

FORMER BLUES PLAYERS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Marie Davies

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

After the British and Irish Lions Tour to South Africa this summer it seems appropriate to 'catch up' with some of the South Africans of the professional era who made an impact at Goldington Road. We are not in touch with them all, but have an update on those below.



RUDI STRAULI

Back Row

35 appearances 1996-99
Player coach 1998-99
Director of Rugby 2004-05.



The Strauli family relocated to Pretoria in 2014 when Rudi became C.E.O. for the Golden Lions (now the Sigma Lions) in Johannesburg.

Of course, the main new family news is that Ruhan, Rudi and Rene's son, now 22 and 6ft. 4ins, played for the Sigma Lions v The British and Irish Lions in the first game of the recent tour. Ruhan who is comfortable playing in both the second and back row came off the bench.

Rudi continues in his role as CEO at the Sigma Lions. The family's last visit to Goldington Road was on Boxing Day 2010 when they witnessed the town's remarkable response to the urgent call to clear the pitch of the overnight heavy fall of snow so that the game v Bristol could go ahead. Of course, it did go ahead and the result was a great 39-22 win for Bedford. What a reward for the town!

SHAUN PLATFORD

Second Row

35 apps. 1996-98



Shaun is going to feature in an updated article about his life in South Africa later this season.

He joined Bedford in the first season of professionalism. His wife Jen joined the teaching staff at Wootton Upper School. They returned to South Africa in 1998 and are still living in Durban. They have a son Josh, who is 19.

NEAL HATLEY

Prop

34 apps. 1997-9



Neal was actually born in Chorley, Lancashire, but spent his early life in South Africa. After Bedford, he had a prestigious rugby career in the Premiership playing at London Irish. In 2012 he joined Bath as Forwards Coach, leaving in 2016 to become England's Forward Coach under Eddie Jones. Following the World Cup in 2019 he returned to Bath as Forwards and Defence Coach and in 2020 he became Head Coach at Bath where he lives with his wife Robyn and two daughters.

CHRIS PEARSON

Hooker

11 apps. 1999-2000



Chris, his wife Nicola and daughters Emily 14 and Lauren 12 live in Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal.

Chris owns a company that helps game reserves in South Africa with wildlife (predominantly rhino, elephant and lion) to fund the costs associated with their wildlife conservation, research and management.

PHILL CLARKE

Second Row

43 apps. 2000-02



Phill's father was English but his mother South African. He was brought up from an early age in Durban so inevitably joined Natal Rugby, where Rudi Strauli, having returned to South Africa, was

coaching. It was Rudi who arranged for Phill to gain overseas experience with Bedford. Phill then returned to South Africa for a spell before playing in England again at London Welsh, where his rugby career ended because of a serious neck injury.

Phill became a Consultant for an Energy Company and lives in Ashted in Surrey with his wife Sarah and daughters Emma and Ally.

NIC STRAUSS

Back Row

109 apps. 2004-08



Nic is going to feature in a programme article in November, so I will only add that he has retired from playing rugby and is still living with his family in France.

MARK HARRIS

Full Back

31 apps. 2004-06



Mark lives in Ballito near Durban with his wife Jess, daughter Lily aged 10 and son Cruz aged 7. He works for a Property Development Company in Sheffield Beach. He still enjoys deep sea fishing and golf and because Cruz loves football and rugby Mark finds himself constantly kicking or passing a ball.

Mark's highlight at Bedford was winning the Powergen Shield Final at Twickenham in 2005 when he scored our only try in the 14-13 win over Plymouth. He recalls, 'The support was phenomenal and I'll never forget my Twickenham experience or the party on the bus on the way home!'

Mark and Jess haven't given up the idea of returning to live in the U.K., so hopefully we might see them at Goldington Road in the not too distant future.

PAUL KENDALL

Wing

17 apps. 2005-07



Paul lives in Dallas, Texas. He met his American wife Stephanie in Bedford, where she was teaching lacrosse at Bedford High School.

When we last heard, Paul was working in Real Estate and was still an avid runner and Triathlon competitor. Paul and Stephanie have three children - a son Cameron and two daughters Hadley and new baby Beckett.

DARRYL VEENENDAAL

Scrum Half

147 appearances. 2009-2015



Hopefully, we will feature an article about Darryl later this season. His impressive 147 appearances for the club is unusual and noteworthy in the professional era.

The latest news we have is that Darryl will be playing for Cambridge RFC in the 2021-22 season.

HANDRE SCHMIDT

Wing

42 apps. 2010-12



Handre was born in Cape Town. At school he played scrum-half but when he was 19 his coach persuaded him to change positions and play on the wing. During his two seasons at Bedford he scored 33 tries!

Handre and his wife Genna still live fairly locally in Newton Blossomville. Handre is a Director of Life Sciences EMEA. It was good to see him playing at Chairman Geoff Irvine's farewell celebrations in May. He obviously hasn't lost his try scoring skills as he scored six tries - a double hat-trick!

NICK FENTON-WELLS

Back Row

69 apps. 2013-16
Captain 2014-16



Nick joined the playing squad at Bristol in 2016 and after retiring from playing he was offered the position of Team Manager. He continues in this role alongside our legendary Junior Paramore, who is the Bears' kit manager. Nick and his wife Skye live in Bristol with their little son Leo.

MOURITZ BOTHA

Second Row

73 apps. 2006-09



Mouritz is still a familiar face in Bedford and he will be back at Goldington Road today with Ampthill where he is currently Forwards Coach. Mouritz, lives locally with wife Natasha and sons Josh and Theodore.