THE WHITE PAPER #36

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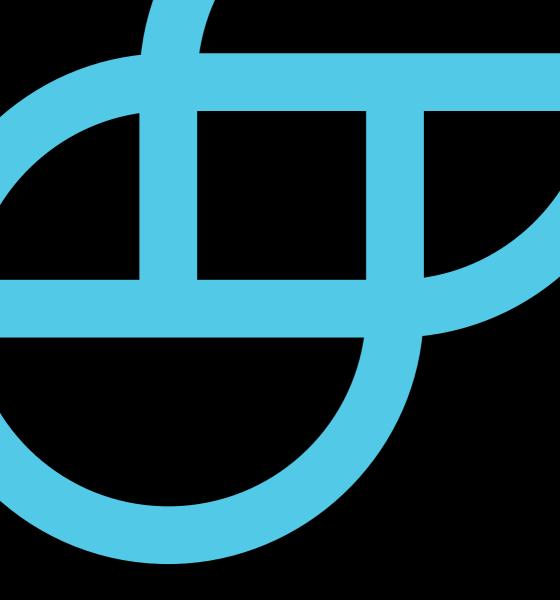


REAL BEDFORD VS COCKFOSTERS

SPARTAN PREMIER DIVISION

SAT 33TH DECEMBER '23 - 3.00 PM

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22/23 SPARTAN DIVISION ONE WINNERS 22/23 BEDS COUNTY CUP WINNERS

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As Chairman of Real Bedford Football Club, I could not be happier as I write my final programme notes of the year. Our club, both on and off the field, has achieved so much over the past twelve months, a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved.

Earlier this year, our men's team completed a league and cup double, securing promotion to step 5. We now end the year at the top of the league, and if we win today, we will take at least a seven-point lead into 2024. Similarly, our women's team has had a great season. Following the disappointment of finishing bottom of the league and surviving relegation due to another team folding, we made significant changes to the management and playing team. They now top their division with a 100% winning record and a nine-point lead.

I set both our managers with a single primary goal: win their league, and they have delivered. I know how hard they work behind the scenes, and their dedication to ensuring this club is a success should fill every Real Bedford fan with pride.

Off the pitch, the club has seen significant growth. Our fanbase has expanded, attracting increasing attention from international supporters while growing our match-day attendance for both teams. There is a real buzz around the club in Bedford, and I love meeting the new people who check us out every home game.

I want to thank our sponsors for their continued support over the last two seasons, as without them, this would have been a lot harder. Their contribution has been vital to our success and has helped us maintain a competitive yet sustainable budget, contrary to some speculation. I've said many times that a football club is a business, and to build a competitive budget, it needs to be a successful business. Ours is, and for the two seasons I have been chairman, we have been profitable, enabling us to offer our managers competitive budgets.

This year, We have focused heavily on



enhancing non-sponsor revenue streams as a strategic move towards ensuring the club's sustainable growth. As we potentially face another promotion, preparing for the associated challenges, including higher budgets and resource requirements, is imperative. I take nothing for granted as a season is long, but I have to plan for the demands of Step 4 and Step 3 football, even if we are unsuccessful. With the season finishing in May and pre-season starting in June, it is a small window to prepare for a higher division; as such, I am always preparing for higher divisions, even if we don't know whether we will make it.

I will visit the United States in January to engage with sponsors and investors. This trip is crucial for securing their support for future seasons and updating them on the club's progress. Their backing is essential for the club's continued success and growth.

With a new year upon us, I want to thank our supporters for their consistent support over the past year. Your enthusiasm and commitment are the lifeblood of our club. As we enter 2024, your continued support and that of your friends are crucial.

Turning my attention to today's game, we face Cockfosters, a team I know who will give us a challenging game. We drew with them earlier in the season, and I am sure they will want our scalp at McMullen Park. I know Rob will have prepared the team well, and they will be eager to end the year on a positive note.

As we enter 2024, I am optimistic about the future of Real Bedford Football Club. I came in with big promises, and thanks to the hard work of so many people, we have delivered on them, but we have so much further to go.

I wish everyone a happy New Year and look forward to your continued support in 2024.

Peter McCormack, Chairman



Real Bedford cruise past Crawley to ensure they're top at Christmas

The game started with two long-range shots testing Adi Connolly in goal for Crawley, with Charlie Smith and Ben Stevens attempting to break the deadlock. Connolly saved the latter, but only as far as Josh Setchell. Setchell, in turn, found Archie Jones, whose low-driven cross was flicked towards goal by Joey Evans, who bagged his first goal of the afternoon inside 10 minutes.

