

THE **NON-LEAGUE** PAPER®

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THE ORIGINAL AND THE BEST



INSIDE:

**PARKINSON:
ROBINS CAN
FLY AGAIN**

AND

**SEASIDERS
SAVOUR
WINNING
RETURN**

HIGH-RISERS:
Marske United
edged out
Newcastle Blue
Star as the new
season kicked
off at Steps 5&6

PICTURE:
Charlie Waugh



**FRIENDLY
ACTION
CONTINUES**

AND

**TOWNERS
ACE MARCUS
EFL BOUND**



ZONED IN!

National League bag new broadcast deal

THE NATIONAL League have secured a groundbreaking seven-year broadcast deal with UK-headquartered streaming giants **DAZN**.

As well as the 'traditional' selection of a Saturday game for live coverage, the partner-

EXCLUSIVE

By **Matt Badcock**

ship will focus on allowing fans to watch any permitted game globally across all three divisions played outside of the existing UEFA Article 48 black-

out hours. Building on the concept of National League TV - launched 18 months ago - games and content will be accessed through the DAZN app in a dedicated section.

Available through Sky Q and Virgin Media boxes as well as

Continued on P4-5 >

MARK HARRIS: CLUBS MUST THINK SUSTAINABLY

INSIDE



All the opening day action from Steps 5/6
SEE PAGES 10-13

UP FOR THE CUP

We look ahead to the FA Cup extra preliminary round
SEE PAGE 8



Pre-season games from around the grounds
SEE PAGES 14-15, 18-19

GOOD, BAD, UGLY

This week: Legendary Alty goalkeeper Stuart Coburn
SEE PAGES 26-27



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FLETCHER FORCED TO CALL IT OFF!

FORMER Bath City striker Alex Fletcher has announced his retirement from football.

The 25-year-old was left in a coma in November 2022 after colliding with a perimeter wall at Twerton Park, causing a match against Dulwich Hamlet to be abandoned.

Fletcher was discharged from hospital a month later and had to learn to walk again.

He was left deaf in one ear following the accident but having worked his way back to full fitness, he was given a short-term contract for the start of the 2023/24 campaign.

The former Plymouth Argyle youngster returned to playing in August 2023 before departing the club three months later for Weston-super-Mare.

Missing

With opportunities limited at the Woodspring Stadium, Fletcher spent time on loan at Tiverton Town earlier this year, the club he had departed to join Bath City in January 2021.

The striker made 72 appearances for City, scoring 28 goals.

He was the club's Supporters' and Players' Player of the Year for the 2021/22 season.

Fletcher became a father for the first time in June, a year af-

By Mark Stillman

ter marrying his long-term girlfriend Ellie.

"I'm really gutted about it," said Fletcher, who broke down in tears in a filmed interview with his dad, Paul.

"I've got to be so grateful on one hand because I'm able to live life relatively normal compared to what I was before.

"Since I made my recovery on the pitch there was something about my game that was missing.

Impact

"I didn't feel the same player as I did before the accident.

"I know that's normal with a lot of injuries, but with a brain injury there's not only the PTSD side of what happened, there's also the physical impairment which I've got.

"In a recent brain scan, it showed the physical impact on my cerebellum is affecting my balance, co-ordination and timing.

"All three of those components in football are what made me a good player.

"Obviously there are a few differences like my deafness and vertigo which cause me a few issues.

"Carrying on playing football was probably one step too far.

"I've still got memories to last a lifetime."



SAD ENDING: Alex Fletcher has announced his retirement from football

PICTURE: Simon Howe

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BARRY, THE NEW DUKE OF SUSSEX



BIG MOVE: Mo Faal MO HAS EARNED SECOND CHANCE

By Jon Couch

MO FAAL says he is ready to jump back into the EFL after penning an initial six-month contract with League One new boys Crawley Town.

The 27-year-old striker has been handed a second chance in the pro game after joining the Reds from Maidstone United.

Prolific spells with Kingstonian and Enfield Town earned Faal a dream move to Bolton in January 2020, but the move didn't work out and the striker re-joined Enfield Town, where he netted 35 goals in 43 matches.

A move to Havant & Waterlooville followed, where Faal notched a further 28 goals, before joining Maidstone in the second half of last season.

"I have had lots of highs and lows in my career, but this is definitely the time for me to jump back into the EFL," Faal said. "I have gained a lot of experience throughout my career so I will be taking all of the lessons I have learned with me to Crawley."



GARETH BARRY, the Premier League's record appearance maker, is expected to play 'a handful of matches' after his shock signing for village side Hurstpierpoint.

By Matthew Nash

The 43-year-old was initially hailed as coming out of retirement to play for the Bluedogs in the Step 8 Mid-Sussex League's second-tier Championship but club secretary Alex Oecken-Faithfull played down the coup.

Instead, he says Sussex-born Barry will merely play "when he can" at Fairfield Recreation Ground, given he lives in the midlands. Monday was arguably the biggest day in Hurst's 138-year history, however, and the news reverberated around football circles.

"There have been a lot of retweets, a lot of messages and we even got mentioned on Sky Sports News and ESPN. We never expected any of that," said Oecken-Faithfull.

Aura

"It's not that he's coming out of retirement as such, it's that Gareth is signing for his mate's team for a handful of appearances.

"The story starts with Michael Standing, Gareth's long-time friend, teammate and agent, who came through at Aston Villa with him and is involved with our club.

"He said to Gareth: 'Just come down when you're in Sussex visiting family, you can sign on and play the odd match for us'. He was at training last Tuesday and we'd love him to even play just a few games for us."

Oecken-Faithfull admits he believes Barry could still cut it in more revered company having retired after leaving his final club West Bromwich Albion in 2020.

The 53-cap former England midfielder played 653 top-flight

matches – a record which still stands, although it could go this season, with Brighton & Hove Albion's James Milner on 634 and likely to overtake Barry this season.

"One hundred per cent he could still do it at a higher level," added Oecken-Faithfull. "He came in very humbly. He didn't put a foot wrong in training and just has an aura about him. He makes everyone up their game around him.

"We have a lot of boys who will be inspired by this. Imagine if you are a 16-year-old with Hurstpierpoint and you come in and train with the senior teams with Gareth Barry the former England international there."

Catalyst

Oecken-Faithfull says it was "coincidence" Barry penned Mid Sussex League forms with Hurst just weeks after former Premier League duo Charlie Daniels and Dan Gosling signed for Premier Division Westfield over the border in East Sussex.

But Barry, who joined Villa from Brighton as a trainee in 1997, could act as a catalyst to get the Bluedogs back up the divisions and is set to make his competitive debut "in mid-September", with a clearer picture once fixtures are released soon.

Oecken-Faithfull explained: "We were around from the 19th century but dropped out of what is now the Southern Combination League ten years ago and there were four people at the table desperately trying to stop the club from dying.

"We've got players in from the village since then and have three men's teams. If we get it right, we could go back to the County League."



STAR SIGNING: Gareth Barry with his Hurstpierpoint shirt and, insets, in action for Aston Villa, left, and England, right

PICTURE: Hurstpierpoint FC and Alamy

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THE NATIONAL LEAGUE REVEL

DAZN STRENGTH CARRY US RIGHT

SHAKE ON IT: DAZN's Pete Oliver, left, and the National League's Mark Ives at Wembley
Inset: The duo with DAZN's Joe Pickering
 PICTURE: Darren Campbell

► Continued from Front

Smart TVs, on mobile, tablet and games consoles, there will also be a highlights package and all play-off matches will be shown in all three divisions.

Fans will be able to purchase season passes, monthly passes or a day pass. Confirmation of the opening stand-alone live game on August 10 – with presenters, commentators and pundits – is due imminently with full fixture schedules released shortly.

It comes after the National League's ten-year association with TNT Sport – previously BT Sport – ended last season.

DAZN are a big player in live boxing in the UK, while they manage international streaming for the NFL and have deals in Spain for La Liga, Italy for Serie A and Germany for UEFA Champions League. Their platform is accessible in more than 200 countries globally and will mean all games can be shown internationally. However, this represents a first deal with a domestic league in the UK.

ROUND TABLE

The NLP sat down with National League general manager Mark Ives, their independent non-executive director Martin Howard, DAZN's CEO of growth markets Pete Oliver and their rights director Joe Pickering to discuss the seven-year agreement, how it will work as well as how clubs will be supported:

MARTIN HOWARD: We think this is groundbreaking with regards to football at National League level and certainly far more advanced than anything else offered and what we've seen previously.

So we're obviously incredibly happy to have DAZN as a long-term partner as well. We believe in the partnership and believe it is going to be cutting edge for the next seven years.

MARK IVES: Seven years is testament to the commitment from both sides. From a National League perspective

we're absolutely delighted. In terms of the overall package, where we've got National League TV, it's bigger and better than the traditional broadcast partnership.

MH: This really is a joint venture by both parties and, therefore, there's going to be a lot of work done behind the scenes to bring National League TV and the broadcast side of the business together. We're looking at it as one entity. A lot of work is going to be done by DAZN and the National League to ensure it's a seamless experience for any fan – both UK and global. That's the other really exciting thing about DAZN. They are a global broadcaster in over 200 markets. We know the National League as a competition has many supporters outside of the UK. To be able to work with DAZN to get to those markets in a fully integrated manner and really maximise the opportunity for fans to experience it when they can't to grounds – and obviously in midweek for UK fans – is exciting.

Over the last 18 months, NLTV has allowed us to see the size of the audience outside of the UK.

That's why our conversations with DAZN were so fruitful because their power, their strength, their breadth, their technology will allow fans to tune into any National League game anywhere in the world across any platform.

MI: Bear in mind NLTV is only 18 months old, it has performed tremendously. The intention when we kicked it off was purely to reach the fanbase that couldn't get to games. I know there was some nervousness amongst some clubs thinking it would take away fans coming into grounds. That hasn't been the case. Attendances across all three divisions have increased year-on-year. That shows it gives the reach further. This is an ideal opportunity to push on.

MH: NLTV in the long term was hoping a broadcaster would see the strength of it and want to do more. We're fortunate it has only taken 18 months before DAZN has seen that opportunity.

MI: We shouldn't fall away from the quality of the game either. It has shown this level of football is on a par with the



IN THEIR NEW BROADCAST ERA

AND REACH WILL AROUND WORLD!



ONES TO WATCH: Barnet will be among the National League favourites in the coming season

EFL. We've said that all along. You've only got to look at those clubs that leave us. They do well when they go into the EFL.

NLP: So is this effectively merging NLTV with a more traditional broadcast deal?

JOE PICKERING: Breadth and technology is really where DAZN can sing with the National League. What we're looking to ultimately do is replicate a lot of the successes and deliverables from our NFL Game Pass deal. About a year-and-a-half ago we signed a ten-year exclusive with the NFL to manage their international OTT (Over-the-top) streaming product, NFL Game Pass. That was completely rebuilding that from scratch, taking over the international marketing and, ultimately, trying to grow the audience with great NFL content – the Super Bowl

“We believe in the partnership – and believe it is going to be cutting edge for the next seven years

Martin Howard, NLP

being one of the biggest events in the world. That partnership is about to start its second season and it has been incredibly successful for us and incredibly successful for the NFL.

When we saw where NLTV is now both in the UK and internationally, it's a strong and growing audience base. But the product is in its infancy. As a global streaming platform investing billions of dollars a year in technology, we can really take that NLTV platform to the next level.

It's not just going to be on laptops anymore. It's going to be on every app store, every Smart TV, games consoles, tablets moving forward. It's about opening up the funnel to the audience for where they want to watch it and giving a best in class streaming product. Not to mention it will be a very similar involvement in production as TNT – and BT Sport – have had for several years.

So we are going to be up-scaling at least one game a week throughout the National League, National League North and National League South seasons.

That will be a multi-camera production using all our experience with major boxing events, what we do with La Liga in Spain, in Italy with Serie A and in Germany with Bundesliga.

So it's a combination of best-in-class technology, unbelievable breadth of distribution and all of that production know-how. It's taking it to the next level and that's why we're committing for such a long term, financially and all the resources DAZN has got as a normal broadcaster.

NLP: So there will still be the traditional 'live TV game'?

PETE OLIVER: Absolutely – more cameras, pundits at the ground. The first season will be about getting the service up and running but we also want to look at what other innovation we have for the production. So looking at new technology for remote production, we will pull together highlights packages on the app. It will be quite a different experience to watching a couple of games on TV.

There will be a dedicated area on the DAZN app for the National League. Fans will be able to follow their own clubs. As well as live games, they will be able to get highlights and we will look to put other content on there as well – interviews, news stats and so on.

Our app is everywhere. For fans in the UK it's available on Sky Q boxes and Virgin Media boxes. You can conveniently switch to the DAZN app and watch your National League

team. The app environment is really good for a league like this because there are so many games happening and you can pick the game for you. The app works anywhere in the world. So if you go on holiday you can watch the game on the app too.

NLP: Will there be similar day passes to watch games?

PO: We plan to have a very similar structure to NLTV. You will be able to buy a season pass, a monthly pass or if you just want to buy for one game, we will have that option as well. It's all about flexibility.

MI: To be clear, we are still governed domestically by Article 48.

NLP: But there will still be one Saturday game a week outside of the blackout?

PO: That's the intention. Either pulled forward from the 3pm or moved back depending on the logistics.

JP: We're not coming in and ripping up the calendar and changing how everyone has engaged with the league for years. It will still be the 12.30pm, the 5.20pm kick-offs everyone is used to. We're right in the middle of what the first few months of the league is going to look like from a production perspective. We've got what we think are some really

exciting games picked to kick things off properly and you're going to see the big multi-camera production, the studio set-up, good commentators and pundits involved.

MI: It's important for clubs and fans to understand that there will be plenty of notice. We aim to have a significant period where people know in advance what the games are. We've obviously got to get it kicked off so we need to be sensible around the start of the season. But once we're live and moving forward, we're looking that five weeks in advance you'll know what the games are.

“What we're looking to ultimately do is replicate a lot of the successes from our NFL Game Pass deal

Joe Pickering, DAZN

NLP: How will logistics work at smaller Step 2 clubs? Is that now in place?

MH: There is a way of getting a signal out of a stadium no matter where you are. Technology is so advanced these days, you can get a remote signal and broadcast from anywhere. It's up to us to bring everything to a consistent production standard with regards to camera quality, commentators – and then the editorial sheen, graphics and stats DAZN will add on top of that to make it feel like a TV broadcast. It's a long-term partnership so we will be building to bring everything to the same standard.

NLP: So a Step 2 game could be the dedicated game of the week too?

JP: If you've got a crunch match at the end of the season, for example, then absolutely. The deal gives us that flexibility to do that type of thing if we think it is in the interests of us as partners. It's important it's not just seen as the National League – it's the National League, North and South coming together.

MI: We have committed to all the play-off games across all three divisions.

JP: The production levels we're looking at are really exciting. We're not looking to rip up the rulebook and completely change things. But it's going to be that first-rate broadcast experience for all the play-off games and for at least one game each week.

NLP: What's your message and why should fans get on board with what you're doing?

PO: We think it's going to be a really enhanced experience for fans. We're going to make more games available on more devices. We're really excited about innovating production. We want to make it authentic for fans. And we're hoping they will be excited and enjoy watching it all on a big screen TV and not just one or two games a week on traditional TV and on a laptop.

JP: All the benefit of what we're doing in investing to deliver the best possible experience to the biggest competitions in the world is going to come to the National League product as well.

It's going to be live scores, fixtures, results. Clubs will have their own dedicated areas, goal alerts you can click on so you can watch it as an instant highlight.

MI: It also complements people who are going to the games and what they can access after. It doesn't just stop there. The experience you can have going back to watch the highlights is huge.

NLP: Obviously we know many National League clubs are run by volunteers, how will you assist them?

PO: Part of the partnership is to work with the clubs. Our marketing team will work with clubs to provide information and assets. We want that relationship and also to get their feedback on how we're covering their team.

MI: The league have taken on dedicated staff to support that as well. We've got a new team that will work with DAZN and assist our clubs and their supporters to actually make sure they get the best benefit out of it.

ARTHURIAN BOYS GET SET TO FLY THE FLAG

THE Arthurian League travel to Finland this week to represent England in the UEFA Regions Cup – and secretary Jon Hunter says it still feels surreal they will be pulling on the Three Lions jersey.

They kick off on Wednesday against Portugal before taking on the hosts on Saturday and completing the group stage on August 6 versus Latvia.

The Arthurian League beat West Yorkshire Association Football League in May's FA Inter League Cup final – a competition made up of representative sides from Step 7 of the National League System.

Ben Hale scored the extra-time winner in their 1-0 win at Lincoln City's Sincil Bank and set up the chance to represent their country this summer.

And Hunter, who is assistant manager to Billy Jenkins as well as Athurian League Secretary, says excitement is building.

"It seems slightly surreal," Hunter told *The NLP*. "We're having to pinch ourselves that players from amateur level, especially our level, are going to get to wear the Three Lions. It's outrageous. A unique feeling."

"It's come out of the blue really. We'd never entered the FA Inter League Cup and, by hook or by crook, we ended up getting to the final and winning the thing. That was a surprise in itself."

"The Athurian League is unique in you have to

By Matt Badcock

have gone to the schools to play for the clubs. First and foremost you are school mates. So it becomes quite parochial. When Charterhouse play Eton, that's a proper derby, that's quite fierce.

"There's lots of rivalries. So getting the rep team together, the big thing is you've suddenly gone from being adversaries to mates. That's been one of the best things about it."

As part of preparations, the side recently travelled to Jersey to take part in the Bulls Cup against island side Jersey Bulls, National League North outfit Curzon Ashton and Step 4 new boys Wythenshawe Town and they've also taken on the Southern Amateur League.

"We just want to compete the best we can," Hunter said. "The lads are really excited and so is the league. It's a big deal. We've got a guy called Tony Hall who has been everything at the league for 40-odd years since he stopped playing. He came out to Jersey on his own expenses, he's going to watch the game, he's as proud as anything. At the end of the day, that's kind of what it's about."

And Hunter says they won't take the opportunity for granted.

"It hasn't got lost on any of the players that this is a real privilege and honour to do this," Hunter said. "It's doing the very best you can and that's all we can do."



CHAMPIONS: The Arthurian League celebrate winning the FA Inter League Cup final

PICTURE: Andy Nunn

Age is more than a number for Bentley



CHANGE OF TACK: Southport are adding greater experience to their ranks

PICTURE: Alamy

By Chris Dunlavy

NOT many managers want to raise the average age of their squad, but that is exactly the approach taken by Southport boss Jim Bentley this summer.

The former Morecambe boss replaced club legend Liam Watson in August last year and inherited a callow squad reeling off the back of 11 straight defeats.

Bentley's nous and a change of ownership eventually averted relegation from National League North, but a season of struggle left the 48-year-old in no doubt as to what was required.

Only four of Southport's ten summer signings are under the age of 30, with former Wrexham, Peterborough and Bradford centre-back Nat Knight-Percival the headline act at 37.

"A lot of the players we had – and this is no disrespect to them or Liam – just didn't have the know-how and the experience," explains Bentley.

"That's nobody's fault. There wasn't much money so they had to shop a little bit lower down and take a couple of chances."

"One or two of those kicked on and got sold. One or two didn't and have ended up dropping back down. We've just tried to eliminate that risk element as much as possible."

"We wanted the average age to come up. We wanted a lot more know-how and a few more promotions on the CV. By and large, that's what we've got."

"We've still got one or two projects who've come from lower leagues. Tom Moore was the captain at Bury last sea-

JIM NEEDS VINTAGE FOR PORT

son. Sonny Hilton's come from Bootle, which is a couple of leagues below. He's been at Fulham and in the England youth set-up and has just lost his way with an injury.

Promotions

"But the majority of our signings have been there and done it. Nat Knight-Percival has got six promotions. We've just signed Jamie Proctor, who's got four. Sam Minihan and Jordan Keane have both won this division, and the one above, in the last four or five years."

"They know what it feels like. They know what it takes. And I think the whole squad feels a lot better for it."

Bentley's unusual recruitment drive has been aided in

no small part by chairman Peter Mitchell, whose Big Help Group – already the stadium sponsor – bought the club in October last year.

Despite the obvious outlay on players, Bentley insists the Sangrounders will still be operating on a bottom-half budget this season and says the bulk of Mitchell's investment is taking place behind the scenes.

Analysis

"People might look at it and go 'Well they've signed a lot of experienced players, the budget must have rocketed up'," says Bentley, left. "And yes, it has gone up a little bit. It's made us more competitive, but it's not

massive. Off the field, though, they're investing all the time."

"They're improving community links. They're looking to improve the stadium. Match-day travel is better, pre-match meals are better. We're actually going to Belfast in a couple of weeks for a bit of team bonding."

"We've got an extra first-team coach. A sports scientist, someone who's going to do a bit of analysis for us. We've got heart monitors."

"We used to train on a third of a pitch every Tuesday and Thursday so it was difficult to do anything. Now we've got a full pitch."

"All this stuff costs money, but it's not as if they're just going to bankroll a team. They're here for the long-term, they want to improve the club in all areas and make us more professional on and off the field."

"That's got to be measured. You've got to cut your cloth accordingly. But I look at this club and the future is bright."



Mark HARRIS

NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE CHAIRMAN

HARDLY a week goes by right now when we don't hear about another Non-League club in financial difficulties. Why is this happening, and where will it all end?

I'm not doom-mongering but sincerely believe that the biggest threat to Non-League football right now is clubs' ambition exceeding their capability to fund that ambition.

This is the first in a short series of articles looking at what's driving some clubs to throw caution to the wind in search of glory. I'll be looking at the impact on other clubs and asking whether Non-League football is in danger of becoming unsustainable.

THE PRICE OF AMBITION

Every football fan wants to see their team buying the best players, winning trophies and titles along the way. When a club can't afford the former it usually means (with some notable exceptions) they don't achieve the latter.

Managers usually want the same thing, and I don't blame them for that. After all, it's the manager's job to ask for what he can't have, and it's the chair's to say no. Unfortunately, in more and more clubs this isn't happening.

With talent at a premium, players have the upper hand in any negotiations, especially if agents are involved. They play one club off against another without thinking (in the words of Petula Clark) the grass may not be greener on the other side.

It takes a strong chair and board to maintain an affordable pay structure and say 'no' to unrealistic demands. When they do, they get vilified for a lack of ambition. Yet, how many actually stop for a moment and consider whether the club can afford to show that ambition?

SPIRALLING WAGES

The consequences are there to see. Last season we lost two NPL clubs for off-field reasons. Marske United couldn't sustain their player commitments in terms of contracts and wages. New owners quickly saw that their business was not viable, so they took the courageous decision to resign and regroup.

Loughborough Dynamo



SLIPPERY SLOPE: Marske United withdrew after failing to sustain their player commitments

PICTURE: Alamy

AMBITION CAN PROVE COSTLY

realised that they could not sustain Step 4 football, despite (or maybe because of) having their best ever season at that level. They completed the season. It must have come as a terrible shock for players, officials and supporters but that decision allowed the club to live to fight another day at a lower level in the Pyramid.

Whilst sponsorship deals can fall through, commitments get broken and other unforeseen events occur, the consistent factor in most cases of clubs that have got into financial difficulties is unaffordable wage bills.

I know of Step 4 clubs offering players £500 a week or more. That's fine if the club has wealthy backers, but utter madness if the club simply decides to 'have a go' in the hope that the cost will be covered by bigger attendances, an FA Cup

run or greater sponsorship. There's no place for hopes in a football budget.

It only takes a couple of clubs to get giddy before it becomes contagious. Others feel they have to follow suit to compete, with sporting integrity and responsible management thrown out of the window.

Call me cynical, but every time I see a club appealing for financial help, my first reaction is to wonder how much they are spending on players. After all, there are only two promotion places available in most divisions, so why bother?

WHEN'S THE HELP?

When a club is in financial trouble, the cry goes up (usually on social media) "the authorities should have done something about it".

What do they expect? It isn't the FA or the league's job to run clubs' businesses.

The only people who can stop clubs spending what they cannot afford is those who run them – to a degree.

Contrary to popular opinion, there isn't a bottomless money pit at the Premier League, let alone The FA. Even if a financial bail-out was possible, it would effectively be an endorsement of poor financial management, or worse.

For a League to do so would mean giving money that belongs to every other member club in that competition. A Hardship Fund has been mentioned, but most clubs in the NLS could justifiably claim to suffer hardship in one way or another. It would have to be a very big fund indeed.

The help that is available to clubs is professional advice on how best to tackle the situations in which clubs find themselves. The

trouble is, clubs are reluctant to admit they need help, often because they fear the reaction of their fans (and players). By then, it may be too late.

FANS HAVE A BIG PART TO PLAY

If you've managed to get this far, chances are that you're now depressed at my doom-mongering. Well, it doesn't have to be that way, and fans have a big part to play in ensuring that their clubs show ambition that is affordable.

