# THE WHITE PAPER #38

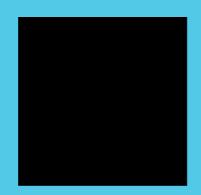
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REAL BEDFIRD VE MARPENDEN TUWN SPARTAN PREMIER DIVISION TUE ZETH FEBRUARY ZY - 7.45 PM

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CLUB HONOURS: 22/23 SPARTAN DIVISION ONE WINNERS 22/23 BEDS COUNTY CUP WINNERS

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# FROM THE DUGOUT

I want to give a warm welcome to the manager, staff, players and directors of Harpenden.

I want to start by thanking our groundsman, Jack Mudge, who has done an incredible job getting tonight's game on. Despite the heavy and consistent rain that has fallen across Bedfordshire these past few weeks, the club has worked tirelessly to ensure McMullen Park is in good enough condition for a match today.

Reflecting on our performance last weekend, it was disappointing to miss out on the 3 points against Biggleswade United, who did well to stay in the fight and take their chances in front of goal. However, I am still pleased with the style of football we played throughout the 90 minutes, continuing to dominate possession for large parts of the game. I hope that the squad can provide a positive response tonight.

I would also like to congratulate Codicote FC on progressing through to the next round of the Gladwish Challenge Trophy. They proved tough opposition last week and deserved to progress deeper in the Gladwish. I wish their players and management team all the best for the remainder of their campaign.

Away from the action, we have been able to welcome Ben Fitzjohn back into the club for some light running sessions on the grass. Ben suffered a leg break in March 2022 and has since been working hard with our lead sports therapist, Lottie Burton, on making a return to football. It was great to see him at McMullen Park last weekend, and I look forward to seeing him return to full training shortly.

As we look ahead to a good run of home fixtures, it has been great to see new and returning faces through the turnstiles at McMullen Park. Thank you to everyone who continues to support the team heading into the home straight of this campaign.

Thank you to everyone in attendance this afternoon, and enjoy the game.

#### Rob Sinclair, Manager

# FROM THE BOARDROOM

Welcome back to McMullen Park, the heart and home of The Pirates.

Since Christmas, it has been a challenge to get games consistently on with all the relentless rain. We've never seen anything like it. Every home game we're battling whether on not the game will be on as the Gods hammer McMullen Park. On more than one occasion, the ground has been completely flooded, including the walkways.

Not only does this challenge getting games on, but it also adds additional wear and tear to the pitch as the wet surface takes more punishment than usual. I do, therefore, want to thank Mudger, our head groundsman, for everything he does, week in, week out, getting the pitch and ground ready,

Behind the scenes, we've been tirelessly working on developing the football infrastructure for the club and the wider football community in Bedford. On my recent trip to America, I had successful meetings with all our sponsors and investors, who share our vision for the club. I'm pleased to confirm that all our primary sponsors have committed to long-term deals, ensuring stable support for our ambitious project.

As I have said recently, for the town to compete in the higher leagues, we need more training pitches and an academy, something I am very hard on developing. We are planning and designing an all-weather training centre with two purpose-built 3G pitches. The town requires more playing surfaces, especially in North Bedford. We have witnessed this as we have struggled to secure regular training pitches for our first teams.

This facility will be a game-changer for our men's and ladies' first teams, providing them with the resources needed for full-pitch, year-round training. Furthermore, we're laying the groundwork for an academy, which I hope we can launch in 2025. This academy will be a local option for youth development in Bedford,



offering a pathway for our talented young players to hone their skills locally rather than seeking opportunities elsewhere. An academy in Bedford allows us to develop players in the Real Bedford structure and reduces the pressure on parents to drive back and forth to the likes of Milton Keynes, Luton and Cambridge.

Through our partnerships with Bedford Park Rangers and Real Bedford Girls, we want to allow them to develop teams in the high standards leagues such as the JPL and EGA. We need the facilities our training centre and academy will give us to do this. We will also commit to supporting the development of coaches and maintaining our hardship fund for these teams.

This expansion isn't just about football; it's about sustainability and the broader impact on our community. To this end, we're exploring opportunities to support other sports, starting with netball, where we hope to launch a Real Bedford team next year. Netball is also vastly underserved in the town, where the facilities do not exist to support the needs of the local talented players. I want to help nurture a diverse range of young athletes, giving them the foundations for success in their chosen sports under the Real Bedford name. It won't be easy, and I need the town's support. I can only do so much with sponsors and investors. We need the people of Bedford to come out to games and buy a burger and some merchandise, as this all supports the sustainability of this project.

