



# Followers' News

This edition marks an extraordinary situation in the world, probably not seen for a century since the Spanish flu. I am sorry that I cannot include any "Coming up soon", a bit like the rest of my diary at the moment.

We wish all the players well and hope they can weather the current situation. It will seem likely that more championship clubs may have to go to a part-time model as Covid19 takes its toll on the finances of major sponsors. Many clubs are asking players and staff to take cuts in pay. Perhaps this may help to even up the competition in our league.

It is sad to have to announce the death of two of our Blues supporters. Simon Franklin died suddenly from a heart attack of which the family had no warning. Also David Fuller died recently, and I include Howard's recollections of one of the 'back of the coach' family.

I think we have four really good contributions this time and you may have time to do a quiz or two!

Mel Grover

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*The first of contributors is Will Hooley who penned this great contribution for us. Editor.*

Dear Followers,

Writing this, I realise the saddest of all things is the inability to actually speak to you all face to face. The conversations after a match, in the marquee, or by the bus before we head back home from an away fixture. We are all accountable, in taking the small things for granted. The joys of rugby, and being part of the Bedford Blues family, have halted and seem like a distant memory. However, in this letter I would like nothing more than to have the ability to express our thanks as players, for your continual dedication and support.

COVID-19 has certainly not been the only negative news this season. 'Championship cuts' were proposed, and a first half of the season that was as disappointing as some of the lockdown measures. Fair to say there has been some challenges, but there have also been some standout occasions that have taken place during this 2019-20 season with the Blues. By looking back, we must remember, and think positively, that rugby will return, and your Bedford Blues will be fighting it out once again.

Having been asked to illustrate this letter for the honorary gentlemen and ladies, it was

expressed that I indulge in some of my own personal experiences from the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan. Unable to join and help the boys during the start of the Championship season, I busied myself throwing everything I had at the pre-World Cup, and Rugby World Cup tournament itself. I cannot express the gratitude I have for the level of support I received from all those involved with the Blues, including the Followers. I hope I represented the club's name well, both on and off the field, in what was an incredible journey for my family and myself. I had a bit of a roller coaster ride, with an unlucky fall in my first match against England that resulted in a head injury. I was able to get back fit for our last pool games against Argentina and Tonga. It was during these matches that I spotted Chris Deverell (I must name drop) who waited with his Bedford Blues flag at the side of the pitch for a photo; thank you for the support Chris!

Jet setting back to Goldington Road, personally, and as a side, we were poor during the first half of the season. Disappointing results against sides we would ideally look to gain the upper hand against. There is no point blabbing on and making excuses, our structure to our defence and attack was non-existent at times. I know as fans you wish for us to express ourselves, play into space and hold down a solid defence, but trust me, you need some structure to get things working and gain success.

It honestly was a 'career highlight' moment, being part of a playing group and coaching staff, which had a hard look at itself, and turned over the proverbial leaf in 2020. We worked hard, we were honest to each other, but most importantly, we became closer than ever as a group. That win against London Scottish away in January was a momentous feeling. To all you Followers, we can only thank you for your continual support through the tough times. It was a joy to celebrate with you guys after that win down in Richmond. It really did kickstart our season.

From there, we began to know our strengths and build as a team. Noticeable wins against Hartpury, Coventry, Doncaster, and of course, the last minute try by Huw Worthington to beat Jersey, gave us momentum. Players, such as Oskar Hirskyj-Douglas and Joe Atkinson were starting to become fan favourites. We began to have a fully fit squad to select from. We even had the delight of playing in a free-flowing running game officiated by 'Sir' Wayne Barnes himself!

I am assuming, it was not just us as players who were enjoying life. Goldington Road really did find its voice again in 2020, and I am sure you, as the Followers, were undoubtedly loving supporting a successful Blues side at the weekends!

However, amongst the celebrations and winning results, a sour taste burned in any Championship rugby enthusiast's mouth. The RFU came to a conclusion that they wished to cut the funding to all Championship clubs. Social media and newspapers screamed and yelled. The communication and reasoning behind the RFU's decision begs belief. Yet, such is business. Although we were all in shock and disappointment, life moves on, and Bedford Blues, along with all other Championship clubs, will have to make arrangements to combat the lack of funding next year.

COVID-19 then hit. It seems as though disaster had to strike twice!

Watching on, I was truly gutted that Newcastle Falcons had to be our last game to be played in the season. The boys fought for 80 minutes but Newcastle showed their Premiership aspiring power. On the bus trip back, there was still an energy that everyone wanted to learn from our

mistakes and get back to winning ways. Back then, we had no clue how COVID-19 would wreak havoc on the sporting industry. Cancelling and postponing events left, right and centre!