The second goal came soon after. Lee Watkins picked up a loose ball in the midfield and found Josh Setchell in space on the right flank. Setchell slid past the defence and down the by-line in an impressive 30-yard charge and found Evans, who once again applied a deft touch to see it past the keeper.

Setchell was at the heart of the next attack 5 minutes later, too; his pass found Ahmed, who travelled into the area before dragging the ball back to Ben Stevens. The midfielder picked his spot and wrapped the ball into the bottom left to make it 3-0 inside 30 minutes.

Kian Wilkes then looked to strike back for Crawley Green. His free-kick from the edge of the area made it past the wall but only as far as McGregor, who used his athleticism to palm the ball around the post—denying the visitors their best chance of the half.

Up the other end, Crawley Green had more trouble in the run-up



to halftime. After chances from Archie Jones and Tom Wood were blocked, the ball rebounded to the Real Bedford skipper. Wood struck it cleanly on the volley, with the ball flying straight into the bottom left to make it 4-0 at the break.

Second Half

The Pirates dominated the second half, too, finding another goal within 20 minutes into the second half. Mo Ahmed was set away down the left after some intricate one-touch football. Ahmed's delivery eventually found Ben Stevens after Setchell helped the ball on. Stevens' toe-poke effort was enough to defeat Connolly and see him pick up a well-deserved brace.

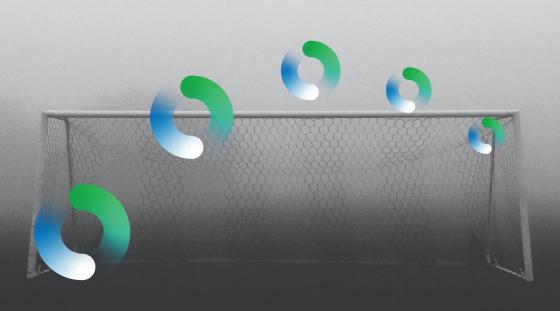
However, the goal milestones weren't over there, as Evans did

one better 10 minutes later, completing his fourth hat-trick of the campaign. After good work on the right wing by Eddie Corbit, the replacement delivered a ball to Evans, who beat the defenders in the area before getting a shot away to pick up the match ball.

Evans had a chance to get his fourth late on, but Adi Connolly saved his one-on-one opportunity in the final few minutes of the match.

RBFC: McGregor, Burgess (Swain 82'), Wood ©, Richardson, Smith, Watkins (Knight 78'), Setchell, Ahmed (Corbit 70), Stevens, Jones, Evans

Unused Subs: J.Ducket, Walsh





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Real Bedford have been a pleasure to watch from up in the gantry this season. While commentating, neutrality is critical, but the way the Pirates play, delivering results such as 9-1, 8-0, 7-0, 6-0, etc., it's hard not to talk just about Bedford.

Since my first game against MK Irish at the very start of the season, there've been ups and downs in the development of my commentary, but apart from the single loss versus St. Panteleimon, Real Bedford have just kept climbing. The squad and staff should be proud of their achievements this year. After being promoted just last season, being at the top of the league again is incredible.

I must also thank the international fans for sticking with the stream - if it weren't for them, I'd be speaking to nobody. It's humbling and amazing to have such an audience at the level that Real Bedford is at, and hopefully, my efforts from up in the scaffolding do enough to coincide with the players killing it on the pitch. I hope you all stick around when I'm commenting on Real Bedford in the Premier League.

On the club side, being welcomed into the Real Bedford team so quickly and kindly felt so good. I must thank Pete and Emma backstage, Rob, Mark, Gerry, Pete Thornes, Lottie, Browny, and, of course, my brother for being so friendly and warm, always saying hello when they see me. That same goes for all the players; their support has helped me feel welcome, too.

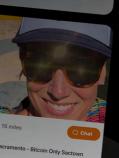
Speaking of which, I've had the luxury of being alongside some of the players in the gantry doing some co-commentary. Joe Steele has been on the mic a couple of times, as well as Archie Jones. Lewis Burgess was a delight, and CJ Gordon is naturally hilarious. Maybe it's a bit too funny to broadcast sometimes.

There's much to look forward to in 2024, a title being the main aim. I know it will bring challenges and excitement and the perfect chaos between those two things.

Benji Roberts Commentator





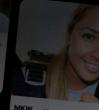














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The Pirates put 7 past Shefford on the road

With the 3 points convincingly won by Rob Sinclair's men, Real Bedford will again sit atop the league table at the end of the year. Hat tricks from Ben Stevens and Josh Setchell and a goal from Mo Ahmed secured the win at Shefford Sports Ground.