As ever, thank you for your unwavering support. Together, we're not just building a football club but shaping the future of sport in Bedford.

#### Peter McCormack, Chairman

# BIGGLESWADE UTD MATCH REPORT OF

#### Real Bedford share the points at McMullen Park after a last-minute equaliser from Biggleswade Town.

After taking an early lead, The Pirates had to settle for a draw after a late penalty decision allowed Coree Wilson to convert from the spot.

Real Bedford started the stronger of the two sides, with the first chance coming 10 minutes into the game. Brett Longden's lobbed ball into Josh Setchell allowed the winger to skip past Tom Wyant, but Setchell could not get the shot away. Instead, he found Ben Stevens, who dragged his effort just wide.

10 minutes later, Drew Richardson attempted the same lofted pass. This time, Evans was first to the ball, chipping Wyant, who had been caught off his line and opening the scoring in the first half. Not long after, Lee Watkins regained possession in the midfield, playing a through ball to Setchell on the right flank. Setchell hit the by-line before crossing it back to Stevens, who tapped it home off the inside of the post to double the lead for Rob Sinclair's men.

However, in an instant response, Biggleswade found themselves at the other end of the pitch. Striker Coree Wilson skipped past Richardson, who in turn took out the attacker, forcing the referee to point to the spot 30 minutes in. Wilson smashed the ball past McGregor to halve the deficit.

Just before the break, Biggleswade found themselves level. Awarded a corner; the ball wasn't cleared properly by Tyler McGregor, and the ball fell to Milo Keane, who curled it into the bottom left from the edge of the area to bring things level-heading into



halftime.

#### Second Half

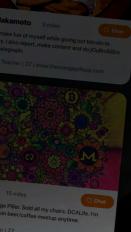
The Pirates pushed for a winner, Mo Ahmed struck the crossbar early in the half, and Joey Evans had another chance after a good ball from Ben Stevens. But Biggleswade's Markel Cousins arguably had the best chance of the first few minutes. After catching Bedford on the counter, the Biggleswade striker managed to get past Richardson to create a one-on-one with McGregor, but Bedford's shot stopper deflected it out for a corner.

With 20 minutes left on the clock, it was a moment of magic from Setchell down the touchline that sparked the next chance, his dancing feet evading defenders before his cross hit the hand of Joe Babbage in the penalty area, allowing the referee to point to the spot for the second time this afternoon. This time, Evans stepped up and thrashed it into the top right to give Bedford a well-deserved lead.

The Pirates seemed to have weathered the Biggleswade storm and looked to see out the game, but in the final few minutes, a ball into the Real Bedford box hit the arm of Eddie Corbit, and the referee once again pointed to the spot. Coree Wilson once again put it past McGregor to salvage a point for the visitors in the game's dying embers.

RBFC: McGregor, Corbit, Longden, Wood ©, Richardson, Smith, Setchell (Jones 85'), Watkins, Evans, Stevens, Ahmed (Agemoh-Davies' 75)

Unused Subs: J.Ducket, Knight, Hitchcock





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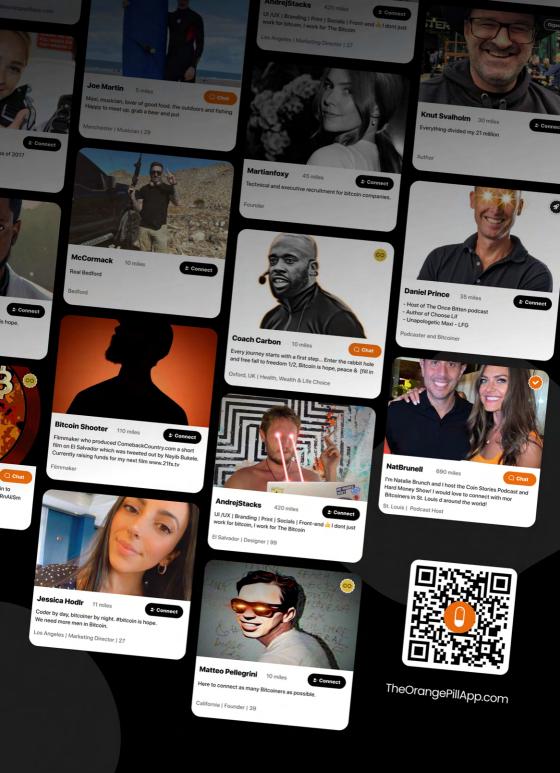
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# CODICOTE FC kris Energy MATCH R<sup>1</sup> 29 POR

