

2020
2021



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THE TEAMS



COVENTRY RUGBY



BEDFORD BLUES

STARTING XV

Louis Brown	15	Rich Lane C
Rob Stevenson	14	Pat Tapley
Andy Forsyth	13	Elijah Niko
Will Owen	12	Reuben Bird-Tulloch
Rob Knox	11	Ryan Olowofela
Kieran Wilkinson	10	Tommy Mathews
Joe Snow	9	Connor Tupai
Toby Trinder	1	Joe Warfter
Nic Dolly	2	James Fish
James Harper	3	Corrie Barrett
Nile Dacres	4	Lewis Bean
Adam Peters	5	Will Carrick Smith C
Sam Lewis	6	Joe Atkinson
Ben Nutley	7	Ollie Newman
C Ryan Burrows	8	Tui Uru

POSITION
SPONSOR



REPLACEMENTS

Suva Ma'asi	16	Jacob Wrafter
Luc Jeannot	17	Sean McCarthy
Phil Boulton	18	Ed Prowse
Alex Woolford	19	Manny iyogun
Senitiki Nayalo	20	Oli Robinson
Pete White	21	James Lennon
Tony Fenner	22	Will Maisey
Louis James	23	Matt Worley



Good luck

for the 2021 season



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A huge virtual welcome to everybody and especially to our old rivals from Bedford (I never thought I'd be so pleased to see you).

It is just one day short of a year since I last wrote programme notes similar to these for our home game against Ealing Trailfinders on March 7th, 2020. What has happened in between then and now is almost beyond belief; I doubt if anyone predicted what we have actually experienced, both within and outside the rugby family. We should keep it all in perspective of course, many have lost loved ones and many more have seen their livelihoods destroyed: we have all lost at least a year in one way or another.

Coventry Rugby was starting the final year of its then current three-year plan encompassing our ambitions both on and off the pitch. The rugby strategy was for a Championship top three team (at a minimum) and the business strategy was to produce non-rugby income to make the club financially independent of benefactors while playing rugby at that level. In the end we finished fourth in the truncated season and if all had gone to plan, we would have by now seen significant construction work proceeding on the Butts Park Arena site, both to generate income and to enhance the spectator facilities. Obviously Covid has put a stop to that and we have had to reset our long-term strategy in the light of events we cannot control.

I believe we quickly grasped the potential danger to the club and by early April 2020 had developed our three-phase virus Strategy, entitled 'Survive, Revive and Sustained Excellence' which is based on milestones that are event-based rather than time-based, because predicting what happens next and when is not feasible. We are so far still navigating the Survival phase, having received welcome but limited government support but continuing to have our Business Interruption claim disgracefully denied by our insurers, whilst we continue to have no income from match day crowds.

Therefore the only rugby-related revenue that we can get is from the streaming of both home and away games, so please sign up and enjoy watching your favourite team.

It does seem that there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, and we do hope to return to crowds in May, when we are expecting to host a certain recent European champion side and if we are allowed, we will make that a gala day.

As somebody else once said in other trying circumstances:

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Winston Churchill, The Lord Mayor's Luncheon, Mansion House, November 10, 1942

Happy viewing!