I'm not naive enough to ask any fan not to want success for their club. Neither am I suggesting that everyone becomes a forensic accountant overnight. But fans have to acknowledge a responsibility to prevent wild spending, whether shareholders or not.

Some clubs are already passing a proportion of their

spending onto fans. I could name half a dozen clubs where the prices for a cup of tea, a pie or a pint have taken the cost of the matchday experience past £50 at Step 4 level.

Ask for financial updates at Fans' Forums; it isn't just shareholders who are entitled to know whether their club risks points deduction, or worse.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF ALL

Ultimately, the saddest part of all this is that history shows that the clubs promoted at the end of the season are usually those who have spent the most to acquire the best players.

In next week's NLP I'll be looking at what a solution to this problem might look like, from greater regulation to fan-ownership, to wage caps. I'll be asking 'what price sporting integrity?'

FA CUP EXTRA PRELIMINARY RND PREVIEW

By Phil Annets
@FACUPFACTFILE

221 The new record number of ties in this season's extra preliminary round, involving 442 Non-League clubs.

99 The number of seasons since Beverley Town last participated in the FA Cup – a competition record gap between consecutive games.

13 Of the 123 Step 4 clubs involved in the extra preliminary round, at least 13 are guaranteed to be knocked out.

30 There are 30 clubs in the extra preliminary round who are yet to register an FA Cup victory, although 14 of them are participating in the competition for the first time: AFC Whyteleaf, Berks County, Blyth Town, British Airways, FC St Helens, Hamworthy Recreation, Ivybridge Town, Larkfield & New Hythe, Millbrook (Hampshire), Newark Town, Newcastle Blue Star, South Liverpool, Sporting Club Inkberrow and Wormley Rovers.

5 Of those clubs with multiple FA Cup campaigns still awaiting to progress beyond the extra preliminary round in the competition, Golcar United and Hilltop FC are both trying to for the third time, Belper United are looking to do so at the fourth time of asking (away at Shifnal Town), whilst Thornbury Town are hoping to make it fifth time lucky (at Lydney Town).

7 Amesbury Town return to the FA Cup after a 55-year absence and are looking for their first victory in the competition in what is their seventh campaign (at Oldland Abbotonians).

1 Two of those clubs yet to taste victory in the FA Cup face each other as Harleston Town host Heacham FC so at least one club will record their first FA Cup win.

82 Conversely, 82 clubs involved in this year's extra preliminary round have actually appeared in the 'proper' rounds of the competition in the past, with Sheffield FC, Northwich Victoria and Glossop North End all actually having gone as far as the last eight in the past, admittedly happening more than 100 years ago.

6 It requires as many victories (six) as the likely eventual winners of the competition will need for any of the 442 clubs involved in the EP Round just to reach the 1st Round 'Proper' this season, although Skelmersdale United proved just four years ago it could be done.

100 Melksham Town are competing in the FA Cup

EXTRA SPECIAL SHOT AT CUP GLORY



for the 100th time this season. The club have never reached the 'proper' rounds of the competition yet, and failure to do so this season would make them the first club to reach 100 campaigns without doing so.

75 Other clubs starting out in this earliest round also celebrating competition milestones

are: Crook Town (in their 75th campaign), Eynesbury Rovers, Kempston Rovers and Saffron Walden Town (50th campaign) and Bridlington Town, Cobham FC, Horndean FC, Mildenhall Town, Moneyfields FC, Royal Wootton Bassett Town, Sawbridgeworth Town, Squires Gate, VCD Athletic and Westfields FC (25th campaign).

47 The number of ties involving clubs that have met each other in the FA Cup before, including four pairs of clubs who last met in the competition just last season.

Hullbridge Sports will be one of the keenest of those clubs looking to avenge a past FA Cup defeat having lost 6-0 to this season's opponents Grays Athletic in their

only previous meeting nine years ago.

15 Guisborough Town have had to wait 15 years for the opportunity to avenge their heavy 9-1 defeat at Kendal Town in the first qualifying round in the 2009-10 season.

86 It's 86 years since Aylesbury United and Thame United

last met in the FA Cup for the second time. The Ducks won both previous FA Cup encounters by a five-goal margin. Heaton Stannington have had a 72-year wait to avenge a 1-0 defeat by Easington Colliery in the competition

10 All eyes really should be on Newmarket Town v March Town United in the hope of witnessing a repeat of when they last met in the FA Cup 43 years ago where they shared 10 goals before the Hares went on to win the replay. This is also the most common tie of the round with March Town United ahead by three wins to two in past FA Cup meetings.

52 The number of extra preliminary round ties involving clubs that will meet each other in league action this season. The Northern League Division One and the Wessex League Premier Division are the two most represented leagues with six ties each in total.

5 Wythenshawe FC vs Pilkington FC, Melton Town vs Harrowby United, Harleston Town vs Heacham FC, British Airways vs Loxwood, and Punjab United (Gravesend) vs Snodland Town are five ties that guarantee the winner will either equal or set their best FA Cup run.

Whichever player scores the earliest FA Cup goal in the ties to be played on Friday, August 2 will become an FA Cup history-maker as the player who scored the earliest ever FA Cup goal in a season.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2

(No 7.45pm unless stated)

EMIRATES FA CUP Extra Preliminary Round:

AFC Liverpool v Abbey Hey (8pm), Albion Sports v Trafford (8pm), Heaton Stannington v Easington Colliery, Great Yarmouth Tn v Kirkley & Pakfield, Spelthorne Sports v Burgess Hill Tn.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

(No 3pm unless stated)

EMIRATES FA CUP Extra Preliminary Round:

Crook Tn v Marske Utd, Consett v Redcar Athletic, West Auckland Tn v Bishop Auckland, Newcastle Benfield v Knaresborough Tn, Garforth Tn v Northallerton Tn, Kendal Tn v Guisborough Tn, Whickham v Carlisle City, Boro Rangers v West Allotment Celtic, Shildon v Ashington, Birtley Tn v Brindlington Tn, Tow Law Tn v Blyth Tn, North Shields v Newcastle Blue Star, Tadcaster Albion v Seaham Red Star, Penrith v Pickering Tn, Colne v Mossley, Longridge Tn v Cheadle Tn, Sheffield v Nantwich Tn, Ossett Utd v Widnes, Vauxhall Motors v Ecclehill Utd, Wythenshawe Tn v Chadderton, Whitechurch Alport v Ilam, Thackley v Frickley Athletic, Stocksbridge Park Steels v Prestwich Heys, West Didsbury & Chorlton v Bursough, Penistone Church v Charnock Richard, Ramsbottom Utd v Stalybridge Celtic, Barnoldswick Tn v Brighouse Tn, Liversedge v Slisden, Campion v Parkgate, Padigham v Golcar Utd, Wythenshawe v Pilkington, Northwich Victoria v Squires Gate, Handsworth v South Liverpool, Congleton Tn v Bury, Stockport Tn v 1874

Northwich, Litherland REMHYCA v Glossop North End, Emley v FC St Helens, Brocton v Tividale, Wolverhampton Casuals v Rugby Tn, Lutterworth Tn v Studley, Coventry Sphinx v Ashby Ivanhoe, QJM Black Country v Chase Tn, Rugby Borough v Darlaston Tn, Kids Grove Athletic v Pershore Tn, AFC Wulfrunians v Atherstone Tn, Sporting Khalsa v Coventry Utd, Sutton Coldfield Tn v Romulus, Hinckley AFC v Highgate Utd, Westfields v Daventry Tn, Worcester Raiders v Stourport Swifts, Racing Club Warwick v Hednesford Tn, Stone Old Alleynians v Bedworth Utd, Hanley Tn v Boldmere St Michaels, Worcester City v Walsall Wood, Uttoxeter Tn v Heanor Tn, Shifnal Tn v Belper Utd, Malvern Tn v Hereford Pegasus, Sporting Club Inkberrow v Dudley Tn, Evesham Utd v Newcastle Tn, Coleshill Tn v Eastwood Community, Gresley Rovers v Lichfield City, Corby Tn v AFC Rushden & Diamonds, Grimsby Borough v GNG Oadby Tn, Leicester Nirvana v Northampton On Chenecks, Rossington Main v AFC Mansfield, Shirebrook Tn v Deeping Rangers, Bourne Tn v Aylestone Park, Yaxley v Godmanchester Rovers, Barton Tn v Newark Tn, Lincoln Utd v Goole, Melton Tn v Harrowby Utd, Shephed Dynamo v Winterton Rangers, Sherwood Colliery v Grantham Tn, Kimberley Miners Welfare v Cleethorpes Tn, Skegness Tn v Newark & Sherwood Utd, Wellington Tn v Seafield Tn, Bugbrooke St Michaels v Loughborough Students, Northampton Sileby Rangers v Boston Tn, Hucknall Tn v Bottesford Tn, Dereham Tn

v Wisbech Tn, Ely City v Mulbarton Wanderers, Sheringham v Woodbridge Tn, Harleston Tn v Heacham, Wroxham v Walsham Le Willows, Thetford Tn v Ipswich Wanderers, Stowmarket Tn v Histon, Cornard Utd v Fakenham Tn, Newmarket Tn v March Tn Utd, Gorleston v Hadleigh Utd, Long Melford v Downham Tn, Soham Tn Rangers v Mildenhall Tn, Great Wakering Rovers v Redbridge, Newport Pagnell Tn v Ilford, Stansted v Biggleswade, Leverstock Green v Baldock Tn, Eynesbury Rovers v Romford, Tring Athletic v Barking, Biggleswade Utd v Frenford, Milton Keynes Irish v Welwyn Garden City, Witham Tn v Hertford Tn, London Lions v Arlesey Tn, Colney Heath v Takeley, Cookfosters v Kings Langley, Sawbridgeworth Tn v FC Roma, Real Bedford v St Neots Tn, West Essex v Enfield, Little Oakley v Dunstable Tn, Basildon Utd v Hadley, Shefford Tn & Campton v Brantham Athletic, FC Clacton v Leighton Tn, Kempston Rovers v Brightlingsea Regent, Patton Utd v White Ensign, Barton Rovers v Saffron Walden Tn, Heybridge Swifts v Wormley Rovers, Benfleet v Woodford Tn, Grays Athletic v Hullbridge Sports, Edgware & Kingsbury v Crawley Green, Stanway Rovers v Maidon & Tiptree, Tilbury v Buckhurst Hill, Harpenden Tn v Halstead Tn, Porthead Tn v Easington Sports, Tuffley Rovers v Kidlington, Malmesbury Victoria v Slmbridge, Reading City v Ardley Utd, Lydney Tn v Thornbury Tn, Burnham v Corsham Tn, Brislington v Wallingford & Crommarsh,

Flackwell Heath v Aylesbury Vale Dynamos, Binfield v Wokingham & Emmbrook (12.30), Longlevens v Winslow Utd, Cinderford Tn v Nailsea & Tickenham, Virginia Water v Brimscombe & Thrupp, Ascot Utd v Milton Utd, Thame Utd, Aylesbury Utd, Oldland Abbotonians v Amersham Tn, Highworth Tn v Bishop's Cleeve, Roman Glass St George v North Leigh, Fairford Tn v Cirencester Tn, Hartpury University v Risborough Rangers, Yate Tn v Holport, Royal Wootton Bassett Tn v Mangotsfield Utd, British Airways v Loxwood, Horsham YMCA v Newhaven, Larkfield & New Hythe v Kennington, Rayners Lane v Broadfields Utd, Littlehampton Tn v Tooting & Mitcham Utd, Cobham v Uxbridge, Chipstead v Athletic Newham, Peachcombe & Telcombe v Shoreham, Hanworth Villa v Knaphill, Deal Tn v Roffey, Epsom & Ewell v Phoenix Sports, Saltdean Utd v AFC Vandeanians, North Greenford Utd v Corinthian Casuals, Stening Tn Community v Hilltop, Merstham v Wick, Wembley v Bedfont Sports, Abbey Rangers v Hythe Tn, Punjab Utd v Snodland Tn, Hassocks v Haywards Heath Tn, Broadbridge Heath v Horley Tn, Badshot Lea v Stansfeld, Sevenoaks Tn v Whitstable Tn, Fisher v Redhill, Tunbridge Wells v Farnham Tn, Balham v Midhurst & Epsbourne, Holmesdale v Crawley Down Gatwick, Loxwood v Erith & Belvedere, Eastbourne Tn v Little Common, Ashford Utd v Egham Tn, Bexhill Utd v Faversham Tn, Northwood v Ashford Tn (Midx), Camberley Tn v Lydd Tn, Sheerwater v Rusthall,

Beckenham Tn v Harefield Unite, Lingfield v Hollands & Blair, AFC Croydon Athletic v Guildford City, South Park (Reigate) v Sutton Common Rovers, Corinthian v AFC Whyteleaf, Sutton Athletic v Sandhurst Tn, Erith Tn v Pagham, Glebe v East Grinstead Tn, Met Police v VCD Athletic, Eastbourne Utd v Sporting Bengal Utd, Crowthor Athletic v Bearsted, Tadley Calleva v Millbrook (Hampshire), Farnham Tn v Sherborne Tn, AFC Portchester v Utd Services Portsmouth, Melksham Tn v Welton Rovers, Thatcham Tn v Christchurch, Bournemouth v Shaftesbury, Portland Utd v Hamworthy Recreation, Baffins Milton Rovers v Petersfield Tn, Hamble Club v Westbury Utd, Alton v Fleet Tn, Andover New Street v Hythe & Dibden, Laverstock & Ford v Cowes Sports, Bemerton Heath Harlequins v Brockenhurst, Hartley Wintney v Downton, Shepton Mallet v Hordean, Moneyfields v AFC Stoneham, Paulton Rovers v Bashley, Wincanton Tn v Blackfield & Langley, Falmouth Tn v Torpoint Athletic, Exmouth Tn v Street, Ilfracombe Tn v Tavistock, St Blazey v Ivybridge Tn, Barnstaple Tn v Helston Athletic, Brixham v Saltash Utd, Willand Rovers v AFC St Austell, Wellington AFC v Buckland Athletic, Bideford v Bridgwater Utd.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4

(No 3pm unless stated)

EMIRATES FA CUP Extra Preliminary Round:

Berks County v Clevedon Tn (1pm), Beverley Tn v Whiteley Bay, Cambridge City v Lakenheath (2pm), Hallam v Lower Breck (2pm).

I'VE GOT NEW ZEST FOR LIFE

LEANNE CAUGHT THE BUG AT TAGS

By Will Castle

HASHTAG United volunteer Leanne Stevens believes getting involved with the club during the pandemic saved her son's life.

A carer and single mum, Stevens was first introduced to Hashtag when her son Freddie, who is neurodivergent and wheelchair dependent, asked to go to see a match.

This was a surprise to Stevens, with Freddie having never before expressed an interest in football. But he had been won over by the Essex club through their YouTube channel, and was eager to meet YouTuber and club founder Spencer Owen.

What followed from their visit to Parkside would last longer than 90 minutes, with Stevens and Freddie quickly becoming integrated within the family at the Isthmian League Premier Division side, breathing life into their social prospects at a time where both had been struggling.

"We started at Hashtag just after lockdown and lockdown was a difficult time for us," Stevens said. "Freddie would probably say to you that Hashtag saved his life.

"Academically, he's quite a bright child, but, socially and emotionally, he's not like your average 19-year-old at all. They've been amazing with him.

"Without Hashtag, I don't know where I'd be. My friends that I have now, I'm going on holiday with a family that I've met at Hashtag, we go out with friends who we've met at Hashtag.

"All my friends that I've known forever, I'm doing more things with all my Hashtag people. It's really weird but it's been amazing for Freddie and for me."

Now manning the front gates for Hashtag's home games, Stevens is one of countless volunteers who play integral roles at Non-League clubs across the country, with opportunities to get involved now available through the Pitching In Volunteer Hub.

Through entering their postcode, individuals can locate volunteering opportunities at nearby clubs and discover more details about which roles are available.

And while Stevens almost stumbled upon the joys of Non-League by accident, she hasn't looked back since involving herself in the club – with matchdays now the highlight of her week.

She added: "It doesn't matter how I feel on a Friday night, whether I've had a bad week, a good week. I know who I'm going to see on Saturday and when I get up on Saturday morning, I just can't wait to get there.

"I love it. I don't even see Freddie on a matchday until probably halfway through the second half. His independence has grown because he was someone I never let out of my sight.

"All the regular fans that I've become really close friends with have obviously got to know him. He literally just goes in, I do my gate, the first person that comes through the door takes him wherever he wants to go, and he's just part of them."

To find volunteering opportunities near you, see: pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk

TAVISTOCK volunteer Peter Crockford credits volunteering at his local football club for changing his life.

By Mohamed Hamza

Crockford, 67, has undergone major heart surgery and also cares for wife Sally during her own period of ill health – yet still devotes himself to the Devon club whenever the opportunity arises.

A former worker in the prison service, Crockford began volunteering for the Lambs not long after retiring three years ago in a bid to remain physically active and he hasn't looked back.

He said: "I got fully involved with Tavistock FC because I wanted something to do to keep me occupied more

than at home. The groundsman, who I'm friendly with, said, 'Could you give me a hand?' and that's how I started in Tavistock. I used to go in there alone every now and then as a supporter but then it just took off.

"I had two heart attacks, but you've just got to get up and go again. It knocked me down at the time but after that, I slowly got back into it and now I'm back in the saddle.

"My wife can't walk very far, she had five operations on her back and she has breathing problems, but we just pedal on and keep going."

Crockford has a range of responsibilities at the Southern League Division One South club both on and off matchdays, ready for whatever Tavistock may need of him.

"Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I'm in with a very good friend called Tony Dwelley," he added.

"He's a groundsman and we look after the pitch three days a week.

"We run barbecues on matchdays to make money for the club and do fundraising as well. He's a good, knowledgeable chap and we work together very well.

"Tavistock's a great football town, a very

pretty town, the supporters are excellent, the rest of the supporters and the ground crew and the staff that we've got, we're just one big happy family really."

Crockford is one of countless volunteers who play pivotal roles at Non-League clubs across the country, with opportunities to get involved now available through the Pitching In Volunteer Hub.

Through entering their postcode, individuals can locate volunteering opportunities at nearby clubs and discover more details about which roles are available.

For Crockford, volunteers are essential to the future of Non-League football and he

can't imagine a future without Tavistock in his life.

He admitted: "It just keeps me ticking over. Tavistock gets me out of the house for a few hours three or four times a week and I certainly enjoy it. You go in there and have a laugh and joke with the boys and other volunteers, it's good.

"Come and give it a go. You'll have a good laugh and a joke and take the mickey out of each other but, at the end of the day, local football needs local support.

"If you have more volunteers, you'll make life a lot easier for football clubs."

To find volunteering opportunities near you, see: pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk



VOLUNTEERS: Peter Crockford, centre, and colleagues at Tavistock FC

PICTURE: Chris Chilcott/Chilly Pics

I OWE UNITED MORE THAN JUST LOYALTY

AN EX-SERVICEMAN wants to give back to the people who helped him overcome his addiction – by devoting his time to Bedworth United.

Despite moving away from his childhood club to Liverpool, Kevin Moore still makes the five-hour round trip to Warwickshire, every matchday.

Kevin has undertaken several jobs at The Oval over the years such as stadium announcements, refereeing, security and car parking.

"I've done pretty much everything involved in matchday apart from the turnstiles," Moore said. "The person who has been doing the turnstiles has been doing it for around 15 years so I don't want to take their job!

"I've even jumped on games before when a referee or official has gone off injured."

By Ayisha Gulati

Moore's connection with the NPL Midlands club goes back to when he was a young boy.

"When we were bunking off school, we used to play on the field," he said.

"My footballing career ended quite early, so I took up refereeing. I did my first adult game as a 14-year-old. From that, I've followed the club through a lot of thick and thin – through bankruptcy and internal strife. Even when I was in the military."

Moore served in the Army for six years, but when he left, he struggled with alcohol addiction.

"The club stood by me when I decided to try and turn my life around.

"It's an honour to try to give something back to the club to say thank

you. Being truly gut-wrenchingly honest, it feels like a debt that I can never repay fully so I just do my best."

Moore is now six years sober and lives in Liverpool, working at Tom Harrison House, the same rehab centre for Armed Forces veterans he attended in 2018.

This makes his commute to Bedworth a five-hour round trip, but he believes the journey is worthwhile.

"It's a pleasure to be a part of," he added. "Over the last decade, Neil and Alan have changed the club and it's now a family-friendly caring atmosphere and a wonderful community.

"There wasn't even a kids' team there when I was younger. We are all brothers from another mother!"

Moore is one of countless volunteers who play integral roles at

Non-League clubs across the country, with opportunities to get involved now available through the Pitching In Volunteer Hub.

Through entering their postcode, individuals can locate volunteering opportunities at nearby clubs and discover more details about which roles are available.

"If you don't have volunteers, the club will die," Moore added. "It's not just on matchdays, but you've got to keep the stadium clean, look after the ground, have managers for kids' teams, the list goes on.

"It's not just me as a volunteer, there's loads of us. So for me, I'm not doing anything special."

To find volunteering opportunities near you, see: pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk

TROPHY WINNER STIMSON FOUND GUILTY

By Andy Mitchell

FIVE-time FA Trophy winner Mark Stimson has been convicted of assault following an incident after a tie in the competition last year.

Former Stevenage Borough, Gillingham and Grays Athletic boss Stimson, 58, had pleaded not guilty but was convicted of assault by beating at a hearing at Stevenage Magistrates' Court on July 16. He was fined £180 and ordered to pay £50 in compensation, a £72 surcharge and £750 in costs to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Hertfordshire Police confirmed the incident had taken place at Hertford Town Football Club on Saturday, September 9, 2023, at approximately 6pm.

That was the day that Stimson's Grays had lost 3-2 at Hertford in an FA Trophy first qualifying round tie that began at 3pm. The Football Association (FA) has confirmed it is investigating the matter.

Deimar Queni gave the hosts the lead shortly before half-time with Grays hitting back through Sam Bantick immediately after the restart, going on to take the lead through Aron Gordon 16 minutes from time. Hertford swiftly equalised through Harry Peterson before player-boss Ben Herd got the winner six minutes from the end.

Stimson lifted the biggest knockout cup prize in Non-League football as a player with Canvey Island in 2001 before winning three in a row as manager – twice with Grays, the first complementing the Conference South title, before leading Stevenage Borough to glory in the first competitive match played at the new Wembley in 2007.

He made more history by leading Step 3 Hornchurch to the top prize in 2021, plus two play-off finals, but he was replaced by Steve Morison during the summer of 2023.

Stimson returned to Step 4 Grays but endured a torrid time, leaving in November without having registered a win. He was recruited by struggling Margate in December but could not prevent relegation from the Isthmian Premier.

The NLP approached Stimson for comment but had not heard back prior to going to press. Hertford Town did not wish to comment.

STEP 5 & 6 ACTION

RAMS GO ON CHARGE WITH KIMBER PAIR

SOUTHERN COMBINATION

By Rory Hayward

NEWCOMERS Petersfield Town began life in the Premier Division in fine style with a 3-0 away win against Crowborough Athletic. Cal Kimber netted twice for the visitors with Liam Kimber adding the other.

Horsham YMCA also started the season in highly impressive fashion as they recorded a crushing 5-0 home victory over Little Common. Josh Neatheay grabbed a brace for the home side with Conner Colcutt, Mitch Clark and Luke Roberts also on target.

Elsewhere, Lee Robinson struck both of Newhaven's goals as they beat AFC Vardeanians 2-1 at home and there was a stunning 5-0 home win for Pagham against Crawley Down Gatwick.

Henry Blackmore and Max Holloboe were the scorers for Peacehaven & Telscombe as they secured a 2-0 away success over Shoreham and the match between newly promoted teams Roffey and Wick finished in a goalless draw.

Eastbourne United suffered a 2-0 defeat away to Haywards Heath Town as Darius Goldsmith and Lewis Finney both scored for the home side and Tevon Webster's last-minute equaliser salvaged a point for Loxwood as they drew 2-2 at home to Bexhill United.

In the day's other two games, substitute Jack Troak struck the winner for Hassocks as they beat Saltdean United 1-0 at home and Lingfield lost 3-1 away to Midhurst & Easebourne.

HAPPY LARKS ENJOY THEIR STEP 5 BOW

SOUTHERN COUNTIES EAST

By Paul Carter

NEWLY-PROMOTED Larkfield & New Hythe won 2-1 at Rusthall in their first game at Step 5.

Ben Davison and Chibueze Innocent put the Larks two-up before the half-hour mark, with Jack Kirby pulling one back for the hosts.

Title favourites Faversham Town sent a warning to their rivals with a 4-0 win at home to Glebe.

Kieron Campbell opened the scoring in the second minute, with Tashi-Jay Kwayie adding a second. Stefan Payne came off the bench to score the fourth after James Fitchett's own goal.

Bradley Schafer and Jake Embury scored for Lordswood in a 2-1 win at last season's play-off finalists Corinthian.

Elias Ahmed scored twice in added time as Sutton Athletic came from 3-1 down to draw at home to Whitstable Town. Harvey Smith's two second half goals looked like giving Whitstable the points.