The Championship duly got cancelled, leaving us with an eighth-place finish. Yorkshire would be relegated, and Newcastle would be promoted.

As I write this letter, for us as players, normality has been put on hold. Home workouts have become the new norm, and 'furlough' has become everyone's hot topic. I have no doubt that everyone who reads this has sadly been affected in some similar way. In some cases, you may have been close to those who have had it worse. It is at this point that I want to pay tribute to a life-long Bedford Blues fan, David Fuller. It is now public that David sadly passed away in his home a few weeks ago. This hit me more personally, as David lives, quite literally, opposite my partner and me. He was a true rugby nut, fully engaged with everything that was going on. He lived and breathed for the Blues, describing to me how Goldington Road was "his sanctuary". Usually at every home and away game, I would always get a run down from David on Blues events. He would be the first one to come up to me at the local Italian delicatessen to praise the team and myself for our hard efforts. I am sure the majority of you will know David. On behalf of the team we would like to send our deepest condolences to his family.

I must express the good that has occurred during these adverse times. Bedford Blues has been a positive light in the sporting media. Goldington Road got singled out by Sunday Times rugby writer, Stephen Jones, as being one of the best rugby grounds in the world, and young film producers Harry Beard and Sean Tracey starred the Blues in the brilliant documentary, 'More Than Just A Game'. The club has also been busy helping local charities and the community, with the creation of the 'Blues Foundation'. Players have also been helping their own communities and have been busy raising money through various challenges; from shaving heads to crossbar challenges. The players continue to chat, workout and share a drink with one another through the joys of FaceTime and Zoom.

The club is hopefully starting to materialise a squad for next season, whenever the Championship starts. However, it is at this point, that I must confess that when my contract finishes, I will no longer be playing my rugby at Goldington Road. I have absolutely loved my time at the Blues. It is truly a historic and wonderful club, full of characters and down to earth people. However, what really makes Bedford is you, the Followers and the fans. I have loved playing for a 'rugby town', where the passion is rugby. I have so many fond memories, but I feel the one that shines out has to be in 2018 against Yorkshire Carnegie. A pitch covered in snow, with no chance of the game going ahead, the Blues fans turned up in their numbers to sweep the snow off the Goldington Road surface. We duly played the game, putting in one of the finest Bedford Blues performances I have been a part of, and we won the match comfortably. For me, that win, and that day belonged to the whole club, and especially the fans! It illustrated everything that is so brilliant about Bedford Blues.

I do hope that you are all keeping as well as you can be. Moving forward, the club and the players will need your support more than ever. This great club will get through this difficult time. Goldington Road will be in full voice once again!

Wishing you all the very best.

Will Hooley

*We will miss your skills on the field and hope you have good fortune in your future career. If you have a few moments, please let us know how you are getting on in the future! We like to keep up with the Blues Family.*

*Howard Travis has kindly given me permission to reproduce this article which featured in his recent email. I am sure that many of you are already members of the Friends of the Blues and if you are not then you might consider joining up now. Download the form from the Blues website. Those of us that travelled with Dave at the back of the bus will miss his company.*

Friends.

It is with deep regret, that I have to tell you of the sudden passing of David Fuller.

David had been a supporter of Bedford RUFC for as long as I can remember. I do not know the club without him. He was a Follower, a Season Ticket holder, a Shareholder and an FoB.

He was a Bedfordian, through and through. He was fun, a great companion, and a great character. He was a sage, and so knowledgeable, of so many things.

David attended Bedford School. On leaving, he joined the Metropolitan Police for a short service career. He would regale me with his Kray Brothers' story. He later lived for a period in the West Country before finding employment, until he retired, in the motor racing industry.

In his early years he was a tremendous athlete, with those long legs of his, and a great tennis player. He adored sport. He loved history, sporting history and memorabilia; but particularly he adored sport, and especially tennis & rugby.

Much of this love was for Bedford Rugby. He was there at Twickenham in 1975.

He was also very proud, that items he co-owns, with his brother Robert, are on display at the RFU museum at Twickenham. I do not know where he got half the stuff he did. I was always amazed. Often it was of great value. He was a very interesting and very talented man.

In retirement he took to walking a great deal and immersing himself in his many interests. He was so keen to help me with the FoBs; and he and his brother donated prizes. Volunteering to collect Mr Rahi's samosas for the Soiree he complained his car smelt like a curry house for weeks.