COVENTRY RUGBY

SENIOR SQUAD



JOSH BARTON

05/12/1997



PHIL BOULTON

17/01/1986



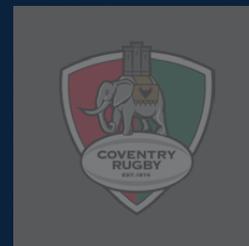
LOUIS BROWN

17/02/1998



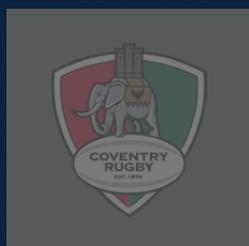
JAKE BRIDGES

29/01/2002



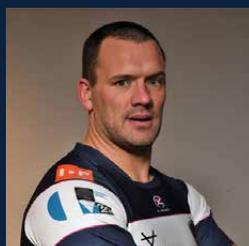
JOE BUCKLE

13/05/1993



ANDY BULUMAKAU

28/08/1992



RYAN BURROWS

25/04/1988



NILE DACRES

09/10/1991



NIC DOLLY

11/06/1999



TOM EMMERY

02/07/1998



TONY FENNER

12/12/1989

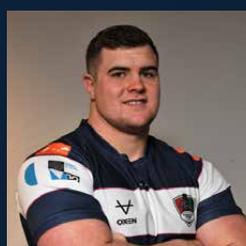


ANDREW FORSYTH

28/08/1992



ALEX GIBSON



JAMES HARPER

16/10/2000



KAILUS HUTCHINSON

16/10/1997



LUC JEANNOT

16/09/1996



CAMERON JORDAN

17/11/1999



ROB KNOX

04/02/1992



DAN LEWIS

12/12/1989



SAM LEWIS

27/03/1998





KESTON LINES

08/11/1999

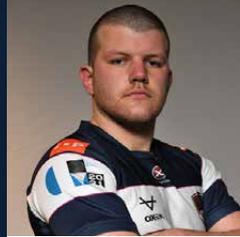


SUVA MA'ASI

08/11/1997



JAMES MARTIN



SAM MCNULTY

17/01/1996



SENTIKI NAYALO

12/05/1991

PLAYER SPONSOR
MALVERN CARVELL



BEN NUTLEY

07/04/1992



WILL OWEN

06/07/1993



ADAM PETERS

17/08/1994



MARIO PICHARDIE

31/01/2001



CALLUM SIRKER

04/05/1998



JOE SNOW

11/12/1998



ROB STEVENSON

10/02/1995



TOBY TRINDER

05/05/1998



PETE WHITE

24/07/1991



KIERAN WILKINSON

03/10/1999



ALEX WOOLFORD

08/12/1992



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epreyes@coventryrugby.co.uk



Countrywide
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FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

It's great to finally be playing a competitive game after such a long break. It is, however, bittersweet that we are back at Butts Park but unable to share the occasion with all of you in person. I am hoping that the new live stream set up, or listening to the commentary from JB and Alec on BBC CWR will make up for it a little!

Ever the optimist, I wanted to use this opportunity to highlight a few of the positive steps that we have taken over the last 12 months.

We have maintained the core of our squad and staff, which is really important to give us continuity and as much stability as possible to build the new team around. Hopefully before the end of 2021, a number of our players will become centurions for the club, which is a great achievement for them and means a lot to us at the club too.

We have recruited a handful of senior players, but more importantly we have promoted 10 players from our Academy programme and I am delighted that quite a few of them have progressed quickly to Championship level and have added so much energy to the team.

Off the pitch our Academy programme has continued to grow. We have enhanced our partnership with Moulton College, meaning that we are now able to offer education to all our players, right up to degree level. Developing a dual pathway like this is crucial as we not only increase our offering in the recruitment and retention market, but also adapt to the challenges and opportunities that Covid has presented us with.

Today we face Bedford Blues, who have joined forces with Northampton Saints to create a player and coach support programme. This means that former Cov fly half Jake Sharp, who is now part of the Saints Academy coaching staff, will support Mike Rayer at Bedford for the season and he'll be joined by 15-20 players from Northampton who don't make the Saints senior side. A quick shout out to another former Cov fly half, Will Maisey (a Cov centurion too), who should be in the squad to face us today. Will is an excellent player and I am sure he will make life difficult for us.

Finally, a big thank you to all the supporters. Rest assured that we know you will be watching, listening, and cheering the team on from home. The next 11 weeks will fly by, and hopefully we can look forward to having a beer with all of you, as soon as we can welcome you back to the BPA when we host Saracens in May!





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FIXTURES LIST



ROUND	DATE	OPPO	VENUE	KO
1	06/03/2021	Bedford Blues	Butts Park Arena	3.00 PM
2	12/03/2021	Doncaster Knights	Castle Park	6.00 PM
3	19/03/2021	Ealing Trailfinders	Butts Park Arena	6.00 PM
4	27/03/2021	Nottingham	Lady Bay	5.30 PM
5	11/04/2021	Ampthill	Butts Park Arena	2.30 PM
6	BYE			
7	24/04/2021	Hartpury	Alpas Arena	1.00 PM
8	01/05./2021	Cornish Pirates	Butts Park Arena	3.00 PM
9	15/05/2021	Jersey Reds	Stade Santander	3.00 PM
10	22/05/2021	Saracens	Butts Park Arena	5.00 PM
11	29/05/2021	Richmond	Richmond Athletic Ground	TBC

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TODAY'S OPPO

BEDFORD BLUES

By John Butler

It finally is here! The long-awaited return of the Green King IPA Championship, albeit in a reduced form, is ready for take off.

Sadly, for the foreseeable future, current restrictions mean no crowds are allowed, that in itself of course being a first.

What most certainly is not a first is the visit of our old East Midlands rivals, Bedford Blues, to whom we extend a warm welcome as always.

Records show the first ever meeting between our two clubs was some 127 years ago in March 1894, a day when Cov inflicted Bedford's only defeat that season.

Since that long off time, fixtures between us have moved way past the 170 mark. Overall we are some way ahead in terms of wins achieved, although since the inception of league rugby in 1987/88 Bedford can justifiably claim they lead the way with 21 wins from 34 league matches played. Cov have won 11, with two matches drawn.