Erith & Belvedere returned to the league with a 2-2 draw at Snodland Town. Todd Brand and a Stanley Oldfield penalty saw the Snods lead twice but the Deres hit back through Tommy Whitnell and an Alfie Eldridge penalty.

Lewis Heywood-Oriogun's double earned Holmesdale a point in a 2-2 draw at Hollands & Blair, while Jack Mahon struck six minutes into added time as Stansfeld draw 1-1 at Bearsted.

Jacob Feasey and Siji Akinlusi scored in Tunbridge Wells' 2-0 win at Kennington, and VCD Athletic beat Lydd Town 1-0 at home. Punjab United won 1-0 at Fisher.

SEASIDERS GOLD STAR



By Jeff Bowron

TWO clubs that have arrived back in the Northern League top flight by default played out a hard-fought 90 minutes on the opening of the new Northern League season.

Financial problems forced Marske United to resign from the Northern Premier League mid-season, subsequently dropping two divisions to return to Step 5.

A reformed Blue Star, meanwhile, lost their second division play-off final to Easington Colliery – only to be promoted anyway due to league restructuring.

NEWCASTLE B STAR 1 MARSKE UTD 2

Both sides celebrated their new surroundings with an early goal before Marske claimed the winner just past the half hour.

Marske first team coach Craig Hill believes it was the perfect start to life back in the Northern League after the club nearly went under last season.

"We're a newly put together

team with all the players from last season no longer at the club," said Hill. "We wanted heart, determination and work rate and we got that today. They showed great resilience to see the game out and pick up the three points.

"A successful season would be to survive and become established in the division but these

KENDAL CRUMBLE AS THE

REDCAR Athletic recorded the biggest win on the opening day of the season when they put four goals past reluctant Northern League debutants Kendal Town.

Mark Anderson's first-half goal

NORTHERN LEAGUE

By Jeff Bowron

was added to after the break by a Bradley Fewster brace and a 75th-minute Jack Blackford strike. West Auckland and

Penrith both recorded 3-0 home wins, the ever-dangerous Josh Scott scoring two late goals for West against Seaham Red Star.

Luke Brown gave Penrith an 18th minute lead against Birtley Town, DJ Taylor then

scoring either side of half-time.

Blyth Town marked their first game at step five with a 4-2 win at Newcastle Benfield, Dan Wilson and Brandon Slater goals seeing Blyth home after Benfield had recovered

RETURN WITH PERFORMANCE



AT THE DOUBLE:
Marske United
celebrate McCorrie
Carmichael's winner

PICTURE: Charlie Waugh

boys keep shocking me and I think we'll shock a few sides.

"Marske United could have gone into extinction back in December, so credit to all the staff and the people behind the scenes, who have got the club back up and running."

Their efforts were almost rewarded in the opening minute when a surging Charlie Graham run saw the left-back's deep cross nestle in the roof of the net.

The Marske faithful, however, only had to wait another five minutes to celebrate.

Jack Daley's attempted clearance saw him kick Marske frontman McCorrie Carmichael instead of the ball, Carmichael

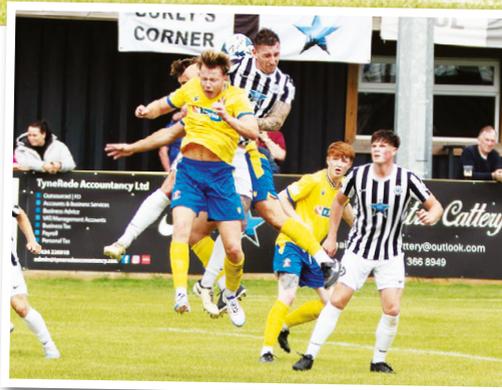
finding the bottom corner from the spot.

Blue Star were quick to respond with lively striker Dan Lanning levelling with an angled shot off the far post.

Carmichael then scored the winner from Millen Burnett's through ball as Star offside claims fell on deaf ears.

Liam Henderson's scissor-kick was tipped over at the other end, Burnett inches wide for Marske early in a second half dominated by Blue Star.

A new-look Marske proved a tough nut to crack, an equaliser proving elusive for Star, though Lanning came close in stoppage time when his shot was blocked.



UP FOR IT: Blue Star defender Tom Bexton wins an aerial duel

STEELMEN ARE JUST TOO TOUGH

from two-down.

Play-off winners Easington Colliery came from two behind to draw 2-2 at home to North Shields, late goals from Brad Hird and Mark Davison, a header, salvaging a point.

Whitley Bay beat Whickham 2-1, Mikel Thompson scoring on 79 and 91 minutes after Levi Collins had put the Lang Jacks in front.

Louie Hall's header and an injury-time goal from Stuart Rose

ensured that Boro Rangers overcame battling Crook Town 2-0.

Two goals in a minute on the hour mark from Jason Blackburn and Kurtis Howes saw Guisborough Town record a 3-1 victory at Northallerton Town.

Tow Law went down 2-0 at home to Carlisle City, while Andrei Ardelean's 77th-minute strike from inside the penalty area was enough to give Shildon a hard-earned 1-0 win away to West Allotment Celtic.



WINNER: Andrei Ardelean

AIRPORTMEN CRASH AWAY TO SPORTS

ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE

By David Balheimer

NEW or returning clubs had a tough day as the Essex Senior League season got under way.

Benfleet's Step 5 debut ended in a one-goal defeat at home to Woodford Town, Khalil Kaiwan-Mead netting after 77 minutes. Three players, two from Woodford, saw red.

Stansted were beaten 5-0 at Hullbridge Sports, Zayshaun Asamoah, twice, Connor Hart and Mechack Asuka on target before the break, Jack Unwin late on.

Sawbridgeworth Town lost 2-0 at Frenford, where Jordan Elongo's sixth-minute strike was the league's first goal of the season. Warren Kayembe made it 2-0.

Kuwon Akintunde, Marcel McDonald and Chris John were the marksmen as Barking won 3-0 at FC Clacton.

Despite Harry Thomas giving Stanway Rovers an early lead, hosts Romford hit back to win 4-1, with goals from Chris Millar, David Oweidu, Elliott Howson and Shermandin Artmeladze.

Saffron Walden Town were surprised 1-0 at home by Athletic Newham, Abdul Khamis their goalscoring hero.

A late goal from Bryn Thorpe gave Takeley all three points at home to Ilford, while Harry Martin and Tony Martin helped Great Wakering Rovers win 2-0 at West Essex.

Buckhurst Hill fought back from 2-0 down against Little Oakley to snatch a point and, at White Ensign, they and Halstead Town shared two goals and two points.

LATE SHOW WILL FIRES UP ROVERS

WESTERN LEAGUE

By Max Hall

HOSTS Paulton Rovers led 2-0 against Nailsea & Tickenham, via Kitan Jaiyeoba and Dan McBeam. Lucas Vowles replied from the spot and scored again in the 89th minute but Will Osborne gave Rovers an injury-time victory.

A Jack Taylor brace gave Bridgwater United a 2-0 win at Peninsula League East champions Ivybridge Town.

Shepton Mallet had Dylan Gould dismissed in the first half but Charlie Bateson levelled an Ethan Feltham opener to earn the hosts a 1-1 draw against Western League Division One champions Portishead Town.

Harry Foster and Joel Jacob gave Street a 2-1 win at Peninsula League West champions – and Western League debutants – AFC St Austell, Martyn Duff replying.

Ali Sen and Dean Griffiths hit trebles and Owen Humphreys and Jay Malpas scored as Division One play-off winners Brislington routed St Blazey 8-0.

Sam Beresford and Cam Steer gave hosts Clevedon Town a 2-0 win against Barnstaple Town, who had Mitchell McCann dismissed in injury time. Clevedon keeper James Dunn saved a Gabriel Rogers penalty. Ryan Bush scored two late on as Buckland Athletic battered Welton Rovers 8-0 with Myles James, Ryan Richards, Adam Hill, Sam Morcom, Frankie Jones and Jared Lewington on target.

Quick brothers Jake and Miles gave Wellington a 2-1 win at Ilfracombe Town, cancelling a Billy Tucker opener.

STEP 5 & 6 ACTION

AMBERS ARE GOLDEN IN THE OPENER

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST

By Max Hall

BRANDON Bagley and Scott Ruthven gave **Handsworth** a 2-0 opening day win at a **Winterton Rangers** side relegated from the Northern Premier Division One East last season.

Taylor Nicholson, Jamie Austin and Harry Day secured NCEL Division One champions **Parkgate** a 3-0 win at home to **Goole AFC**. Division One play-off winners **Beverley Town** were brought down to earth at **Thackley**, however, despite a Daniel Earl penalty. A Finn Donovan brace secured victory.

Last season's disappointed play-off sides **Rossington Main** and **Albion Sports** both opened their accounts with a point on the road. A Ross Hannah double saw Main come back from 2-0 down to draw at **Eccleshill United**, for whom Joshua McKiernon and Harvey Booth scored. Sports were held 0-0 at **Barton Town** and **Hallam** posted the same result at **Knareborough**.

Pickering Town saw Harry Jessop's brace sandwiched by goals from George Brown and Wayne Brooksby in a win 4-2 at **Frickley Athletic**, for whom Jack Varley and Luke Williams scored.

James Knowles, Elliott Andrew and Alfie Dean struck to earn **Tadcaster Albion** a 3-0 win at home to **Bottesford Town**.

On Friday night, last season's runners-up **Campion** crashed 3-0 at **Silsden AFC** with Kayle Price, Luke Brooksbank and Casey Stewart on target.

Alfie Wilkinson, Daniel Naidole, Ryan Hall and a MacKenzie Stocks own goal gave **Golcar United** a 4-1 win at home to **Penistone Church**, Nathan Keightley replying.

PROMOTED TOWN OFF TO A FLIER

EASTERN COUNTIES

By Rory Hayward

NEWLY promoted **Great Yarmouth Town** got their Premier Division campaign off to a winning start with a 2-0 home victory against **Long Melford** on Saturday. Connor Deeks and George Couzens were both on target for the home side.

Hadleigh United eventually ran out 2-0 winners at home to **Dereham Town** despite having a man sent-off just after the hour mark. Curtis Harvey opened the scoring to hand the hosts a 1-0 lead at half-time but Josh Hubert saw red in the 64th minute seemingly to hand a massive chance for Dereham to turn the match around. However, Zach Gayfer soon added a second goal for Hadleigh to seal the three points.

Elsewhere, Charlie Norman netted both of **Walsham-le-Willows'** goals as they beat **Heacham** 2-1 away from home and **Woodbridge Town** suffered a 2-0 defeat away to **Mulbarton Wanderers**. Angus Mackie and Ben Jones were the home side's scorers.

George Diggins and Dan Gilchrist were both on the scoresheet for **Theftord Town** as they secured an impressive 2-0 away success over **Brantham Athletic**.

Ely City lost 2-0 away to **Kirkley & Pakefield** as Macaulay Holt and Bailey Phipps grabbed the goals and in the day's other game, **Soham Town Rangers** fought back to draw 2-2 at home to **Harleston Town**. Jordan Gent's 70th minute equaliser rescued a point for the home side.

RED HOT: St Helens celebrate scoring their third goal

PICTURE: Alun Roberts



JOE CREATES SAINTS KICK

NORTH WEST COUNTIES

By Andy Mitchell

JOE Barker started where he left off with the double that fired FC St Helens to a little piece of history.

The Division One North champions cruised to a 3-0 opening day victory over **Abbey Hey** – themselves promoted from Division One South last term – having dominated the club's first encounter at Step 5.

St Helens probed from the outset and got a helping hand after half an hour when Jordan Barnett was sin-binned for the visitors.

Barker soon got the opener eight minutes later, applying

Barker's double strike proves

an emphatic finish to hand the hosts a warranted lead and his second came pretty quickly, stooping to nod past keeper Ellis Allen in the 41st minute.

Abbey Hey improved after half-time, gradually building pressure either side of the hour mark but the home side showed they knew the way

to goal with Tom McNamara hammering an effort against the frame of the goal.

McNamara had another chance within a minute and while he was denied by Allen, Tom Scarborough was on hand to tuck in the rebound to make the points safe.

George Omokua scored eight minutes from time as promoted **Stockport Town** also kicked off life in the Premier Division with a win, 2-1 at **Irlam**.

Bury blew a pair of two-goal leads with hat-trick hero Dean Ing their nemesis in a 4-4 draw at **Squires Gate**.

Ing swiftly cancelled out Irywah Gooden's early effort



CLOUD NINE: Joe Barker scores St Helens' second goal



HISTORY AS OFF IN STYLE

too much for Abbey

for the Shakers and while Rustam Stepan made it 3-1 to the visitors at half-time, James Hughes got one back shortly after the restart.

Bryan Ly made it 4-2 to Bury after an hour but Ing notched twice more to restore parity.

Jordan Lazenbury got two of three second-half goals as West Didsbury & Chorlton saw off Glossop North End 3-0.

The impressive Andrew Hill's last-ditch leveller completed his brace to help Bar-noldswick Town come back from behind to draw 3-3 at home to Lower Breck.

Dan McLaughlin scored late

as Cheadle Town beat Prest-wich Heys 2-1 and Leighton Hewitt got Longridge Town's 90th-minute winner in a 1-0 success over Burscough.

James Hammill rescued Litherland REMYCA two minutes from time against Pad-dham, securing a 2-2 draw after his side had trailed by two goals inside 12 minutes.

Pilkington drew 2-2 with Ramsbottom United and South Liverpool drew 0-0 with Charnock Richard.

The season continues with another round of Premier Division fixtures this week on Monday and Tuesday evenings.



TUSSLE: Abbey Hey's Abdul Conteh on the charge

JACK IS THE TRUMP CARD FOR UNITED

SPARTANS SOUTH MIDLANDS

By Andy Mitchell

PROMOTED Winslow United wasted no time getting settled into life in the Premier Division. A swift start resulted in a 2-1 win at Baldock Town with Jack Rowe sliding home before Ethan Flanagan's header doubled the lead early on.

Fellow newcomers Wormley Rovers could not match that but still got a point, Josh Asiedu equalising in a 1-1 draw with Crawley Green.

The big winners on the opening day were Ar-lesey Town, whose first-half blitz inspired a 5-0 victory at Aylesbury Vale Dynamos.

Noah Mosanya and Alex Cathline got the ball rolling before a pair of sumptuous John Freeman free-kicks left the hosts in a spin at half-time. Isaac Olaleye got the fifth after the break.

Jamie Fulton and Kelechi Etienne each bagged crackers to fire Colney Heath to a 2-1 success at Dunstable Town, Jamie Ovington's late inter-vention proving no more than scant consolation.

Harry Andic's two goals in seven second-half minutes saw Harpenden Town turn the tide to win 3-2 at Shefford Town & Campton. They scrubbed off a halftime deficit with Harry Locke's third proving vital when the hosts got a second.

Relegated Kempston Rovers started with a 2-0 at Cockfosters, Caleb Burton wrapping up the points deep into added time, while Scott Metcalfe was Biggleswade United's late saviour in a 1-1 draw with Tring Athletic.

London Lions beat Potton United 2-0, while Milton Keynes Irish won 3-0 at FC Romania.

KIMBERLEY SHOW THEIR SIX APPEAL

UNITED COUNTIES

By Robin Jones

THE highest score of the day in Premier North saw Kimberley Miners Welfare beat visitors Deeping Rangers 6-1 thanks to a Declan Brown brace and a goal each by Josh Mundell, Lewis Weaver, Josh Timson and Paul Johnson.

An 85th-minute goal by Billy Gillies gave hosts Sleaford Town a 1-0 win over Hucknall Town.

Harry Limb and Lucas Dakin were on target for Boston Town in their 2-1 victory at Gresley Rovers, while Leo Priestley found the net in Lincoln United's 1-0 win at Wisbech Town.

Back in the top flight after 14 years, Bourne Town lost 2-1 at home to AFC Mansfield, who came from behind to score via Kaylum Mitchell and Ryan Ingram.

Hosts Heanor Town beat Skegness Town 2-1 with goals by Max Thornberry and John King.

Belper United drew 2-2 at home to Melton Town. In their first-ever game at Step 5, Newark Town forced a 1-1 draw against visitors Ashby Ivanhoe, while Shirebrook Town v Newark & Sherwood United also ended 1-1.

In Premier South, Newport Pagnell Town came from behind to beat visitors Yaxley 5-1 with Luke Abraham, Nabil Shariff, Rio Henson, Dan Walker and substitute Harrison Lynham on target.

Hosts Lutterworth Town saw off Northamp-ton ON Chenecks 3-2 with goals by Benji Adamako, Callum Riley and Abdul Sunmonu.

Elsewhere, Bugbrooke St Michaels won 5-1 at Godmanchester Rovers.

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

EZE DOES IT TO GIVE THE MILLERS A DERBY WIN

AVELEY took the Essex derby honours when the National League South Millers and a Colchester United XI shared five goals at Parkside.

During the close season defender Harry Beadle departed Colchester United at the end of his contract and joined Aveley for the upcoming 2024/25 campaign.

About five minutes before the end of the first half, Harry Gibbs' flick found his centre-half partner Beadle, who netted with an acrobatic finish into the left-hand side of the goal to give the Non-League outfit the lead at half-time.

Into the second half and in the 48th minute a trialist knocked the ball home after the goalkeeper punched the ball out to initially deny the ever-dangerous Razzaq Coleman De-Graft.

BRIGGS IS THE HERO AS SHIELDS CLAIM CUP

ROBERT Briggs was the toast of South Tyneside as his ten-year commemoration Mariners Cup went the way of National League North outfit South Shields in a seven-goal thriller against Grimsby Town.

Shields broke the deadlock after a Sam Hodgson-Mackenzie Heaney one-two on the left resulted in Heaney's cross finding Bryan Taylor's head at the back post.

Grimsby striker Charles Vernam then levelled, capitalising inside the six-yard box following a Tyrell Warren cross from the right.

The League Two visitors, however, once again trailed when Shields hitman Paul Blackett latched onto a ball from Will Jenkins on the right to fire home from inside the box.

Shortly after the restart Grimsby were again level through Callum Ainley,

**AVELEY 3
COLCHESTER UTD 2**
By Jamie Manktelow

Aveley made it 3-0 five minutes later, a ball into the penalty area was headed home at the front post by forward Ikechi Eze, who evaded his marker with a great run to score.

Just before the hour mark and the League Two side were able to pull one goal back. Confusion in the Aveley defence allowed the Colchester centre forward an opportunity with an open goal and he duly slotted home.

With 20 minutes to go Colchester scored again, finishing from close range, but the Millers held on for a 3-2 victory after what was a great workout for both sides with the new campaign now fast-approaching.

**SOUTH SHIELDS 4
GRIMSBY TOWN 3**
By Morgan Jameson

who battled hard to win possession just outside the Shields' box and his solo run on the left found him one on one with the keeper. Ainley fired low past Myles Boney at the near post as a topsy-turvy game took another twist.

Shields went ahead once more when Jenkins and Blackett combined inside the box, Blackett teeing up Hodgson who was able to tap home.

Grimsby's third equaliser came via Lewis Cass following an inswinging Matty Carson corner.

However, it was Shields who claimed the winner when Hodgson's half-volley met Briggs' cross and the ball nestled into the left corner of the net.



HAVING A LAUGH: Dale celebrate Aaron Henry's winner

PICTURE: Dan Youngs

JIM SAYS DEAL ME IN AT DALE

ROCHDALE head coach Jim McNulty announced a three-year deal with the club's new owners this week and capped it with a victory over League One side Carlisle.

"I feel humbled by it and really grateful, moving into my tenth year at the club, to have the desire and faith in myself, Kev (Kevin Gibbins, head of performance services) and the team moving forward," he said.

Goals either side of half-time reflected a sparkling display at the Crown Oil Arena.

McNulty's starting XI boasted six summer signings, including goalkeeper Luke McNicholas, who joined on a season-long loan from Wrex-

**ROCHDALE 2
CARLISLE UNITED 1**
By Mark Rooney

ham in the summer, and Tanzanian international Tarryn Allarakhia, a left-sided midfielder who signed a two-year deal.

From the start Dale were in control playing a passing game against the Cumbrian side who finished bottom of League One last season.

Established Rochdale striker Devante Rodney almost gave his side the lead on 15 minutes when he found himself clear with only keeper Harry Lewis to beat, but his low shot came off the post.

Carlisle, who, until now, had been unbeaten in friend-

lies, had little to offer in response with Allarakhia combining well with the Dale front two of Kairo Mitchell and Rodney to pile on the pressure.

Their reward came on 41 minutes when Rodney put Harvey Gilmour through into the box and his low cross was turned in by Mitchell.

Carlisle can have had little complaints in being behind at the break and they were further punished on 49 minutes after they conceded a free-kick on the edge of their own box. Aaron Henry, a 20-year-old summer signing on loan from Charlton Athletic, curled the ball into the corner of the net from 25 yards.

The home side continued to play attractive, flowing

football. However, as the second half progressed, a plethora of substitutions from both sides began to upset the rhythm of the game and it became much scrappier. Midway through the half, Carlisle substitute Dan Butterworth pulled a goal back when he fired low past McNicholas, but Dale held on for the win in front of nearly 1,000 fans.

"I thought it was positive," said Mitchell. "We controlled the game over large parts. There's a lot of new faces and it was an opportunity to get to grips with new things. It was a good test - Carlisle are a good outfit and obviously favourites to go back up."

"We weren't at it today," Carlisle manager Paul Simpson admitted.

PERSISTENCE PAYS DIVIDEND FOR JONES

A CALLUM JONES strike near the end of the first half proved to be enough as Dartford beat Sutton United in front of 602 spectators at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park.

The scoreline was a fair reflection of the afternoon's football, although the hosts should have been well clear within the opening eight minutes.

**DARTFORD 1
SUTTON UNITED 0**
By Chris Palmer

But Sutton goalkeeper Jack Sims had other ideas as he saved superbly from Denzelle Olopade's seventh-minute drive, before denying two Dartford headers from corners within a matter of seconds.

Goalkeeper Jacob Marsden denied Matt Rush with a good stop at the other end after ten minutes, before tipping Ryan Jackson's curling drive over in the 29th minute.

But Jones struck in the 45th minute, when he got to the rebound first after Tyler Christian-Law's effort smacked the Sutton upright.

Sims then saved well from

the ever-dangerous Duane Ofori-Acheampong in the 55th minute, before attacking midfielder Jack Wadham fired narrowly over the crossbar 13 minutes later.

The Darts weren't to be denied as Marsden saved well from Will Davies in the 89th minute, securing his first clean sheet of the pre-season programme.

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GULLS GRASP THE POSITIVES

CITY TAKING CONFIDENCE FROM FINE COMEBACK

Rooney's men are too good

TORQUAY UNITED 0
PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 2
By Steve Harris

TORQUAY UNITED manager Paul Wotton remained focused on the positives after the Gulls fell to a narrow defeat against his former club Plymouth Argyle.

A Ryan Hardie penalty and a strike from Bali Mumba sealed a win for the Pilgrims in front of former Argyle boss Neil Warnock, who was watching on as United's football advisor along with the Gulls' new owners, the Bryn Consortium, in a game that was punctuated by a number of medical emergencies in the crowd.

"It was a fantastic workout for us, they (Plymouth Argyle) are a Championship side and I thought we coped well with them at times," said Wotton.

"I'd like to thank all the fans for coming today, there were a few interruptions but I hope those supporters are okay. To have a crowd like we did today for a pre-season friendly game was fantastic and it shows how big the club is. Overall I thought there were a lot more positives than negatives."

His opposite number, Wayne Rooney, was pleased with his side's display.

"It was a strange first half, it was very stop-start but I

TUSSLE: Torquay's Cody Cooke attempts to get away from Plymouth's Will Jenkins-Davies

PICTURE: Pinnacle



thought we started really well," said Rooney. "Overall I'm pleased with the players."

The Pilgrims got off to a flying start as Hardie twice went close inside the opening minute.

Torquay then gradually eased their way into the game and their first real chance came in the eighth minute when Brad Ash threatened with an angled shot that looped over the crossbar.

On 20 minutes, the game was delayed briefly due to a medical emergency in the

crowd. When play eventually restarted, Argyle were mainly restricted to long-range efforts until Freddie Issaka fired tamely wide on 36 minutes after making a thrusting run.

Shortly afterwards, play was stopped again due to a second medical emergency in the stands.

Five minutes after the restart for the second half, the Pilgrims were awarded a penalty after Ash felled former Gulls' loanee Will Jenkins-Davies, which Hardie

stepped up to convert from 12 yards.

A minute later, United looked well placed to equalise as substitute Cody Cooke nodded a free-kick from Dan Hayfield wide.

Moments later, Cooke went close again as he headed a Matt Carson corner behind.

On the hour mark, Argyle doubled their lead when Callum Wright saw a strike from 20 yards parried by Torquay keeper James Hamon before Mumba slotted home from the rebound.

ADAM Hinshelwood hopes York City will take confidence from their second-half fightback against Notts County.

