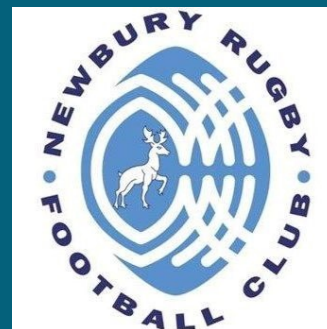


# BLUES NEWS

## KEEPING IN TOUCH - 7

AUGUST 2020



### WHAT'S INSIDE

Welcome

[What's On /Supporting the Club](#)

[Message from the Chair](#)

[Return to Rugby Roadmap](#)

[Mini & Junior Update](#)

[Annual Fundraising Golf Day](#)

[Personal profiles](#)

[Sponsorship/Supporting our community](#)

[Latest from the Ladies](#)

[Coaches' Corner - Will Harwood](#)

[Through the Eyes of the Players - Dan Thorne](#)

### 100+ CLUB

**Congratulations to the July draw winners:**

1st Sarah Coleman  
2nd Giuseppe Ruggiero  
3rd Simon Jones

A **BIG 'THANK YOU'** to recent winners who have kindly donated their winnings to the Club's Good Exchange projects.

### KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to contribute to the next Blues News, please email content to [David Jones](#)

**NEWBURY  
RUGBY CLUB**

### THE CLUB IS NOW OPEN....

Welcome to KIT 7 and the 'BEGINNING OF THE SEASON'!! September is up and running and we need your help to get the club back to COVID Normal! **GET WEEKENDS BACK IN YOUR DIARY AT MONKS LANE.**

Information on rugby, COVID club opening, what we can and can't do, changes by the day but **RUGBY IS BACK** in restricted format and **THE CLUB WELCOMES YOU BACK AS WELL.** The RFU has indicated we are now in a position to move onto Stage D in our [Return to Rugby](#) (see the chart later in the newsletter), subject to approval from Lou and her committee which would allow some limited form of contact. Keep an eye on the website for further announcements. We can also look forward to the adapted game **READY4 RUGBY** and asking referees to explain the rules!! We are also able to look at playing games with other clubs.


September is busy with the [NAT WEST RUGBY FORCE WEEKEND](#) this coming weekend - **5/6th September**. Please see the jobs that need doing on the next page, and help if you can. The following weekend, **12/13th September** is [PITCH UP FOR RUGBY WEEKEND](#) and the **19th September** is the [SPONSORSHIP DAY](#) with Head coach Paul Archer organising an [Interclub Touch tournament](#).

We hope you will support all these events at the club, even if dropping in for a short time - please read more in the newsletter. Neil Hunter and Paul Archer are running [Kicking Clinics](#) for 8 - 14 year olds, so signup and get the benefit of the skills of a premiership player (more on the following pages).

The [Golf Day](#) was a brilliant success and raised lots of money and a very big 'thank you' to Colin Farrant who co-ordinated the day and all the other helpers. How great to have such a cross-section of ages with 16 current senior players and at least 8 of the players from the 80s, plus a good selection of members and supporters from the local community - 54 players in total.

Thanks as ever to all those who volunteer their time to make sure the club continues to operate. We hope to see you all at the club in September.

[David Jones - President](#)



Newbury RFC has set-up a club based Track & Trace system as part of our Covid-19 protocols, in line with UK Govt requirements. It will be a mandatory requirement for all visitors to the Club (both inside the clubhouse and outside on the pitches), to use this simple system to register their attendance.

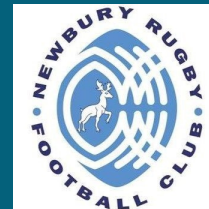
You will need to use a mobile phone (or similar camera-fitted device such as an ipad), to scan a dedicated QR code. Once the QR code is scanned, a confirmation message will appear on your device. This will need to be done on every visit to the Club. The QR codes will be on display in multiple locations around the Club and the system fully adheres to GDPR regulations.

We have produced a simple "How to Register" guide which will be available on the Pitchero and Venue websites.

KEEP IN TOUCH, KEEP FIT AND KEEP SAFE!

