

FORMER BLUES PLAYERS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Marie Davies



DARRYL VEENENDAAL

2009-15. Scrum Half. 147 appearances. 18 tries.

Darryl's 147 appearances for the club are noteworthy, especially in the professional era.

Darryl was born in Alberton, Natal, South Africa and the family moved to England when he was eight. When he arrived in England he couldn't speak a word of English! The family made their new home in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Wisbech RFC became an important part of the Veenendaal family life and Darryl's father is the Director of Rugby and Chairman of the club.

Darryl writes:

'We settled in Wisbech and my first introduction to rugby was at Wisbech RFC, where I played in the mini-rugby section. My father and grandfather were undoubtedly the main influences in my early rugby life. From Glebe House School in Hunstanton, I went to Sedbergh School in Cumbria for my GCSEs before joining Oakham School in Rutland for 'A' levels. Both Sedbergh and Oakham had strong rugby traditions. The memorable games from my school days were the House matches, the Daily Mail fixtures at Oakham School and playing for the East Midlands, Midlands and England Students. I also enjoyed other sports like hockey, cricket and athletics.

TRY TIME!



IN ACTION FOR THE BLUES

My rugby playing career flourished at Bedford and I averaged about 28 games per season. I played with some very good Bedford fly-halves - mainly Jake Sharp and Myles Dorrian.

There were many memorable seasons and games. The 2012-13 season stands out for me! Bristol and Newcastle were in our League, but we managed to reach the Playoff Final. The semi-finals were very exciting. We had a 9-point lead after our home game v Nottingham and held on with an even closer away win by two points. It will be 10 years in May since we met Newcastle in the Finals. Although we lost narrowly both home and away it was a great achievement. Our games v Bristol were always exciting particularly the B&I Cup Final in 2011 which we lost 14-17 away at Bristol in the pouring rain!

I enjoyed the B&I Cup fixtures, particularly travelling away to 'wet and muddy' Wales. I was in the Championship Dream XV in 2011 and played for the South African Barbarians in 2013. Also, I always enjoyed playing in the same team as my brother, DelaRey.

I joined Northampton Saints Academy and it was when I left there that Ali Hephner, who had played for the Blues from 2001-06, referred me to Bedford and Denis Ormesher, who was in charge of the Colts. During this time I also gained men's rugby experience at Luton RFC in 2009, joined the Blues' first team in 2010 and played for Bedford until 2015.



2014-15 DARRYL - FRONT ROW, 3RD FROM LEFT

I have many great 'off-the-field' memories, particularly the pre-season bonding trips. Probably my favourite was travelling to France for a pre-season training camp in Bordeaux. It was an amazing visit and the hospitality was great. Away coach trips were always fantastic, especially if we won. Travelling home from, for example, Plymouth and Penzance with Hynes leading the charge and Toops in control of the funnel was a memorable experience! Six Nations Super Saturdays meant a team visit to The Grafton pub in Midland Road where we celebrated together.

My final game for Bedford was the last game of the season on April 25th 2015. I had signed for Nottingham RFC for the 2015-16 season and by some strange coincidence, we were playing Nottingham that day. My family were there to give their support. On that day, we lost to my new club 17-26. An even stranger coincidence was that four years later my final game for Nottingham was again the last game of the season at Goldington Road, but this time it was Bedford who gained the win 38-13.

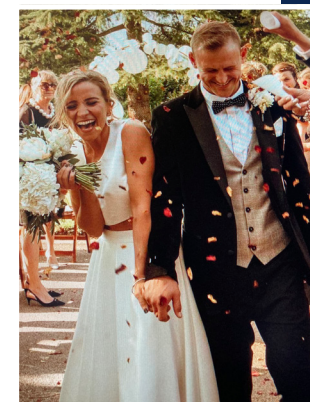
I made many friends while at Bedford and am still in contact with several including Ollie Dodge, Ben Gulliver and Stef Liebenberg, a fellow South African, who played at Goldington Road in the 2011-12 season.

IN ACTION FOR NOTTINGHAM AGAINST THE BLUES



I had always been interested in coaching rugby and had already taken sessions at Wisbech, so I was pleased when I was offered the post of player-coach at Amptill RFC. This was followed by another player-coach role at Cambridge RUFC.

Ash and I were married in 2021 and now are living in Putnoe in Bedford. I am currently working in Recruitment, coaching and playing for Bedford Queens and coaching Bedford Blues Women.'



WEDDING DAY



DARRYL NOW

I recently discovered that Darryl 'loves' running and was 'delighted' that Ashleigh decided that the best way to celebrate his birthday would be by them both taking part in the Landmark London Half-Marathon on April 2nd!! Good luck Ashleigh and Darryl!