#### Real Bedford Exit Gladwish Challenge Cup

Real Bedford were knocked out of the Gladwish Challenge Trophy with a narrow loss over Codicote FC.

The hosts took a 2-goal lead inside the first 15 minutes, and despite a second-half comeback from The Pirates, Codicote were able to see out the match and progress to the next round.

Having made eight changes from the side who drew to Biggleswade United in the league three days prior, Rob Sinclair's side suffered early blows as both Christos Pedrithes and Liam Hayden got the better of the Bedford defence on the counter to slot home two goals past Alfie Bozward. Codicote remained composed at the other end of the pitch, as Tom Hitchcock, Joey Evans and Claston Gordon all had efforts denied by Declan Jackson and his accompanying defenders.

The Pirates did manage to pull one back before halftime when Joey Evans smashed home a good chance to half the deficit at the 25-minute mark, but that goal was cancelled out just before the break as Codicote once again slipped a ball in behind for Hayden to chip over Bozward.

#### **Second Half**

Despite the scoreline, Real Bedford remained in control of the match throughout the second half, maintaining possession and playing lots of good football in the opposition



half; however, the Codicote defence remained strong and kept The Pirates honest with dangerous counters denied by James Ducket and Lewis Burgess.

Archie Jones proved a handful for Codicote defenders, and a good run down the by-line saw an opportunity to square the ball to Hitchcock, who tapped it in to chase, cutting the Codicote lead to one.

The arrival of Mo Ahmed and Josh Setchell continued to cause trouble for the hosts, as both players produced lethal crosses into the area. Joey Evans was then brought down in the box at the 75-minute mark, leaving the referee with little option but to point to the spot. Luke Knight stepped up and calmly slotted it past Jackson to put The Pirates back level.

As the game looked destined for penalties, a late mistake at the back cost Real Bedford dearly. Archie Jones played a back pass to Alfie Bozward, giving Codicote a chance to win the game. Hayden pounced on the ball, slid it past the keeper with moments left to spare, and punched Codicote's ticket into the next round of the Gladwish Trophy.

RBFC: Bozward, Longden, Knight ©, Burgess, Jones, Watkins, Agemoh-Davies (Setchell 68'), Evans, Hitchcock, Gordon (Ahmed 68')

Unused Subs: Smith, Walsh, Stevens

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# NEEDHAM MARKET MATCH REPORT

## The Pirates make it 13 on the bounce against Needham Market.

A confident victory in windy conditions pushed The Pirates further from the pack at the top of the league table.

All three goals came from top goalscorer Tash Fensome on her return to the Starting XI, having recovered from a short-term injury. Fensome's first came from a Needham blunder. Evie McKane and Lexie Pryke failed to collect the ball as it raced towards the Needham net, leaving Fensome with the prime opportunity to poke it past McKane for the first goal inside 30 minutes.

Seconds later, off the restart, Fensome's poacher instincts struck again; this time, the Needham defence failed to deal with a ball from Lisa Milliken, which Fensome pounced on to head home for her second goal in as many minutes.

#### Second Half

Despite maintaining possession for long parts of the game, the strong winds prevented the visitors from creating too many chances to get back in the game. The third goal came midway through the half, as Amy Reed's deep cross found Lisa Milliken, who tapped it back across the area for Gemma Croucher, who in turn played a selfless pass to the unmarked Fensome, who knocked it past the keeper for her hattrick, giving Real Bedford a comfortable lead.

Despite not being called upon for most of the game, Real Bedford keeper Sarah Hudson did have her work cut out in the final stages as the hosts looked to launch a late comeback. An audacious finish from Amber Cantwell from 35 yards out sparked hope for Needham, but a few good stops from Hudson denied them from getting anything out of the game.