"It definitely would have been nice to win, but I'm hoping they took a lot of confidence from the second-half display," said the City boss.

"It's very easy when you're getting the run-around to just want to cave in, but they didn't, and I think it was a real sign of just how far we've come in such a short space of time."

A Jodi Jones strike from a free-kick handed the League Two Magpies a fifth-minute lead, the forward blasting into the top-left after Harrison Male had handled Joe Felix's back-pass.

But it took until the 42nd minute for them to double their advantage when the impressive Alassana Jatta

YORK CITY 2
NOTTS COUNTY 2
By Emma Kennedy

beat the offside trap before guiding the ball past Male one-on-one and into the bottom-right corner.

York, though, turned the game on its head after the interval, with Billy Chadwick collecting Ollie Pearce's pull-back to halve the deficit on 56 minutes with a superb curling effort from the edge of the box.

He then returned the favour, playing in Pearce to slot home an equaliser into the bottom left corner with just over 20 minutes left to play.

City edged the late chances, but Marvin Armstrong could not keep his effort under the bar as a winning goal proved to be elusive.

NICKE NODS WINNER AS BEES LEAVE IT SO LATE

A LATE goal for Barnet clinched the win over Hornchurch.

The Bees began brightly, Zak Brady feeding Billy Clifford but his effort from range sailed over the bar.

Urchins keeper Joe Wright was then called into action to smother after a marauding run from Reece Hall-Johnson.

After the drinks break, the hosts had a great opportunity to open the scoring - Femi Akinwande was sent clear, and with just Nick Hayes to beat, the Bees stopper won the battle to save well. That proved to be the brightest moment of an even first half.

With Barnet's playing squad depleted through injury, Hornchurch lent a player for the second period which opened with a flurry of chances for the visitors. A corner was headed over by Brady before Anthony's dangerous

HORNCHURCH 0
BARNET 1

By Stephen McEnnerney

run was denied by some good defending.

In response, a whipped Tom Wright free-kick was cleared by Brady and Angelo Balanta's shot deflected for a corner that Ryan Scott header over.

Clifford turned sharply in the box but again failed to find the target before Urchins sub Lennon Peake flashed a dangerous cross across goal but no one was on hand to apply the finish.

As the minutes ticked by it looked like a single goal game and that proved correct when Barnet snatched the win on 85 minutes - a deep cross to the back post was met by the rising Nicke Kabamba and his looping header found the corner of the net.

EAGLES PLAY PART IN NINE-GOAL EPIC

BEDFORD TOWN and Watford Academy produced a nine-goal thriller at Hitchin Town.

The Eagles opened the scoring in the 13th minute when a pass into the area was tamely defended, giving Rico Greco the opportunity to fire past Jonathan McAuley. Keeping up the pressure, the 'home' side added a second midway through the half when Connor Tomlinson's

BEDFORD TOWN 4
WATFORD ACADEMY 5
By Roger Worsley

pass from the byline allowed Leon Lobjoit to turn and fire into the net. Watford pulled a goal back in the 34th minute as Jake Watkiss crossed in for Tobi Adeyemo to score. Rob Hall then scored from a free-kick with

a minute left, putting the ball into an exposed part of the net, when the other players were expecting a cross.

Carl Mensah produced a double clearance off the line after the break, but two minutes later, Watford did claim their second as Prince Sikiru produced home a cross.

Adeyemo bagged his brace on 66 minutes to restore parity,

and four minutes later, the academy side took the lead from the spot via Shaq Forde.

Two minutes later it was four apiece, as Bedford equalised from the spot and Lobjoit claimed his brace.

Watford scored the winner a minute from time as Jon Lawson latched on to a loose ball. Inside added time, Tomlinson's piledriver was well saved.



AWAY DAYS: STEVE HILL TAKES IN

MANXMEN PUT SHOW FOR FANS

GAME 1, FRIDAY 19 JULY, 19:00

FC ISLE OF MAN 2 CHESTER FC 5

IN an attempt to replicate the demands of a long distance National League North away fixture, the Chester squad travelled to Douglas on the day of the game. The key difference is they came by ferry, sharing the high speed Manannan from Liverpool with a boisterous Seals following. Over 400 Chester fans piled into The Bowl on a Friday night, and their vocal support was rewarded with an early goal from Iwan Murray. The hosts soon hit back though, levelling matters with an excellent finish from Dean Pinnington, who expertly lifted the ball over new Chester keeper Cam Mason to restore parity. Quickfire strikes from Declan Weeks and Tom Peers put the Seals in charge, but again FC Isle of Man hit back through Charlie Higgins. The reinvigorated Peers completed his brace with a curled effort just past the hour mark, and then new signing Dan Turner added a fifth.

GAME 2, SATURDAY 20 JULY, 14:00

RADCLIFFE FC 4 LANCASTER CITY 1

AS the weather system known locally as Manannan's Cloak descended on The Bowl, the nearby incinerator was shrouded in mist, eerily resembling Sauron's Tower from The Lord of the Rings. The artificial surface coped with the deluge however, with over a hundred fans making the journey from Radcliffe and about 40 from Lancaster, plus a few neutrals. Initially anything but friendly, an early brace of yellow cards was dished out and Lancaster's right back seemed intent on kicking Radcliffe's tricky winger Jude Oyibo out of the game. Josh Hancock opened the scoring for Radcliffe from the penalty spot following a handball decision, and soon doubled his tally from a keeper error before Oyibo made it three on the stroke of half-time. Mass substitutions from both sides ensued and a Lancaster strike briefly threatened to make a game of it, but Brad Jackson notched shortly afterwards to maintain the three-goal buffer.

THE Isle of Man is known for many things: TT Races, tailless cats, tax arrangements, that three-legged symbol, and – as this reporter learned the hard way – feral wallabies.

What it's not immediately known for is football, although this is changing with the recently formed FC Isle Of Man now occupying a place in the English football pyramid. A further flag was planted on the football map last weekend with the inaugural Summer Festival of Football, an invitational event hosted in the capital city of Douglas.

The island does actually have a tradition of pre-season football in the form of The Manx Cup, which later gave way to the Steam Packet Tournament. It's the latter event that the club were hoping to evoke with this new format, as FC Isle Of Man director Lee Dixon (who played in it) explains to *The NLP*.

"The pro teams used to visit the island," he recalls. "I don't know whether it was a funding issue, but it disappeared and it hasn't been played for probably the last 15, 16 years. When we set the club up the intention was that at some point down the line it would hap-



BLUES CRUISE: Chester's Declan Weeks scores against FC Isle of Man, left, and celebrations against Lancaster City, right



pen. I spoke to Chester, and I spoke to the likes of Bury and Macclesfield, Radcliffe, Scunthorpe, Oldham. In the space of a week I'd contacted 11 or 12 clubs that had massive followings, all that I would describe as 'phoenix from the flames' clubs. From what's happened to them they've all got a bigger appreciation for the importance of community.

Foundations

"That is the central part for me. I don't want to go down the line of professional football again, I'd love to create the go-to tournament in the British Isles for Non-League football."

Chester manager Calum McIntyre quickly bought into the concept following a 24-hour recce.

"We wanted to do something for our supporters," he says. "We wanted to galvanise them ahead of a really important campaign, to do something that played a part in developing that bond between the team, the club, the supporters, all those strands of it."

"I feel we've certainly done that and put in some solid foundations towards that unity and togetherness. I think it can become a really good fixture in the pre-season programme. I think our supporters have enjoyed it, they sound like they have, we've

certainly heard them before we've seen them at times. You want to create opportunities and experiences for the club and it has been a really, really positive one. The hosts have been first class and we've been made to feel really welcome around the island."

Nostalgia

Radcliffe co-manager Anthony Johnson is a pioneer of the pre-season tour, and recalls the original Steam Packet Tournament fondly, even if he never went.

"I remember as a kid when they used to do the Steam Packet tours in the early 90s," he says. "Bury would come and Burnley

and Bolton. Nostalgia is what makes you want to do things. The thought of getting away for a pre-season just evokes those memories again.

"It's been amazing – a brilliant few days. On a boat for three or four hours, you're away from home – alright they speak the same language as us, but you do feel like you're away don't you? I don't think there's many cannibals on the island or anything, but there's a feeling of not being at home. To do what they're doing, to pay for all the clubs, is amazing. I recommend it to every club."

Same time next year please. Until then, Manx for the memories...



THE ISLE OF MAN FOOTBALL FESTIVAL

ON A SUMMER MS TO SAVOUR

HEYDAY: Chester's Ollie Heywood, right, in action during the 5-2 win over hosts FC Isle of Man

PICTURE: Rick Matthews

GAME 3, SUNDAY 21 JULY, 11:00

**LANCASTER CITY 1
CHESTER FC 4**

KICKING off barely 19 hours after the end of their last match, Lancaster's more recreational approach to the trip was perhaps reflected in the scoreline as a well-rested Chester side meted out another 4-1 drubbing to the weekend's wooden spoon side, who were a late addition to the festival's line-up. Early goals from Weeks and Turner set the tone before Lancaster hit back with an impressive strike from the edge of the area. Tom Peers scored again to make it 3-1 at the interval and secure the Golden Boot. An unfortunate wrist injury to Harrison Burke saw Chester complete the game with ten men, albeit still in control as the action became soporific. There was a late boost, however, as 17-year-old substitute Oskar Rosenblatt left his mark on the festival with a superb strike, clinically stroking home from outside the area as Lancaster's reserve keeper went down like the Titanic.

GAME 4, SUNDAY 21 JULY, 15:00

**FC ISLE OF MAN 3
RADCLIFFE FC 3**

WITH the over-30s rested, an unfamiliar Radcliffe strolled out at The Bowl to face the unpaid amateurs of FC Isle of Man, backed by a noisy home support. As the sun finally put in an appearance, the Ravens soared, taking the lead against the freshly promoted National League North side through Luke Murray and then doubling their advantage with another Charlie Higgins goal. Veteran striker Jordan Hulme was reduced to carrying drinks for Radcliffe, but they mustered enough firepower from the bench to get back in the game and eventually took the lead with goals from Luca Navarro, Jake Thompson and Luke Bange in the space of 20 second half minutes. With the hosts seemingly heading for a double defeat, substitute Adam Adebisi took matters into his own hands in the 86th minute with a drilled far post finish to snatch a draw and end the festival in style.



PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

RYLEY NETS AS BOSTOCK WINS ON HIS DEBUT

SOLIHULL Moors handed a debut to experienced former Notts County midfielder John Bostock just hours after his signing was announced by the National League side.

But it was two of the club's young guns who combined to hand them a narrow victory at Bromsgrove Sporting.

The Southern Premier Central hosts stifled the Moors for much of the first half and on the rare occasion that the visitors broke through, veteran keeper Charlie Price was up to the task, denying Kian Ryley early on and then keeping out a James Gale effort on the half-hour.

Sporting also had their chances, the best of which fell to Aksum White who started and finished a sweeping move up the right only for Solihull keeper Laurie Walker to thwart him.

BROMSGROVE SP 0 SOLIHULL MOORS 1

By David Lawrence

The home side started the second half the better and could have broken the deadlock within a minute when Aaron Bishop won the ball and beat the keeper only for his shot to be cleared from in front of goal by Moors skipper James Clarke.

The goal came on the hour with second half substitute Finn Howell lofting a ball into the centre for fellow academy starlet Ryley to steer home via the upright.

Price kept out efforts from Tyler Bruck and trialist Jacob Pennington before a fine curling effort from Bromsgrove substitute Isaac Adegoke prompted a flying save from Walker.

BATTLING HOLY BLUES ARE PIPPED BY BLADES

GAINSBOROUGH Trinity were edged out by a Sheffield United XI in an entertaining game at the Kal Group Stadium.

Trinity started brightly, creating opportunities down the left. Ashley Jackson dragged wide after good play involving Lewis Butroid, Fraser Preston and Joe Stacey.

Declan Howe then got involved, linking with Stacey. Howe got on the end of the winger's centre only to see his header clawed away by Henry Molyneux.

The Blades saw plenty of the ball, but it was Gainsborough who were fashioning the better chances.

A cleverly taken free-kick freed Stacey down the left and his cross was met by a thumping Dylan Cogill header that crashed a yard wide.

Trinity looked to be finishing the half strongly, with Preston probing from

GAINSBORO' TR 0 SHEFFIELD UTD XI 1

By Rob Hughes

deep, but they were stung when the young Blades went ahead on the stroke of half-time. Marshall Francis got to the by-line and his cut-back was fired home from six yards by Riley McLaughlin.

Trinity ramped up the pressure in the second half and appeals for a penalty were waved away when Bailey Conway appeared to be hauled to the ground.

The Holy Blues continued to push men forward in front of a 417-strong crowd, but the final ball was just lacking.

The United youngsters couldn't exploit the spaces opening up at the back as Trinity keeper Ollie Battersby enjoyed a fairly quiet afternoon.



ALL-SQUARE:
Brackley's Scott Pollock
nets the equaliser
against the Cobblers

PICTURE: Mike Capps

MISTAKES COST US, SAYS GAV

BRACKLEY TOWN 1 NORTHAMPTON TN 2

By Tim Carroll

Former Brackley boss Jon Brady, now manager of Northampton Town, said: "We know it will always be a competitive game here and today it was a great test for us. I know some of the players here from their time at Northampton and it is great to see them playing at a top level. The game today was of a good standard and just what we needed."

Both sides made full use of substitutions in the second half but the game maintained a competitive edge with incidents until the end. The visitors spurned sever-

al half-chances in the opening stages as Brackley fought to get a foothold in the game.

The game sprang to life midway through the half as Northampton's Akin Odumayo deflected Riccardo Calder's cross on to the crossbar and Connor Hall was not able to force the rebound into the net.

Minutes later Northampton captain Jon Guthrie opened the scoring, striking a 25-yard effort sweetly into the top corner to give Brackley keeper Jonny Maxted no chance at all.

Mitch Pinnock's shot was

well saved by Maxted and, for Brackley, Morgan Roberts' surging run was thwarted by Cobblers goalkeeper Lee Burge.

Brackley levelled the score soon after the interval as substitute Scott Pollock robbed a defender of the ball and found a perfect finish to beat Burge.

Danny Newton's header from Tyler Lyttle's cross brought a full-length save from Burge before a bizarre own goal gifted the visitors the winning goal, a deflected back pass looping over Maxted to nestle in the net on 64 minutes.

Pinnock again went close and ex-Rotherham United striker Tom Eaves headed over when well placed.

"These were useful minutes against a strong side and it has given us lots to think about," Brackley manager Gavin Cowan said.

"In terms of conditioning it was a really good workout today.

"We were the masters of our own downfall which is disappointing but it is about concentration really and there can be no excuses.

"We need everyone on the same wavelength and need to hit the ground running.

"Strategically we needed this game and then we play Chesham next Saturday.

"We are building a few players up and selection will be a tough decision for me come August 10."

GLOVERS' LATE RALLY SNARES THE CUP

NATIONAL League new-boys Yeovil Town came from behind in the closing stages to win the Ted Pearce Memorial Cup in honour of the legendary former Farnborough Town manager.

A tense opening 45 minutes breezed by, with Boro having the best chances in front of a healthy crowd of 622.

Young midfielder Taylor Clark connected with Ollie Robinson's

FARNBOROUGH 1 YEOVIL TOWN 2

By Dom Lloyd

long throw into the box, only to be denied by the left hand of goalkeeper Ollie Wright.

Boro's Olly Pendlebury then forced Wright into another low save from a free-kick just minutes later and Ricky Holmes

also tested the Southampton loanee with a volley before the half was up.

The second half sparked into life in the 68th minute. Farnborough's Trialist E lost his marker to head home Pendlebury's pinpoint free-kick.

Yeovil responded seven minutes later. With the hosts appealing for a free-kick, substitute Dylan Morgan stole the

ball just inside his own half and advanced on a mazy run into the box before bending a low shot into the net.

Two more of the Glovers' subs combined for the winning goal on 87 minutes. Brett McGavin strode into midfield and patiently picked out full-back Jordan Thomas, who poked the ball past goalkeeper Jack Turner from inside the box.

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CARLTON NETS TO CHEER IRON

SHOTS STUN BLUES WITH FIRST-HALF FIGHTBACK

Butler's boys KO Shaymen

SCUNTHORPE UTD 1
FC HALIFAX TOWN 0
By James Moody

SUNTHORPE United edged their home friendly against higher level FC Halifax Town courtesy of a deflected second-half strike from one of their six summer signings.

Carlton Ubazeuonu, formerly of Chorley, struck in the 63rd minute to settle the tie, with a wicked deflection resulting in the ball lifting over Shaymen shotstopper Sam Johnson for the game's only goal in an otherwise tightly contested affair.

Ubazeuonu was arguably one of the standout performers throughout, with his goal added to a number of strikes to his name in the warm-up games so far.

However, in truth, neither goalkeeper was severely tested on the day with a distinct lack of efforts on target.

The closest Halifax did come to an equaliser came in the final minute of the game with Adan George's free-kick clearing the wall but striking the crossbar, with referee Ruebyn Ricardo ending proceedings a mere matter of seconds later.

Prior to that, the National League side's best chance of the game came in the first half through Andrew Oluwabori.

The Nigerian cut inside

from the left and stroked an effort across goal and narrowly wide of Ross Fitzsimons' far post.

A flurry of changes, as is usually the case in pre-season, disrupted the second half rhythm somewhat, with the Shaymen putting the hosts on the back foot towards the end.

Former Scunthorpe midfielder Tom Pugh replaced another former Iron player in Jack Jenkins, and did almost return to haunt his former employers in providing an

assist, but his ball through to George resulted in a near miss from his opportunity on goal.

Unsurprisingly, it was Scunthorpe United manager Andy Butler who was the happier of the two gaffers post-match.

Reacting to his National League North side's sixth straight pre-season victory, and first against higher league opposition, he said: "It was a good test, and that's why we wanted this fixture putting in.

HIGH RISE:
Scunthorpe defender Max Kouogun wins an aerial battle

PICTURE: Luke Broughton



TWO goals in two first-half minutes set the Shots on their way to a deserved comeback victory against a strong Birmingham City second string.

This entertaining friendly – hastily arranged after club secretary Matt Wigman's move between the two clubs – could have yielded more goals.

Shots assistant boss Richard Dryden said: "It's a really good performance, a fantastic workout against a massive club. It's always nice to step-up and play against top players."

Lukas Jutkiewicz stroked Birmingham into an eighth-minute lead with a cool finish after the home defence was opened up too easily, but a flurry of chances turned the game around. George Hall nearly scored an own goal, and Lachie Byrd's header brought a point-blank save from Ryan Allsop, but

ALDERSHOT TOWN 3
BIRMINGHAM CITY 1
By Steve Gibbs

almost immediately Ryan Jones fired a drive into the far corner of the net to equalise.

And the hosts were ahead on 24 minutes when Theo Widdrington nodded in the rebound after Hady Ghandour's header hit the bar.

Jutkiewicz and Tyler Roberts both struck the post before the break, but it was the Shots most likely to score in the second half. Allsop denied Josh Barrett with a close-range save but could only watch as Barrett's audacious chip on the turn bounced down off the woodwork.

Substitute Ollie Bray sealed victory with a fine deft flick across goal, from Ollie Harfield's delivery,

HARRIERS LOOK GOOD BUT ZAK IS FORCED OFF

PHIL Brown admitted the gloss was taken off Kidderminster's impressive win against League Two side Newport County by an injury to talisman Zak Brown.

The National League North outfit notched a goal in each half to down the Exiles in Worcestershire on what was a largely positive afternoon.

However, midfielder Brown was forced off in the first half after being fouled for a 15th minute penalty that Ashley Hemmings converted to give Harriers the lead.

Boss Brown confirmed after the game that the injury would be "okay long term", but that it took a slight edge off an otherwise solid workout.

"It was a good performance, but the most important things are injuries in pre-season, and we've picked up one today when

KIDDERMINSTER H 2
NEWPORT CO 0
By Matty Paddock

Brown came off," he said. "That's the most disappointing part having won the game and won it comfortably."

The hosts flew out of the traps and could have been comfortably ahead by the time Hemmings scored from the spot. Amari Morgan-Smith and Maliq Cadogan both went close in the early stages.

County, who went closest through Michael Spellman's 40th minute effort, were 2-0 down shortly after the hour when a Harriers trialist found the bottom corner from 18 yards.

With 73 minutes on the clock, sub Jack Lambert went within inches of making it 3-0. His angled drive whistled past the post.

WESTON DOUBLE DOWNS THE TURBINES

DERBY County loanee Tony Weston scored twice as newly-promoted National League side Boston United triumphed at Peterborough Sports.

Former Pilgrim Michael Gyasi started for the Turbines and Peterborough United loanee forward Pemi Aderoju was handed a start by Boston.

The Pilgrims took the lead within the first five minutes as

PETERBOROUGH SP 1
BOSTON UNITED 2
By Lillianna Armstrong

Weston latched onto a loose pass from Sports' player-manager Michael Gash and smashed a fine finish past Peter Crook from 25 yards.

The lead did not last long. Just five minutes later, Sports

were level through a close range finish from Dan Jarvis.

The hosts had the better of the possession and chances.

Just after the half hour mark, Gyasi found himself one-on-one with Boston's Cameron Gregory but the keeper did well to smother the winger's effort.

Boston's Aderoju had a decent chance from close range just before the half-time interval

but Crook made a good save to deny him his first Pilgrims goal.

Doncaster Rovers loanee Jack Goodman was introduced by the hosts in the second half and he saw an effort trickle just past the far post on 67 minutes.

However, the Pilgrims went back ahead on 72 minutes and it was 20-year-old Weston at the double as he converted the winner from close range.

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

BLUES SALUTE RETURN OF KING KURT

CHESTER 1
ALTRINCHAM 0
By Neil Turner

A GOAL midway through the second half from Nathan Woodthorpe brought the curtain down on Chester's home pre-season friendly campaign, in a match that could have gone either way.

After a two-season absence from the genteel shores of the River Dee, the Chester faithful had turned up in numbers to welcome the return of star striker Kurt Willoughby, who was greeted with all the enthusiasm of Richard the Lionheart returning to his devoted followers from the Crusades.

Willoughby, who sealed a 12-month loan move from Oldham Athletic on Thursday, was a fans' favourite during his first spell at the Deva Stadium, and his return is thought by many to be the key to a successful campaign for the National League North outfit.

Neither side created a great deal early on, with both keepers virtually unemployed as creativity was at a premium.

The first real chance fell to the visitors, Joe Nuttall unlucky when a 20-yard thunderbolt hit the underside of Chester's bar before bouncing to safety.

Charlie Caton and Willoughby created the home side's best chance just before the break, the pair linking well before Willoughby fired just wide of the Alty upright with an angled effort from 15 yards.

Altrincham, who reached the National League play-offs for the first time last season, nearly took the lead nine minutes into the second period, Justin Amaluzor shooting just over from 18 yards.

The only goal of the contest came after 67 minutes. Substitute Declan Weeks and Caton both had shots blocked, the ball fell invitingly to Woodthorpe who swept it home from close range.

Both sides made personnel changes in the dying embers of the game, but neither really created any clear-cut opportunities.

WHAT A GOAL!
Nick Haughton cracks home AFC Fylde's second against Tranmere Rovers

PICTURE: Steve McIellan



COASTERS SERVE UP THRILLER!

ROUND-UP

By David Lawrence

JON Ustabasi, Nick Haughton and Joe Riley were on target as AFC Fylde drew 3-3 with League Two visitors Tranmere Rovers.

But it could have been so much more for the Coasters, who were three goals to the good before the visitors clicked into gear in the second half.

Ustabasi's opener came on 15 minutes when he turned in the loose ball after his initial effort had been saved.

It was 2-0 moments before the interval when, following some good approach work, Haughton drilled an excellent shot beyond debutant keeper Ben Winterbottom.

The second half was just two minutes old when Fylde added a third when Riley curled an effort beyond replacement keeper Joe Murphy before the visitors pulled a goal back on 58 minutes through Kristian Dennis.

The fightback continued when Cameron Norman added a second for Tranmere midway through the half and they equalised on 75

minutes when Dennis netted his second of the game, stabbing the ball under the keeper from close range.

There was almost a hat-trick for the Rovers striker but he was denied a third by the woodwork.

Oldham Athletic lost out to a solitary own goal against Radcliffe when a 35th-minute Tom Walker corner was diverted into the net while Macclesfield went down 2-0 at home to Buxton where Josh Popoola and Ethan Fitzhugh were on target and there was a penalty save from the Bucks' on-loan Manchester City keeper True Grant.

Nic Evangelinos gave Lancaster City the perfect start in their match at Witton Albion, scoring inside 30 seconds. The Dolly Blues went on to win 5-0 which included a brace from Marcus Cusani.

Darlington won 2-0 at Morpeth Town, both goals coming in the second half

from Cedric Main and Cameron Salkeld while the hosts' Ryan Wombwell was sent off.