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

WHAT'S ON / SUPPORTING THE CLUB



## What's On at Monks Lane

### 5/6TH SEPT - NAT WEST RUGBY FORCE RETURNS FOR 2020

The Nat West Rugby Force weekend is returning, providing the opportunity for everyone to help our club get ready for the return of rugby. The weekend provides the perfect opportunity to get involved and help get our facilities in great shape as we work towards a return to play. A list of the jobs we would like to tackle over the weekend are below and it would be great to see as many people as possible at the club helping out. If you can spare an hour, a day or the whole weekend, please email Ian West, Newbury RFC Volunteer Co-ordinator at [ian.west1964@btinternet.com](mailto:ian.west1964@btinternet.com). Thank you for your support.

- 1) Dig trench the length of the First team pitch (for Ralph) - will help to stop the path from flooding.
- 2) Clean all windows and sills inside and out
- 3) Clean all gutters
- 4) Clear all wood, bbq, pallets and rubbish within the grounds.
- 5) Stand the Home dug out back up and remove timber backings from both
- 6) Scrub the balcony.
- 7) Wash, scrub and clean rugby changing rooms/showers.
- 8) Remove old Sky dishes - note this will require use of a ladder and may be considered not suitable

### 12/13TH SEPT - PITCH UP FOR RUGBY WEEKEND

This weekend has been highlighted by the RFU for us all to return to some kind of rugby and using our Club, so we are!!

**Sat 12th - Touch Rugby** (full details on next page). Contact Peter Norman if you would like to join in.

**Sat 12th - Kicking Clinic** organised by Neil Hunter (ex-Gloucester fly-half), now part of the coaching team for our senior men. Places must be booked in advance. This is a great opportunity for 8-14 yr olds and is a great opportunity to develop an important skill.

**Sun 13th - Mini training** will begin, hopefully with a breakfast/brunch bbq - make it a family morning?

### 19TH SEPT - WHOLE CLUB SPONSORSHIP FUNDRAISING DAY

This will include an inter-club Ready4Rugby Touch 7s Tournament which is being organised by Head Coach, Paul Archer. We would also like to see every section of the club do a sponsored event on the day to raise money for the club. This could be a passing relay, kicking competition, relay run, in fact anything you want to do within your space and team. If every age group and team raises £200 that will raise over £3000 for the club. Managers and coaches - get creative and get your thinking caps on; let's make 19th September a Covid-controlled Party Launch Day for the season, involving the whole club. Any queries, please contact David Jones.

### LIVE PREMIERSHIP RUGBY BEING SHOWN AT NEWBURY RFC THIS AUTUMN

Check out the website for full details of the games being televised, book a table and come and enjoy a pint and a burger.

## MEMBERSHIP - ONE BIG WAY YOU CAN HELP YOUR CLUB

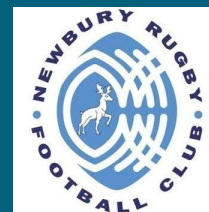
This is a tough time for every sports club and we are no exception. The fixed costs before we open the doors of this club are £200,000 per annum. Joining the club and paying your membership is a very simple but incredibly important way of supporting NRFC - your help is crucial. Please contact Sarah Tunstall if you have any queries.

Membership cards can be collected from Sarah Tunstall at the clubhouse after 6.30pm on Weds nights or Sunday mornings, assuming training resumes, 10-11am. Please observe Covid signage and instructions.

The club is now open and we are trying to organise events and get the club open as much as possible so we can enjoy our rugby. As you know, the Covid-19 regulations are constantly moving but we really are working extremely hard to make rugby safe and have it back at Monks Lane.

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## WHAT'S ON / SUPPORTING THE CLUB



**Touch Rugby** is described as a non contact form of Rugby which is a bit of a misnomer given the major attribute of the game is in the name touch. At Newbury we play a social form of the game for fun and fitness and pre Coronavirus games would vary from 5-aside in the cold winter months to full on 15-aside when the weather is more clement (not that any of our squad are fair weather players). In another misnomer, to play Touch at the club all you need to be is a non-playing social member which is currently £110 for the year and we are the only squad that plays 52 weeks of the year, twice a week, which equates to a little over a £1 a game - where else can you get such value for money?

We are totally non discriminatory: you can play unaccompanied between the ages of 16 and currently 61 and we play mixed squads. Younger players can also join in if their parents are playing. No prior experience of rugby is needed and we have players of all abilities, we even occasionally lower our standards to allow first team players to practise when they are off season.

