

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Marie Davies

ED TAYLOR

Second Row/Back Row. 2016-20. 79 appearances. 4 tries.

Ed writes:

'I was born in Stourbridge, but grew up near Bridgnorth in Shropshire. With a Welsh mother and rugby-mad father from Shropshire, there was only ever one sport I was going to play. One part of my family is from a farm on the Snowdonia coast, near Aberdŷfi and Tywyn and the other part from Wolverhampton and Shropshire. A few lads would call me a 'plastic' Welshman but there are many mongrels like me on the Wales / Shropshire border. "Shwmael!"

Writing this at the age of 28, the Covid break was the longest I've had from rugby for 24 years - Yes - Since the age of 4! It has been a tough period for everyone, but it is great to see crowds back again!

At 4 I was taken to Wolverhampton Rugby Club until Bridgnorth, my local rugby club began junior rugby when I was 6. I would play there until the age of 17, coached by my old man and his mates - clueless at times - but they were a huge inspiration. I may be biased, but the club has one of the most picturesque backdrops in the country. The River Severn separates the club and the historic 'high town' which sits overlooking the rugby arena on sandstone cliffs. The decision to step out on the often flooded pitches of Bridgnorth Rugby Club would be what shaped the rest of my life.

I don't like cricket, I love it!... I have been sport mad from an early age. In fact anything that involved a level of competition, I was locked in! Cricket would take over the majority of my summer, representing Shropshire and Worcestershire age groups. However, when concerned opposition parents started giving me grief for the aggression in my erratic pace bowling, or when I was banned from my friend's football parties because of aggressive tackling, I think my parents knew rugby was going to be the sport for me.

At the age of 11, I joined Old Swinford Hospital (OSH), a state boarding school in Stourbridge where

rugby was a religion, with many pupils moving onto England age groups and professional rugby contracts. The rugby department's non-negotiable values were teamwork, work rate, discipline, humility and, most importantly, enjoyment. Our age group was very successful and as captain of our first team, we reached the Daily Mail National Schools Cup Final at Twickenham, where we lost narrowly to Dulwich College. It was special to share this moment with my 15 year old brother, Huw, who was always going to be destined for great things in rugby. He later went on to win the Junior World Cup for England and is currently playing for Newport Gwent Dragons after a number of years at Worcester Warriors. (Huw continues to be a huge inspiration for me - would still have him in a scrap mind).

During my final year at school, I was fortunate enough to play for England U19 against Wales (split allegiances in the family that day) and was subsequently named captain of England U18 Clubs and Schools. I was awarded my first professional contract at Worcester Warriors and put my studies at Loughborough Uni on hold. After a school rugby tour to Argentina filled with copious amounts of booze and BBQ'd red meat, I was ready to enter into a Premiership rugby environment. I had limited game time for Worcester, but with loan spells at Rotherham Titans and Old Luctonians, I had plenty of men's rugby experience.



ED NOW-PLAYING FOR BLACKHEATH



FRIENDS FOR LIFE!

I thought I knew how to throw a rugby social until I arrived at Loughborough Uni. Some of my best memories on the pitch have come in a Loughborough African-Violet jersey. But nothing compares to the lifelong friendships that were made from the loose off-pitch antics. I am very fortunate to have played over 75 times in National League 1 alongside best mates, who were looking for the typical university experience whilst playing a decent level of rugby. I was captain of the 1st XV in my final year, which was a challenge in a very competitive league, but we ended up having a successful season. I was fortunate enough to be offered another shot at pro rugby. Mikey Rayer came to watch my game against Richmond and soon after offered me a full time contract.

I was offered other opportunities, but Bedford seemed the perfect fit. Bedford have an impressive track record, an incredible fan base, historic ground and a reputation for an exciting brand of attacking rugby. It is safe to say Bedford did not disappoint! The training schedule also allowed me to complete a Masters in Real Estate at UCL whilst in my first year, so I was able to pursue a property career alongside my rugby commitments. I went on to play about 80 times, and was extremely proud to captain a special club on a number of occasions.

We made some amazing memories at Bedford; finishing in the top 4, two years in a row; the away trips to Penzance; insane pre-season tours to Bordeaux, Barcelona and Bruges; the post-match beers in the marquee; hosting 'Bedford's Got Talent'; winning against Munster and probably my favourite moment - beating Jersey at home on that famous Boxing Day game! I have come away with some lifelong friends.

My plan was to play semi-pro rugby whilst focusing more on my career, after recently becoming a Director of a development company called CB Collier. Implications of COVID-19 accelerated that move to the Summer 2020.



CAPTAIN ED!

In the Summer of 2021, a year after my double hip surgery, a group of us from Bridgnorth Rugby Club (including my girlfriend Emily) set up a charitable initiative called "Maul Together"; we will complete annual challenges and events to raise money for charities close to our hearts. During that summer, we completed our first event which was cycling from John O'Groats to Lands End in 9 days, and raised £60,000 for My Name's Daddie Foundation and Matt Hampson Foundation. Was worse than playing Rotherham away in January!

Emily and I then moved to Blackheath and having 'The Club' on my doorstep, joining was something of a no-brainer. Blackheath obviously has an outstanding rugby history and reputation. I was subsequently named captain for the 21/22 season, which is an incredible honour and I am thoroughly enjoying my first season. The quality of our squad and the coaching and backroom staff make me excited for what is to come. It's been a tough transition year so far, but I am confident that we will survive the fight, finish the season well and push on for a higher league finish next year!

I would like to thank Mikey Rayer for taking a gamble on a daft university graduate and all the coaches, backroom staff and everyone else who contributed to making my time at GR so special. I cannot wait to get back into the marquee and to give Deano grief on the side-line for still living with his mum and dad, whilst holding a pint of Eagle in my (left) hand!

CHARITY CYCLING CHALLENGE