A stunning overhead kick from Luke Ward was the pick of the goals as Sporting Khalsa beat visitors Harborough Town 2-1. Liam Kirton scored the other for the home side after Tendai Daire had handed Harbs the lead.

Walsall Wood twice came from behind to draw 2-2 with Redditch United and it was the same scoreline at Halesowen Town where Hereford finished with ten men after defender Matt Preston saw red.

The honours were shared at St Ives Town where visitors Cambridge City came from behind to draw 1-1 while Banbury United came from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Thame United.

Jonny Margetts and Gold Omotayo were on target as King's Lynn Town ran out 2-0 winners at Leiston and a goal just before half-time

was enough to hand St Albans City a 1-0 win against a Luton Town XI.

Enzo Boldewijn's goal was not enough to stop Wealdstone from suffering a 3-1 defeat at home to League Two visitors MK Dons and it was the same outcome for Southend United at home to Gillingham, Josh Walker finding the net for the Shrimpers.

Former Ayr United striker Francis Amartey scored for Weymouth in their 2-1 defeat at home to AFC Bournemouth and a Keiron Thomas goal early in the second half earned Weston-Super-Mare a 1-1 draw with Cardiff City XI.

Charley Kendall scored twice in Woking's 3-2 win at Salisbury with the other being an own goal and Wiltshire neighbours Royal Wootton Bassett Town suffered a 2-0 defeat at home to Forest Green Rovers with the goals coming from Jamie Robson and Kyle McAllister.



STARTER: Jon Ustabasi gave the Coasters the lead

WELL, here we go again. It only feels like yesterday that we were finishing last season's competition.

This season's Fantasy Non-League will again only cost you £5 to enter. The FNL 2024/25 entry deadline will be midnight on Saturday, August 31, 2024. It is very important that you read the rules very closely as I am making some changes to the competition this season.

Again, this season the EARLY ENTRY BONUS is in play, which is being increased to 1,000pts. This is always a difficult subject and gauging what this should be is not easy.

Last season, the highest position at the end of the season of a team that entered before the season started was 52nd. They finished the season 2,469pts behind the FNL 2023/24 winner.

I had thought about dropping the Early Entry Bonus and starting the competition from Saturday, August 31, but it was pointed out to me that this course of action would hinder The Mixtures leagues as those three weeks of August feature at least two rounds of the FA Cup.

Therefore, I have decided to stick with the Early Entry Bonus and everyone will start scoring points from the start of the season on Saturday, August 3.

So, how does the Early Entry Bonus work? Well, if you enter the competition before 12pm noon on Saturday August 3 you will receive those EARLY ENTRY BONUS points.

I still get emails and calls commenting on the fact that we allow people to enter the competition nearly four weeks into the season.

Ideally, I would love to start the competition before the season starts but if we did, we would only have around half the players we normally get. My normal answer to everyone that asks this question is everyone can start either before the season starts or before the deadline at the end of August. In fact, I know that many players enter at least two teams – one before the season starts and one before the deadline at 3pm on Saturday, August 31.

There will again be Manager of the Month awards. In total, there will be eight of these with the last one being April

FANTASY NON-LEAGUE 2024-25

2025. However, again this season the first Manager of the Month will be for the month of September.

At the end of the season, there will be cash prizes for the top three places and once again we will have my personal favourite, a prize for finishing bottom, so why not enter two teams, one to win it and one to lose it? If you have never tried to finish bottom then give it a go, it is not easy.

Again, this season you will be competing for the Barrie New Bottom Spot! (If you are planning to try and finish bottom can I suggest that you enter after the season starts so there is no chance of me accidentally giving you the Early Entry Bonus).

Every season I like to make a few changes to the competition and this season there will be five changes, so please make sure to take note of these.

● The biggest change this season is the introduction of two more leagues. I have decided to revamp The Mixture part of the competition. The reason for this is that it has become more difficult to choose just 24 teams.

The Mixture will become three leagues of 24 teams. The Northern Mixture (eight teams from each of the three Step 4 divisions), The Isthmian Mixture (eight teams from each of the three Step 4 divisions), The Southern Mixture (12 teams from each of the two Step 4 divisions).

● As stated above the Early Entry Bonus is being increased to 1,000pts.

● I am dropping the bonus teams as they have caused some confusion. Therefore, this season you will need to pick three

teams from each of the ten leagues (30 teams) and I will be increasing the jokers from three to five teams.

● In previous seasons I have been awarding 25 and -25pts to the best and worst performing teams in each month. This season this will change to 30, 15 and 7pts for the top best performing teams each month and -30, -15 & -7pts for the bottom three worst performing clubs each month.

● This season I have also decided to alter the End of Season Bonus points. I will be awarding the top three and bottom three in each league the following 250, 125 & 60pts for the top three and -250, -125 & -60pts for the bottom three. The cup competitions and the Play-Offs will remain the same.

THE RULES FOR FNL 2024/25

(Please read these very carefully). You will need to choose three teams from each of the ten leagues. (Which will give you a total of 30 teams). Then you will need to nominate your five FNL JOKER TEAMS from the 30 teams you have already picked.

Those five teams will mean that you will receive double points throughout the season. That will include all bonuses awarded during the season, it will also include the End of Season bonuses.

The way to show your 5 jokers on the entry form is to place a "J" instead of a tick.

Also, if you wish you can pick five substitute teams, but these five teams must be on your FNL 2024/25 Entry Form at the start of the season. (More on the substitutes later in this season's rules).

PRIZE MONEY 2024-25

OVERALL WINNER
£1,000!
2ND £500, 3RD £250,
BOTTOM £500

MANAGER OF THE MONTH
1ST £25, 2ND £10,
3RD £5, BOTTOM £10

POINTS ALLOCATION, IN ALL TEN LEAGUES LEAGUE & CUP GAMES

Home win = 10pts + goals Away win = 20pts + goals

Home Draw = 2pt + goals Away Draw = 4pts + goals

Home Defeat = -10pts Away defeat = -5pts

Every goal scored = 1pt (This counts if your team wins, draws or loses).

Every goal conceded (Win & Defeat only) -1pt.

Goal Bonus Points = 5pts (This is awarded if your teams score 4 or more goals).

Clean Sheet Bonus = 5pts (This is awarded for both wins and 0-0 draws).

Concede 4 goals = -5pts (This does not apply to drawn games).

(Two-legged ties count as two separate games. Cup replays that go to penalties. The penalties are only used to decide the winner. No points are awarded for the penalties scored).

BONUS POINTS FOR REACHING VARIOUS ROUNDS IN EACH CUP COMPETITION

For reaching the FA Cup 1st round proper and each round beyond = 25pts.

For reaching the Quarter-finals and each round beyond in all the other cups that are involved in the competition which are listed below = 25pts.

LEAGUE LEADERS & BOTTOM CLUB BONUS

At the end of each month up to and including April 2025 the top three teams leading each of the ten leagues will be awarded 30pts, 15pts & 7pts respectively.

The bottom three teams of the ten leagues will be awarded -30pts, -15pts & -7pts

respectively. The Mixture bonus points will be allocated based on the top three and worst three teams over the leagues that are included in The Mixture Leagues. (Please remember and this is important these bonus points will only count towards the main FNL season total and not the Manager of the Month points).

MANAGER OF THE MONTH BONUS POINTS

Each month the best and worst team in each of the ten leagues will be awarded 30, 15 & 7pts & -30, -15 & -7pts respectively.

(These bonus points only count in the Manager of the Month calculations).

PLAY-OFF GAMES

The actual Play-Off games themselves will be awarded points as if they were league games. The Play-Off Final winners will be awarded 50pts for gaining promotion.

(These points will be awarded at the end of the season).

END OF SEASON BONUS POINTS

(These points will be awarded at the end of the FNL Season in May 2025).

All League Champions will receive 250pts for winning their respective leagues. Second place will get 125pts and third place will receive 60pts.

The bottom team in each league at the end of the season's Fantasy Non-League will be awarded -250pts.

Second from bottom -125pts and third from bottom -60pts.

Cup Winners will receive 250pts for the FA Trophy and 150pts for the other Cups.

Play-Off Winners will receive 50pts.

Remember if your FNL Joker team get these bonuses they will be doubled, for example a league champion picked in July 2024 at the start of the FNL Season will win you 500pts.

The Mixture Leagues will be awarded the End of Season Bonuses based on the FNL Points scored over the season. However, if any of the other clubs in The Mixture wins their respective league or get relegated they will receive 150pts or -150pts. This will be halved if you sub the respective teams in the transfer window.

Substituted teams will be awarded half the End of Season bonus points & the full Play-Off Winners bonus.

The following Leagues and Cup competitions will be involved in this season's Fantasy Non-League

National League - FA Cup and FA Trophy.

National North - FA Cup and FA Trophy.

National South - FA Cup and FA Trophy.

Northern Premier - FA Cup, FA Trophy and League Cup.

Isthmian Premier - FA Cup, FA Trophy and League Cup.

Southern Premier Central - FA Cup, FA Trophy and League Cup.

Southern Premier South - FA Cup, FA Trophy and League Cup.

The Mixture Leagues - FA Cup, FA Trophy, League Cups.

USE OF SUBSTITUTIONS.

As stated above, you can select five substitutes on your FNL 2024/25 Entry Forms and out of those five substitutes you can use all five substitutes. Again, this season there will be only one substitution window and that will be during the month of December 2024 with your selected changes taking effect from January 1, 2025.

Details on how to use your substitutions will be released nearer the time during the month of November. Please also note you can change your FNL Joker teams on January 1, 2025 if you wish, but this will count as one of your substitutions.

lan White
Fantasy Non-League

ENTER ONLINE @ <http://www.thenonleaguefootballpaper.com/fantasy-non-league>

2024/25 ENTRY FORM

NATIONAL LEAGUE			NATIONAL LEAGUE NORTH			NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH			NORTHERN PREMIER			ISTHMIAN PREMIER		
Pick Three	Code	Tick	Pick Three	Code	Tick	Pick Three	Code	Tick	Pick Three	Code	Tick	Pick Three	Code	Tick
AFC Fylde	1		Alfreton Tn	25		Aveley	49		Ashton Utd	73		Billericay Tn	95	
Aldershot Tn	2		Brackley Tn	26		Bath City	50		Bamber Bridge	74		Bognor Regis Tn	96	
Altrincham	3		Buxton FC	27		Boreham Wood	51		Basford United	75		Bowers & Pitsea	97	
Barnet FC	4		Chester FC	28		Chelmsford City	52		Blyth Spartans	76		Canvey Island	98	
Boston Utd	5		Chorley	29		Chesham Utd	53		FC United Of Man	77		Carshalton Athletic	99	
Braintree Tn	6		Curzon Ashton	30		Chippenham Tn	54		Gainsborough T	78		Chatham Tn	100	
Dagenham & Red	7		Darlington FC 1883	31		Dorking Wanderers	55		Guiseley	79		Cheshunt FC	101	
Eastleigh	8		Farsley Celtic	32		Eastbourne Bor	56		Hebburn Tn	80		Chichester City	102	
Ebbsfleet Utd	9		Hereford FC	33		Enfield Tn	57		Hyde Utd	81		Cray Valley Pm	103	
FC Halifax Tn	10		Kidderminster H	34		Farnborough	58		Ilkeston Tn	82		Cray Wanderers	104	
Forest Green Rvrs	11		King's Lynn Tn	35		Hampton & Rich	59		Lancaster City	83		Dartford FC	105	
Gateshead FC	12		Leamington	36		Hemel Hempstead	60		Leek Tn	84		Dover Athletic	106	
Hartlepool Utd	13		Marine	37		Hornchurch	61		Macclesfield	85		Dulwich Hamlet	107	
Maidenhead Utd	14		Needham Market	38		Maidstone Utd	62		Matlock Tn	86		Folkstone Invicta	108	
Oldham Athletic	15		Oldham City	39		Salisbury FC	63		Mickleover FC	87		Hashtag Utd	109	
Rochdale	16		Peterborough Sp	40		Slough Tn	64		Morpeth Tn	88		Hastings Utd	110	
Solihull Moors	17		Radcliffe FC	41		St Albans City	65		Prescot Cables	89		Hendon FC	111	
Southend United	18		Rushall Olympic	42		Tonbridge Angels	66		Stockton Tn	90		Horsham FC	112	
Sutton Utd	19		Scarborough Ath	43		Torquay Utd	67		Warrington Rylands	91		Lewes	113	
Tamworth	20		Scunthorpe Utd	44		Truro City	68		Whitby Tn	92		Potters Bar Tn	114	
Wealdstone	21		South Shields	45		Welling Utd	69		Workington AFC	93		Whitehawk	115	
Woking	22		Southport	46		Weston-s-Mare	70		Worksop Tn	94		Wingate & Finchley	116	
Yeovil Tn	23		Spennymoor Tn	47		Weymouth	71							
York City	24		Warrington Tn	48		Worthing	72							

MY FIVE SUBSTITUTE CLUBS ARE:

-
-
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AFC Sudbury	117		AFC Totton	139		Belper Tn	161		Ascot Utd	185		AFC Dunstable	209	
AFC Telford Utd	118		Basingstoke Tn	140		Bishop Auckland	162		Farnham Tn	186		Barton Rovers	210	
Alvechurch	119		Bracknell Tn	141		Bradford (PA)	163		Guernsey FC	187		Beaconsfield Tn	211	
Banbury Utd	120		Chertsey Tn	142		Consett FC	164		Hartley Wintney	188		Flackwell Heath	212	
Barwell	121		Dorchester Tn	143		Emley FC	165		Hayes & Yeading	189		Hadley FC	213	
Bedford Tn	122		Frome Tn	144		Grimsby Borough	166		Moneyfields FC	190		Kings Langley	214	
Biggleswade Tn	123		Gloucester City	145		Newton Aycliffe	167		Uxbridge FC	191		Leverstock Green	215	
Bishop's Stortford	124		Gosport Borough	146		Sheffield FC	168		Westfield FC	192		North Leigh FC	216	
Bromsgrove Sp	125		Hanwell Tn	147		Chasetown FC	169		Basildon Utd	193		Northwood FC	217	
Halesowen Tn	126		Havant & Water'ville	148		City Of Liverpool	170		Cambridge City	194		Real Bedford	218	
Harborough Tn	127		Hungerford Tn	149		Hednesford Tn	171		Gorleston FC	195		Thame Utd	219	
Hitchin Tn	128		Marlow FC	150		Mossley FC	172		Grays Athletic	196		Ware FC	220	
Kettering Tn	129		Merthyr Tn	151		Nantwich Tn	173		Maldon & Tiptree	197		Bashley FC	221	
Leiston FC	130		Plymouth Parkway	152		Newcastle Tn	174		Sporting Bengal U	198		Bideford FC	222	
Lowestoft Tn	131		Poole Tn	153		Stafford Rangers	175		Tilbury FC	199		Cinderford Tn	223	
Redditch Utd	132		Sholing FC	154		Widnes FC	176		Wroxham FC	200		Cribbs FC	224	
Royston Tn	133		Swindon S	155		AFC Rushden & D	177		AFC Croydon	201		Falmouth Tn	225	
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St. Ives Tn	135		Tiverton Tn	157		Grantham Tn	179		Deal Tn	203		Larkhall Athletic	227	
Stamford AFC	136		Walton & Hersham	158		Lye Tn	180		Eastbourne Tn	204		Moushole FC	228	
Stourbridge	137		Wimborne Tn	159		RC Warwick	181		Herne Bay	205		Shaftesbury FC	229	
Stratford Tn	138		Winchester City	160		Walsall Wood	182		Margate FC	206		Tavistock FC	230	
						Wellingborough T	183		Steyning Tn Com	207		Thatcham Tn	231	
						Worcester City	184		Three Bridges FC	208		Westbury Utd	232	

PICK THREE TEAMS FROM EACH LEAGUE (30 TEAMS) AND FIVE JOKERS. THE JOKERS MUST BE FIVE TEAMS YOU HAVE ALREADY PICKED.
SHOW YOUR 5 JOKERS ON THE ENTRY FORM BY PLACING A "J" INSTEAD OF A TICK

NATIONAL LEAGUE NEWS

ZAK BOOSTS SHAY ATTACK

FC HALIFAX Town have completed the signing of teenage starlet Zak Emmerson from League One Blackpool.

Emmerson, 19, began his career at Oldham Athletic where, at 15 years and 73 days old, he became the second youngest player to play in the EFL by making his debut against Walsall in October 2019.

In July 2020, the forward signed for Brighton's development squad where he played for two years before joining then Championship side Blackpool.

Last season, the forward spent time on loan at National League South side Eastbourne Borough, where he netted five times in 11 league appearances.

Fell completes a rise to Heed

GATESHEAD YOUNG gun Ben Fell says he is ready to fulfil 'big expectations' after making the step up to join Gateshead from Step 6 side Blyth Town.

Centre-back Fell, 20, played an integral role as Blyth landed the Northern League Division Two title last year, being named as the division's Player of the Season.

"I'm delighted, it's a big club and comes with big expectations," said Fell, who made his Heed debut in a 2-0 win over North Shields in pre-season.

"I think there's no expectations of me being a first-team player yet, but whatever I do, wherever I go, I need to do well at it, stick in and try my best, and that's what I'm going to do."

BEECH LIFE IS FOR ZANZALA

STRIKER Offrande Zanzala has reunited with former boss Chris Beech after signing for AFC Fylde.

Congolese Zanzala, 27, started his career at Derby County and went on to make over 130 appearances in the EFL with the likes of Accrington Stanley, Crewe Alexandra, Carlisle United, Barrow and Newport County, where he has spent the last two seasons.

"I've been speaking to the head coach and I can't wait to get going and help get the club where it wants to be," Zanzala said.

"The club has ambitions to go higher and so me coming here was certainly something I wanted to do."

Moors project tempts Bostock

JOHN BOSTOCK says Solihull Moors tick two key boxes – ambition and family.

The 32-year-old former Crystal Palace and Tottenham midfielder has joined Moors on a two-year deal. Bostock was a key part of Notts County's promotion to the EFL in 2023 and played 37 times in League Two last season.

"It was really important where the club was situated – as a family man, they're my priority," Bostock told the club's website.

"It came down to speaking to the gaffer (Andy Whing), Wardy (Stephen Ward, director of football) and the project about how they wanted to play and the plans for the club. The club have come quite far very quickly and last year they came so close to taking the next step."

BRAINS 'N' BRAWN: John Akinde has joined Braintree Town after leaving Colchester United and, Inset, boss Angelo Harrop

PICTURE: Alamy



AKINDE HAS HIS FUTURE IRONED OUT

NEWLY promoted Braintree Town have made another huge statement of intent by capturing National League Golden Boot winner John Akinde.

The Iron have won the race to sign the 35-year-old following his release by Colchester at the end of last season.

A proven scorer at National League level, Akinde scored 31 goals to help Barnet become champions in 2014-15. Overall, he scored 87 league goals in 166 appearances for the Bees.

He then spent two years at both Lincoln City and Gillingham in the EFL before joining Colchester United in January 2022.

Speaking on social media, Iron boss Angelo Harrop said: "(I'm) over the moon to bring John to Braintree. A player who will not only bring quality and a great deal of experience but will also play a huge part in developing our younger players too. Signing this kind of player speaks volumes on how far we have come as a club."

Akinde, who has made more than 600 career appearances to date, links up with former Colchester teammates Ryan Clampin, Chay Cooper and Marley Marshall Miranda at the Iron and forms a powerful strike partnership with fellow new signing Inih Effiong.



PARKY HAS A CHRIS OF LIFE

PHIL Parkinson insists Altrincham will be a stronger side – even with the loss of talismanic top-scorer Chris Conn-Clarke. *By Chris Dunlavy*

The skilful Northern Irishman scored 22 goals from an attacking midfield role as Alty finished fourth before losing to Bromley in the play-offs.

Subsequently named National League Player of the Year, Conn-Clarke was then signed by Peterborough for a club record fee of £350,000.

His departure left Parkinson with an almighty hole to fill, but the former Nantwich boss says the signings of Hartlepool midfielder Tom Crawford, Colne winger Lucas Weaver and Oldham forward Joe Nuttall will make Alty a better all-round outfit.

"We've always had players like Chris at Altrin-

cham," says Parkinson, below, who has overseen two promotions since taking charge at Moss Lane in 2017.

"Before him we had Ryan Colclough. Before that we had Jordan Hulme. All of them had that X-factor, that bit of brilliance.

Risks

"Truth be told, we weren't banking on Chris doing that for us. He was still developing, and it could have gone either way, but he showed enough for me to be able to build a team around him.

"The reason he did so well is obviously his undeniable quality, but also because he had team-mates who made up for a lot of his deficiencies.

"That's where I feel

we've bridged a bit of a gap this summer.

"You never want to lose a player like Chris and we're obviously going to miss his goal contributions.

"But the way that I'd set the team up was all geared towards him scoring and creating. We evolved into a transitional team, a counter-attacking team who took more risks. I still want to keep an element of that but everything we've ever done has been built on being strong in possession and we want to get back to being more consistent and controlled.

"We'll have a differ-

ent way of doing things now and I do truly feel we'll be a better all-round team for the players we've signed, the experience we've gained and the tweaks that we've made."

Continuity

Altrincham defied a modest budget to finish fourth last term, their highest finish in almost 30 years. It may prove a tough act to follow, but Parkinson isn't worrying about unrealistic expectations.

"You've got to embrace it, haven't you?" he says. "If you don't then you worry about it and that can consume you."

"It obviously has the potential to be a bit of a negative. If things don't go right,

it will be 'Well, you're not as good as last year, you're missing Chris Conn-Clarke, etc'.

"But the fact is, Altrincham overachieved last year and we're probably at a level now where some people expect us to be in and around the play-offs.

"Is that a realistic expectation for Altrincham every season? Probably not in terms of the size of the club and the finances. But we're moving in that direction, so it's not something I'd push away from and I'd never say that we don't have ambitions of getting promoted.

"For that to happen we've got to get everything right and we've got to have a bit of luck. We haven't got a big squad like some teams in this division but if we can get that little bit of continuity and stay injury free then we've got a chance."



NATIONAL LEAGUE - STEP 2 NEWS

BRIAN RAISES WHITES' BAR!

By Chris Dunlavy

SALISBURY boss Brian Dutton has admitted that the search for a ball-playing centre-half may go down to the wire.

The Whites defied a modest budget and long odds to clinch a shock promotion from the ultra-competitive Southern Premier South last term, and are now preparing for a first season at Step 2 since the club reformed in 2015.

But Dutton says attracting players who are capable of playing his expansive style within budget is proving difficult.

"The squad as it stands is a young bunch," explains the 39-year-old, who succeeded Steve Claridge at the Ray Mac in 2022.

"The average age has actually come down again this summer, to about 22. It's probably crying out for a little bit of experience, but those players are hard to find.

"We want to play quite a possession-based style of football and a lot of these experienced boys have been brought up on something different.

"It's not like academy lads, who are all well-versed in that style. Ball-playing centre-halves who know the level are hard to come by and tend to cost a lot of money.

"We're still waiting for the right one to pop up, and it is a bit of a waiting game. The really good ones get gobbled up by the

Dutton's recruitment mission

big boys. The rest want to go on trial and see if they can get something bigger. Then you're hoping for some of them to come back to you.

"It's frustrating because you just want to crack on with the group and get your coaching points across but that's the way it is."

Conversations

If that waiting game is difficult, however, it is nothing compared to telling several of Salisbury's promotion heroes that they would not be making the step up to National League South.

Dutton released six players in May, including Jack Ball, Charlie Gunson and Aaron Simpson, who were all in the squad that beat AFC Totton on penalties in the play-off final.

"It was quite ruthless, because they were great lads who had served the club well and probably deserved a crack at Step 2," he concedes.

"It's probably the toughest

phone call in football. When I took over this job, I only retained three of the existing squad. But those conversations were a lot easier because I didn't think the lads I let go were up to the standard that Salisbury required.

"These lads, who were great players and gave their all, it was a lot tougher. But just from my experience as a player, I felt we didn't quite have a team that was capable of competing at this level and the only way to change that was to add players. Sadly, that meant some had to go."

Mentality

One player who isn't going anywhere – yet, at least – is last season's 26-goal top scorer Noah Coppin, who spurned offers elsewhere to sign a one-year extension last month.

"There are a few clubs circling around Noah," says Dutton. "Like a lot of our lads, he's probably on the brink of getting a really big move."

"They probably need one more really good season, and that's my advice to them. If it's not broke, don't fix it. Don't move sideways for money – wait for the big ones.

"Noah's settled here at Salisbury, like a lot of lads are, and hopefully he can have another successful season then kick on."

Which is exactly what Dutton wants Salisbury to do, despite his side starting the season as one of the bookies' favourites for relegation.

"The club's aim is to stay in the league and build on what we've done here," says Dutton. "And it's really important that we do stay in the league.

"But the mentality of myself and what I try to instil in the squad is that we go out there to try to win the league and we try to win every single game.

"Our goals will be really high, but that's within the walls of the changing room. I think everybody else – the fans and the board – would be delighted if this time next season we're planning for another year in National South."