The goals started early again, with the first coming inside 9 minutes. Ben Stevens was allowed open pasture to run towards the Shefford goal, taking a wild shot towards the net from 25 yards. With keeper Jack Galatis assuming the ball would go wide, he remained rooted to the spot, but to his dismay, the ball nestled into the bottom left corner of the goal, leaving many around the ground stunned at Stevens' opener.

Minutes later, The Pirates created anoth-

er excellent chance. Josh Setchell and Mo Ahmed combined in the area before laying it off to Evans, who had a go from point-blank range, but his effort fell straight into the lap of Jack Galatis.

Shefford got their best chance of the game up the other end of the field through Scott Metcalfe after a Dan Hammer ball released the winger, but his shot was struck straight at Tyler McGregor. A well-worked counter-attack from Bedford allowed Joey Evans to get in behind the Shefford defence shortly after, but the striker's chance knocked against the woodwork.

Ten minutes later, Real Bedford doubled their lead. Mo Ahmed took the ball from Adam Drakulic and combined with Ben Stevens down the left flank to allow Ahmed to travel down the by-line and square it to Josh Setchell, who smashed it into a vacant net.



Before the half-time whistle, The Pirates claimed their third. Josh Setchell gathered the ball on the left before finding Archie Jones inside the area. An unselfish pass from Jones allowed Stevens to get a first-time shot away, which slipped under Galatis, giving the midfielder a first-half brace.

Second Half

Rob Sinclair's side applied the pressure early on in the second half, with three goals inside 10 minutes. The first goal came seconds after the break. The attackers all worked in harmony, Josh Setchell was the beneficiary of a fine bit of interplay. Setchell smashed the ball into the top corner. Soon after Ben Stevens collected his hat-trick through a similar move, Archie Jones setting up Stevens for his 27th goal of the campaign.

The sixth goal came through Mo Ahmed,

a signature run down the by-line this time was completed with a powerful shot with smashed the roof of the net, giving Ahmed a well-deserved score to accompany his performance.

The final goal came with moments to spare in the match. Josh Setchell gifted the ball 15 yards out, the winger rounded Galatis and tapped it home to collect his second hat-trick of the season.

Real Bedford now host Cockfosters on Saturday in hope of rounding off their 2023 with a win! Tickets are available here.

RBFC: McGregor, Burgess, Wood ©, Richardson, Smith (Knight 73'), Watkins, Setchell, Evans, Stevens (Gordon 84'), Ahmed, Jones (Corbit 64')

Unused Subs: J.Ducket, Swain

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This week, we sat down with manager Rob Sinclair, giving him time to reflect on 2023 and his time at Real Bedford.

Despite the successes this year, January was tricky for The Pirates. With the context of the final league standings, what effect did those initial losses have on the squad?

Despite having a good start to the campaign, losses to Langford and Wellingborough Whitworth at the beginning of the year were certainly a wake-up call. Until then, everything had been going our way, making teams more complacent than needed. I'd argue our performances over those games weren't a million miles off, but the dropped points allowed us to refocus on the back end of the season, which the squad reacted to very well.

Looking back on the run-in last campaign, was the clash with Rugby Borough away arguably the club's most crucial game? I'd say so. Going into that game, Rugby had a fair few games in hand and had shown their strengths, especially at home; we also suffered blows with one of our more experienced players, Stuart Sinclair, having to come off injured in the first half. With the game level with 10 minutes to go, it was a real show of character for the squad to not only get the winning goal but double down with another minute later. The professionalism and desire to win really rang true throughout the rest of the campaign.

To come away with two trophies that campaign as well must've been a great bonus?

Heading into the cup final with Elstow, we had just come off the back of our league win, which, as you can imagine, is quite physically and mentally draining for the playing squad, so to pick themselves back up and produce such a professional performance was a really proud moment. The match itself produced some fantastic



moments, too; in particular, Matt Clifford's Cup Final hat-trick still sticks in the memories of many Pirates fans.

Heading into the 2023/24 season, Real Bedford signed 13 players before a competitive ball was kicked. How pleased were you with your off-season recruitment?

Ever since the turn of the year, I have focused on bringing in young players dedicated to improving and being coached by our staff. I was delighted that we could bring in not only players who fit that mould but also players who have serious experience around these levels. It's a credit to the ambition and vision of Peter McCormack, which certainly allowed me to show how these young players would be able to improve at McMullen Park.

The season certainly started with a bang. Did the win against MK Irish put the team in good stead?