Until this year we have played uninterrupted at Newbury since early 2004, originally set up by some South Africans who brought it over with them when they had children in the Minis and Juniors. I joined in the tail end of 2004 having played no contact since the age of 13, and some would argue that age hasn't improved my game.

Of course this year has been different and last week was our first outing since lockdown, when we were allowed to play with up to 10 a side. Our game is essentially the same as it has always been but keeping in mind precautions to ensure that we play as safely as possible in this Covid era. Still, anyone watching us start would have been reminded of cows exuberantly let loose in the field after a long winter in the shed, you could see people literally frolicking on the pitch and the first 15 minutes were conducted at a frenetic pace which thankfully for us older participants didn't last! But it was a reminder that once you start it is easy to become hooked on the sport as a great way of keeping fit whilst having fun. So if you would like to make more of your rugby membership and want to keep fit whilst making new friends, then come and join us on: Saturdays 10am - 12pm; Mondays 7pm to 8:30pm.

All you need at this time of year is a pair of trainers, though come September boots may be advisable. For further information simply email me at [pnorman3@btinternet.com](mailto:pnorman3@btinternet.com). I look forward to meeting some of you.

**PETER NORMAN**



#bluesfamily



### JUNIOR KICKING CLINIC

Hosted by: Senior Men's Coach and ex-Gloucester fly half Neil Hunter  
and Head Coach Paul Archer



**Aged 8 to 14? Keen to build your all-round kicking skills in a fun and supportive environment?**

- Goal kicking
- Punting
- Drop kicking

#### DATES

Saturday 5th September, 10am - 11.30am  
Saturday 12th September, 10am - 11.30am

#### PRICE

£20 per session, maximum of 20 attendees per session to adhere to RFU guidelines

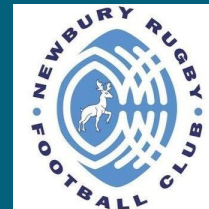
To book your space, please e-mail  
[bluesrugbycoaching@outlook.com](mailto:bluesrugbycoaching@outlook.com)

## THANK YOU!!

We would like to say a huge 'THANK YOU' to Tom Phillips for his very generous donation to the Club. Tom ran the first ever Minis coaching session at Pinchington Lane and thus was responsible for introducing rugby to NRFC stalwart, Ian Skipworth!! Maybe this was compensation!! Thanks so much Tom - we have put the money into a community project at the club, which has been match-funded by Greenham Common Trust Good Exchange. Thank you very much to both. Tom keeps in touch with the club from his northern look out and has always been a great supporter, volunteer and in his day, player for the club.

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Members

Without stating the obvious, we know this year is going to be tough, so I particularly wanted to personally thank those individuals who have paid their membership early, despite the uncertainty around our return to matches. I have started the task of writing to every individual who has paid so far and will carry on doing so over the coming weeks.

It has been heart-warming to receive some of the replies from those members in response to my personal note. So much so that I think you will enjoy reading some of them too. Here are a few extracts from the messages I've received.

*"...glad to be able to support. Thanks for all the hard work you, the committee, coaches etc etc do. It has certainly been great to be back training, even with restrictions getting a good run out and seeing mates is hugely beneficial. "*

*"..I am really looking forward to the date when everything returns to normal and I can watch rugby again with no restrictions."*

*"Thank you for your note, it means a great deal to me. I will continue to support the club in a small way..... Newbury RFC will always be in my thoughts and it is wonderful to see the club back on its feet again and thriving (despite the Covid challenges!)"*

*"To pay fully in these uncertain times felt the right thing to do, in our own small way, to help in turn bring some certainty to the club. Here is hoping normality returns, rugby starts up again and all the 'Blues' teams do fantastically well this season.....!"*

*"Looking forward to getting back to the club in the coming months."*

*"..... I think Rugby is taking the right steps to get The Game up and running again....."*

*"...Glad to see there is planning to expand Touch....."*

*"Thank you for your kind remarks. A team is only as good as its committed. A club is only as good as its members and leadership. While I can, I will. You and the team are doing an excellent job and deserve members support. Hope others follow suit..."*

*"The least I could ..... Thanks for all your hard work and dedication from the team..... "*

With the return of the juniors, colts and girls this week there is a real sense that we are turning the corner to some form of normality. We will need to continue to be vigilant and adhere to the protocols that have been developed following the successful return to training by the seniors.

