regional 2 Tribute South West League and are currently sixth in the middle of a table with lots of well-known West Country towns.

He went to Millfield School and was selected for the Bristol Bears Academy before he went to Loughborough University. Isaac won around fifty league caps for Loughborough in both the National Two North and the new National Two West leagues when Loughborough was allocated to that new league (when National Two was reorganised).

When playing hooker for Loughborough in the BUCS (British University and Colleges Sport) competition he scored a hat-trick of tries against Swansea University, admittedly in a record 95-8 win!

While at Loughborough he made appearances for Northampton Saints and Bedford Blues. He played for Northampton Saints in the Premiership Rugby Cup against Quins and Saracens in 2022/23 and for Bedford Blues against Bristol Bears in 2023/24.

Isaac works in cyber security consultancy recruitment in London and lives in Stortford, sharing accommodation with Harrison Langworthy.

Isaac is being sponsored this season by Nockholds Solicitors.





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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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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### Tory defector rejects by-election call following switch to Reform

#### Graham McAndrew will become Bishop's Stortford's first councillor representing Nigel Farage's party

Stuart Orr  
stuart.orr@bishopstortfordindependent.co.uk

Conservative defector Graham McAndrew says he will not be stepping down and intends to serve as Bishop's Stortford's first Reform UK councillor.

Cllr McAndrew sent shockwaves across the political spectrum when his decision to join Nigel Farage's party was revealed on Monday (March 17).

His former Tory colleagues and Labour have called on him to relinquish his East Herts Council (EHC) seat, but he told the *Indie* there would be no by-election in his Bishop's Stortford Thorpe Mead ward and he intended to serve out the remaining two years of his term.

Cllr McAndrew is also the Herts county councillor for Bishop's Stortford Rural division. However, Reform UK has already announced that former pilot Jonathan Gracie is its candidate for the seat in May 18.

It has been suggested Cllr McAndrew's defection to Reform was prompted by the Conservative's decision not to select him to stand again after 12 years in office. Instead, the Hertford and Stortford constituency association chose Susan Jackson will contest the seat for Labour, with Wren Ivin and East Herts district councillor George Williams representing the Green

Party. Nominations close on Wednesday April 2.

Cllr McAndrew, the Tory administrator's deputy executive member for the environment at County Hall, told the *Indie* he announced his resignation from the party "with deep regret".

"After careful reflection, I can no longer support a political establishment that has repeatedly failed to address the urgent challenges facing Britain," he said. "I am proud to join Reform UK, a party offering the bold, common-sense solutions our communities deserve."

"I wish to reassure residents that I remain fully committed to serving my constituents with the same dedication and integrity I have always shown."

"I will not be standing down and will continue representing residents' interests as a Reform UK councillor. My priorities remain unchanged: communities and a brighter future for all."

He added: "This decision was not made lightly. However, loyalty to my party cannot outweigh loyalty to Britain. Reform UK's vision - pragmatic, patriotic and unafraid to challenge failed orthodoxy - is the fresh start we need."

Cllr Bob Deering, leader of the Conservative group at EHC and Cllr McAndrew's former colleague at County Hall, said there should be a "Graham is of course no longer a



Reform UK's new recruits, from left, Cllr Graham McAndrew, Uttlesford district councillor and Saffron Walden town councillor Heather Asker (formerly Rd4) and Cllr Jayney McHior, an Esping Forest district councillor currently sitting as an independent

member of the Conservative group so we have no way over his decision," he said. "However, as we all know, Reform have complained bitterly that they have been denied elections in Essex."

"So, if they are true to their word they should be requiring Graham and all other crossovers to resign their existing seats and put themselves forward to be judged by the voting public."

Cllr Deering confirmed that his David Jacobs agreed that Cllr McAndrew should stand down and let the voters decide before the next scheduled poll in May 2027.

"We have a slate of excellent candidates for the elections and they will if elected," he said. "Hertfordshire is a top-performing council that provides vital services, and our candidates will keep it that way."

EHC Labour group leader Cllr David Jacobs agreed that Cllr McAndrew should stand down and let the voters decide before the next scheduled poll in May 2027.