GRIFF GIVES IN TO YOUNG



MARINE boss Neil Young has finally got his man after landing midfielder Regan Griffiths following his departure from Kidderminster Harriers.

Griffiths, 24, played 41 times in Leagues One and Two with Crewe Alexandra, taking in loan spells at Notts County and Boreham Wood along the way before joining Harriers in February.

Delighted boss Young said: "Regan is someone I have tried to sign probably for the last two seasons on loan but on both occasions went to National League clubs.

"He is an excellent footballer who wants to work hard and at only 24 fits exactly what we are trying to do."

King Kurt back on Blues loan



FANS' favourite 'King' Kurt Willoughby is back at Chester.

The 27-year-old has returned for a second spell at the Deva Stadium on a season-long loan from Oldham Athletic to bolster Calum McIntyre's forward line for the 2024/25 campaign.

Willoughby scored 27 goals in 52 appearances in his first Blues spell in 2022-23, earning him a move to the Latics last term.

He ended the season on loan at Scottish Championship side Ayr United, scoring three times in 11 appearances.

McIntyre said: "His record during his time with us was formidable and he has a terrific relationship with our fans. We are really pleased to have got this done."

ALVES LANDS ROMANS GIG



BATH CITY have completed the signing of Jordan Alves following a successful trial.

Midfielder Alves, 24, has joined the Romans from Isthmian South Central side Westfield, where he made 37 appearances and scored 14 goals in helping them to the play-offs. He has also turned out for North Leigh.

"It's a good feeling to finally get it over the line and I'm buzzing to be here," said Alves, who has spent the summer at Twerton Park.

Romans boss Jerry Gill tweeted: "(Jordan is) another player who I am very excited to work with. He has strong attributes that fit the profile we are looking for in attacking areas."

Gulls swoop for Cody and Omar



TORQUAY United have made an impressive double swoop by landing striker Cody Cooke from National League South rivals Bath City and former Dagenham & Redbridge midfielder Omar Mussa.

Cooke, 31, arrives at Plainmoor after three seasons with the Romans, where he scored 55 goals in 130 appearances.

He played under Gulls boss Paul Wotton at hometown club Truro City and has also turned out for St Mirren and Weymouth.

Wotton beat off competition from Southend, among others, to land Mussa with the 23-year-old Burundi international having built a big reputation for himself at the likes of Dover Athletic, Weymouth and Dagenham.



IT'S A BIT OF ALL WHITE! Salisbury celebrate winning promotion through the Southern Premier South play-offs

PICTURE: Tom Phillips



STEP 3 NEWS

KACY'S COOL FOR BASFORD

BASFORD United have clinched the signing of midfielder Kacy Butterfield after he impressed manager Martin Carruthers in pre-season.

The Bermudan international arrives at the NPL Premier club with over 70 appearances in National League North with Leamington, Kidderminster, Guiseley and, most recently, Alfreton Town.

Last season, Butterfield lined up for Nuneaton Borough and Stourbridge in the Southern Premier Central.

"I'm absolutely delighted to get Kacy tied down," Carruthers said.

"This is a real coup for the football club and we can't wait for the season to get started!"

Cody's back on Trinity's books



VERSATILE defender Cody Collins is back permanently at Gainsborough Trinity –nearly two years after he first appeared for the Holy Blues on loan.

Collins first joined NPL Premier outfit Trinity as a 17-year-old in 2022 on loan from Mansfield Town, playing seven times.

Injury halted his loan move and he was let go by Mansfield in the summer of 2023.

Last season, Collins turned out for Tadcaster Albion in the Northern Counties East League, making 25 appearances, before returning briefly to Gainsborough in March.

Collins said: "I've had conversations with Russ (Wilcox, manager) over the summer and I've never thought of going anywhere else."

BOWERS BAG A YOUNG PAIR



ISTHMIAN Premier new boys Bowers & Pitsea have strengthened their squad with two new arrivals.

Bowers boss James Collins has picked up winger Rio Campbell and former Southend United midfielder Jacob Bland.

Campbell, 21, was with Cray Wanderers at the start of last season, playing five times and then heading to Kingstonsian, where he made another 13 appearances.

Bland, 19, comes in on a dual registration deal with Chelmsford City after spending last season with Concord Rangers. He previously played at Great Wakering Rovers and the Southend Under-18 set-up.

Stefan to start again at Blues



TOP marksman Stefan Brown has left Basingstoke Town to join newly-promoted Southern Premier South rivals Marlow.

The 34-year-old, in an injury-ravaged second spell with the Dragons, scored 15 goals in 61 appearances, including a double as Stoke retained the North Hants Senior Cup.

Reflecting on his departure from Stoke, Brown said: "I wish my body would have allowed me to contribute more, but appreciated the love and support I received from everyone regardless."

Marlow have also signed striker Jose Sani, who has scored 41 goals in the last two seasons for Step 5 sides Knaphill and Sandhurst Town.



LOOKING THE PART: Players show off the new kit at Royston Cave

PICTURE: Royston Town

KIT LAUNCH IS INSPIRED BY HISTORY

By Jon Couch

ROYSTON Town have paid homage to the town's heritage in designing their new home shirt, inspired by the enigmatic Royston Cave.

The Southern Premier Central Crows say the unique shirt – to be worn by both the men's and women's teams – depicts the "captivating pattern" of the Kings Templar, found by accident within the historic Hertfordshire cave in 1792.

The club say the Nike-designed shirt, with its white base and grey pattern replicating the cave's carvings, marks a local landmark steeped in mystery, sparking conversation and igniting curiosity about Royston's rich heritage.

"It's not just about looking good on the pitch, it's about celebrating what makes Royston special," said club chairman Steve Jackson at the unveiling.

"We believe this shirt will not only be a source of pride for our players and fans but also spark interest in the town's fascinating history."

Royston Cave manager Emma Shaw added: "We were thrilled when Royston Town FC approached us about the proposed shirt design."

"It is a wonderful way to celebrate the unique heritage of Royston Cave."

"We hope the shirts are popular with the players and fans alike and wish the teams every success in the upcoming season."

McCANN: WE'RE A NO.1 TARGET!

BILLERICAY Town boss Gary McCann says the club's big-spending history has made his side a target for their Isthmian Premier rivals.

The Essex outfit were bought by steel millionaire Glenn Tamplin in 2016. His lavish three-year reign saw the signings of former Premier League stars Paul Konchesky, Jamie O'Hara and Jermaine Pennant.

Tamplin stepped down in 2019 but McCann, right, believes Billericay's reputation for extravagance lingers on – which is why he has spent the summer signing players strong enough to repel the scalp-hunters.

"Billericay are not overly loved," admits McCann,

By Chris Dunlavy

who joined the Blues in April 2023 after lengthy spells at Hendon and Hampton & Richmond.

"There's a lot of teams who take great satisfaction in beating us. There's a little more added effort to beat us."

Characters

"That probably comes from the reputation and the exposure the club got during the Glenn Tamplin era and, in a sense, we're still trying to shake off that tag of being big spenders."

"Most still think we are. Some of the abuse I've heard on the football pitch, about individ-

uals in our group earning certain amounts of money, is ridiculous.

"That in itself brings its own needs in terms of our recruitment. You need experience. You need big characters with the right mentality."

"I shared that with the owners in our meetings this summer and they were very much on board."

Amongst nine new arrivals are 25-year-old Ansu Jannah from Hastings, 26-year-old forward Decarrey Sheriff from Eastbourne, plus midfield duo Tyrell Miller-Rodney and Jack Paxman, who are both 30.

So confident is McCann in the

quality of his summer signings that he does not believe the club will miss last season's top-scorers Alfie Cerulli and Bradley Stevenson, who have joined Hemel Hempstead and Solihull respectively.

Together

"Some may say that will leave a big hole in the team," adds McCann. "But I'm confident the players we've recruited are going to replace those goals. In terms of the requirements of the league and the requirements of the badge, I'm a lot more confident and a lot more content with the group I've got at my disposal this year than I was last year."

Billericay won their final six games of last season but missed out on a play-off

berth on the final day. The aim this year is to challenge for the title, and McCann is predicting a wide open race.

"The remit is to muscle in on the top three," he says. "I don't think there's any stand-out contender like Hornchurch last year."

"Everyone I spoke to when I took over here said they were the team with the continuity, know-how, togetherness and quality. That proved to be the case, especially in the early part of the season."

"This time, I don't see that one stand-out. If we become that team, wonderful. But I feel like there are four or five contenders who will all battle it out."

"The mood in our changing room is 'Let's think about top spot and anything close is still progression!'"



PITCHING IN

STEP 4 NEWS

TYLER INSPIRES MOLES MISSION

ROSS WEATHERSTONE believes 'walking miracle' Tyler D'Cruz can inspire Binfield to avoid the tension of a relegation battle and go on to better things this season.

The Moles forward collided with a perimeter fence in his side's 2-1 victory at Met Police in January, suffering a nasty head injury and having to be treated by club staff and then paramedics before being rushed to hospital.

He had been in and out of consciousness before suffering seizures in the dressing-room and the care and attention he received saved his life, according to boss Weatherstone, whose team won their first Isthmian South Central game of the season that day, D'Cruz netting before the incident.

Former Oxford United defender Weatherstone felt Binfield's successful bid to stay up – which they achieved by four points after recording eight wins following his arrival at the previously winless club in December – was fuelled by D'Cruz's plight.

And holding on to the former Reading City man this summer has been crucial to the plans for the manager's

ISTHMIAN S.CENTRAL

By Matthew Nash

first full season in charge at Hill Farm Lane, even if he has lost four other key men.

"Tyler is a walking miracle after what happened to him," he said. "We have managed to keep hold of him and Mitchell Parker and that means we will have goals in the team this season.

Philosophy

"Defender Jack Matton has gone to Wycombe Wanderers, goalkeeper Killian Barrett is on trial at Sheffield Wednesday, having also been at Reading, forward Glenn Gabriel has gone to play for Coleraine in Northern Ireland and Dontaye Whittaker is signing for a team at Step 3.

"There is the opportunity now to work with the squad I've got and change the style and philosophy of how we play. Our style last season to get survival was tournament football. Every match was a cup final. Every game mattered.

"Now as a coach I can put a bit of a different footprint on it."

And Weatherstone is in no

doubt the 22-team Step 4 division has the strongest line-up he has seen, including promoted Farnham Town and Rayners Lane, relegated Kingstonian and ambitious Raynes Park Vale.

It will be a stern test, even for a boss named Berkshire manager of the year last month. But the Moles can at least start afresh after a season of survival.

Weatherstone adds: "We're very respectful of the teams that have come up and down into the division. It is the strongest South Central division I've seen and almost has a Step 3 feel to it when you see some of the clubs involved.

"We're miles away from some of these teams in terms of budget but that is the exciting challenge: to be able to go and play against big clubs like Kingstonian and Hayes & Yeading.

"I want us to compete in every match like we did last season. We know how we'll present ourselves against some teams and also that we may have more of the ball against others. But I want teams to know they have been in a real game against us."



MIRACLE MAN: Binfield's Tyler D'Cruz PICTURE: Binfield FC

SAM COMES BACK HOME WITH COLLS



WINGER Sam Peplow has come back home to Atherton Colliers.

The 22-year-old former Manchester United and Huddersfield Town academy product broke into senior football at Hyde United but has battled against a number of injuries.

Peplow last played for NPL Premier side FC United of Manchester and is delighted to be with his local club as Colls aim to bounce back to Step 3 following relegation to NPL West last season.

"It's a great feeling," Peplow said. "To be with my local club makes it a bit more special as well."

Heslop heads to Seaside



BRIDLINGTON Town have landed a coup with the signing of experienced midfielder Simon Heslop.

The 37-year-old has made over 100 appearances in both League Two and the National League for the likes of Oxford United, York City and Mansfield Town.

He also spent a season in League One, making 27 appearances for Stevenage in the 2013/14 season.

Heslop spent last season playing for Bridlington's NPL East rivals Liversedge, where he made 34 appearances, scoring once.

THE END OF AN ERA FOR CHIEF DERYK



DERYK Heywood has stepped down as chairman of Mousehole AFC after six years at the helm.

Heywood took over the Seagulls hotseat in 2018 with the club playing in the South West Peninsula League Division One West at Step 7.

Now, after unprecedented success at Trungle Parc, Heywood has led the club to the Southern League at Step 4 – only the second Cornish club ever to do so.

Handing over the reins to Billy Jacka, Mousehole's award-winning groundsman, Heywood said: "On reflection, it's now time for someone else to take the helm and help drive the club towards further success."

SMITH'S BIG SHOW WITH RAMS RAID

ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST

By Jon Couch

RAMSGATE boss Ben Smith has made a huge show of intent by completing an impressive quartet of signings.

Smith bizarrely returned to the Rams hot-seat a fortnight ago, just weeks after standing down following the club's painful play-off semi-final defeat to Chichester City, having led the Isthmian South East Division for long spells.

And he's clearly got title aspirations after adding former National League duo Joe Ellul and Roarie Deacon to the ranks.

Experienced Ellul, 35, the former Braintree Town and Maidstone centre-back, is back for a second spell with the Rams, arriving from Welling United, after a season away at Sittingbourne, while ex-Sutton United winger Deacon, 32, joins from Havant & Waterlooville, via a loan spell at Dulwich Hamlet.

Smith has also landed former Southend midfielder Lewis Gard, from Tonbridge Angels, and ex-Maidstone and Herne Bay winger Tushaun Tyreece-Walters, who arrives from Hastings United.



STAR TURN: Ramsgate's new signing Roarie Deacon, left, in action for Dundee against Celtic's Deryck Boyata PICTURE: Alamy

Jacques jumps at Real chance



MANAGER Rob Sinclair is backing new signing Jacques Kpohomouh to be a big hit at Real Bedford.

The 27-year-old centre-back has joined the ambitious Southern Division One Central new boys from Beaconsfield Town having previously turned out for Faversham Town, Hemel Hempstead Town and Potters Bar Town.

"Jacques is a great name to bring into the side," Sinclair said. "His experience and presence on the pitch will certainly help solidify our defensive ranks."

Kpohomouh added: "I know Rob well and the style of football he encourages here is brilliant to be a part of."

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND IT'S BEEN AND JUST

IN SAFE HANDS: Stuart Coburn has earned legendary status at Altrincham

PICTURE: Neil Brockman/JMP



STUART Coburn celebrates his testimonial this afternoon – and if anyone has earned a day in the limelight, it's Altrincham's legendary stopper.

The 48-year-old, dubbed England's No.1 by supporters, clocked up an incredible 689 appearances across two spells at Moss Lane, a club record that will surely never be surpassed.

Eight years after injury forced him to hang up his gloves, Coburn will be back at his spiritual home, joined by Alty legends from the promotion winning sides of 2005 and 2014.

To mark the occasion, we asked Coburn to look back on a career that began all the way back in 1994, starting with a canny chairman at lowly Irlam Town and ending 22 years later on a heart-breaking summer's day in Dover...

FIRST CLUB

Irlam Town, in about 1994-95. It was North West Counties Division 2, so it would probably be about Step 5 now.

I played on a Sunday and one of the managers of my team took over at Irlam. He invited a few of us down and basically filled the team full of young lads. We finished bottom of the league – I think we won two or three games out of 42.

You got a tenner if you won, and nobody got paid otherwise. But the chairman used to shake my hand and put £30 in it. He knew I'd had trials at Rochdale and he wanted to keep me sweet, hoping someone would come in for me.

BEST MANAGER

It's got to be Graham Heathcote. He was my manager for the majority of my time at Altrincham and I always got on really well with him. He's managing one of the teams today.

Just a top, top guy. Miserable as sin when we got beat but very funny as well. I remember when we



By CHRIS DUNLAVY

played Luton on the first day of the season and 20 minutes before kick-off he's in the changing room doing this shopping trolley dance he learned on holiday.

We came in 1-0 down at half-time and he was like 'What, do you think you're still on holiday or something? You're not taking this seriously'.

We were all looking at him thinking 'You were dancing around an hour ago'. He went from hot to cold and vice versa so quickly but he was a really great guy.

BEST TEAMMATE

Colin Little, the former Crewe centre-forward. Just class. We were a struggling team, and he'd get 20-plus goals every single season.

I remember we played Weymouth one day and I'd put a ball up in the air that came down with snow on. He took it in one, chipped it over a lad's head and volleyed it in. I was down the other end just going 'Wow'.

He lived and breathed football. You'd get on the bus after playing someone and all you wanted was to chill out. But he'd sit there and talk through the whole 90 minutes of the game. He used to analyse everything.

He's a coach at Man United now and even Marcus Rashford has referenced him in interviews, saying how influential he'd been working on his finishing.

ON THE UP: Altrincham celebrate promotion to Non-League's top flight in 2014

PICTURE: James Boylis



BEST MANAGER: Graham Heathcote

FIRST PROMOTION

With Trafford, from the North West Counties in about 1996-97. I was probably the youngest player and we had a lot of older lads who looked after you.

The craic there was a different level.

Everybody went to the bar after games and you'd stay all night having a laugh and a drink. I was on about £60-a-week and pretty much all of it went straight back to the club!

FUNNIEST PLAYER

There've been a few but one who always springs to mind is Gary Scott, who'll be playing in the game today.

He was always cracking jokes, always messing about.



CLASS ACT: Colin Little sparkled for Altrincham

Stuart Coburn Testimonial

(Supporting the Darby Rimmer MND Foundation)

ALTRINCHAM 2005 XI V ALTRINCHAM 2014 XI

Today, 3.30pm at The J. Davidson Stadium

Admission: £5 adults, £2 under-18s, Free for under-5s

THE UGLY: STUART COBURN

THRILLS, GLORY A GREAT CRAIC!



a lovely place – nice pitch, decent crowd. But it just gave me a sinking feeling.

TOUGHEST OPPONENT

This is someone who probably gets mentioned a lot of times, but I'd say Richard Brodie, pictured below, the former York City and Crawley striker.

He was a really nice lad off the pitch, but he was the biggest cheat you can imagine. He never stopped moaning. He'd fall over if you blew on him. He'd leave one on the centre-halves.

We used to have a player at Alty, Kyle Perry, and he was exactly the same. Built like a barn door but if anyone touched him, he'd go down like he'd been shot.

When you saw Brodes' name on the teamsheet you just knew that he'd rub you up the wrong way. I think he'd just do anything to win, that was the thing.

FAVOURITE PLACE TO GO

I'm a Man United fan and I played at Old Trafford in a cup final for Trafford, so that was a dream come true. Wembley was on the bucket list but I never quite made it, despite coming close with Alty a couple of times.

Otherwise I'd say Nene Park, the old Rushden & Diamonds ground. It was brand new, absolutely state of the art. It was a lovely one to visit. And though I only played there once, Bristol Rovers was a proper Football League ground with a great atmosphere. It was the type of place where the fans would have a bit of craic with you and you could give some back and everybody took it in good spirit.

AMBITION

As far as football goes, I'm done. What's happening at the weekend will be a great moment but that's it for me. I'll still play a bit of five-a-side but I don't do coaching and don't have any real aspirations on that side. It's really just about watching my lads on a weekend now.

He was never down. Even if you got beat, he'd be exactly the same.

You couldn't publish some of the stuff he did but I remember when Mark Ward was manager and he told us on New Year's Eve that the game was off. Everyone was like 'Right, we're going out'.

Next morning, 10am, everyone got a message saying the snow had melted and the game was back on. Someone had seen Scotty at 6am dressed as a fairy and when we got there he was sat in the corner shivering, still drunk.

FUNNIEST INCIDENT

It's not so much funny as surreal. We were going for the play-offs in 2005 and in the very last game we played at Hucknall. Harrogate, who were also going for the play-offs, needed to better our result against Southport, who had already won the league.

The guy on the tannoy at Hucknall kept announcing the scores and after 20 minutes it was 4-0 to Southport, so we knew we'd done it. Inevitably, we got beat 5-2.

Graham Heathcote abso-

lutely lost his head at us and ended up getting sent off. He was walking down the tunnel screaming insults, going 'What are you f***ing lot doing?' and effing and jeffing.

Scotty and some of the other lads then started giving him some back. In the midst of all this mayhem, the guy is still on the tannoy going 'Southport 6, Harrogate 0'

and you're just stood on the pitch thinking 'What is going on here?'.

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT

Having the all-time appearance record for Altrincham. It took me 18 years to achieve that and it probably won't ever get beaten.

To play that many games over a career would be good but to have done it for Altrin-

cham, especially being a local lad – nothing tops that.

LOWEST MOMENT

That's got to be when I tore my achilles at Dover. I knew it was going to be my last year at Altrincham and I thought 'I'll get to the end of the season, do my waving and walk off the pitch and that will be that – mic dropped'.

Then we went to Dover. It

was only a couple of weeks into the season, the hottest day you can possibly imagine.

I felt something pop and I knew what had happened instantly because one of the lads had described when it happened to him. I knew I was done. To finish like that was horrible but the recovery and the rehab was worse. It took so much out of me.

TOUGHEST PLACE TO GO

Woking and Dover. Dover, I'd only been there twice before and on both occasions I'd been taken all the way down only to be told I wasn't playing. Then when I finally did, it finished my career.

Similarly with Woking. I did my groin there about three times and only won once in god knows how many attempts. It was



FAVOURITE PLACE TO GO: Nene Park





FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2024-25

PRIZE MONEY 2024-25
OVERALL WINNER
£300!
2ND £150, 3RD £75,
BOTTOM £150

MANAGER OF THE MONTH
1ST £25, 2ND £10,
3RD £5, BOTTOM £10

WELCOME to the second season of Fantasy Football League. I am really pleased to announce that moving into this second season the competition has been adopted by *The Football League Paper*. It will cost you only £5 to enter and that for the whole of the 2024/25 season. The FFL 2024/25 entry deadline will be Noon on Saturday, August 31, 2024. Fantasy Football League is based on the very successful Fantasy Non-League competition that I have run in *The Non-League Paper* for over 20 years.

You will be able to view your teams' progress throughout the season in *The Football League Paper* and on my website with weekly updates on either Saturday evening or Sunday morning. My website can be found at <https://iw-fantasyfootball.yolasite.com/>

This season I am introducing the EARLY ENTRY BONUS into the game. Those of you who play the Fantasy Non-League competition will be very familiar with this concept.

So, how does the Early Entry Bonus work? Well, if you are brave enough to enter the competition before NOON on Saturday, August 10, 2024 you will receive an EARLY ENTRY BONUS of 500 points. The game starts on that Saturday and all players start accumulating points from that Saturday, August 10 2024 whether they have entered before the start of the season or just before the deadline on August 31, 2024. Hence the 500pts if you enter before a ball is kicked.

I still get emails and calls from Fantasy Non-League players commenting

on the fact that we allow people to enter the competition nearly four weeks into the season. The reason for this is that *The FLP* does not appear until Sunday August 11, 2024. Ideally, it would be better to start the competition before the season starts but if we did, we would miss a lot of possible players. My normal answer to everyone that asks this question is everyone can either put their entry in before the season starts or before the deadline at the end of August 2024.

In fact, I know that many players in Fantasy Non-League enter at least two teams – one before the season starts and one before the August 31 deadline when they have had a chance to study the form of the first three weeks or so of the season.

There will be Manager of the Month awards throughout the season. The top three teams and the bottom team each month will receive a cash prize. In total, there will be eight Manager of the Month awards with the last one being April 2025. The first Manager of the Month will be September 2024.

At the End of the Season there will be cash prizes for the top three places and a prize which is personally my favourite, the prize for finishing in bottom spot, so why not enter two teams – one to win it and one to lose it. I have discovered in Fantasy Non-League that it is in fact harder to finish bottom than it is to finish in first place.

THE RULES FOR FFL 2024/25

(Please read these very carefully). You will need to choose four teams from each of the six leagues, which will give you a total of 24 teams. You must also pick 5 FFL JOKER TEAMS from the 24 teams you have already picked. Those five teams will receive double points throughout the season. That will include all bonuses awarded during the season. It will also include the End of Season bonuses (this only applies if you keep your FFL Jokers for the whole of the season). The way to show your 5 jokers on the entry form is to place a "J" instead of a tick Remember the FFL Joker teams must be teams you have already picked.

Also, if you wish you can pick five substitute teams, but these five teams must be on your FFL 2024/25 Entry Form. (More on the substitutes later in this season's rules).

POINTS ALLOCATION, IN ALL THE SIX LEAGUES

LEAGUE & CUP GAMES

Home win = 10pts + goals

Away win = 20pts + goals

Home Draw = 2pt + goals

Away Draw = 4pts + goals

Home Defeat = -10pts

Away Defeat = -5pts

Every goal scored = 1pt (This counts if your team wins, draws or loses)

Every goal conceded (Win & Defeat only) -1pt.

Goal Bonus Points = 5pts (This is awarded if your teams score 4 or more goals).

Clean Sheet Bonus = 5pts (This is awarded for both wins and 0-0 draws). Concede 4 goals = -5pts (This does not apply to drawn games).

