

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE TELEGRAPH

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## **Dream is over but S&L's attention turns to promotion**



Stewarts & Lloyds v Yarnbury in the RFU National Senior Vase semi-final. Pictures courtesy of Noel Doyle

**So, the Twickenham dream was not to be.**

The prospect of playing at rugby's headquarters was snatched away from Stewarts & Lloyds at the last hurdle when they lost 21-11 to Yarnbury in the RFU National Senior Vase semi-final.

Mixed emotions engulfed the men from Occupation Road at the end with pride tinged with huge disappointment seemingly the over-riding feeling.

"It's difficult to assess," said head coach Kev Manson. "I am sure we could have won.

"We started well and really scared them in the first 20 minutes.



"I think Yarnbury's heart rates were well up when they saw how well we were playing.

"But the bounce didn't quite go for us on a couple of occasions and, in the end, I think it was home advantage that told.

"That's not sour grapes, though. I have no complaints.

"Yarnbury were arguably the better side on the day and I really hope they go on and win the final.



"I wish them good luck because it would nice to say we lost to the winners.

"We are friends in rugby now and I hope it won't be the last time we see them.

"Our boys were a credit to the club, the supporters were a credit to the club and I am exceptionally proud of what they have done.

“The players gave everything they could. They threw everything at it and left nothing on the field.



“John (Robson) and I are so thankful for all the effort they have put in all season.

“I would have been disappointed if we had lost after not giving ourselves every chance but the boys put all they could into it.

“It was sombre in the huddle at the end of the game and a few of the guys were quite emotional knowing how close we had come.

“But they represented our club really well – and Yarnbury’s president said as much to everyone in the clubhouse afterwards – and we left in good spirits.”



There is no time to wallow in self-pity and ponder on what might have been, however.

While many others clubs are already on their summer break, S&L still have the serious business of promotion to concern them.

Two bonus-point wins from the remaining two games – at home to Bedford Queens this week and away to Rugby St Andrews the Saturday after – and they can go into the off-season knowing they have achieved their initial goal from the start of the season.

And while the disappointment of last weekend will be a motivational factor for many of the players, Manson insists it is not the main driving force.



“Our theme or philosophy all year has been progression and development,” he stated.

“We can’t reflect too much. We have to concentrate on the next game and focus on the now.

“It is all about looking forward. Yes, we will take something away from the cup game and we’ll learn from it.

“But it becomes white noise if you keep talking about what has already happened.



“Getting over the line is all that matters now.

“We have to win this weekend and get a bonus point, that is what we are thinking about.

“We need to get to the next match first and we don’t do our job against Queens then it won’t matter anyway.

“Two wins, two bonus points – it’s as simple as that!

“I’m sure the lads will be keen to win to put the disappointment of last week behind them.

“But there is no greater motivation than promotion.”