



# FOLLOW THE BLUES

September 2007  
Number 34

## News from the Blues Followers

### Never in doubt!?

**Memories of last season's disappointing start sprang to mind last Saturday at Newbury when with 5 minutes to go the difference was 1 point and Newbury had been closing rapidly. But the final score looked comfortable!**

This season is especially interesting as our near neighbours have to 'suffer' the indignity of playing in National Division 1 and our next home game is against them – so make certain you buy your tickets.

For the younger supporters, and those used to the luxury of Barfordian travel Neil Roy recalls days gone by, when Ted Keep did everything in his power to avoid driving through Northamptonshire, except on one famous occasion!

There is no doubt that standards are rising every year in our league, but for all clubs there is a price to pay; that of increasing revenue to match the efforts of others. Andy Irvine outlines the need to increase gates and already greater efforts have been made to advertise games. A fixture calendar has been produced and if you have a local pub or shop that might be willing to pin one up then call in at the Followers Office to collect one or two.

Above all though pass the word to family and friends and bring them along to watch the Blues!

**Adrian Randall**

### Welcome to the 07/08 Season

As Chairman of the Followers, I would like to say hello and welcome to the new season to you all. We have everything to look forward to as we reflect on the summer of sev-

eral departures but with quality players arriving from many differing spheres. As usual we expect them to be made very welcome by all of us and we look forward to seeing them show us what attracted Mike to them and his determination to bring them to Goldington Road.

The squad has bonded well and the preseason has been hard for them (as it should be with Mike and Nathan being the task masters) but enjoyable, as the players form the comradeship and camaraderie you would always want to see come to the fore. Over the weeks we will get to know all the players that bit better and they will also come to appreciate the support we have always enjoyed. Do not forget, this could be a watershed season as far as the future of top class rugby is concerned in England and we want to be at the forefront of that revolution. So make sure of your attendance at every possible match and drag along anyone you can.

The way forward is not only on the pitch but the effort we put in to keep this Club where it has always been, recognised as one of the true and respected Clubs in the country. Enjoy the day, enjoy the season, most of all enjoy the Club and what it is to Bedford; the leading sports club in the town.

**Pete Smith**

### "Find the 500"

The Blues are in a privileged position to have such a loyal and vibrant fan base and many clubs I'm sure would gladly swap their average attendance for the 2,177 that regularly attend Goldington Road for our League matches. Combine that with our away support, which must be the envy of the league and on the surface things look pretty good for rugby in Bedford.

However if the club is to move forward and continue to compete in the top levels of rugby whilst sustaining itself financially we have to aspire to raise our gates. We know the support is there, in excess of 4,000 supporters travelled to Twickenham two years in succession and the

5,000 plus who attended the visit of Harlequins or purchased an advance ticket this summer for the Northampton Saints game is testament to that.

Yet the West Country teams with over 3,000 supporters per game continue to increase the gap in this league and subsequently invest the money back into their facilities and playing budgets. Goldington Road handles current gates easily and we would dearly love to have the problems that a bigger crowd brings every other week. Only then could we look to improve our facilities.

Over the past 5 years the club have managed to increase gates by 50% but we need all Blues supporters to help us do more. Direct marketing from the data base of the new ticket system is starting to pay dividends with season tickets now up to 1,200 members, however another 500 people on last season's average would wipe out the £100k deficit shown in the last set of accounts.

Whilst the Club will continue to market the Club locally we also need your help, so spread the word and bring along your friends and family to Goldington Road.

Here's looking forward to another successful season both on the pitch and at the turnstiles!

**Andy Irvine**  
Commercial Manager

### Who are the S\*\*\*\*s anyway?

Picture the scene. It's September 22. Northampton are at Goldington Road. A perky Keith Barwell asks for a cheese and pickle sandwich at Nos's Nosh. All hell breaks loose as the Babes in the Bistro ask Nos if he will prepare what the Saints chairman has ordered – something he reckons that is all that will be on offer in National Division One. The smoke comes out of the ears of the harlequined-trousered celebrity chef.

Now go back to the last day of the season 1988-89. Bedford finish up 15-15 at Sale, where just a few

years before they managed a 0-0 draw. It seemed a nothing result but suddenly as the scores elsewhere in national division two came in, it dawned on the keenest of the Followers up in Cheshire that, through no fault of their own, Bedford had earned promotion to the elite top 12.

Trips home from the north even in those days were usually pretty depressing. But this one was different. Rather than divert down the M1 motorway to his favourite pub in Stilton on the A1, Ted Keep, the Margaret Appleton of the day, decided that this would be a trip no one would forget. He ordered the driver to go on a tour of Northampton taking the coach into Franklin's Gardens to invite the 'Jimmys', as he referred to them, to join in the Bedford promotion celebrations!