(Two-legged ties count as two separate games. Cup replays that go to penalties. The penalties are only used to decide the winner. No points are awarded for the penalties scored).

BONUS POINTS FOR REACHING VARIOUS ROUNDS IN EACH CUP COMPETITION

For reaching the FA Cup 1st round proper and each round beyond = 25pts. (This only applies for the National League, National North & South). For reaching the FA Cup 3rd round proper and each round beyond = 25pts. (This applies to all the leagues expect the Championship).

For reaching the Quarter-finals and each round beyond in all the cups that are involved in the competition which are listed below = 25pts. (This applies to all six leagues in the FFL 2024/25 Season).

LEAGUE LEADERS & BOTTOM CLUB BONUS

At the end of each month up to and including April 2025, the top three teams leading each of the six leagues will be awarded 30pts, 15pts & 7pts respectively. The bottom three teams of

the six leagues will be awarded -30pts, -15pts & -7pts respectively. (Please remember, and this is important, these bonus points will only count towards the main FFL season total and not the Manager of the Month points).

MANAGER OF THE MONTH BONUS POINTS

Each month the top three best performing teams for each individual month in each of the six leagues will be awarded 30pts, 15pts & 7pts respectively. The bottom worst performing three teams each month will receive -30pts, -15pts & -7pts respectively (These bonus points only count in the Manager of the Month calculations).

PLAY-OFF GAMES

The actual Play-Off games themselves will be awarded points as if they were league games. The Play-Off Final winners will be awarded 50pts for gaining promotion. (These points will be awarded at the end of the season).

END OF SEASON BONUS POINTS

(These points will be awarded at the end of the FFL Season in May 2025). All League Champions will receive 250pts for winning their respective leagues. Second place will get 125pts and third place will receive 60pts.

The bottom team in each league at the end of the season's FFL will be awarded -250pts. Second from bottom -125pts and third from bottom -60pts.

Cup Winners will receive 250pts for the FA Cup & League Cup and 150pts for the other Cups. Play-Off Winners will receive 50pts.

Remember, if your FFL Joker team get these bonuses they will be doubled. For example, a league winner picked in August 2024 at the start of the FFL Season will win you 500pts.

Substituted teams will be awarded half the End of Season bonus points & the full Play-Off Winners bonus.

The following Leagues and Cup competitions will be involved in this season's Fantasy Football League

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

FA Cup & EFL Cup

LEAGUE ONE

FA Cup, EFL Cup & EFL Trophy

LEAGUE TWO

FA Cup, EFL Cup & EFL Trophy

NATIONAL LEAGUE

FA Cup and FA Trophy

NATIONAL NORTH

FA Cup and FA Trophy

NATIONAL SOUTH

FA Cup and FA Trophy

USE OF SUBSTITUTIONS

As stated above, you can select five substitutes on your FFL 2024/25 Entry Form and out of those five substitutes you can use all five substitutes. There will be only one substitution window and that will be during the month of December 2024 with your selected changes taking effect from January 1, 2025. Details on how to use your substitutions will be released nearer the time during the month of November 2024. Please also note you can change your FFL Joker Teams on January 1, 2025 if you so wish, but this will count as one of your Substitutions.

MY FANTASY WEBSITE - FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2024/25
iwfantasyfootball.yolasite.com

2024/25 FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE ENTRY FORM

THE WAY TO SHOW YOUR 5 JOKERS ON THE ENTRY FORM IS TO PLACE A "J" INSTEAD OF A TICK

THE CHAMPIONSHIP			LEAGUE ONE			LEAGUE TWO			NATIONAL PREMIER			NATIONAL NORTH			NATIONAL SOUTH		
Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick	Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick	Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick	Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick	Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick	Pick Four Teams	Code	Tick
BLACKBURN R	1		BARNLEY	25		ACCRINGTON STANLEY	49		AFC FYLDE	73		ALFRETON TOWN	97		AVELEY	121	
BRISTOL CITY	2		BIRMINGHAM CITY	26		AFC WIMBLEDON	50		ALDERSHOT TOWN	74		BRACKLEY TOWN	98		BATH CITY	122	
BURNLEY FC	3		BLACKPOOL	27		BARROW	51		ALTRINCHAM	75		BUXTON FC	99		BOREHAM WOOD	123	
CARDIFF CITY	4		BOLTON WANDERERS	28		BRADFORD CITY	52		BATNET FC	76		CHESTER FC	100		CHELMSFORD CITY	124	
COVENTRY CITY	5		BRISTOL ROVERS	29		BROMLEY FC	53		BOSTON UTD	77		CHORLEY	101		CHESHAM UTD	125	
DERBY COUNTY	6		BURTON ALBION	30		CARLISLE UTD	54		BRAINTREE TOWN	78		CURZON ASHTON	102		CHIPPENHAM TOWN	126	
HULL CITY	7		CAMBRIDGE UTD	31		CHELTENHAM TOWN	55		DAGENHAM & RED	79		DARLINGTON FC 1883	103		DORKING WANDERERS	127	
LEEDS UTD	8		CHARLTON ATH	32		CHESTERFIELD	56		EASTLEIGH	80		FARSLEY CELTIC	104		EASTBOURNE BOR	128	
LUTON TOWN	9		CRAWLEY TOWN	33		COLCHESTER UTD	57		EBBSFLEET UTD	81		HEREFORD FC	105		ENFIELD TOWN	129	
MIDDLESBOROUGH	10		EXETER CITY	34		CREWE ALEXANDRA	58		FC HALIFAX TOWN	82		KIDDERMINSTER HARRIERS	106		FARNBOROUGH	130	
MILLWALL	11		HUDDERSFIELD TOWN	35		DONCASTER ROVERS	59		FOREST GREEN ROVERS	83		KING'S LYNN TOWN	107		HAMPTON & RICH	131	
NORWICH CITY	12		LEYTON ORIENT	36		FLEETWOOD TOWN	60		GATESHEAD FC	84		LEAMINGTON	108		HEMEL HEMPSTEAD T	132	
OXFORD UTD	13		LINCOLN CITY	37		GILLINGHAM	61		HARTLEPOOL UTD	85		MARINE	109		HORNCHURCH	133	
PLYMOUTH ARGYLE	14		MANSFIELD TOWN	38		GRIMSBY TOWN	62		MAIDENHEAD UTD	86		NEEDHAM MARKET	110		MAIDSTONE UTD	134	
PORTSMOUTH	15		NORTHAMPTON TOWN	39		HARROGATE T	63		OLDHAM ATHLETIC	87		OXFORD CITY	111		SALISBURY FC	135	
PRESTON N.E.	16		PETERBOROUGH UTD	40		MK DONS	64		ROCHDALE	88		PETERBOROUGH SPORTS	112		SLOUGH TOWN	136	
Q.P.R.	17		READING	41		MORECAMBE	65		SOLIHULL MOORS	89		RADCLIFFE FC	113		ST ALBANS CITY	137	
SHEFFIELD UTD	18		ROTHERHAM UTD	42		NEWPORT COUNTY	66		SOUTHEND UNITED	90		RUSHALL OLYMPIC	114		TONBRIDGE ANGELS	138	
SHEFFIELD WED	19		SHREWSBURY TOWN	43		NOTTS COUNTY	67		SUTTON UTD	91		SCARBOROUGH ATHLETIC	115		TORQUAY UTD	139	
STOKE CITY	20		STEVENAGE	44		PORT VALE	68		TAMWORTH	92		SCUNTHORPE UTD	116		TRURO CITY	140	
SUNDERLAND	21		STOCKPORT COUNTY	45		SALFORD CITY	69		WEALDSTONE	93		SOUTH SHIELDS	117		WELLING UTD	141	
SWANSEA CITY	22		WIGAN ATHLETIC	46		SWINDON TOWN	70		WOKING	94		SOUTHPORT	118		WESTON-SUPER-MARE	142	
WATFORD	23		WREXHAM FC	47		TRANMERE R	71		YEOVIL TOWN	95		SPENNYMOOR TOWN	119		WEYMOUTH	143	
WEST BROMWICH	24		WYCOMBE WANDERERS	48		WALSALL	72		YORK CITY	96		WARRINGTON TOWN	120		WORTHING	144	

FFL Helpdesk – iwfantasy@btinternet.com Phone Number – 07909993854

2024/25 FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE ENTRY FORM

Name:
 Address:
 Postcode:
 Telephone:
 Email Address:
 Team Name (max 15 letters)

ONLY £5 PER ENTRY
 Payment by Cheques payable to *The League Paper Ltd* or by Postal Order
 Please tick here if you do not want to be contacted by The NLP

My five substitute clubs are:
 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Deadline for entry is Saturday, August 31, 2024. The game starts on Saturday, August 10, 2024. Entries before the season starts get 500 bonus points.

Please send form to: Fantasy Football League, The Football League Paper, Tuition House, St George's Road, Wimbledon SW19 4EU

ENTER ONLINE: www.theleaguepaper.com/fantasy-football-league

RESULTS SERVICE

STEP FIVE

THURLOW NUNN EASTERN CO'S LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

Brantham Athletic 0 Thetford Town 2, Gt Yarmouth Town 2 Long Melford 0, Hadleigh United 2 Dereham Town 0, Heacham 1 Walsham le Willows 2, Kirkley & Pakfield 2 Ely City 0, Mulbarton Wanderers 2 Woodbridge Town 0, Soham Town Rgrs 2 Harleston Town 2

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gt Yarmouth Town	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Hadleigh United	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Kirkley & Pakfield	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Mulbarton Wanderers	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Thetford Town	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Walsham le Willows	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Harleston Town	1	0	1	2	2	1	
Soham Town Rgrs	1	0	1	2	2	1	
Cornard United	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Downham Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Fakenham Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Lakenheath	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sheringham	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Stowmarket Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Heacham	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Brantham Athletic	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Dereham Town	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Ely City	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Long Melford	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Woodbridge Town	1	0	1	2	0	0	

ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE

Benfleet 0 Woodford Town 1, Buckhurst Hill 2 Little Oakley 2, FC Clacton 0 Barking 3, Frenford 2 Sawbridgeworth Town 0, Hullbridge Sports 5 Stansted 0, Romford 4 Stanway Rovers 1, Saffron W'den Town 0 Athletic Newham 1, Takeley 1 Ilford 0, West Essex 0 Great Wakering 2, White Ensign 1 Halstead Town 1

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hullbridge Sports	1	0	0	5	0	3	
Romford	1	0	0	4	1	3	
Barking	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Frenford	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Great Wakering	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Athletic Newham	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Takeley	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Woodford Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Buckhurst Hill	1	0	1	2	2	1	
Little Oakley	1	0	1	2	2	1	
Halstead Town	1	0	1	1	1	1	
White Ensign	1	0	1	1	1	1	
Benfleet	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Ilford	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Saffron W'den Town	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Sawbridgeworth Town	1	0	1	0	2	0	
West Essex	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Stanway Rovers	1	0	1	1	4	0	
FC Clacton	1	0	1	0	3	0	
Stansted	1	0	1	0	5	0	

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

Barnoldswick Town 3 Lower Breck 3, Cheadle Town 2 Prestwich Heys 1, FC Isle of Man 1 Chadderton 1, FC St Helens 3 Abbey Hey 0, Irlam 1 Stockport Town 2, Longridge Town 1 Burscough 0, Padinhm 2 Litherland REMYCA 2, Pilkington 2 Ramsbottom Utd 2, South Liverpool 0 Charnock Rovers 0, Squires Gate 4 Bury 4, West Didsbury 3 Glossop North End 0

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC St Helens	1	0	0	3	0	3	
West Didsbury	1	0	0	3	0	3	
FC Liverpool	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Cheadle Town	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Stockport Town	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Longridge Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Bury	1	0	1	0	4	1	
Squires Gate	1	0	1	0	4	1	
Barnoldswick Town	1	0	1	0	3	1	
Lower Breck	1	0	1	0	3	1	
Litherland REMYCA	1	0	1	0	2	1	
Padinhm	1	0	1	0	2	1	
Pilkington	1	0	1	0	2	1	
Ramsbottom Utd	1	0	1	0	2	1	
Charnock Rovers	1	0	1	0	0	1	
South Liverpool	1	0	1	0	0	1	
Chadderton	0	0	0	0	0	0	
FC Isle of Man	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Colne	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Irlam	1	0	1	2	0	0	
Prestwich Heys	1	0	1	1	2	0	
Burscough	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Abbey Hey	1	0	1	0	3	0	
Glossop North End	1	0	1	0	3	0	

TOOLSTATION NORTHERN CO'S EAST LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

Barton Town 0 Albion Sports 0, Eccleshill United 2 Rossington Main 2, Frickley Athletic 2 Pickering Town 4, Knarsborough Town 0 Hallam 0, Parkgate 3 Goole 0, Tadcaster Albion 3 Bottesford Town 0, Thackley 2 Beverley Town 1, Winterton Rangers 0 Handsworth 2

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Goalcar United	1	0	0	4	1	3	
Parkgate	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Silsden	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Tadcaster Albion	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Pickering Town	1	0	0	4	2	3	
Handsworth	1	0	0	2	0	3	

Thackley	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Eccleshill United	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Rossington Main	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Albion Sports -3	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Barton Town	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Hallam	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Knarsborough Town	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Beverley Town	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Frickley Athletic	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Winterton Rangers	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Penistone Church	1	0	0	1	1	4	
Bottesford Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Campton	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Goole	1	0	0	1	0	3	

EBAC NORTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

Blyth Town 4 Newcastle Benfield 2, Boro Rangers 2 Crook Town 0, Easington Colliery 2 North Shields 2, Newcastle Blue Star 1 Marse United 2, Northallerton Town 1 Guisborough Town 3, Penrith 3 Birtley Town 0, Redcar Athletic 4 Kendal Town 0, Tow Law Town 0 Carlisle City 2, West Allotment Celtic 0 Shildon 1, West Auckland Town 3 Seaham Red Star 0, Whitley Bay 2 Whickham 1

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Redcar Athletic	1	0	0	4	0	3	
Penrith	1	0	0	3	0	3	
West Auckland Town	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Blyth Town	1	0	0	4	2	3	
Guisborough Town	1	0	0	3	1	3	
Boro Rangers	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Carlisle City	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Marse United	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Whitley Bay	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Shildon	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Easington Colliery	1	0	0	1	0	2	
North Shields	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Newcastle Blue Star	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Whickham	1	0	0	1	0	2	
West Allotment Celtic	1	0	0	1	0	0	
N'castle Benfield	1	0	0	1	0	4	
Northallerton Town	1	0	0	1	1	0	
Crook Town	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Tow Law Town	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Birtley Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	

PREMIER SPORTS SOUTHERN COMBINATION PREMIER DIVISION

Crowborough Ath. 0 Petersfield Town 3, Hassocks 1 Saltean United 0, Hayward Hth Town 2 Eastbourne United 0, Horsham YMCA 5 Little Common 0, Loxwood 2 Bexhill United 2, Midhurst/Easebourne 3 Lingfield 1, Newhaven 2 AFC Vardeanians 1, Paghams 5 Crawley Down G'wick 0, Roffey 0 Wick 0, Shoreham 0 Peacehaven/T'cmbe 2

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horsham YMCA	1	0	0	5	0	3	
Paghams	1	0	0	5	0	3	
Petersfield Town	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Midhurst/Easebourne	1	0	0	3	1	3	
Hayward Hth Town	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Peacehaven/T'cmbe	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Newhaven	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Hassocks	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Bexhill United	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Loxwood	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Roffey	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Wick	1	0	0	0	0	1	
AFC Vardeanians	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Saltean United	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Lingfield	1	0	0	1	3	0	
Eastbourne United	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Shoreham	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Crowborough Ath.	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Crawley Down G'wick	1	0	0	1	0	5	
Little Common	1	0	0	1	0	5	

PRESENCE & CO. SOUTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

Bearsted 1 Stansfeld 1, Corinthian 1 Lordswood 2, Faversham Town 4 Glebe 0, Fisher 0 Punjab United 1, Hollands & Blair 2 Holmesdale 2, Kennington 0 Tunbridge Wells 2, Rushall 1 Larkfield New Hythe 2, Snodland Town 2 Erith & Belvedere 2, Sutton Athletic 3 Whitstable Town 3, VCD Athletic 1 Lydd Town 0

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Faversham Town	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Tunbridge Wells	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Larkfield New Hythe	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Lordswood	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Punjab United	1	0	0	1	0	3	
VCD Athletic	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Sutton Athletic	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Whitstable Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Erith & Belvedere	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Hollands & Blair	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Holmesdale	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Snodland Town	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Bearsted	1	0	0	1	0	1	
Stansfeld	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Corinthian	1	0	0	1	1	0	
Rushall	1	0	0	1	1	0	
Fisher	1	0	0	1	0	1	
Lydd Town	1	0	0	1	0	1	
Kennington	1	0	0	1	0	2	
Glebe	1	0	0	1	0	4	

SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

Aylesbury Vale 0 Arlesey Town 5, Baldock Town 1 Winslow United 2, Biggleswade United 1 Tring

Athletic 1, Cockfosters 0 Kempston Rovers 2, Dunstable Town 1 Colney Heath 2, FC Romania 0 Milton Keynes Irish 3, London Lions 2 Potton United 0, Shefford & Campton 2 Harpenden Town 3, Wormley Rovers 1 Crawley Green 1

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arlesey Town	1	0	0	5	0	3	
Milton Keynes Irish	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Kempston Rovers	1	0	0	2	0	3	
London Lions	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Harpenden Town	1	0	0	2	0	3	
Colney Heath	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Winslow United	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Biggleswade United	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Crawley Green	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Tring Athletic	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Wormley Rovers	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Shefford & Campton	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Baldock Town	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Dunstable Town	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Cockfosters	1	0	0	1	2	0	
Potton United	1	0	0	1	2	0	
FC Romania	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Aylesbury Vale	1	0	0	1	0	5	

GCE HIRE FLEET UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

North: Belper United 2 Melton Town 2, Bourne Town 1 AFC Mansfield 2, Gresley Rovers 1 Boston Town 2, Harrowby United 1 Eastwood Community 1, Heanor Town 2 Skegness Town 1, Kimberley MW 6 Deeping Rangers 1, Newark Town 1 Ashby Ivanhoe 1, Shirebrook Town 1 Newark/Sherwood 1, Seaford Town 1 Hucknall Town 0, Wisbech Town 0 Lincoln United 1

(table at July 27)	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kimberley MW	1	0	0	6	1	3	
AFC Mansfield	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Boston Town	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Heanor Town -3	1	0	0	2	1	3	
Lincoln United	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Seaford Town	1	0	0	1	0	3	
Belper United	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Melton Town	1	0	0	2	2	1	
Ashby Ivanhoe	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Newark Town	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Newark/Sherwood	1	0	0	1	1	1	
Shirebrook Town	1	0	0	1	1	1	

HARRISON: WE'VE STILL GOT PLENTY TO PLAY FOR

THEIR Champions League dreams may be hanging by a thread after a 5-0 hammering in Budapest, but Welsh champions The New Saints still believe there is plenty to play for in their second qualifying round, second leg clash with Ferencvaros at Park Hall on Tuesday night (ko 7pm).

The Hungarian champions of the past six years proved too strong on the night and in front of a near capacity 23,700 crowd at the Groupama Arena last week they gave their new head coach Pascal Jansen plenty to smile about.

But even with another defeat on Tuesday night the TNS European adventure won't be over. Having won their first qualifying round they will get a shot at the second tier Europa League, meeting either either Santa Coloma, from Andorra, or Danish champions FC Midtjylland on August 8 and 15.

"We have to approach the second leg as if the first game hadn't happened. We want to go on and win the game and we have a very good record at Park Hall," said TNS boss Craig Harrison.

"It will take a huge effort to overturn a five goal deficit and actually go through but that won't stop us from trying to win the game. A win would be good for confidence and for Uefa co-efficiency points.

"It was a tough one to take because nobody likes getting beaten by five goals. I'm disappointed at the result but not by the attitude and application the players showed right to the end.

"They came at us really hard in the opening half-hour because they had a big crowd and it was their new manager's first game in charge. But they showed us a lot of respect by picking their strongest team available."

That team included

WELSH VALE-UP

By Rob Cole

one of Hungary's Euro 2024 goalkeepers in Denes Dibusz and their two wide men, 49 times capped Mali international Adama Traore and the 24-year-old Brazilian Marquinios, were a class apart.

Three goals in 10 minutes in the first half, two from the outstanding Traore and another from Kristoffer Zachariassen, gave the home side a massive boost and an impregnable lead.

"We had a few spells where we were brave and looked after the ball, but with the ferocity and intensity of the way they came at us it made it really tough," admitted Harrison.

"But we were always in the game and working hard, and there wasn't one second where we threw in the towel. We had a couple of opportunities and for me there was a stonewall penalty.

"At 3-0 we hit the cross bar and then they went on to score the next goal."

Skipper Danny Redmond admitted "there are plenty of things to learn from to take into the next leg" and that "we want to give a good account of ourselves back at home". Even so, it is going to be another tough night at the office.

The same is true for Euro new boys Caernarfon Town, who were beaten 6-0 by Legia Warsaw in the Polish capital in their second qualifying round Europa Conference League tie.

Trailing 2-0 at the break in a completely empty stadium, due to a Uefa ban on Legia fans, the Cofis went on to concede four more in the second half with Marc Gual grabbing a hat-trick.