He said: "We would be confident of making his seat given that we topped the poll in that ward in 2022. Labour's Cllr Dave Willlocks got 1,084 votes, ahead of Cllr McAndrew (961) and

» Continues on Page 3

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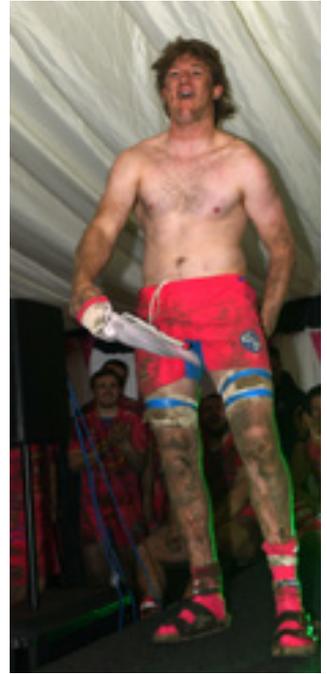
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# OFF THE PITCH: RICHARD EVANS



**Hudson Pope** was born in the early hours of the 6th of December at the Rosie Hospital in Cambridge, weighing 9lbs! He is a bit of a chunk like his dad but takes after his Mum with his smile and good looks. I actually ended up playing less than 24 hours after he was born, against Sale at Home, which took some convincing. But was glad to do so as we came out on top, so it was a very special weekend all in all! I know TC was particularly happy with Izzie for being a legend and letting me play.

thinking about becoming parents over the next few years so that will be exciting to see!

I'm not sure if Mummy Pope will be a too keen with our little man playing Rugby, after seeing various injuries and bangs and bumps. But I find it hard to not envisage Hudson running around in the blue and white at some point! I think Golf and football are more on the cards at the moment.

Being a father has certainly made Austin a more responsible player as he has not been yellow carded since Hudson was born. Less work for Dee



He has been up the club near enough every home game now, if not by Izzie's side, with his grandma and Grandad (My Dad and Mum) or granny (who

is affectionately known as JT) Izzie's Mum. He is a firm favourite among all the uncles and aunts (players and their partners) it has been really special to see him bond already with our closest friends and can't wait to see him running about the club over the next few years! Hudson was named after a close friend and former member of the club, Hudson Rees-Jones who sadly took his own life.

We played in the same Colts rugby side and bonded very quickly in the two years spent together, he was a talented player and an even better friend, and we miss him dearly.



Also important to mention that Toby Hill and his wife Phillipa are expecting a little girl this summer, so will be an awesome addition to the dad club with Hanks and myself. I also can foresee a few other members of the squad,



## Vivienne Hankin

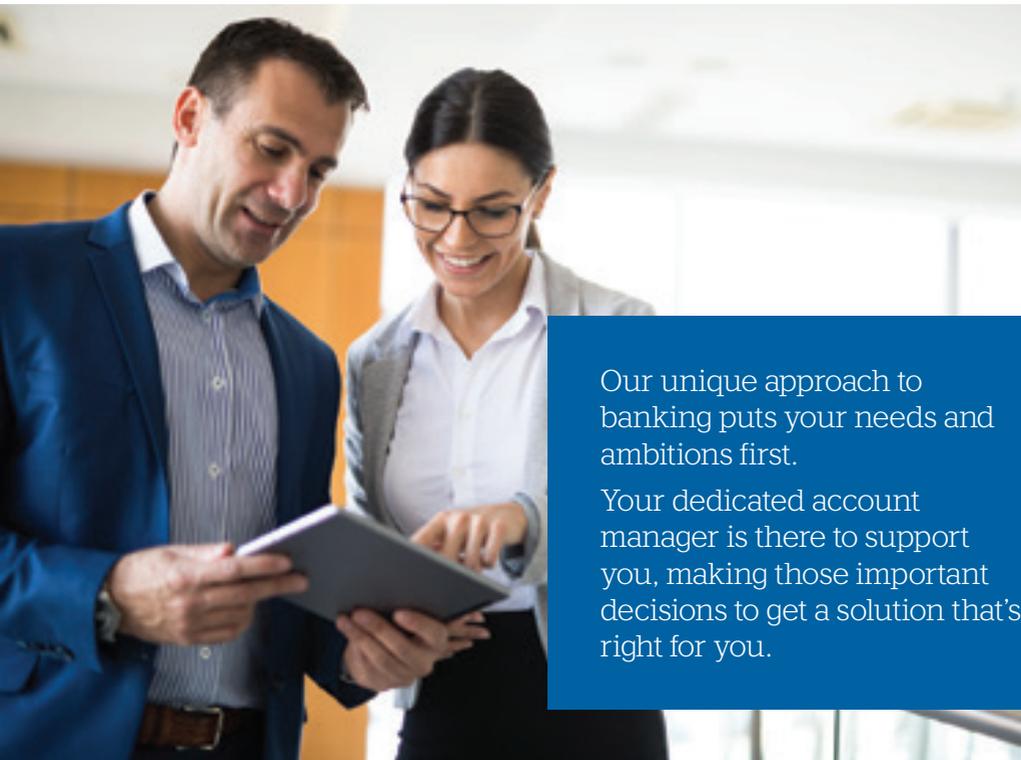
being born coinciding with Nick's retirement forced by his latest injury, but Vivienne manages to keep him very busy, therefore this has not been a huge disappointment. Nick had always planned to retire at the end of this

