

FORMER BLUES PLAYERS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Marie Davies



DARREN FEARN

Prop. 43 appearances. 2012-2014. 3 tries.

Darren was born in Scarborough, North Yorkshire. He was a great fan of Rugby League and when he was growing up he played both codes. His father played for Hull, but that was the only family rugby connection. Rugby wasn't played much at the Comprehensive School he attended in Scarborough, but when he was in 6th Form College he won a Sports Scholarship at Northumbria University. In university, he studied sports development and rugby coaching and also signed a professional rugby contract at Newcastle Falcons.

Darren writes:

'Growing up, I was a great fan of Rugby League. My family was very supportive and therefore a great influence. There was very little rugby played at the Comprehensive School I attended, but I was also very keen on football. In fact, I thought I was good with the round ball! I went on to play rugby for Blaydon Rugby Club, Northumbria University and Newcastle Falcons.



DARREN IN ACTION FOR NEWCASTLE

After visiting Bedford and Meeting with the Director of Rugby, Mike, at The Embankment Hotel, I left Newcastle and moved to Bedford for the 2012-13 season.

I thoroughly enjoyed my two seasons at Bedford. The home support at Goldington Road was always fantastic. The first season was particularly successful. We came first in Pool 2 of the British and Irish Cup reaching the semi-final, came 3rd in the Championship, won the two-legged play-off semi-final vs. Nottingham, but narrowly lost the play-off final (home and away) to Newcastle. The night out in Newcastle was also very successful and extremely memorable! Another highlight for me was our huge 45-25 win vs. Leeds Carnegie at Otley RFC. Having been brought up in Yorkshire this was very special for me. We had some very experienced players that season - to name just a few - James Pritchard, Paul Tupai, Darren Fox, Sacha Harding. There were many more and of course, Jake Sharp at fly-half, was a special talent! It is good to see that several players moved on to play for the Premiership - Mark Atkinson, Luke Baldwin, Nick Fenton-Wells, Josh Bassett, Ben Cooper to name just a few. Also, a special mention for scrum-half, Ali Price, who has had a great rugby career for Glasgow Warriors, Scotland - recently in their RWC Squad and is also, of course, a British Lion.

Our pre-season 'team bonding' trip to France was incredible. The varied and extensive entertainment offered by Ian Vass will never be forgotten!



...AND FOR BEDFORD



2012-13 10 YEAR REUNION

When I left Bedford in 2014, I signed for Sale Sharks, then later for Mowden Park. I still currently run out for Blaydon, my very first club.'

After Darren finished playing professional rugby he became Head of Rugby at Northumbria University and in 2019 was appointed as Newcastle University's new Director of Rugby, following the retirement of Matt Carter. Darren took over the University's five men's and two women's teams. He has also been involved in the coaching of England Students since 2018 and is currently the Head Coach. In April 2022, England Students played France Universities in Kingston Park and won 16-15 with two late penalties. It was interesting to see some familiar names in the squad - Joe Howard, Monty Royston and Charles Rylands!



Darren has mentioned his England Students' away victory vs. France in his 2023 update below.

DARREN WITH ENGLAND STUDENTS CAPTAIN JOSH BARTON. FRANCE 2023

Darren continues:

'I am now living in Newcastle and am the Director of Rugby at Newcastle University and Head Coach for England Students. I have coached some players who have progressed to playing for Bedford. In May this year the England Students won vs. the French Universities 25-21. This marked the side's first win on French soil in seventeen years!

I am married to Kayleigh and we have two daughters - Amélie and Léonie. They are definitely 'Geordies'!



FAMILY. DARREN, KAYLEIGH, AMÉLIE AND LÉONIE

In May this year at Bedford's End of Season Gala Dinner, the squad of the successful 2012-13 season was invited to celebrate the 10 year reunion. It was great to meet up again and reminisce with my 'old' Bedford teammates.'

Darren made a great effort to travel the long distance from Newcastle to meet up with his teammates for the reunion. His effort to be there was much appreciated and a great evening was enjoyed by all.