Our next step is to start the process for planning the return of the Minis section in September and I hope to meet with managers and coaches in the next couple of weeks to agree these arrangements.

In the meantime, thank you to all those who have been involved in making the plan to Return4Rugby a reality. Keep safe and I hope to see you at the club very soon.

LOUISE GOODALL - CHAIR

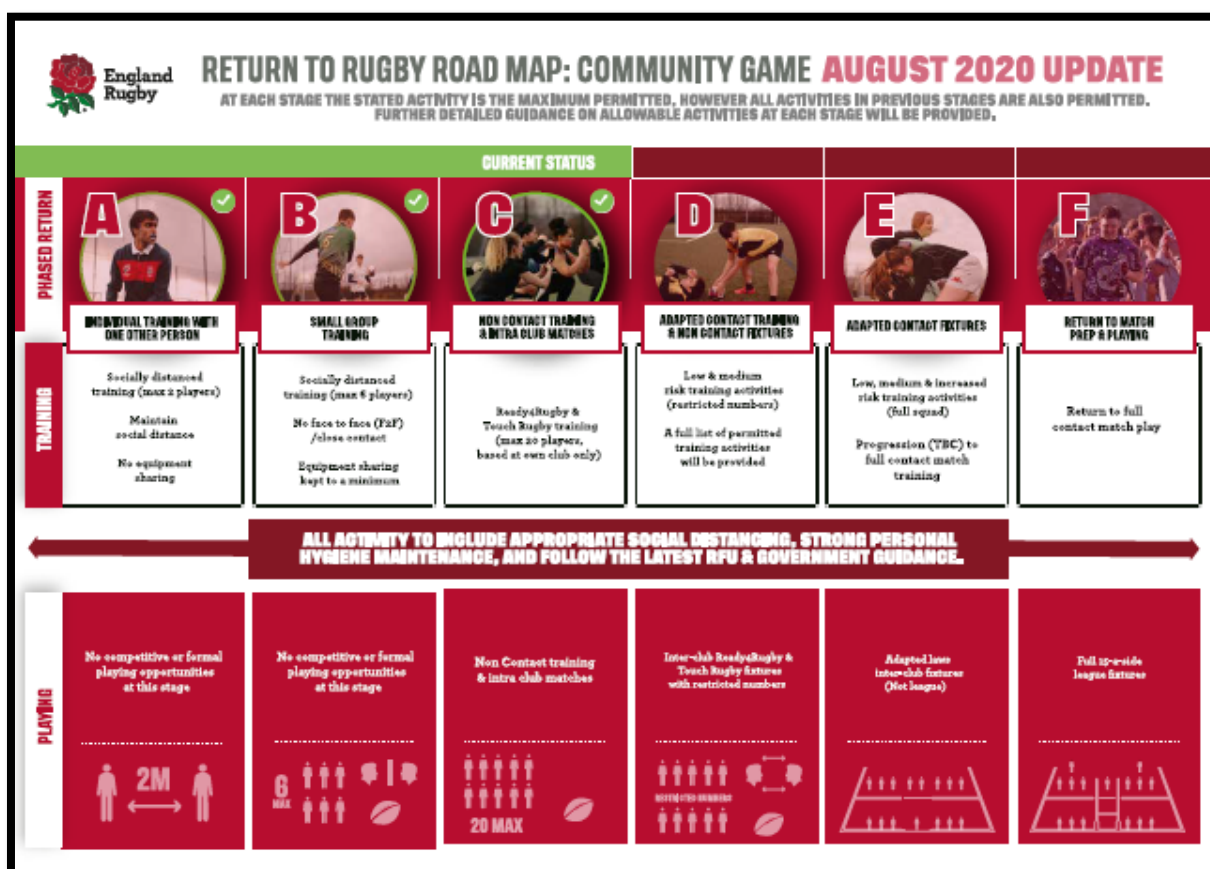
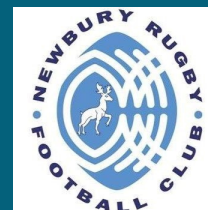


KEEP IN TOUCH, KEEP FIT AND KEEP SAFE!



# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## RETURN TO RUGBY ROADMAP - AUGUST UPDATE



### MINI & JUNIOR UPDATE

GOOD NEWS FOR JUNIORS, AT LAST!! Junior training has now STARTED on Weds and Fri evenings. Minis registration will take place on Sun 5th Sept and full training commences on the following Sun (13th Sept).

TAKING ON SAMARATHON - Congratulations to Alan McDermott who completed a Marathon for charity during July, raising over £350 for The Samaritans. He completed the full 26.2 miles but did it throughout July, logging his progress on an app that reported his progress. Nationally, the Samarathon raised over £500k for The Samaritans. Well done Alan!

### SIMPLE WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CLUB

**PAY YOUR CLUB MEMBERSHIP**

**SPONSORSHIP**  
Contact Richard Deal

**CLUB EVENTS**  
Details posted on Pitchero

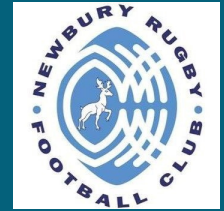
**LATEST GOOD EXCHANGE PROJECT**

**RETURN TO RUGBY EVENTS**

**100+ CLUB**

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GOLF DAY



### NRFC GOLF DAY

On Friday 21st August 54 players and 14 teams took part in our second annual fundraising Golf Day - our first major club event since Covid restrictions began. It was a great day, despite the promised weather!

The good news is that with match-funding this event raised over £5000 for the club., which is amazing. It included 16 senior players and Graham Stewart's front five team who were largely playing golf for the first time and entered into the spirit of the day. At the other end of the spectrum, we had three teams of players from the 1970s and 1980s, plus three guest teams from Newbury's local community, Russel Frost and friends, and John Hutchinson's team from the U14s coaches and Peter Benson's team from the Colts.

There was a tie for first place in the team competition, with 119 points, between the **Canny Centres** and the **Happy Half Backs**, third place going to the **Whinging Wings**; **Dan Thorne** collected first prize in the individual competition. Well done to all, although next year there may be an independent assessor on everyone's realistic handicaps (obviously I didn't win, so no sour grapes there!) Well played everyone and thanks for all your support. Also thanks to Donnington Valley for allowing us to play and the generous donations made by the Vineyard and Newbury & Crookham for their support.

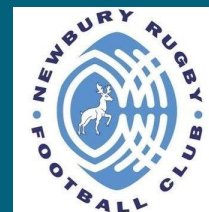
A fabulous day and huge thanks to **Colin Farrant** for co-ordinating and organising the day and thanks to all those who helped. Below is a list of the teams and the scores. If you were a successful sponsor in choosing the winning teams, then please contact Colin to collect your winnings.





# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## PERSONAL PROFILES FROM ACROSS OUR BLUES FAMILY



### SENIOR MEN



**BEN HICKS**

**Playing history:** Newbury from under 6 all the way to men's rugby, St Bart's all school years and first XV, Berkshire under 16s. Position - loose head.

**Favourite song:** ELO Mr Blue Sky - we listened to this a lot when we young while on holiday. Brings back happy memories.

**Most admired person to invite for dinner:** Ricky Gervais to provide the laughs; Jonny Wilkinson - my first rugby hero - he was the biggest rugby star while I was growing up.

**Most surprising fact about yourself:** I'm a Lord! Saw a good deal on Groupon to buy a lordship - too tempting to turn down!

**Favourite rugby moment at NRFC:** winning our playoff game to be promoted to Nat 3. Such a good day that I will never forget, playing in front of a massive crowd and all our hard work paying off.

### SENIOR WOMEN



**FLO PIDDINGTON**

**Playing history:** Berkshire Baa Baas; Hartpury Uni; Gloucester Hartpury; Newbury WRFC

**Favourite song:** Mountain at my gate - Foals

**Most admired person to invite to dinner:** Rosa Parks, Emmeline Pankhurst & Princess Diana

**Most surprising fact about yourself:** Rugby is the first and only team sport I have ever participated in; my background is gymnastics, dance and more recently I've been pursuing my passion for yoga.

**Favourite rugby moment at NRFC:** Every second spent with these amazing people! Getting back after knee surgery was pretty special - I learnt a lot from being No 1 supporter but nothing is quite like getting back on the pitch.

