



FOLLOW THE BLUES

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News from the Blues Followers

The World Cup

It was impressive that the Blues had a full house against the Saints, in spite of the fact that England was playing at the same time. This is at a time when Premiership Rugby has shown a decline in attendance.

Since the last issue we have lost 3 matches; although perhaps 2 of them were no surprise, we had hoped for a better result at Nottingham. Last Friday saw the defeat of Coventry and no season is a total disaster if we beat them. Another pleasing feature of the Coventry match was the crowd of over 2,200. Let us hope this trend can continue.

Last Saturday saw a crowded Scrum Hall to watch England beat Australia. The Club had made a real effort to make this an afternoon a great occasion; not only organising the result, but a Q & A session with many of the players. Tips from them on Bedford stars for the next World Cup were Dan Cole and Karl Dickson! A raffle was held in support of the players' charity, Multiple Sclerosis Centre and then Nos fed the gathered masses. The highlight, however, was Nos honouring his bet that if England won he would streak round the pitch; as it was before the 9 o'clock watershed he clad himself in a t-shirt proclaiming the successes of English rugby!

Today there is a feast of rugby at Goldington Road. As well as the Blues, Wootton Upper School defend their title as first winners of the University of Bedfordshire's 6th Form trophy against Sharnbrook. Then at 8pm the England game will be on the big screen in the Scrum Hall; so stay around!

Adrian Randall

The World Cup and Bedford

As well as our own international at the World Cup, James Pritchard, who, although Canada probably have not performed as well as they hoped, proved to be one of the most reliable kickers in the tournament, we have seen several former Bedford players competing for their country. Still there, having both made outstanding contributions to England's cause are Andy Gommarsall and Paul Sackey. A recent departure from Bedford was Soane Tonga'uiaha (Great to see him at the Coventry game) who played most of Tonga's games; Scott Murray for Scotland and Chris Horsman for Wales. Congratulations to them all.

University of Bedfordshire 6th Form Rugby Tournament

FINAL TODAY AFTER THE FINAL WHISTLE

Wootton v Sharnbrook

At 9 am on Wednesday morning (3rd October) a few PE staff from around the county must have been thinking 'it cannot be happening again!', as the heavens were opening there were flashbacks to a rain soaked 6th form tournament from last year rebounding back into peoples' minds. Fortunately the rain proved to be short lived and the weather improved for the arrival of the 10 teams taking part. The entries were up on last year with last year's winners Wootton in a group with the hosts Biddenham, BMS, St. Thomas More, and Samuel Whitbread. The other group included last year's runners up Mark Rutherford, Sharnbrook, Redbourne, Stratton and Sandy.

The afternoon provided a showcase for some excellent school rugby with some tight matches including a 3-3 draw between Sharnbrook and Redbourne and Wootton beating Samuel Whitbread by a solitary penalty. There was, of course, some higher scoring games with plenty of tries and free flowing rugby on display. Sharnbrook amassed nearly 100 points in their 4 matches with Redbourne and Samuel Whitbread

scoring over the half century in their games.

The final standings in each group were as follows:-

Group 1 – 1st Sharnbrook 2nd Redbourne 3rd Stratton 4th Sandy 5th Mark Rutherford.

Group 2 -1st Wootton 2nd Samuel Whitbread 3rd Biddenham 4th Bedford Modern 5th St. Thomas More.

The final, between Sharnbrook and Wootton, will be played today after the Blues game against Plymouth It will kick off at 5.30 pm - time to get to the bar and it is hoped that there will be a good crowd that will stay to watch the 6th form final. If last year is anything to go by then we will be in for a great game.

Alan Brown

Wayne Barnes could be equal to Ed Morrison

Yes it's true! Remember Wayne from a few years ago when he refereed at Bedford? As I remember him, it was as a whistle happy pedant stickler for the laws who looked as if he had only just got out of nappies. "Too young", I thought, "for this level of the game". It wasn't so much that he was not the best referee in the world it was more that he didn't let the game flow. And now, just a few years on he could be the "next Ed Morrison". How so? Well if England don't make the final for this World Cup, Wayne has impressed the selectors so much that he could be given the ultimate post

Wayne first started as a ref around the age of 15 which is an unusually young age rising rapidly through the ranks. Wayne gave up playing to become a ref and since his appointment to the Elite referees he has put on hold his legal career. When appointed he joined "legends" such as Tony Spreadbury and Chris White. For me, the speed of the rise did lead to a more stickler for the laws kind of ref at first but over time, with more experience gained, he has mellowed and matured and no doubt taken on board his experiences. Although it is great to have a rapid riser like this, there is nothing

like experience to realise that empathy for the game is more important than being praised for ticking the boxes.

