



FOLLOW THE BLUES

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News from the Blues Followers

A Promising Start

Don't the stats look good!? Not only are we top, but we have scored the most points; we have the leading try scorer and points scorer in the league and, by all accounts, perhaps the most impressive feature of the Rotherham match was the defence. Alright I know it's early days, but let's enjoy it!

In this issue Martin Bartlett lets us into some of the secrets of the changing rooms and how he helps to ensure that the Blues go on to the pitch in perfect condition.

As everyone must be aware, when they enter the ground, the Followers are busy selling jackpot tickets and the 'Voice' Markham explains what the money is used for; first and foremost, to support the Club and specifically this year a renovation of the electrics is essential. However, we believe that we have a community responsibility and have chosen to support 'Help for Heroes' and Bedford Hospitals Charity.

It is also great to see that the (younger) ladies will be able to divert their aggression to the rugby field as Bedford Junior Blues Ladies section starts its first season. I am sure everyone will want to wish them good luck.

Finally, I was interested to read in Rugby Times about the English Clubs Colts Cup. Since its inception in 1997 only one club has retained the trophy, the Blues! Interest in the competition is growing with new sponsors on board. So let us wish the Academy under its new head coach, Stuart Low, a successful and enjoyable season.

Adrian Randall

Operation Bartlett

It's another home match for the 'Blues' and it must be stressed a team effort off the field, as well as on it, is required in the dressing rooms. Gareth Davies the club president describes my role as "a drop of oil" to help the day run smoothly, if only it was that easy.

The day starts with getting 4 pints of milk (2 pints half fat for the support staff or officials who may be or in my opinion should be on a diet). A pack of wine gums for Mike Rayer or Jonesey the club physio and not forgetting Martin Hynes to pinch. Tea bags, coffee, sugar and thermal cups for the numerous numbers of hot drinks that will be consumed.

Arrive at the ground 3 hours prior to kick off, so let battle commence. The tasks undertaken are not necessarily carried out in any order, which is the same if I were to play a tune on a piano.

So firstly check the ice machine for crushed ice (this is for injuries). Then the most important task is to fill the hot water urn for the teas and coffees. The hot water also comes in handy for moulding players gum shields from time to time. Ensure cups, tea, coffee, milk and sugar are at the ready. Also hide the post match snacks, (explain later) this stops them becoming a pre-match meal. That's the domestics taken care of now what is required for the game.

Fill 20ltr. tub with isotonic drink then charge 8 drink bottles and another 8 with drinking water. Match kit is on pegs courtesy of the club president Gareth Davies. Place a match programme on each player's dressing room place, this enables those that can read to study form and the other to study the pictures and identify any comb overs or new hair do requirements. This also goes for the match officials and opposition as they also get a complimentary programme.

Check the ice bath is ready, thanks Pete Beard, as he fills it with water prior to my arrival and check the six match balls are the correct pressure. Tackle bags and cones ready for players' warm-up. Ice bags in ice box for physio. (Task completed by Lloyd Rayer, a good little helper). Towels for ball boys. Ensure tea is always available for Rob Crowle the team manager as he is always gaggling for it. Supply tea and coffee for officials. Now sit back and relax, if only. Shorts are not quite right and need changing, studs on the boots not up to scratch, etc. But most important keep a low profile whilst players focus on the game.

Ready to start game. Referee has match ball and players file out to commence battle. I, in the mean time, tidy the dressing room ready for half time. 25 isotonic drinks and 4 packs of wine gums ready for the half time break.

Prior to the teams coming in at half time I provide tea and cold drinks for the officials and put ice bags in the dressing room, then retreat to the tearoom for the supply of tea and coffee for support staff, doctors, physio's, and coaches.

The second half commences and again I tidy the dressing room and provide 25 isotonic drinks 2 packs of wine gums, Muffins and yoghurts, for the players post match wind down.

The match ends so whilst the players warm down it's teas for the officials and 10 bags of ice for the ice bath, (yes it's very cold) Check the match balls are accounted for, thanks Lloyd. Tidy away tackle bags and make more tea and coffee for the support staff. Collect all shirts, shorts and socks ready for the laundry and clean and put away all drink bottles subs suits etc. Mair and Rudi club physio's tidy up the plethora of medical gear.

All this work is also achieved (as I'm getting older) with the help of my apprentice Dave Robinson, yes he looks older than I do, he could well be!