### CLUB OFFICIAL



**ADAM PRICKETT**

**Playing history:** Schools Representative sides in Hull & East Yorkshire; Manchester Uni 1st XV (toured USA & Canada in late 70's, 'quite an experience in many ways'). Had the traumatic misfortune of seeing Fran Cotton come peeling off the back of a lineout straight at me when we played Sale. Needless to say, I didn't halt his progress. Junior clubs followed in Leicester before a neck injury forced me to quit just in my prime! Our President David Jones did coerce me out of retirement to go on a couple of NRFC Vets tours in mid-90's but I prefer to forget about those now! Hard to believe but I was a fly half, more of the Stuart Barnes mould than a Rob Andrew!

**Favourite song:** Louis Armstrong, 'What a Wonderful World', played at my father's funeral and my eldest son's wedding.

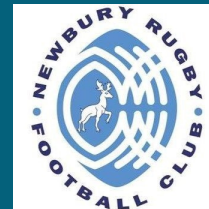
**Most admired person to invite for dinner:** Willie John McBride; an outstanding leader, great charisma and inspirational speaker; played in 5 Lions Tours, captained the great 1974 winning side that toured South Africa, and introduced the famous or infamous '99' call to combat the Springboks' rather 'aggressive approach' - he'd be great company and enjoys a drink too!

**Most suprising fact about yourself:** I was the North of England Choir Boy Champion

**Favourite rugby moment at NRFC:** Going to watch the Blues at Franklin's Gardens to see them take on Northampton Saints, who'd been relegated to the National Division One as it was then in the 2007/08 season. The Saints side that day included the likes of Carlos Spencer, Bruce Reihana, Chris Ashton, Tom Smith and many more household names. We played some superb rugby and were leading with just a few minutes remaining, only to lose by a single point 24-23. Our performance was well received by the home crowd who gave The Blues an excellent round of applause - happy memories!

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

SPONSORSHIP/SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



## Become a Befriender



Would you like to provide one to one support for people at risk of loneliness and social isolation?

Are you looking for a way to share your experience, knowledge and time?

Can you empower our clients to achieve their own goals, whether this is in the garden, getting back to work, or providing companionship?



Contact: Terri Harley  
Befriender Coordinator  
Telephone: 01635 569000  
Email: [terri.harley@twosaints.org.uk](mailto:terri.harley@twosaints.org.uk)

## SPONSORSHIP

Richard Deal has been busy generating new sponsorship for this coming season - not an easy task in the current circumstances, but he's doing a sterling job.

Thank you to all those sponsors who have already signed up and this week a 'thank you' to Russell Kennerley of CSS and Dangerous Dave Shields for their kind offers to continue to help financially.

Anyone wishing to sponsor or support the club, however small (or BIG), please contact **Richard Deal**.

Please note that support of certain community club projects will be match-funded by Greenham Common Trust. Because of the Covid Virus, we have never needed sponsorship so much and will never be more grateful!

Thank you!

## SUPPORTING BUSINESSES POST LOCKDOWN

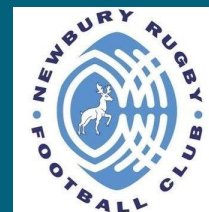
If you are a Club member and would like to promote your job, do please let us know. Coming out of lockdown will be tough and for many of us it will mean relaunching our business and working life, particularly for those recently self-employed who have not had the benefit of furloughing. If you provide us with your contact details and what you do, we will include in the next newsletter - **email David Jones**.

KEEP IN TOUCH, KEEP FIT AND KEEP SAFE!



# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## HELP IN THE COMMUNITY / SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS



### Free Career Consultation with Suzanna Adams of Varnium.

Let's make some positive career decisions, YES even in lockdown!!!

Looking for career opportunities? Perhaps you have just left School, College or University or maybe you are already working but you feel there could be something more inspiring and challenging out there for you?

Why not contact **Suzanna Adams of Varnium** for a conversation on where your future could take you.

Suzanna Adams - Recruitment Consultant

Tel: 07392 842606 [www.varnium.com](http://www.varnium.com)



**Geoff Fisher** is providing **fruit and vegetable boxes** for collection from their Hambridge Lane depot. Order online on the [Fishers of Newbury](http://Fishers of Newbury) website. Geoff has also been making weekly fruit and veg donations to NHS staff at Newbury Hospital.

