



## BRIDPORT RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB NEWSLETTER NO. 14 – JANUARY 2019

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### The season so far

The Blues started pre-season training under new coach, Lee Burdett, a former Blues player and Juniors coach who took up the mantle following the rather haphazard coaching last season after the departure of Wes Lewis. Lee was looking forward to bringing some fresh ideas about coaching particularly having spent a day at the England training base at Pennyhill Park under the tutelage of Eddie Jones. The sessions were well attended but the team were under no illusions with away games against five of the strongest teams in the league before Xmas.

Before the start of the season, good groundwork by Ayo Fraser led to a proposal, approved by the committee, to appoint two Sports Therapists who would attend home and away matches to prepare the players before each match and to provide support when needed during a game. This was much appreciated by the players and has been of great benefit in the season so far.

The Blues had their first match of the season in the annual friendly against Crewkerne played for the Brown Bowler. This fixture was inaugurated in 1985 following the death of Tony Bowditch who lived in South Street. He had several nephews who were playing for both Bridport and Crewkerne and in his will he bequeathed his Brown Bowler to be played for annually between the two teams. This fixture has been played most years since and recently just by chance Dave Singleton, one of the nephews, met Tony's daughter Katie Gatehouse who did not know about the Bowler and was here to present it to the winning Crewkerne captain, the Blues going down in a keenly contested game 31-17, conceding 2 late tries.

The start of the league proper highlighted the difference in strength between the top 6 teams and the rest, when with a weakened team, against Swanage 1<sup>st</sup> who came down from Southern Counties South they were completely overwhelmed losing 96-0. The team bounced back with a strong performance away to North Dorset winning 34-17 but with their next 4 games away to sides in the top 6 they faced an uphill task. They were heavily beaten by Dorset Dockers 119-12, Oakmedians 57-5, put in an excellent performance against Wimborne to just miss out on a losing bonus point losing 29 -21 and with only 14 players went down to Sherborne 60-0. This was a match played in atrocious conditions and all the players put their bodies on the



Daragh Mcoughlin held up against Crewkerne



Crewkerne Captain receives the Brown Bowler



Mitch Waters breaks against North Dorset

line with a great defensive display against a very strong side. They have played 4 home games with 2 drawn, 1 victory and 1 defeat. They lost to the enigma which is Bournemouth 3rds, who with an apparently strong side won 46-24 but not before the Blues pack dominated the second half and created the position to enable the team to get a four try bonus point. The two drawn games against Weymouth and Puddletown were very disappointing in that we conceded the match equalling score with the final play of each game, having put in excellent performances in the pack. Ironically the scores came from 2 scrum penalties. The sole victory was a nail-biting win against Blandford 17-16 with some confusion from the referee as to who was actually winning at the final whistle!!

The final game before Xmas was at home and due to be played against Salisbury 2nds who were 3 points above us in the table. We had probably what was our strongest side available but the game was called off because of a waterlogged pitch due to the constant heavy rain prior to kick off.

So with North Dorset 2nds pulling out of the league, this means we are bottom of the table and we will need a fully committed performance in the second half of the season to stave off relegation. Our away games are all however against sides in the lower half of the league and if we can avoid injury and have our best side available then this is something that we can achieve.

### Junior Section

A buoyant start to the season in glorious September weather for Rugby training. The numbers of six, seven and eight year old new recruits, girls and boys, taxed our stalwart Coaches, but order was quickly established, and the sight of nearly two hundred players aged six to seventeen throwing and passing rugby balls showed that Rugby was well established in Bridport's Fiftieth Anniversary Year. The new kit, blue and white squares with gold edging and a gold 50 encircled emblem, from AKUMA, was available for the first rounds of the Dorset & Wilts Cup matches, and regular match reports across the age groups appeared in Bridport News.

One of the most moving events of the old year was to see the mass of junior players standing to attention on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, to pay honour and respect to those who had given their lives that we might be free.

Bridport, at the junior level, punch above their weight, and at certain age groups the mighty scalps of Dorchester, Trowbridge and Wimborne have been claimed.

It is still a struggle to get new parents to step forward and enter the Coaching and Referee Courses, paid for by the Club, but we are actively holding Courses on our own ground to make it easier for volunteers to attend.



Driving forward to score against Bournemouth 3rds



Dave Cutting gets the ball away against Weymouth



Daragh Mcoughlin breaks against Puddletown



Skill at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Juniors Fun Day

BRIDPORT progress in the Cup matches, and yet again we have been asked to host the West Dorset Schools TAG FESTIVAL on SATURDAY 9th MARCH, where over a hundred junior pupils from sixteen Schools will compete for the trophy.

And at the end of the season, our first Junior visit to Lège-Cap-Ferret Rugby Club on the Atlantic coast of France. Founded only one year later than Bridport, we aim to establish a Twinning association with our French friends that will encompass both Senior and Junior sections of the Club. Be assured, Rugby will be playing here in Bridport in 2068, our Centenary year!

### **Colts**

Sadly Toby James has had to step down as coach but the Colts continue to grow in confidence and are playing attractive rugby with hopefully some players able to come through to the 1st XV later in the season.

They have played 8 matches so far winning 50% and perhaps one of the most satisfactory was beating local rivals Weymouth in a thrilling game, coming back from 14-0 down to win 28-26.

### **Club Developments**

To supplement the excellent financial support from our Sponsors and VP's we set up a Business Development Committee comprising of Stuart Briggs, Noel Gregory, Ayo Fraser and new member Dave Bolwell whose brief was to look at ways of increasing our income stream and to consider new projects to put before the main committee which would take the club forward across the whole spectrum of its requirements. There are currently three active projects under consideration:

1. **Formation** of a 100 Club which to date has 72 members raising in a full year £1800 in extra income. The target is to reach 100 by the end of March. The first 3 prizes of £70, £60 and £45 were drawn on 29<sup>th</sup> December. There are still numbers available and the next draw will be in the clubhouse on the 26<sup>th</sup> January after the Wimborne game.
2. **A complete assessment** of what is needed to upgrade the kitchen in order to manage principally the large number of meals required on a Sunday for the Junior Section. A full costing will be prepared to put to the main committee hopefully by the end of January.
3. **A proposal**, approved by the Leisure Centre, to install on the far side of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV pitch a lean to railing which will accommodate advertising hoardings in order to generate additional sponsor income. It is also hoped to install 2 pitch side team shelters and a scoreboard. This would be expected to be ready for the start of the 2019-20 season.

### **Social**

All the Autumn Internationals were shown on Sky in the Clubhouse with food available, all matches were well attended and profitable. We advertised in the Bridport News and some non-members attended commenting on the excellent atmosphere. We shall follow the same format, showing all the 6 Nations matches and details will be announced in due course.

The Annual VP's lunch will be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March when we are at home to Sherborne and details will be sent out to all VP's later this month.

**Stuart and Kathy Briggs**