current season. The Hankin's intend to keep their connections with Stortford and the home games will still be a family occasion for Nick, Grace and Vivienne despite Nick not playing.



## Richard

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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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# CLUB SHOP

## OPENING HOURS:

Wednesdays 7pm - 9pm

Saturdays  
(when there is a 1st XV home match)  
12pm - 3pm

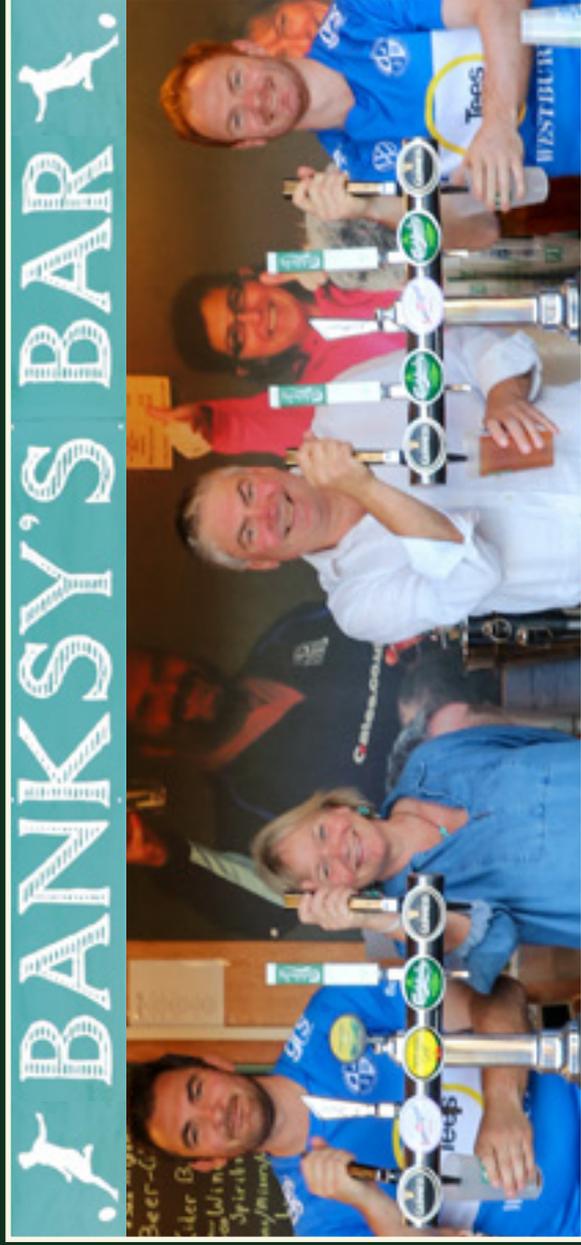
Sundays 9am - 1pm

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