He was often on the Followers coach, to away matches for many years. He was such a great fan of the club. He was always there. On the terrace, on the bus, in the Scrum Bar, in the Cricks. We called each other Nobby. Heaven only know why?

He greatly enjoyed his last years. Brother Robert, and Robert's wife Irene moved to France, and at times, it seemed, that David had too. He kept reappearing though. He watched a lot of rugby over there particularly Lyon, I think, and was full of stories of how he enjoyed France so much.

David Umpiring.

He also took up umpiring cricket. A very brave thing to do. He went on a course and then seemingly went full time with Sharnbrook & Bromham CC, which has a big tie with Bedford Blues. Many Blues players and fans play for them. He adored it. His loyalty was such, that he would forgo holidays to enable the club

to have an official. He was a very loyal man.

I, like many others, am very sad. Our condolences and sympathies go to his bother Robert, sister-in-law Irene and the greater Fuller family.

Bedford has lost a lovely man and a great servant. Great knock, well batted and thank you David.

From all your friends, in your Town.

Howard B Travis

**Friends of The Blues**

[www.friendsoftheblues.net](http://www.friendsoftheblues.net)



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*Our third contribution is from Will Roberts, you may remember his first article in Issue 4 "Bedford Blues: Memories - Bedford Vs Newcastle Falcons" - Editor*

A few weeks ago I spoke to Sean Treacy for the Young Rugby Podcast. A fresh-faced Irish Teen who embarked on a journey to document the lifestyle of the Bedford Blues Community.

(Look up "More Than Just A Game" on YouTube if you want to watch the finished documentary). I was shocked by a few things. Number one, Sean is one of the only Blues fans I had heard of that was not a Blue since birth. If I am honest, I thought you had to be born a Bedford fan, until recently. Number two, he gave me a fresh perspective on how we are as fans, and frankly, it is pretty incredible. When you are in the bubble it is so hard to appreciate how amazing we are towards the club. However over the past few weeks and even this past season, I think it has been very clear to see that everyone has a little blue in their hearts.

So, the 2019-20 Championship campaign. I could talk about the season generically and how we had a rough start but brought it together towards the end before the financial rug was pulled

from under our feet by Mr Sweeney and a thing called COVID. But we have all heard that tale. Instead, I wanted to give my personal view on the season. I am lucky enough to spend some of my weekday evenings at training with the players and frankly, I have learnt more from those players in training, than I have at any rugby camp or live rugby. This season was split into two very distinguishable parts: losing a lot, winning a lot. I will focus on the losing for start.

2019 was tough. Everyone knows that. We had a limited squad due to injuries in crucial positions and the team just did not seem to click. It was tough to watch my heroes come to training after another 'narrow loss'. It seemed like the tables had turned and those 53-52s versus Coventry were just not going our way. The reason we thrived so much in 2018-19 was, in my opinion, down to leadership. Mark Flannagan called the lineouts and marched the forwards on. Will Hooley controlled the backs and the moves that were always executed so well. Chris Czekaj handled the defence from the inside centre with a wealth of experience. And Lee Dickson pulled the strings bringing everything together in such a sleek way. At the start of the season, we had all of that taken away. Hooley in Japan and the rest moving onto different pastures. This was tough. Of course, we had replacements and able ones at that. Dan Temm now leads the forwards calling the shots from the back row. Grayson Hart pulls the strings from 9. But a lot of the leadership and talking lay on the shoulders of Will Hooley. (You may have noticed I have not mentioned club captain Sean McCarthy, he is a leader, however, he leads by example, and what an example that is.) Will Hooley was the major dictator of everything on the pitch. Will only played 50% of our games in 2019. There is our problem. As I alluded, in my first followers' newsletter piece, this is a very young team which shows a lot of promise, however, the team lost a lot of voices and it is hard to sail a ship without a steering wheel.

So, what happened in 2020. Oskar Hirskyj-Douglas happened. Oz's story defines what Bedford is all about. After a few rocky seasons bouncing around Premiership and University teams, and confusion around positions, Oskar came to Blues as a last-minute signing before the season kicked off. After finding the 12 shirt, Oskar started to break out of his shell and really find his true colours towards the end of the season and really click into that backline. In the engine room, Alafoti Fao'siliva made a big impact bringing some 'Jarad' back to the Blues pack. Our trouble/injury issues at scrum-half left some creative options open. Most may remember Ed Coulson's tribute act at Scrum Half last season vs Hartpury, however, this time Matt Worley was left to practice his box kicks right before the Donny game as he played scrum-half at Racing back in his Parisian days! Who knew!