The teams meet again in the second leg at Bangor's Nantporth venue on Thurs-

PRE-SEASON FIXTURES

SUNDAY, JULY 28

(ko 3pm unless stated)

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier South: Rugby Borough v Leicester Nivana (ko 3.30pm)

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One: Coalville Town v Southwell City (ko 12pm)

FRIENDLIES: Aylesbury United v MK Dons (at Chesham United FC), Eastleigh v Swindon Town (ko 1pm), Newcastle Town v Stoke City U21

MONDAY, JULY 29

(ko 3pm unless stated)

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Barkingside v St Margaretsbury

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Stockport Town v West Didsbury & Chorlton

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One North: Daisy Hill v Maine Road, Route One Rovers v Bacup Borough (ko 8pm)

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Abbey Hulton United v Stafford Town, Fluncorn Town v Cheadle Heath Nomads

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier South: Hinckley AFC v Aylestone Park

FRIENDLIES: Cullumpton Rangers v Willand Rovers (ko 7.30pm), Redbridge v Newbury Forest, Yate Town v Tiverton Town

TUESDAY, JULY 30

(ko 7.45pm unless stated)

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Comard United v Hadleigh United, Dereham Town v Mulbarton Wanderers, Ely City v Downham Town, Fakenham Town v Heacham, Lakenheath v Soham Town Rangers, Long Melford v Brantham Athletic, Thetford Town v Great Yarmouth Town, Walsham le Willows v Harleston Town, Woodbridge Town v Kirky & Pakefield

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One North: Diss Town v Leiston U23, Swaffham Town v Holbeach United, Wivenhoe Town v Harwich & Parkeston

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Dunmow Town v Hoddesdon Town, Rayleigh Town v Coggeshall Town

ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE Premier: Barking v Stanway Rovers, Benfleet v Ilford, Frenford v White Ensign, Great Wakering Rovers v Takeley, Halstead Town v Hullbridge Sports, Little Oakley v Stansted, Sawbridgeworth Town v Woodford Town, West Essex v FC Clacton

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Burscough v Squires Gate, Colne v Barnoldswick Town, Glossop North End v Chadderton, Irlam v FC Isle of Man, Longridge Town v Charnock Richard, Padinhm v Bury, Prestwich Heys v AFC Liverpool, Ramsbottom United v Abbey Hey

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One North: Ashton Athletic v Maghull, Ashton Town v Euxton Villa, Droylsden v Atherton LR

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Alscott Heath v Shawbury United, Alsager Town v New Mills, Stockport Georgians v Cammell Laird, Winsford United v Ashville, Wolverhampton SC v Market Drayton Town

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE Division One: Appleby Frodingham v Louth Town, Dronfield Town v Deane & District, Marske United v Crook Town (ko 7.45pm), Nostell MW v Armthorpe Welfare, Penrith v Seaham Red Star (ko 7.45pm), Selby Town v Club Thorne Colliery, Shelley v Maltby Main, Swallownest v Harrogate Railway, Wakefield AFC v Glasshoughton Welfare, Wombwell Town v Ilkley Town, Yorkshire Amateur v Athersley Recreation

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division One (ko 7.30pm): Kendal Town v Guisborough Town, Newcastle Benfield v Carlisle City, Newcastle Blue Star v Easington Colliery, Northallerton Town v West Allotment Celtic, Redcar Athletic v West Auckland Town, Tow Law Town v Shildon, Whickham v Blyth Town

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division Two: (ko 7.30pm): Alnwick Town v Billingham Synthonia (ko 7.45pm), Bedlington Terriers v Washington (ko 7.45pm), Chester-le-Street United v Prudhoe YC Seniors, Esh Winning v Chester-le-Street Town, FC Hartlepool v Boldon CA, Sunderland RCA v Billingham Town, Yarm & Eaglescliffe v Sunderland West End

SOUTHERN COMBINATION Premier: Crowborough Athletic v Eastbourne United, Hassocks v Bexhill United, Lingfield v Saltdean United, Loxwood v Shoreham, Midhurst & Easebourne v Wick, Petersfield Town v Pagham, Roffey v Peacehaven & Telscombe (ko 7.30pm)

SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE Premier Division: Arlesley Town v FC Romania, Cockfosters v Crawley Green, Colney Heath v Biggleswade United v Harpenden Town v Wormaly Rovers, Kempston Rovers v Aylesbury Vale Dynamos, Milton Keynes Irish v Sheffield Town & Camp-ton, Potton United v Baldock Town, Tring Athletic v London Lions, Winslow United v Dunstable Town

SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE Division One: Cranfield United v Eaton Socon

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier North: AFC Mansfield v Heanor Town, Eastwood CFC v Shirebrook Town (ko 8pm), Kimberley MW v Gresley Rovers, Lincoln United v Newark Town, Newark & Sherwood v Harrowby United

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier South: Bugbrooke St Michaels v Rugby Borough, Leicester Nivana v Lutterworth Town, March Town United v Godmanchester Rovers, Northampton Sileby Rangers v Easington Sports, St Neots Town v Newport Pagnell Town, Yaxley v Eynesbury Rovers

WESSEX LEAGUE Premier Division: AFC Portchester v US Portsmouth, Andover New Street v Laverstock & Ford, Baffins Milton Rovers v Millbrook, Brockenhurst v Christchurch, Downton v Wincanton Town, Fareham Town v Cowes Sports, Hamble Club v Blackfield & Langley

WESTERN LEAGUE Premier Division (ko 7.30pm): Barnstaple Town v Ivybridge Town (ko 7.45pm), Bridgwater United v Ilfracombe Town (ko 7.45pm), Nailsea & Tickenham v Wellington, Old-land Abbotonians v Portishead Town, Shepton Mallet v Clevedon Town, Street v Paulton Rovers (ko 7.45pm), Torpoint Athletic v Brixham

WESTERN LEAGUE Division One: Avonmouth v Wells City (ko 7.30pm), Bitton v Longwell Green Sports (ko 7.30pm), Caine Town v Sturminster Newton, Cheddar v Bristol Telephones, Devizes Town v Gillingham Town, Keynsham Town v Hallen, Mendip Broadwalk v Cribbs Res (ko 7.30pm), Odd Down v Shirehampton

ESSEX COUNTY CUP Final: Witham Town v Chelmsford City

FRIENDLIES: AFC Dunstable v Bedford Town, AFC Totton v Eastbourne Borough, Aldershot Town v Crawley Town, Ashington v Spennymoor Town, Ash United v Burnham, Ashington v Spennymoor Town (ko 7.30pm), Ashton United v FC Halifax Town, Atherton Collieries v Bamber Bridge, Aveley v Hashtag United, Avro v Rochdale, Barrow v AFC Flyde

Basford United v Long Eaton United, Bashley v Wimborne Town, Basildon United v Basildon Town, Beckenham Town v Lewes (ko 7.30pm), Bodmin Town v Torpoint Athletic XI (ko 7.30pm), Boldmere St Michaels v Bromsgrove Sporting

Boston United v Notts County, Bradford Park Avenue v Stalybridge Celtic, Brading Town v Newport (IOW), Braintree Town v Bromley, Broadbridge Heath v Charlton Athletic U23, Buckland Athletic v Yeovil Town (ko 7pm), Bury Town v AFC Sudbury, Camberley Town v Binfield, Canterbury City v Hythe Town (ko 7.30pm), Canvey Island v Tilbury, Chasetown v Stourbridge (ko 7pm), Chatham Town v Bromley, Chesham United v Watford, Chippenham Town v Eastleigh (ko 7.30pm), Chipstead v Three Bridges, Clarnfield v Gosport Borough, Clitheroe v Lancaster City, Corinthian-Casuals v Leatherhead, Cove v Eversley & California, Curzon Ashton v Altrincham, Downton v Mon-eyfields, Dunston UTS v Darlington (ko 7.30pm), East Grinstead Town v Cray Valley PM, Enfield Town v Billerica Town, Fareham Town v Havant & Waterlooville, Farnham Town v Bracknell Town, FC United v Farsley Celtic, Fleet Town v Badshot Lea, Folkestone Invicta v Maidstone United, Frome Town, v Bath City, Godalming Town v Met Police, Grays Athletic v Potters Bar Town, Guiseley v Barnsley XI, Hampton & Richmond Borough v Oxford City, Hamworthy United v Christchurch, Hanwell Town v QPR XI (ko 7.30pm), Harborough Town v Northampton Town XI, Harefield United v Uxbridge (ko 7.30pm), Haringey Borough v

Dulwich Hamlet, Harrow Borough v Leverstock Green, Hartlepool United v Scunthorpe United, Hayes & Yeading v St Albans City, Hendon v Boreham Wood (ko 7.30pm), Herne Bay v Gill-ingham XI, Hertford Town v Cheshunt, Horndean v Chichester City, Ilkeston Town v Mansfield Town (ko 7.30pm), Ipswich Wanderers v Henley, Kings Langley v Wealdstone (ko 7.30pm), Knaphill v Kingstorian, Larkhall Athletic v Dorchester Town (ko 7.30pm), Leiston v Colchester United XI (ko 7.30pm), Maidenhead United v AFC Wimbledon (ko 7.30pm), Malvern Town v Worcester City, Marine v Bootle (ko 7.30pm), Mildenhall Town v Needham Market, Newquay v Mousehole, Oxhey Jets v Northwood (ko 7.30pm), Pickering Town v Scarborough Athletic, Poole Town v Worthing, Rushall Olympic v Tamworth, Rushden & Higham United v Biggleswade FC, Salisbury v Winchester City, Sholing v AFC Portchester, South Normanton Athletic v Sherwood Colliery, Southport v Morecambe (ko 7.30pm), Spalding United v Macclesfield XI, Stotfold v Hitchin Town, Stour-bridge v Chasetown, Stourport Swifts v Redditch United, Tavistock v Callington Town (ko 7.30pm), Tonbridge Angels v Charlton Athletic, Tooting & Mitcham United v Raynes Park Vale, Torquay United v Exeter City (ko 7.30pm), Walthamstow v Walthamstow Res, Walton & Hersham v AFC Croydon Ath-letic (ko 7.30pm), Warrington Rylands v Salford City (ko 7.30pm), Warrington Town v Oldham Athletic, Welling United v Ebbsfleet United, Welwyn Garden City v Wingate & Finchley, Westfield v Farnborough, Weston-Super-Mare v Merthyr Town, Witton Albion v 1874 Northwich (ko 7.30pm), Worthington v Bolton Wanderers (ko 7.30pm), Worksop Town v Sheffield Wednesday, Wythenshawe Town v Macclesfield XI

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1
(ko 7.45pm unless stated)

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division Two: Newcastle University v Ryton & Craw-crook Albion

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2
(ko 7.45pm unless stated)

EMIRATES FA CUP Extra Qualifying round: Heaton Stannington v Easington Colliery, Great Yarmouth Town v Kirky & Pakefield, Spelthorne Sports v Burgess Hill Town, AFC Liverpool v Abbey Hey (8.00pm), Albion Sports v Trafford (8.00pm)

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Barkingside v Coggeshall Town, NW London v Cannons Wood

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division Two: Horden CW v Billingham Town

SOUTH WEST PENINSULA LEAGUE Premier East: Newton Abbot Spurs v Bovey Tracey

WESSEX LEAGUE Division One: Fawley v Verwood Town

FRIENDLIES: AFC Telford United v Tamworth, Bury Town v Leiston, Horsham v Three Bridges, Scunthorpe United v Chesterfield (ko 7.30pm), Sholing v Bashley

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

(ko 3pm unless stated)

EMIRATES FA CUP Extra Qualifying round: Crook Town v Mursley United, Consett v Redcar Athletic, West Auckland Town v Bishop Auckland, Newcastle Benfield v Knaresborough Town, Garforth Town v Northallerton Town, Kendal Town v Guisborough Town, Whickham v Carlisle City, Boro Rangers v West Allotment Celtic, Shildon v Ashington, Birtley Town v Bri-dlington Town, Tow Law Town v Blyth Town, North Shields v Newcastle Blue Star, Tadcaster Albion v Seaham Red Star, Penrith v Pickering Town, Colne v Mossley, Longridge Town v Cheadle Town, Sheffield v Nantwich Town, Ossett United v Widnes, Vauxhall Mo-tors v Eccleshill United, Wythenshawe Town v Chadderton, Whitechurch Alport v Irlam, Thackham v Frickley Athletic, Stocksbridge Park Steels v Prestwich Heys, West Didsbury & Chorlton v Bur-cough, Penistone Church v Charnock Richard, Ramsbottom United v Staly-bridge Celtic, Barnoldswick Town v Brighouse Town, Liversedge v Silsden, Campion v Parkgate, Padinhm v Golcar United, Wythenshawe v Pilkington, Northwich Victoria v Squires Gate, Handsworth v South Liverpool, Cong-leton Town v Bury, Stockport Town v 1874 Northwich, Litherland REMYCA v Glossop North End, Emley v FC St Hel-ens, Brocton v Tividale, Wolverhampton Casuals v Rugby Town, Lutterworth Town v Studley, Coventry Sphinx v Ashby Ivanhoe, OJM Black Country v Chasetown, Rugby Borough v Darlast-on Town, Kidsgrove Athletic v Pershore Town, AFC Wulfrunians v Athersone Town, Sporting Khalsa v Coventry United, Sutton Coldfield Town v Romulus, Hinckley AFC v Highgate United, Westfields v Daventry Town, Worcester Raiders v Stourport Swifts, Racing Club Warwick v Hednesford Town, Stone Old Alleynians v Bedworth United, Hanley Town v Boldmere St Mi-chaeels, Worcester City v Walsall Wood, Uxetoxer Town v Heanor Town, Shifnal Town v Belper United, Malvern Town v Hereford Pegasus, Sporting Club Inkberrow v Dudley Town, Evesham United v Newcastle Town, Colehill Town v Eastwood Community, Gresley Rovers v Lichfield City, Corby Town v AFC Rushden & Diamonds, Grimsby Borough v GNG Dady Town, Leicester Nivana v Northampton On Checks, Rossington Main v AFC Mansfield, Shirebrook Town v Deeping Rangers, Bourne Town v Aylestone Park, Yaxley v Godmanchester Rovers, Barton Town v Newark Town, Lincoln United v Goole, Melton Town v Harrowby United, Shepshed Dynamo v Winterton Rangers, Sherwood Colliery v Grantham Town, Kimberley Miners Welfare v Cleethorpes Town, Skegness Town v Newark & Sherwood United, Wellingborough Town v Sleaford Town, Bugbrooke St Michaels v Loughbor-ough Students, Northampton Sileby Rangers v Boston Town, Hucknall Town v Bottesford Town, Dereham Town v Wisbech Town, Ely City v Mulbarton Wanderers, Sheringham v Woodbridge Town, Harleston Town v Heacham, Wroxham v Walsham Le Willows, Thetford Town v Ipswich Wanderers, Stowmarket Town v Histon, Comard United v Fakenham

WESTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: AFC Croydon Athletic (ko 7.30pm), Warrington Rylands v Salford City (ko 7.30pm), Warrington Town v Oldham Athletic, Welling United v Ebbsfleet United, Welwyn Garden City v Wingate & Finchley, Westfield v Farnborough, Weston-Super-Mare v Merthyr Town, Witton Albion v 1874 Northwich (ko 7.30pm), Worthington v Bolton Wanderers (ko 7.30pm), Worksop Town v Sheffield Wednesday, Wythenshawe Town v Macclesfield XI

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31
(ko 7.45pm unless stated)

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One North: Gorleston Res v Dussindale & Helesdon, Stanway Peg-asus v Haverhill Borough, Whittlesey Athletic v FC Peterborough

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: AS London v Harlow Town, Basildon Town v Sou-thend Manor, FC Baresi v Brimsdown, Hackney Wick v Burnham Ramblers, Hutton v Newbury Forest, May & Baker v Enfield Borough

ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE Premier: Buckhurst Hill v Saffron Walden Town, Romford v Athletic Newham

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Cheadle Town v FC St Helens, Litherland REMYCA v Pilk-ington, South Liverpool v Lower Breck

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One North: AFC Blackpool v Thornton Cleveleys, Darwen FC v Skelmersdale United, Garstang v Holker Old Boys, Nelson v Steeton

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE Division One South: Barnton v Sand-bach United, Eccleshall v Foley Meir

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE Division One: South Leeds v Horbury Town, Worsborough Bridge v Brigg Town

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division One (ko 7.30pm): Boro Rangers v Whitley Bay, North Shields v Birtley Town

NORTHERN LEAGUE Division Two (ko 7.30pm): Horden CW v Darlington Town, Jarrow v Grangetown Boys Club, Thornaby v Redcar Town

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier North: Bourne Town v Wisbech Town, Hucknall Town v Belper United, Melton Town v Ashby Ivanhoe, Skegness Town v Boston Town

UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier South: Coventry United v Daventry Town

WESSEX LEAGUE Premier Division: Sherborne Town v Bournemouth

WESTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: St Blazey v Saltash United (ko 7.30pm)

WESTERN LEAGUE Division One: Cadbury Heath v AEK Boco, Warmis-ter Town v Hengrove Athletic

SOMERSET COUNTY CUP Final: Taunton Town v Brislington (ko 7.30pm, at Bath City FC)

FRIENDLIES: Alfreton Town v Grimsby Town (ko 7.30pm), Banbury United v MK Dons XI, Colliers Wood United v Frenches Athletic, Evesham United v Forest Green Rovers (ko 7pm), Hastings United v Brighton & Hove Albion U21, Havant & Waterlooville v Moneyfields, Harborough Town v Northampton Town XI, Harefield United v Uxbridge (ko 7.30pm), Wroxham v Boston United U23



GO FOR IT: TNS boss Craig Harrison has encouraged his side

PLEASE CHECK ALL TIMES AND DATES WITH CLUBS

Town, Newmarket Town v March Town United, Gorleston v Hadleigh United, Long Melford v Downham Town, Soham Town Rangers v Mildenhall Town, Great Wakering Rovers v Redbridge, Newport Pagnell Town v Ilford, Stansted v Biggleswade, Leverstock Green v Baldock Town, Eynesbury Rovers v Romford, Tring Athletic v Barking, Biggleswade United v Frenford, Milton Keynes Irish v Welwyn Garden City, Witham Town v Hertford Town, London Lions v Arlesley Town, Colney Heath v Takeley, Cockfosters v Kings Langley, Sawbridgeworth Town v FC Romania, Real Bedford v St Neots Town, West Essex v Enfield, Little Oakley v Dunstable Town, Basildon United v Hadley, Shefford Town & Campton v Brantham Athletic, FC Clacton v Leighton Town, Kempston Rovers v Brightlingsea Regent, Potton United v White Ensign, Barton Rovers v Saffron Walden Town, Heybridge Swifts v Wormley Rovers, Benfleet v Woodford Town, Grays Athletic v Hullbridge Sports, Edgware & Kingsbury v Crawley Green, Stanway Rovers v Maldon & Tiptree, Tilbury v Buckhurst Hill, Harpenden Town v Halstead Town, Portishead Town v Eastington Sports, Tuffley Rovers v Kidlington, Malmesbury Victoria v Slimbridge, Reading City v Ardley United, Lydney Town v Thornbury Town, Burnham v Corsham Town, Brisington v Wallingford & Crommarsh, Flackwell Heath v Aylesbury Vale Dynamos, Binfield v Wokingham & Emmbrook (12.30), Longlevens v Winslow United, Cinderford Town v Nailsea & Tickenham, Virginia Water v Brimscombe & Thrupp, Ascot United v Milton United, Thame United, Aylesbury United, Oldland Abbotians v Amersham Town, Highworth Town v Bishop's Cleeve, Roman Glass St George v North Leigh, Fairford Town v Cirencester Town, Hartpury University v Risborough Rangers, Yate Town v Holyport, Royal Wootton Bassett Town v Mangotsfield United, British Airways v Loxwood, Horsham YMCA v Newhaven, Larkfield & New Hythe v Kennington, Rayners Lane v Broadfields United, Littlehampton Town v Tooting & Mitcham United, Cobham v Uxbridge, Chipstead v Athletic Newham, Peacehaven & Telscombe v Shoreham, Hanworth Villa v Knaphill, Deal Town v Roffey, Epsom & Ewell v Phoenix Sports, Saltdean United v AFC Vandeans, North Greenford United v Corinthian Casuals, Steyning Town Community v Hilltop, Merstham v Wick, Wembley v Bedford Town, Abbey Rangers v Hythe Town, Punjab United v Snodland Town, Hassocks v Haywards Heath Town, Broadbridge Heath v Horley Town, Broadshot Lea v Stansfield, Sevensoaks Town v Whitstable Town, Fisher v Redhill, Tunbridge Wells v Farnham Town, Balham v Midhurst & Easebourne, Holmesdale v Crawley Down Gatwick, Lordswood v Erith & Belvedere, Eastbourne Town v Little Common, Ashford United v Egham Town, Bexhill United v Faversham Town, Northwood v Ashford Town (Middx), Camberley Town v Lydd Town, Sheerwater v Rushall, Beckenham Town v Harefield United, Lingfield v Hollands & Blair, AFC Croydon Athletic v Guildford City, South Park (Reigate) v Sutton Common Rovers, Corinthian v AFC Whyteleafe, Sutton Athletic v Sandhurst Town, Erith Town v Pagham, Glebe v East Grinstead Town, Met Police v VCD Athletic, Eastbourne United v Sporting Bengal United, Crowborough Athletic v Bearsted, Tadley Calleva v Millbrook (Hampshire), Fareham Town v Sherborne Town, AFC Portchester v United Services Portsmouth, Melksham Town v Welton Rovers, Thatcham Town v Christchurch, Bournemouth v Shaftesbury, Portland United v Hamworthy Recreation, Baffins Milton Rovers v Petersfield Town, Hamble Club v Westbury United, Alton v Fleet Town, Andover New Street v Hythe & Dibden, Laverstock & Ford v Cowes Sports, Bemerton Heath Harlequins v Brockenhurst, Hartley Wintney v Downton, Shepton Mallet v Horndean, Moneyfields v AFC Stoneham, Paulton Rovers v Bashley, Wincanton Town v Blackfield & Langley, Falmouth Town v Torpoint Athletic, Exmouth Town v Street, Ilfracombe Town v Tavistock, St Blazey v Ivybridge Town, Barnstable Town v Helston Athletic, Brixham v Saltash United, Willand Rovers v AFC St Austell, Wellington AFC v Buckland Athletic, Bideford v Bridgwater United

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The tournament was set up the following year and up to the end of last year's tournament, a grand total of £173,000 had been raised for Leukaemia Research.

The first semi final on Tuesday saw Group A winners Gobowen Celtic beat Group B Runners Up Llangollen Reserves 6-1.

Ed Rogers and Sam Nash put Gobowen 2-0 up and after an unfortunate Andy Kelly own goal had made it 3-0 in the 33rd minute, Jack Hughes made the half time score 4-0.

Jake Hayward pulled a goal back for Llangollen in the 60th minute to give his side brief hope but Dyfan Valentine's unfortunate own goal in the 69th minute and Nash's second in the 84th minute saw Gobowen complete a 6-1 win to book their place in the final for the fourth year running.

The second semi final on Thursday saw The New Saints U18 eventually beat The Keys from St Martins 5-1. Jake Humphreys gave Saints the lead in the 35th minute from a controversially awarded penalty and after Jack Airlie had doubled the lead in the 50th minute, Logan Richards pulled one back for The Keys in the 53rd minute.

However, further goals from Alfie Webb, Oli Blayney and an unlucky own goal from Keys defender Cameron Hughes in the second minute of added time at the end saw Saints book their place in the final.

If Gobowen were to win, it would be their third consecutive final win and they would not only become the first side since Oswestry Bell (2007-09) to win the competition three years running but only the fourth side ever in the tournament's history to win it three or more years running.

The trophy will be presented by Wrexham legend Gary Bennett, who scored 82 Dragons goals in the 90s.

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The tournament was set up the following year and up to the end of last year's tournament, a grand total of £173,000 had been raised for Leukaemia Research.

The first semi final on Tuesday saw Group A winners Gobowen Celtic beat Group B Runners Up Llangollen Reserves 6-1.

Ed Rogers and Sam Nash put Gobowen 2-0 up and after an unfortunate Andy Kelly own goal had made it 3-0 in the 33rd minute, Jack Hughes made the half time score 4-0.

Jake Hayward pulled a goal back for Llangollen in the 60th minute to give his side brief hope but Dyfan Valentine's unfortunate own goal in the 69th minute and Nash's second in the 84th minute saw Gobowen complete a 6-1 win to book their place in the final for the fourth year running.

The second semi final on Thursday saw The New Saints U18 eventually beat The Keys from St Martins 5-1. Jake Humphreys gave Saints the lead in the 35th minute from a controversially awarded penalty and after Jack Airlie had doubled the lead in the 50th minute, Logan Richards pulled one back for The Keys in the 53rd minute.

However, further goals from Alfie Webb, Oli Blayney and an unlucky own goal from Keys defender Cameron Hughes in the second minute of added time at the end saw Saints book their place in the final.

If Gobowen were to win, it would be their third consecutive final win and they would not only become the first side since Oswestry Bell (2007-09) to win the competition three years running but only the fourth side ever in the tournament's history to win it three or more years running.

The trophy will be presented by Wrexham legend Gary Bennett, who scored 82 Dragons goals in the 90s.

Classifieds



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GILLS ACE MARCUS IS A CLASS ABOVE

STEPPING UP: Marcus Wyllie has sealed a move to Gillingham
PICTURE: Edmund Boyden

MARCUS Wyllie's move to Gillingham happened so quickly the Enfield Town hot-shot even had to miss the last day of term!

By Matt Badcock

The 25-year-old has become the first player the Towners have ever received a fee for after the League Two Gills came calling.

Wyllie fired 34 goals last season as Enfield were promoted to National League South through the Isthmian Premier play-offs.

And after being watched by Kenny Jackett in their friendly with Arsenal, the whirlwind began.

A phone call alerting him of the interest came on the way home and by Friday

he was having a medical – after being excused from the last day of his day job as a Behaviour Manager at a Special Education school. “I had to miss our last day but they were very understanding,” Wyllie told *The NLP*. “They had an inkling and follow how my football is going so they were really pleased for me.”

Trials

Wyllie's path to League football has been unique.

Born in Cyprus, he was in APOEL's youth set-up until moving to England when he was 17.

He played football at

sixth form and had trials with MK Dons and Yeovil before joining Chesham United reserves and later, aged 18, moving to Risborough Rangers, then in Step 6, before winning promotion on PPG after Covid.

The frontman also played for Nottingham Trent University, while continuing at Risborough where he hit 36 goals in the Spartan South Midlands Premier as they finished second but were denied promotion on ground grading grounds.

A move to Enfield Town followed but it was the arrival of manager Gavin Macpherson and a move back to a central position that changed everything.

“It made a massive difference,” Wyllie said. “Jon Nurse (assistant manager) came in too. He's played in the League, was a striker and he helped me massively in training and games. With the help of my teammates I found myself in really good positions to score and create chances.

Challenge

“I did hope something would come but as we were getting closer to the season I wasn't too sure.

“Obviously we went up so that made a difference because it would be a new league and new challenge. But I always wanted to go

into professional football.”

He added: “Gillingham is a great club. Everyone is really welcoming and there is a really good feeling around the club – especially among the players.

“Hopefully I can kick on in that professional set-up and see where it can take me.”

Boss Macpherson told *The NLP*: “He's got a natural ability to play off the shoulder.

“I don't look at this as, ‘It's a bit of a chance from Gillingham's point of view’. I think they've got a player who naturally finds the net and if he's presented with those opportunities, he will continue to.”



AT THE MATCH

PHOTOGRAPHY FROM WHEN SATURDAY COMES HARDBACK, 240 PAGES £40



AT THE MATCH

Photography from *When Saturday Comes*

by Simon Gill, Colin McPherson & Paul Thompson

AT THE MATCH is a landmark photobook published by *When Saturday Comes*, the independent football magazine, to celebrate two decades of images captured by its team of photographers Simon Gill, Colin McPherson and Paul Thompson.

The photography documents the matchday experience across the UK and Ireland, capturing the jubilation and despair of the game but more importantly the ritual of going to football, whether it's in the Premier League or at grassroots level.

With an introduction by author Daniel Gray, the images reveal the game as it is experienced by those who participate in it, with a focus on the connection between clubs and their supporters. This approach is what makes the collection unrivalled and the book unique, with the images telling stories of how and where we enjoy our football.

Originally backed by nearly 400 supporters on Kickstarter during October 2023, the AT THE MATCH project was led by designer Doug Cheeseman.

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