**Brian Lee** is offering free **A level Economics** tuition to students just starting their Year 12 studies and those in Year 13 who might need some consolidation of work, particularly where they have largely self-taught during the past few months. Tutorials can be via Telephone, Zoom or FaceTime. Child safeguarding requires initial contact must be made by parents/guardians.

Email: [brianchapel@hotmail.com](mailto:brianchapel@hotmail.com);

Tel: **07740351507**

**West Berkshire Council's [Community Support Hub](#)** is available to help anyone in need. Anyone needing support from the Community Support Hub can email

[WestBerkshire@public.govdelivery.com](mailto:WestBerkshire@public.govdelivery.com).



— SIMUL MOVERE —



**MAC Tools of Basingstoke** wishes all members of Newbury Rugby Club and their families well during this pandemic. Like our great rugby club, our business activity is almost completely shut down, but we are on hand if we can assist any of you or your businesses with tools from our catalogues. All will be delivered contact free and delivery free.

In the meantime, we very much look forward to supporting Newbury Rugby Club, and all of the teams, when playing resumes. May that day come quickly!

**MAC Tools for Basingstoke - 07939155887**



**NUVIAS** | UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

Boardroom. Kitchen. Box room. Rugby stand.  
Wherever you are, we can help with remote working

The recent pandemic has shaken the way businesses are working day-to-day. If there's one thing that we know for certain now, it's that the right communication tools are essential to retain business continuity. Fortunately, Nuvias UC are experts in communication - it's not just in our name, it's in our nature.

If you want to find out more about the software, hardware and services Nuvias UC can offer through our network of approved partners, please get in touch >>

Contact Us:

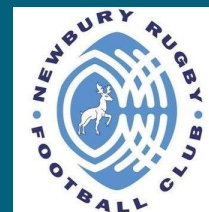
[www.siphonnetworks.com](http://www.siphonnetworks.com)

+44(0)1635 225000

[uc.sales.uk@nuvias.com](mailto:uc.sales.uk@nuvias.com)

# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## LATEST FROM THE LADIES / COACHES' CORNER (COLTS)



### What we've been up to:

The Ladies have loved being able to play touch again, now that the RFU have moved to Stage C. It's very clear from the shouting on the side-lines that we've all missed competitive sports. We've had a great influx of new players, with various levels of experience, including some returners after 10+ years off. We're always ready to welcome new players. We've sponsored a team for the Golf Day, and are looking forward to getting involved in the other club events as they come along.

### Something we'd like to shout about:

Newbury Ladies have secured shirt sponsorship for the next two seasons from Matrix Electronics, who are a leading provider of supply chain solutions to the electronics manufacturing marketplace. Managing Director,



David Piddington, is father of 1st team player Flo. David has always been a fan of rugby, but started taking a special interest when Flo started playing for the U18s. He wanted to do something to progress the Women's game, and sponsorship seemed like a good way

to start. David is now working with the whole club to help bring in other sponsors.

If you have any sponsor suggestions, or would like to get involved, please contact Richard Deal.

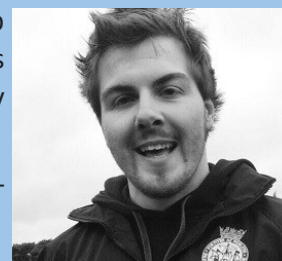
**COLTS RUGBY** is arguably the most important section of any rugby club for their senior teams and for most clubs some Colts players decide not to continue to the senior sides. It might be they just fancy a change, particularly if they have been playing the game since they were seven years old. How encouraging then that in senior pre-season, for at least one of the sessions 50% of those training had played for NRFC Colts. We must be doing something right. However there's always ways to improve and suggestions are always welcome so we can retain even more of our Colts. Will Harwood here talks about the Colts season just finished. **BRIAN LEE**

Before the 2019/20 season was cut short, the Newbury RFC Colts were having a promising season for the future of the rugby club. Results may not have always gone our way but the Colts fielded two teams in the OBB Youth Leagues for a second consecutive season. All fixtures were fulfilled for both teams, a feat that can't always be replicated by others at this age-group. Over 40 young men represented the Colts, including a handful of new or returning players.