Ted was a dead ringer for Benny Hill – grin and all. He didn't go down at all well in the Saints clubhouse but it was his greatest triumph – a moment he'd lived for ever since he'd helped form the Followers with Captain Percy Burke and the journalist Dick Dellow back in 1949.

At the time the club didn't want anything to do with them but they were determined to see the post war country while supporting their team. And to do it in style. They used to leave as early as they could - 9am for a trip to Coventry to take in the cathedral and the shopping and then a high tea somewhere in the city at the end of the match. Ted was the outings secretary for more than 30 years. We called his trips Magical Mystery Tours on account of often getting lost – particularly up north. But his proud boast was that he always got to a game on time.

He hated going north. He hated crossing the bridge at Turvey into Northamptonshire. If Bedford lost, which they usually did at Franklin's Gardens, it was an awful week at the Water Board where he worked. But Saturday was another day. Another chance to man the fortress at home or to see the country and to hope for a Bedford win.

With leagues just starting in 1987/88 no one quite knew what to expect after that promotion but with Goldington Road supplying the England captain, John Orwin, in 1988 hopes were high. It didn't work out – and that's another story – but I always thought that Ted Keep died a happy man, as would a general who, how-

ever briefly, had once got right to the heart of his oldest enemy.

And the Saints' reaction to that invasion of Franklin's Gardens by the Bedford Followers? Just watch Nos blow a fuse when Mr Barwell orders his cheese and pickle.

**Neil Roy**

## Charity Collections

At the Follower's AGM it was agreed that the Association should focus its efforts on two charities and the two chosen are the Multiple Sclerosis Centre and Keech Cottage. So in connection with some of the social events we are organising there will be collections/raffles etc in support of these charities. At the same time in the course of the season the Club has agreed to 6 bucket collections, all for different charities.

Today there is a bucket collection in aid of Rebecca Smith's efforts for Keech Cottage in running the Chicago Marathon on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Rebecca completed the London Marathon in 2006, so she is now taking to the world stage!! Please support her today or on line at: [www.justgiving.com/thistimechicago](http://www.justgiving.com/thistimechicago)

I should also like to thank all who supported my run in the London Marathon. With the help of a bucket collection of over £950 at the last game I was able to raise over £2500, which certainly kept me going on the day; the thought of having to return all that money!!

**Adrian Randall**

### Kirsty Goes Close to James Hinkins

#### Date and place of Birth.

11/05/77; Dover

**Height:** 6ft 1"

**Weight:** 83kg

**Position:** Full Back/Wing

**Occupation:** Teacher

**Marital Status:** Married

**Biggest influence on your rugby career?** My parents

**Most difficult opponent?** Tim

Horan

**Favourite Rugby ground?**

Bedford Blues (Twickenham isn't bad either)

**What is the best piece of advice anyone has given you?**

Weights are over rated.

**Who is your sporting hero?** Daley Thompson

**What match would you most like to play in and where?**

Bedford Vs Hawaii in Hawaii

**What is your first Rugby memory?** Watching my Dad play at Deal Wanderers and thinking that rugby is a stupid game.

**What is your view on video refereeing?** I'd rather have better coaching for current referees.

**What are your thoughts on women's rugby?** Scary - Most are bigger than me.

**What are your interests outside of rugby?** Teaching and sleeping, unfortunately no time for anything else.

**What three words sum up your character?** Hard as nails.

**What attracts you to the sport?** I sometimes ask myself the same question! I just love it.

**Your best memory whilst being at Bedford Blues?** Scoring on my debut against Blackheath

**Which away team do you most like visiting and why?** London Welsh - Smelling that pork roast on the way to the pitch.

**What do you like/dislike about Goldington Road and why?** I love everything particularly Nos' food.

**How old were you when you first played rugby?** 17. I might have played a couple of times when I was 5 or 6, but I cannot remember.

**Where would you like to see 'The Blues' in three years time?** Still at Goldington road.

**What brought you to Goldington Road?** University.

**Best thing about being a rugby player?** Pre-season tours.

**Worst thing about being a rugby player?** No Nos after Monday training.

### Away Trips

**Nottingham Sun 16 Sept. Dep 10.30 Breakfast with Nos 9 am**

**Exeter Sat. 29 Sept. Dep 8 am**

Next Issue:-

**October 13<sup>th</sup> v Plymouth.**

Please let me have your views either via the committee or [arandall69@btinternet.com](mailto:arandall69@btinternet.com) by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

The views expressed in this Newsletter are the authors and do not represent the views either of the Followers Association or Bedford Rugby