I have watched the great Tony Spreadbury a couple of times this World Cup and he and Chris White I have felt were world class referees with a great deal of experience and respect. However Wayne's performances, although not as high profile as Tony's Argentina v France game, have been assured, authoritative and has had respect from the players, and it is that the respect that is the acid test. You can be the most popular ref with the crowd but unless the players are happy with you, then you will be on a hiding to nothing.

Wayne hasn't made any major errors in the full public glare unlike other instances that come to mind this World Cup, and although perhaps a little too serious when a little humour would ease a situation, I doff my hat to him and what he has achieved in just under 15 years.

I have been reading Ed Morrison's book Better Rugby Refereeing and I have learned a huge amount about how a referee referees. I also think Wayne has had his nose in there as well and taken on board some of the points Ed makes. I for one will applaud the IRB and Wayne, if he achieves the World Cup goal and becomes the next Ed Morrison, after all, he has a better chance of refereeing that match than a referee from the southern hemisphere! (Not so sure now -editor!!)

Robin Dewson

N.B. Robin wrote the above piece before the last weekend's match between France and New Zealand, which Wayne referred. As many will know Wayne has been heavily criticised by some people in New Zealand for, in their eyes, causing New Zealand to lose the game.

The Rugby World Cup in France

Living in Normandy, not a great rugby area, I had not expected there to be much interest in the World Cup – in 2003, I had to ask in the local bar for the TV to be switched from the racing for the semis and the final. This year, there was much more interest and excitement, which rapidly evaporated when France lost

to Argentina. As with England Australia, the All Blacks game was thought to be a foregone conclusion, the only interest being what the score would be. However, come the game, the French were glued to their televisions and at the final whistle, I could have been in Bedford when Italy win a football match. This morning, there was only one topic of conversation, and with thoughts turning to next week, there was much discussion of the perceived strong and weak points of both teams.

Unfortunately, I will be in England for the game but have already been offered a free meal if England win and lots of drinks, such is the new found confidence of the French in their team. At the moment, I am 6 centimes down (about 2p) having jokingly bet the owner of the supermarket 3 centimes per game that England and France would lose. I wanted it to be 2 centimes a game but he beat me up to 3! At least, next week for me, there will be no loser.

Paul Gacon

Charity Fashion Show In Aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer

Sue & Andy Cobley would like to take this opportunity to thank all who attended, donated prizes, donated gifts of money and helped at the Charity Fashion Show in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer on Weds, 19th Sept in The Marquee.

The evening was a very enjoyable and successful event, and a staggering £3,205 was raised for this very worthy charity. Thanks again for your support, it was very much appreciated.

Sue & Andy

2008 Tall Ships Race

You all know Lesley Cornish. She is the quiet one selling Jackpot tickets with Jackie! But still waters run deep, as she has been accepted as a crewmember on board Lord Nelson in next year's Tall Ships Race.

She is fund raising and to help her efforts she is selling Pirates Eye Patches from the Followers Office. Please support her – the alternative is the plank!

Chicago Marathon

Congratulations to Rebecca Smith on completing the Chicago Marathon in spite of the temperature in 5 hrs 19. There was a reported temperature of over 30 degrees and the organisers offered an alternative route and the option for runners to withdraw.

Social Events

FIREWORKS DISPLAY FRIDAY 2ND NOVEMBER

**Tickets are now on sale at the Club, Times & Citizen and the Tourist Office
Adults £5; Children £3 and Family £15**

Gates open at 6 pm and children's entertainment at 6.30. Children's firework display at 7.15 with the Main Display at 8 pm

Away Trips

Cornish Pirates Sun 22nd Oct. Dep FRIDAY 5 pm

London Welsh Sat. 3rd Nov. Dep 10.30 Cost £12 & £7. Breakfast 9 am £3

Rotherham Sat. 24th Nov. Dep 9.00 Cost £16 & £9

Next Issue:-
November 17th v Doncaster.
Please let me have your views either via the committee or arandall69@btinternet.com by Friday 9th November.

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