Having MK Irish first up in the league

was undoubtedly an exciting prospect. You'd argue that we were lucky to get all 3 points over the 90 minutes, but we did, and that's down to the talent on the field. Since then, I would say we have improved a lot from that first game. We had a short space of time to implement tactics and allow for the team to gel, but now, after six months, we are in a really good place.

Throughout the year, how impressed have you been with the continued support of the fans?

The fans have really become the heartbeat of the club. Their continuing support, home and away, has been invaluable to the squad's success. Reaching attendance figures of 300+ regularly throughout the last year has made McMullen Park a special place to play. I wish all supporters a happy new year and look forward to seeing them at the club throughout 2024.



The Club was originally formed as Cockfosters Athletic in 1921 by local residents and the ground allocated to the Club by Lady Bevan, from her family estate. The club was established in 1921 as Cockfosters Athletic and joined the Barnet League. Cockfosters Juniors merged into the club at the start of the 1930s, and they subsequently joined the Wood Green League. They won Division Two in 1931-32 and Division One in 1933-34. The 1938–39 season saw them win the Premier Division, League Cup and Barnet Cup. Following World War II the club joined Division One of the Northern Suburban Intermediate League, and after finishing as runners-up in 1946-47, they were promoted to the Premier Division. Although they were relegated back to Division One a year later, they won

Division One in 1949–50 to earn promotion back to the Premier Division. The following season saw them finish as Premier Division runners-up.

Cockfosters won Division One again in 1960-61 and, after being promoted, were Premier Division champions the following season. In 1966 they joined Division One of the Hertfordshire Senior County League, and after winning it in their first season, they were promoted to the Premier Division. In 1968 "Athletic" was dropped from the club's name. They won the London Intermediate Cup in 1970–71, beating Clapton Reserves 2–1 in a replayed final. They won the Premier Division title in 1978–79, also winning the Herts Intermediate Cup and the league's Aubrey Cup. The club were Premier Division champi-



ons again in 1980–81 and 1983–84, and won the Aubrey Cup again in 1984–85. The 1989–90 season saw them win the London Intermediate Cup for a second time, beating Port of London Authority 1–0 in the final.

In 1990 Cockfosters moved up to the Premier Division of the Spartan League. When the league merged with the South Midlands League to form the Spartan South Midlands League in 1997, the club were placed in the Premier Division South. After finishing bottom of the division in the 1997–98 season, they were placed in the Senior Division for the following season; the division was renamed Division One in 2001. In 2006–07 Cockfosters were Division One runners-up, earning promotion to the Premier Division. The following season saw

them win the league's Floodlit Cup. However, they were relegated back to Division One at the end of the 2008–09 season. The 2012–13 season saw them finish as Division One runners-up again, resulting in promotion to the Premier Division. In 2013–14 they won the league's Challenge Trophy and Floodlit Cup.

At the end of the 2018–19 season Cockfosters were transferred to the Essex Senior League. Before being transferred back to the SSML shortly after. The club finished in a strong position last campaign in the Spartan South Midlands Premier Division as their reserves side also performed well in their respective league.



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FIXTURE LIST

AUGUST '23

1	MK IRISH		0	(W)
5	FC CLACTON *	2	2	(D)
12	COCKFOSTERS			(D)
15	FC CLACTON *	4	18	(W)
19	MK IRISH *	3	4	(L)
26	ROTHWELL CORINTHIANS **	9	1	(W)
29	ARLESEY TOWN	0	3	(W)

DECEMBER '23

	COCKFOSTERS		н		
27	SHEFFORD TOWN & CAMPTON	0		7	(W)
23	CRAWLEY GREEN	6		0	(W)
16	FC ROMANIA			3	(W)
2	HARPENDEN TOWN	0		5	(W)

SEPTEMBER '23

2	TRING ATHLETIC	0	-	4	(W)
9	SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN	7		0	(W)
12	AYLESBURY VALE DYNAMOS	1	2	4	(W)
16	ST PANTELEIMON			4	(L)
23	FLACKWELL HEATH **	2		0	(W)
30	LONDON LIONS	0		3	(W)

JANUARY '24

6	LEVERSTOCK GREEN	н
9	COCKFOSTERS ****	Н
13	ST PANTELEIMON	A
16	DUNSTABLE TOWN ****	A
20	DUNSTABLE TOWN	н
27	BALDOCK TOWN	A
30	STANSTED	A

OCTOBER '23

7	COLNEY HEATH	8	1	(W
10	BIGGLESWADE UNITED	1	5	(W)
14	STANSTED	2	0	(W)
21	MK IRISH **	0	5	(W
24	LEIGHTON TOWN FIRST ***	3	1	(L)
28	CRAWLEY GREEN	1	4	(W
31	STANSTED	Α	Α	

