

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



by Marie Davies



JUSTIN BLANCHET

2014-19. Back row. 85 appearances. 3 tries.
7 International caps for Canada

Following in the footsteps of James Pritchard, Justin became the club's second Canadian International on the Honours Board when he was capped in 2019.

Justin made an immediate impact at Goldington Road. In an early home match of his first season he was awarded the Anglian Fasteners Man of the Match in our game v Yorkshire Carnegie, which we won 15-10.

Justin made his debut for Canada's National Team v Brazil in 2019 in the Americas Rugby Championship. His performances in the rest of the tournament saw him named in the Canadian Squad for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan. Unfortunately, he had to withdraw from the squad after suffering concussion in the warm-up game v the U.S.A.

Justin writes:-

'I was born in Montreal, Quebec, which is a French-speaking part of Canada. My family are French Canadians, including both my parents and myself and French is my first language. Alexandre, my half brother still lives in Montreal. There were no family connections to rugby, but both my brother Sam and I played a lot of sports when we were growing up, including ice hockey when we were still in Canada. When, as a family, we moved to the U.K. and lived in Lincoln, Sam and I both started playing rugby at Lincoln R.F.C. and were both chosen to play for Canada U17s. This meant we played at the Millfield School International Tournament and got spotted by Exeter Chiefs, who were able to offer us a place at Truro College. This was where we completed our A levels. From Truro, I went to Exeter University where I studied Economics. I played for both the University and on loan to Taunton R.F.C., who, at the time were in National 2. I also had some games for Exeter Chiefs.'

(Former player Tony Yapp 1997- 99 and now Head Coach at Taunton Titans coached Justin first at Exeter University and also got him involved with Taunton RFC, where he played several games. Tony recalled, 'Justin was a great person and always played very well'.

Tony added, 'It was always a pleasure working with Justin and his brother Sam'. Tony was delighted when Justin joined the Blues and was very happy to see him do so well to which he added, 'was never in any doubt'. Tony was able to catch up with Justin at our End of Season Dinner in 2017.)

Justin continues:-

'I left Exeter in 2014 and wanted to join a club that played an entertaining and enjoyable brand of rugby. I don't think I could have made a better choice. I stayed at Bedford for five seasons. I loved the rugby, made many friends and have some great memories.

I have picked out two of several memorable games. Strangely, they are both 'away' games! The first was beating Bristol away 29-23 in the first game of the 2015-16 season. That was a particular playing highlight!

END OF SEASON 2019



BEDFORD BLUE

Another memorable 'moment' from that season was playing away against Nottingham on a particularly boggy pitch in February 2016, with my brother Sam scoring the game's winning try in the last minute, which made the score 18-18. Of course, there was no chance of Sharpy missing the conversion, so we came away with a 20-18 win! (not quite as close as December 3rd 2022 at Goldington Road v. Nottingham 32-31!). Sam made 8 appearances for Bedford that season and scored 4 tries.

Of course I always enjoyed the Blues' 'off the field' trips and my favourite has to be our trip to the Menin Gate and Bruges. It was definitely the most memorable experience!

After several rugby injuries, Sam decided it was time for a change of sport and was encouraged to try bobsleighbing which he enjoyed and at which he was also successful. He was chosen for the team that went to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. In 2019 he gave rugby another try and joined Taunton Titans where Tony Yapp, another Blues former player is the Head Coach. He eventually left the sporting world at the start of 2022 and currently works at KPMG in the world of finance in London.

Those who have followed my rugby career will know I was very prone to injuries, especially concussion. I finally knew I had to stop playing following being concussed in Canada's warm-up game v. the U.S.A. in September 2019. It had not been a good year for injuries! It was my fourth concussion in 12 months and within that year I had already broken my arm twice.

My fiancée Jojo, - we met in Exeter- and I decided to take some 'time out' to travel. Our first stop was South Africa and, of course, Canada was included in the itinerary. On our return we made our home in London.



CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL

I now work in Real Private Equity in London and we live in Earlsfield in South West London, which is about a two-minute walk from where 'big' Will Carrick-Smith lives!

When you read this I will be a married man. Jojo and I are getting married on the 10th December in the Scottish Highlands. We've been together now for over ten and a half years, so thought it was probably time to 'tie the knot'.

Sending best wishes to the Blues for the rest of this season!

WEDDING DAY!