Finally, considering there is most likely not going to be an FoB soiree this season, I thought I would do some of my slating on here... Ed Coulson and Rich Lane have taken up jobs in TESCO after their somewhat abysmal performance in supermarket sweep earlier this year. Ryan Hutler still is not as cool as Deano, although he is trying. Lewis Robling is currently taking Tiktok by storm with his 'dancing'. Matt Worley is still thinking about how he managed to not put that ball down. Dan Temm is rolling in cashmere scarves because he is not selling any. Grayson Hart has only changed his hair four times since lockdown. Josh Buggea still has not cleaned his teeth. And all the team have shaved their heads apart from Dean Adamson because, well, it is Deano. There is only one more thing to say. Come on you Blues!

Will Roberts

## JACKIE'S SPORTSQUIZ 2019



1. Who scored a hat trick in the first 30 mins v France?
2. Which woman won the Australian Open to top the rankings?
3. Which golfer was disqualified in Saudi Arabia for damaging greens?
4. How many days did Paul Scholes last as manager of Oldham Athletic?
5. One was Brighton. Which team was the other?
6. Which jockey retired after 24 years which included 59 Cheltenham winners?
7. Who were the openers for Sunrise Hyderabad setting the IPL record?
8. Who hit a record 17 sixes in an innings at the cricket World Cup?
9. Who crashed when he blew his nose?
10. Which 15 year old beat Venus Williams at Wimbledon?
11. Which country won the Netball World Cup in Liverpool?
12. What did Egan Bernal win?
13. Which club did Wayne Rooney join?
14. Whose departure from Sky Sports "implied ageism"?
15. Where did Elind Kipchoge break the two hour marathon mark?
16. Which individual medals did Dina Asher Smith win in Doha?
17. Which double Olympic winning boxer retired in November?
18. How many points were Saracens deducted originally?
19. Why did Fallon Sherrock make the sports news?
20. Who did England women play in the sell-out match at Wembley?

## Mick Meadows' BRFA End of season quiz 2020

1. How many tries have Bedford Players scored in internationals for the British Lions?
2. In total, how many international appearances have Bedford players made for the British Lions?
3. When Bedford beat Rosslyn Park at Twickenham in 1975 who scored the Bedford tries?
4. Which player has made the most international appearances while playing for Bedford?
5. What was unique about Budge Rogers being awarded the OBE?
6. On 4th November 1996 Bedford lost 41-27 to South Africa A. What historical event in Rugby Union took place that evening?
7. Who is the most capped English Rugby player?
8. Who has captained England on the most occasions?
9. Who was the last Bedford Player to captain England?
10. How many tries for Wales Did Mike Rayer score?

11. Prior to the game turning professional, what was unique about the shirts worn by Bristol and Leicester?
12. Likewise what was unique about the shirts worn by Richmond and Bath?
13. Final question on Shirts what did Harlequins introduce that was subsequently banned?
14. Who won the 1st European champions cup?
15. 2 Players who played for Bedford played in that final Mike Rayer was one, who was the other?
16. 6 of the Northampton Saints winning side of 2000 subsequently went on to play for Bedford They were Matt Stewart, Jon Phillips, Matt Allen, Craig Moir and Ali Hephher. Who was the 6th?
17. Which Bedford player played in 2019 World Cup?
18. How many times have England played Ireland in the Rugby World Cup?
19. Which side have England played most in Rugby World cup?
20. Who is the most capped Rugby player?

#### From the last issue - General rugby knowledge Issue 5 - Answers

1. John Dawes (captain) and Carwyn James (coach).
2. Norm Hewitt
3. Parma
4. France
5. Scotland
6. Warren Gatland
7. Foot and mouth
8. Chris Ashton
9. A Friday fixture
10. George North
11. Ireland
12. Croke Park
13. Scott Murray
14. Italy
15. Lewis Moody
16. Bloemfontein (Toyota Cheetahs) and Port Elizabeth (Southern Kings)
17. Waikato. None (he played 17 non-international matches for NZ).
18. Lewis Moody, versus Samoa.
19. Green. Tonga (who also play in red).
20. Auckland Harbour
21. Delon Armitage and Steffon Armitage (2009)
22. Philippe Sella (111) and David Campese (101)
23. Yokohama (Japan's second largest city)
24. Sam Davies (2015) and George Ford (2011)



## Members forum/email contributions

Mick Meadows' Article in Followers' Newsletter Issue 3 challenged you to predict the final positions in the Championship at the end of the season.