Anyway as I said in the beginning, "it's a team effort," so thanks to all. Now it about 6 o'clock I think I'll have a beer or two or ?

Martin Bartlett

Fund Raising

This season The Followers will be supporting two charities, Help for Heroes and Bedford Hospitals Charity. In the case of the latter the current specific appeal is the Cancer Screening Appeal for endoscopy equipment. Last season we gave almost £300 each to Keech Cottage and the MS Therapy Centre. In addition The Followers will continue to provide financial assistance to the Club. £13,000 was given to the Club last year, not including the profit from the Fireworks display.

Help for Heroes was launched in October 2007 in response to a desire to do something practical to help our wounded servicemen and women. By giving to Help for Heroes, we can do something practical to help and show our support for them. Primarily the charity is aiming to raise £6 million for essential work at Headley Court (a military hospital for wounded servicemen) and many past and present servicemen are involved in raising money. Extending Headley Court will provide a purpose built facility that can deal with their needs and the specialized treatment of injuries for the wounded returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paul Collins, an ex RAF serviceman, came to Bedford Blues on 23rd August for the Cambridge friendly and did a bucket collection while rowing before the game. He aims to row 1 million metres around UK rugby grounds to raise funds for Help for Heroes. He would like to thank everyone for donations totalling £375 on the day and said he was hugely impressed at everyone's friendliness at Bedford Blues.

Twickenham will be the venue for a special match between teams captained by Lawrence Dallaglio and Scott Gibbs on 20th September. This coincides with our match at London Welsh so we will be taking collections on the coaches to support the cause.

During the close season a full survey of the electrical supply to the ground was undertaken. This re-

vealed that the main cable into the ground needed to be renewed, as it could not cope with the increased demand especially on match days. This will be an expensive undertaking, more than £30,000, and The Followers have agreed to provide funds towards the cost of this essential work. Chairman Geoff Irvine is most appreciative of this undertaking. It is hoped that the work will be carried out in October.

We will keep you updated regarding fund raising activities and the amounts raised in future editions of the Newsletter.

Jackie Markham

Young ladies section now at Junior Blues

After an excellent set of taster sessions at the end of last season followed by well-attended pre-season training, Bedford Junior Blues are extremely pleased to announce the inaugural season of the Bedford Junior Blues Ladies section. We have a large number of young ladies registered already but we are actively seeking many more.

Ladies play in two age groups, Under 15 and Under 18 so if you are Under 18 as at September 1st this year then why not come along on Sunday to Bedford Athletic Rugby Ground at Wentworth Drive for 10am this, or any Sunday. We don't worry about whether you have played the game or not as many of the ladies have never played the game before. You are more than welcome to come along and try it out for a couple of weeks and then decide if it's a game for you.

There is a game already scheduled for later in the season and we are trying hard to arrange other fixtures in preparation for a league next season. You will be coached in a safe and controlled environment at a level that will develop your skills in handling, tactics, and general play and we have had representatives from the WRFU and RFU at some of our sessions.

If you wish to know more, check out the Bedford Junior Blues website www.bedford-junior-blues.co.uk or contact Robin Dewson robin@fat-belly.com who can give you more details.

Robin Dewson

Social Schedule

Remember the first social event of the year is on **Friday 19th September** with Ed Morrison on the ELVs. Please get your tickets today from either Andy Cobley or Phil Novis.

The next social event is a trip to **Charles Wells Brewery** on **Tuesday October 7th**. Meet at the Brewery at 7.15. Cost is £15 and this includes a tour, a hot supper and tasting session. See Andy, Phil or Alan Harper Smith.

On **Friday November 7th** The annual Fireworks Display. Tickets from the usual sources.

Friday 14th November the Followers are organising a Sports Quiz. So get your team ready and start swotting! Who did win the 15th Gold Medal??

For further details about all these events or any suggestions you might have for a social event contact either Andy Cobley or Phil Novis. They can be found selling jackpot tickets under the Lifesure Suites but can also be contacted by E-Mail (andy.cobley@bt.com and philnovis@aol.com) plus mobile phone (07801-681485 and 07809-206563).

AWAY TRIPS

Saturday 20th Sept v London Welsh. Adults £14 Juniors £8 Coach departs at 10.30 am.

Friday 3rd October v Coventry- Adults £12 Juniors £7 departs at 4.30 pm.

**Next Issue:-
Sedgley Park**

Please let me have your views either via the committee or arandall69@btinternet.com by 10th October.

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

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