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# WOOTON BLUE CROSS MATCH REPORT

Real Bedford Ladies produce a record-breaking win in County Cup Quarter-Final

The Pirates put 17 goals past Wootton Blue Cross Lionesses Reserves to see them progress into the County Cup Semi-Finals.

Hattricks from Gemma Croucher, Tash Fensome, and Cesca Partridge were accompanied by braces from Neve Mayes, Sophie Billing, and Erin Price and individual goals from Lisa Milliken and Lauren Coppin.

Highlights include long-range spectaculars from Erin Price and Lisa Milliken, who picked up her first goal for the club, alongside well-worked moves from Gemma Croucher, Cecsa Partridge and Sophie Billing, who all entered the game from off the bench to impact the match, bagging multiple goals.

Credit must go to a valiant Wootton side who, despite the scoreline, proved determined throughout the 90 minutes, bagging a consolation goal just after half-time to the delight of the travelling supporters.

Real Bedford Ladies now face Luton Town in the semi-finals of the League Cup next weekend, with the draw for the County Cup yet to be confirmed.

# 

The club was established in 1891 as Harpenden Football Club.They were founder members of the Herts County Senior League in 1898, but left after two season. They also played in the Mid-Herts League, winning the league on several occasions. In 1908 the club adopted their current name and rejoined the Herts County Senor League, becoming members of the Western Division. They won the Western Division in 1910-11, but were runners-up in the subsequent three-team championship play-off. They retained the Western Division title the following season, this winning the championship play-offs. They were Western Division runners-up the following season.

In 1920–21 Harpenden were Western Division champions again, but finished bottom of the championship play-off. The following season saw the club finish bottom of the Mid West Division, after which they left the league. In 1948 the club returned to the league and were placed in Division One. They were league champions in 1950-51, 1952-53 and 1954-55, finishing runners-up in the seasons in-between. The club was placed in Division 1A in 1955–56 for a transitional season, and finished as runners-up before being placed into the Premier Division the following season due to a reorganisation of the league. In 1957 the club moved up to the Premier



Division of the South Midlands League.

Harpenden were South Midlands League champions in 1961-62 and again in 1964–65. They won both the League Shield and the Herts Charity Shield in 1967–68, and although they finished as runners-up in 1969–70, the club were relegated to Division One after finishing bottom of the Premier Division in 1972–73. The following season saw them make an immediate return to the Premier Division. as a third-place finish saw them promoted. They were relegated to Division One again at the end of the 1981–82 season. In 1989–90 the club were Division One cham-

pions, earning promotion back to the Premier Division. In 1997 the league merged with the Spartan League to form the Spartan South Midlands League, with Harpenden placed in the Premier Division North. An eighth-place finish in 1997–98 saw them gain a place in the Premier Division for the 1998-99 season. However, after finishing second-from-bottom of the table in their first season in the division, they ended the 1999–2000 season bottom of the table and were relegated to the Senior Division, which was renamed Division One in 2001.

# FIXTURE LIST

(W) (W) (W) (U) (U) (W)

#### AUGUST '23

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

#### **DECEMBER** '23

2	HARPENDEN TOWN	0	5	(W)
16	FC ROMANIA	1	3	(W)
23	CRAWLEY GREEN	6	0	(W)
27	SHEFFORD TOWN & CAMPTON	0	7	(W)
30	COCKFOSTERS	3	2	(W)

#### **SEPTEMBER '23**

2	TRING ATHLETIC	0		4	(W)
9	SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN	7	-	0	(W)
12	AYLESBURY VALE DYNAMOS	١	-	4	(W)
16	ST PANTELEIMON	1		4	(L)
23	FLACKWELL HEATH **	2		0	(W)
30	LONDON LIONS	0		3	(W)

#### OCTOBER '23

7	COLNEY HEATH	8 - 1
10	BIGGLESWADE UNITED	1 - 5
14	STANSTED	2 - 0
21	MK IRISH **	0 - 5
24	LEIGHTON TOWN FIRST ***	3 - 1
28	CRAWLEY GREEN	1 - 4
31	STANSTED	A - A

#### **NOVEMBER** '23

4	ARLESEY TOWN	5		0	(W)	
7	POTTON UNITED	0		3	(W)	
11	BIGGLESWADE UNITED **	2		2	(L)	
		(PE	NS	6-7)		
14	WELLINGBOROUGH W'WORTH ***	* 5		1	(W)	
18	AYLESBURY VALE DYNAMOS	5		2	(W)	
25	BALDOCK TOWN	2		0	(W)	
28	POTTON UNITED	3		1	(W)	

