

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Marie Davies

JOHN EGAN

Back Row. 1989-95. 36 appearances. 5 tries

John writes:

I was twenty three when I came to Bedford for a job interview at the Magistrates Court, having left Essex University the year before with a Law degree. I was interviewed by Dudley Peacock, the former auctioneer and magistrate and given a job as a court clerk.

A year later I left and went to Wolverhampton and did my solicitor's exams, having secured some good contacts (mostly in 'The Three Cups') which would later prove invaluable. I had captained the rugby side in university and also captained Wolverhampton.

I returned to Bedford the following year and was offered a solicitor's training contract at Woodfines, courtesy of Gareth Woodfine and Nic Davies, whom

I had met during the year spent in Bedford. This was in no small part because they loved rugby. I was encouraged to join the Blues which I duly did. I was hoping for big things! At first I played many games for the Wanderers where 'Hoss' Lilley was a supporting influence, and it was not until Ian Snook arrived from New Zealand to be coach that I was finally given the opportunity to play for the 1st team. This was a long way from my first club in Kent where I played for Deal Wanderers up to the age of eighteen.

I remember my first game for Bedford (although not the opponents) and not for the best reasons - giving away a try - but thereafter things could only improve. My best game might have been against Leicester (away) though as a team we got hammered. My opposite No 7 was Neil Back and Dean Richards was at No 8.



BEDFORD ATH AT TWICKENHAM. JOHN, 3RD FROM BACK.



CANADA TOUR 1994. JOHN, MIDDLE ROW, 3RD FROM RIGHT

The Underwood brothers were playing on both wings so it was never going to be easy! Another stand out game was against Northampton Saints. Playing opposite Tim Rodber at No 7 and Paul Alston at No 6. Paul, of course, would later come and play at Bedford.

When I was 26 I took a year's sabbatical and travelled around the world, which included staying with my old Bedford teammate Dave Francombe and playing for the Nondies side in Nairobi. Dave sadly was killed in a plane crash in 2016.

Back at Goldington Road a place in the back row did not come easily as there were so many good players around me like Steve Harris, Ian Skingsley, Glyn Wood, Steve Binnington and of course then alongside Eddie Rennell. I quickly realised that to make up for any shortcomings I would have to train harder and be fitter than everyone else. So that is what I did and stubbornly clawed my way back into the team.

While some of the details of the games I played seemed to have escaped me, no doubt due, in some small part to the numerous head injuries



LONDON LUNCH 2019

I received at the bottom of a ruck, what I do remember are the people I trained and played with over the years which gave me a sense of belonging to a town with which otherwise I would have no real connection, having not grown up here. Those ex-players remain great friends and they know who they are without mentioning them all. The tour to Canada in 1994 was, of course, a highlight of my rugby career at Bedford. Fortunately, after the Blues went professional a happy band of players went to Bedford Athletic and I was able to enjoy a few more seasons playing with the likes of Jimmy Chandler, 'Skins', Ashley Tapper et al which enabled us to win the NPI Cup and enjoy an unbeaten season in 1997.

Now my playing days are behind me I still keep fit doing the odd half marathon or mini triathlon now and again. And of course, playing 5-a-side football with the likes of Glanvill, Chandler, Whetstone, Mansell, Rennell and Taylor. Three years ago I bought a farm with my wife and I now share my time between practising divorce law (having set up my own practice as JE LAW Ltd), beef farming and family life, which is kept frantic by our six year old son William. I don't get down to Goldington Road as often as I would like, but when I do it's like coming home.



JOHN ON RIGHT. FORMER PLAYERS' LUNCH.