FEBRUARY '24

3	LEVERSTOCK GREEN	Α
10	HARPENDEN TOWN	Н
13	DUNSTAB:E TOWN	Α
17	BIGGLESWADE UNITED	н
24	FC ROMANIA	. Ω _H

NOVEMBER '23

4	ARLESEY TOWN	5	0	(W)
	POTTON UNITED			(W
11				(L)
14	WELLINGBOROUGH W'WORTH ****	5	1	(W
18	AYLESBURY VALE DYNAMOS	5	2	(W)
25	BALDOCK TOWN	2	0	(W)
28	POTTON UNITED	3		(W

MARCH '24

2	LONDON LIONS	Н
9	MK IRISH	A
23	COLNEY HEATH	AA
30	SHEFFORD TOWN & CAMPTON	Н

* FA CUP MATCH

* *	_ ^	\/	Ç	۸Т.	

^{***} BEDS SENIOR COUNTY CUP

**** GLADWISH CHALLENGE CUP
***** PREMIER DIVISION CUP

APRIL '24

13	TRING ATHLETIC
20	SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN

H

LADIES FIXTURE LIST

AUGUST '23

STEVENAGE

AFC DUNSTABLE

4 - 1 (W)

0 - 7 (W)

5 - 0 (W)

0 - 1 (W)

4 - 0 (W)

(W)

DECEMBER '23

BARKING

10 AFC DUNSTABLE **

3 - 9 (W)

0 - 2 (W)

SEPTEMBER '23

BARKING

WROXHAM FC 10

17 **BOWERS & PITSEA**

ST ALBANS CITY

JANUARY '24

ST ALBANS CITY

HARINGEY BOROUGH

21 KINGS LYNN TOWN

LUTON TOWN

OCTOBER '23

HACKNEY WOMENS *

NEEDHAM MARKET

ROYSTON TOWN

KINGS LYNN 15

STEVENAGE FC * 22

2 - 9 (W)

4 - 1 (W)

13 - 0 (W)

4 - 0 (W

FEBRUARY '24

NEEDHAM MARKET

STEVENAGE FC

WOOTTON BC RESERVES ***

25 **LUTON TOWN**

A

NOVEMBER '23

BILLERICAY TOWN *

WOOTTON BLUE CROSS **

0 - 5 (L)

MARCH '24

AFC DUNSTABLE WOMEN

ROYSTON TOWN

WROXHAM FC

BOWERS & PITSEA

A

APRIL '24

HARINGEY BOROUGH

LUTON TOWN

^{*} FA CUP MATCH

^{**} LEAGUE CUP

^{***} COUNTY CUP



V



PIRATES

TYLER MCGREGOR (GK) ALFIE BOZWARD (GK) **LEWIS BURGESS** JOE STEELE TOM WOOD MATT CLIFFORD JAMES DUCKET **OLLIE SWAIN BEN WALSH** DREW RICHARDSON LUKE KNIGHT © LEE WATKINS CHARLIE SMITH **ARCHIE JONES BEN STEVENS EDDIE CORBIT BEN FITZJOHN** JOSH SETCHELL MO AHMED **CLASTON GORDON** TOM HITCHCOCK JOEY EVANS

COCKFOSTERS

CHARLIE MANN (GK) JERRELL CATO KENNY NOBREGA MATT THOMSON © AIDEN READ JAY LOVELL ANTONIO MICHAEL **OLLIE FINCH** HARRISON ROOKARD REECE BARRETT **GEORGE LUTAAYA** JOE ENTWHISTLE **NEO DONOGHUE (GK) CHRIS GRIFFIN ETHAN ROOKARD** GIDEON SARPONG **CORY UGBOMAH LUCA GORDON** RYAN MCMENEMY **CHARNE LEMBRA** PRINCE MADU

MANAGER - ROB SINCLAIR
ASST. MANAGER - MARK DUCKET
COACH - PETER THORNES
GOALKEEPER COACH - IAN BROWN
PHYSIO - LOTTIE BURTON
KITMAN - GERRY MCCORMACK

MANAGER - GAVIN KELSEY
ASSIST MNGR - GLENN DRAPER
COACH - ANT BURNS
COACH - PHIL LOVELL
KIT MNGR / ADMIN - CARL LILLIS
PHYSIO - CALLUM EAST

REFEREE - JAMES GERRING
ASSISTANT - CHRISTOPHER GEELAN
ASSISTANT - MATTHEW LANGTHORNE