#### **JANUARY '24**

9	COCKFOSTERS ****	2	1	(W)
13	ST PANTELEIMON	0	4	(W)
27	BALDOCK TOWN	2	2	(D)
30	STANSTED	0	1	(W)

#### **FEBRUARY '24**

27	HARPENDEN TOWN		Н		
20	CODICOTE ****	4		3	(L)
17	BIGGLESWADE UNITED	3		3	(D)
10	DUNSTAB:E TOWN *****			6	(W)
3	LEVERSTOCK GREEN	2			(L)

#### MARCH '24

2	LONDON LIONS	H
5	DUNSTABLE TOWN	A
9	MK IRISH	A
16	LEVERSTOCK GREEN	н
19	SHEFFORD & CAMPTON *****	А
23	DUNSTABLE TOWN	Н
26	COLNEY HEATH	А
30	SHEFFORD & CAMPTON	н

#### APRIL '24

9	FC ROMANIA	H
13	TRING ATHLETIC	Н
20	SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN	А

\*\* FA VASE MATCH \*\*\* BEDS SENIOR COUNTY CUP \*\*\*\* GLADWISH CHALLENGE CUP

\* FA CUP MATCH

\*\*\*\*\* PREMIER DIVISION CUP

# LADIES FIXTURE LIST

#### AUGUST '23

13	STEVENAGE	4	1	(W)
24	AFC DUNSTABLE	0	7	(W)

#### **JANUARY '24**

28	WATFORD DEVELOPMENT **	11	2	(W)
21	KINGS LYNN TOWN	0	9	(W)
14	HARINGEY BOROUGH	2	3	(W)

#### **SEPTEMBER '23**

3	BARKING	5	0	(W)	
10	WROXHAM FC	2	4	(W)	
17	BOWERS & PITSEA	0	1	(W)	
24	ST ALBANS CITY	🔵 🔮 🔮 👍	0	(W)	

#### **FEBRUARY '24**

4	NEEDHAM MARKET	1	3	(W)
25	WOOTTON BC RESERVES ***	17	1	(W)

#### **OCTOBER** '23

1	HACKNEY WOMENS *	2	9	(W)
8	ROYSTON TOWN	4	1	(W)
15	KINGS LYNN	13	0	(W)
22	STEVENAGE FC *	4	0	(W)
24	NEEDHAM MARKET			

#### **NOVEMBER** '23

12	BILLERICAY TOWN *	0	5	(L)	
26	WOOTTON BLUE CROSS **	6	1	(W)	

#### **DECEMBER** '23

3	BARKING	3	9	(W)
10	AFC DUNSTABLE **	0	2	(W)

#### MARCH '24

31	WROXHAM FC	H
24	BOWERS & PITSEA	Н
10	ROYSTON TOWN	А
3	LUTON TOWN **	А

#### APRIL '24

7	HARINGEY BOROUGH	н
14	ST ALBANS CITY	А
28		н

#### MAY '24

12	AFC DUNSTABLE WOMEN	H
11	STEVENAGE FC	А
	LUTON TOWN	А

\* FA CUP MATCH \*\* LEAGUE CUP <u>\*\*\* COUNT</u>Y CUP

# MATEMDAY EQUAD

W



#### PIRATES

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



#### HARPENDEN

EMAN OLAJIDE (GK) **ARCHIE FITZGERALD ISAIAH HILAIRE** DAVID KEENLEYSIDE **ARCHIBALD JAMES READER LOCKE** ARCHIE MCCLELLAND EMMANUEL OLAJIDE DANIEL PALMER THOMAS SMITH BENJAMIN ANTHONY SPAUL LEWIS RYAN WILLIAMS HARRY ANDIC REECE LEWIS PATRICK CROWTER HADLEY GLEESON **GEORGE ROBINSON JOSHUA MANUEL J RODRIGUES** JAKE COLLINS **RYAN PLOWRIGHT** JAKE ANTHONY **KYLE RAHHO HUGO BENNETT** MILES HABASHI **RICHARD OLUWATOYIN** JAMES DAVID EWINGTON

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