Mick writes:-

I realise that the season was not completed properly but I got top 4 and bottom 2 right and do not think they would have changed. The only 2 that let me down were Ampthill who were up 5 places and Donny who went down 5. Unfortunately, the method the RFU used does not take into account sides like Bedford, who had started to perform a lot better in games played in 2020. Also the fixtures Bedford had to play were against lower placed sides apart from the Pirates. Jersey and Ampthill still had Newcastle Ealing and Coventry to play.

Prediction Table	Mick's Prediction	Final Position	Mick's Score
1. Newcastle	1	1	0
2. Ealing	2	2	0
3. Pirates	3	3	0
4. Coventry	4	4	0
5. Ampthill	10	5	5
6. Nottingham	8	6	2
7. Jersey	6	7	1
8. Bedford	9	8	1
9. London Scottish	7	9	2
10. Doncaster	5	10	5
11. Hartbury	11	11	0
12. Leeds	12	12	0

Mick's total points 16

FINAL LEAGUE STANDINGS 2019/20 according to #chamrugby

	Club	Points
1.	Newcastle Falcons (P)	104.50
2.	Ealing Trailfinders	83.42
3.	Cornish Pirates	75.43
4.	Coventry	65.80
5.	Ampthill	58.34
6.	Nottingham	50.88
7.	Jersey Reds	49.04
8.	Bedford Blues	46.36
9.	London Scottish	42.43
10.	Doncaster Knights	36.84
11.	Hartpury University	35.29
12.	Yorkshire Carnegie (R)	2.75

### Members Forum

We would like to include articles submitted by members on this page. Please send any contributions by email to:- [bedfordrugbyfollowers@gmail.com](mailto:bedfordrugbyfollowers@gmail.com)

We reserve the right to edit any contribution to make it suitable for publication.

*Editor: I agree with Mick. My own view is that with the form that we were showing in 2020, we should have ended up in 5th or 6th place with around 51 points. Probable wins at home against Yorkshire, London Scottish and Nottingham plus a likely win at Hartpury and perhaps some points against Ampthill should have yielded about 20 points.*

## Sean McCarthy - A Prop's Way to Fitness.

During this bizarre time, when we have all be robbed of our rugby fix, I am sure many of you have been kept up at night wondering what it like to live with a rugby player through lockdown. Well, I can tell you, it has been enlightening!

In the first week a fitness plan was drawn up. A long list of house jobs, that had been on the back burner, started getting done and it was lovely to have a Saturday together!

Then a certain Captain, loose head prop and all round hardy individual tweaked his back doing yoga with me, and my goodness, I saw what not being able to lift weights and run around on a field did to a professional rugby player. Thanks to the power of rehab exercises and me, breaking into a sweat trying to treat his rather solid back muscles with deep tissue massage, Sean recovered, and he was back with a vengeance! Kettle bell circuits for maintaining power, running for fitness, heavy weights for strength and yoga for mobility.

On an average day I get up pretty early, but he is already outside preparing his body for training later in the day and dabbles in mindfulness meditation or breath work. Then he starts his nutritional and fitness coaching work for the day.

I must admit, lockdown has certainly shown me how hard Sean works. In my mind training was not really work. I have often said to him that I would love to get paid to go to the gym but the physical and mental resilience that I have seen from him during lockdown has been very eye opening. His drive to work hard and maintain his fitness despite not knowing when training will resume, has been inspirational. It would be so easy to slack off a little, but he never does.

He has told me that despite missing playing rugby, being able to train in a different way has allowed his body to fully recover for the first time in years! His neck does not ache, his back feels strong, his ankles do not have any niggles. So whilst this situation has bought about some struggles, it has also bought about a lot of benefits. I for one cannot wait to see him run out at Goldington Road with his passion renewed and his body refreshed whenever the seasons starts!

Holly

*Editor. Many thanks Holly for providing this insight into the life of a champion prop. Having seen the weights delivered to the gym, I am sure if anyone can lift them it would be Sean. I also wonder what the food bill must be like, having seen a TV programme on what rugby players eat!*

The Followers aim to support and assist Bedford Rugby in various ways as determined by the Committee and by proposals carried at an AGM.

- We run coaches to mainland away games to provide support unequalled in our division.
- We run a Jackpot at home games to provide funds for the club and as cash prizes.
- We assist with ground maintenance each summer and support when necessary to clear snow and the debris left behind after our fireworks displays.
- We organise social events and help promote events held by the club.

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