The 2020/21 season is going to be different for all rugby lovers. However, plans were in place to start training on 29th July, with a longer pre-season likely, coaches have had to be creative in session planning to challenge players and keep them engaged. Once social distancing measures are eased, the plan is for the colts to move training nights from Wednesday to Thursday so as to warm-up with the senior men. This is to help bridge the gap between colts and senior rugby and help build relationships with peers and coaches alike. What's promising is that a number of last year's colts have already been seen training with the men this season.

The last count was at least 15 colts from the previous 3 seasons involved in senior pre-season already. The future looks blue.

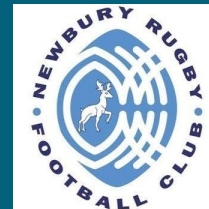
**WILL HARWOOD**





# BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

## THROUGH THE EYES OF THE PLAYERS



### Dan Thorne (Captain, Senior Men)

Stags players don't normally get the chance to see Blues in action but the one time they did last season was certainly worth the wait. After an early kick off away at Oxford Harlequins, Stags were back at Monks Lane in time to watch the second half of Blues vs Brixham. The score was 14-20 going into the last minute of the game when Toby Holland scored to make it 19-20. One of the qualities of a good captain is that he or she steps up when the team needs them and we can all remember what happens after Toby's try. With the last kick of the game, captain Dan Thorne kicks a very difficult conversion to make the final score 21-20 to Blues. One of the highlights of the season!

Dan grew up primarily playing soccer for Thatcham Tornadoes and AFC Newbury and cricket for Falkland. It wasn't until he started sixth form that he decided he wanted to give rugby a go, playing for his school first XV and then a gap year which saw him play for Newbury for the first time, as an U19 Colts player. A course at St Mary's University to study Sports Science and Nutrition followed school and in 2010/11 Dan started pre-season training with the senior Newbury squad. Unfortunately, a knee injury against Bath in pre-season ruled him out of the first half of the season and he made his debut for Blues in January 2011 against Lydney at home, coming on as a replacement.



Since 2011 Dan has been a Blues regular, gaining 210 Blues caps and captaining the side on 139 occasions. Dan says that he has been very proud to lead the team and has been fortunate that what he calls his "big" games, (his 150th and 200th caps) have been at home against teams from near the top of the league, both of which have been victories. Great memories.

As a teacher Dan tries to implement teaching skills into his captaincy, none as important as treating players as individuals and reacting appropriately to different personalities. He tries to imbue a spirit of continuous improvement into the team, whether they are winning or losing.

Dan comes across as a keen student of the game having gained his RFU Level 2 Coaching Award and he feels this helps him analyse games in real time,

spotting how opposition teams play, seeing if there are obvious weaknesses and adapting Blues' game accordingly. This is all done with the help of a few senior players on the field, which Dan finds invaluable, particularly those who lead certain aspects of the game such as line outs.

Obviously disappointed at the team's relegation last season, Dan reflects on the difference between Level 5 and Level 6 rugby and says, "At Level 5 teams that do not play at their best are likely to lose which is not the case at Level 6."

Making a push for promotion next season is important and Dan says there is a confidence within the team that they are good enough to get to and remain at Level 5 and he hopes the experience of playing at Level 5 will hold them in good stead for the coming seasons.

Dan says that all too often in sport we get transfixed with what players can't do rather than what they're good at. The key he says is to appreciate player weaknesses and work on them. In his own case he cites kicking off his right foot. A natural left foot kicker, Dan has worked hard on improving his weaker foot and is now more confident with his right footed field kicking, although whether he will ever attempt a kick at goal off his right foot remains to be seen!

And advice to young players? Work on your weaknesses but don't forget about your strengths because it's those strengths that will give individuals a point of difference, will get players noticed and try to become the best in your team at doing something. "A bit like Jonny Wilkinson who dropped the goal to win the world cup with his weaker foot."

The future for Dan? He would like to go into coaching although he is far more likely to continue playing for a number of seasons, injuries permitting and who knows, in a few years time we might see him playing for the Stags or A's ..... when he finally decides to step down from first team rugby. Now that would be worth a trip to Oxford Harlequins to watch .