Last season, including the league and Championship Cup, our two clubs met a total of four times, the overall picture coming out in our favour 3-1. The league meeting here saw us claim a 26-19 win, Bedford turning the tables 15-19 in the return at Goldington Road before the season came to its abrupt early end.

The long-serving Mike Rayer, the former Welsh international full back, remains in playing charge of the Blues as Director of Rugby. Having played for them previously, Mike returned to take on his current role in 2005, with 2020 being the year when a 15th anniversary was enjoyed.

While many sides in the Championship have brought in players either on a dual registration or loan basis from a wide number of clubs, Bedford has entered an agreement with their East Mid-

lands neighbours Northampton, which has seen a large number of Saints Academy members arrive at Goldington Road. In excess of 12 made pre-season debuts in the two games played against Ampthill, the away side winning on both occasions.

There are however quite a number in the Bedford squad whose names are very familiar at the Butts Park. Two of those are the co-captains, prop forward Sean McCarthy and full back Rich Lane.

Three other names either in the Blues squad or close to it have also had close involvement with Cov Rugby. Fly half Will Maisey left us last season just before the pandemic struck, while former fly half Jake Sharp had a brief spell here two seasons ago, with winger Ryan Olowofela dual-registered with Cov towards the end of the last campaign. Finally, lock forward Jordan Onojaife also had a spell at Butts Park some seven seasons ago, again on a dual registration basis from Northampton before moving on to Ealing then Bedford.

This season's Greene King IPA Championship, minus London Scottish, who will return in September, is taking place in the reduced format, with clubs playing each other just the once. A home and away playoff between the top two will then take place, to determine who will be promoted to the Premiership for next season.



PLAYERS TO WATCH



New face **CORRIE BARRETT**

A summer recruit from Munster, tighthead prop Corrie Barrett has been a standout performer in Bedford Blues' two pre-season friendlies as he gears up for his first taste of Championship rugby.

The Bedford scrum was dominant in last weekend's contest against Amptill at Goldington Road, with Barrett showcasing his power and prowess – which he also displayed in their victory against the same opposition the week prior.

The 22-year-old already boasts a rich rugby heritage having followed in the footsteps of his father, Brian who was an Ireland U21s international.

Starting his career at Ulster U19s, Barrett spent a sabbatical in New Zealand with Otago, before returning home with a place in the Sub-Academy waiting.

A move across the provinces saw Barrett join Munster for 2019/20, featuring mainly for their 'A' side and the infamous Garryowen club, before his arrival in Bedford at the beginning of the year.



Club stalwart **PAT TAPLEY**

Bedford's longest serving current player, Pat Tapley is one appearance short of joining the prestigious Goldington Road century club and could reach that milestone if selected at Butts Park Arena.

The winger arrived at Bedford from Cambridge seven years ago and has firmly etched himself as a fans' favourite at Goldington Road, making 99 competitive appearances and scoring 48 tries.

After an injury hit end of the curtailed 2019/20 season, Tapley has returned from the time away with a spring in his step and has scored in both pre-season outings so far, both against Amptill.

During his time in Bedford, Tapley has been their top try scorer once (2014/15) then was named in the Championship Dream Team 12 months later.

The 29-year-old is another to suffer the travel bug during his career, spending some time in Australia at Warringah Rats alongside former Bedford fly-half, Myles Dorrian.

TODAY'S OPPO

FORM GUIDE



Bedford Blues concluded their training preparations for the 2021 Championship season with a double header #BattleofBedfordshire against Ampthill in the last two weekends. Both sides shared one win apiece and will meet again at Goldington Road on the final day of the upcoming league campaign to complete the trilogy.

After 11 months away from action, Mike Rayer's side made the dream return to rugby with a 36-33 victory at Dillingham Park. Tries came courtesy of Pat Tapley, Oskar Hirskjy-Douglas and players inherited from their strategic partnership with Northampton Saints; namely Ethan Grayson (2), Tui Uru and Dani Long-Martinez.

In the return fixture, Ampthill exacted revenge with a confident 36-21 victory at Goldington Road. Tapley scored again while summer signing



Elijah Niko crossed the whitewash for the first time in a Blues jersey. Scrum half James Lennon finished the scoring late on.

New Zealand born Niko is the standout name from the summer arrivals at Goldington Road, while they have also bolstered their ranks with the additions of Corrie Barrett, Andre Robson and Ealing loanees Oli Robinson and Ewan Fenley.

A total of 14 players have been retained from last season while the rest of the squad will be composed of players from Northampton Saints. Bedford concluded the 2019/20 season in eighth position having had an upturn in form post-Christmas. They were really beginning to build up ahead of steam following notable home wins over Rowland Winter's men and Jersey Reds before the season was cancelled early. They will hope to bring this form into the upcoming campaign.



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