

FORMER BLUES PLAYERS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Marie Davies



MARK FLANAGAN

Second Row. 2015-16 & 2018-19. 47 appearances.

Continuing the club's Irish Connection, Mark Flanagan has given us an update on his present life in Dublin - his family, work and rugby. The connection would not be complete without a 'catch-up' with one of our most recent Irish players.

Mark was born in Westmeath, Ireland and attended St. Finian's College. He has a cousin who is a famous Irish International - Devin Toner. Devin, like Mark, was a second row and at 6ft.10in was the tallest player in the 2015 World Cup.

Mark's Senior Career

- 2009-2013 Leinster
- 2013-2015 A move to France to play for Stade Montois
- 2015-2016 Bedford Blues
- 2016-2018 Saracens
- 2017-2018 Munster (on loan)
- 2018-2019 Return to Bedford Blues



MARK IN ACTION FOR SARACENS

Mark was an Ireland International at U18, U19 and U20 levels.

His initial season 2015-16 at Goldington Road, mainly partnering Bedford legend Mike Howard in the second row, impressed Saracens so much that they offered him a contract. Sarries DoR Mark McCall was quoted as saying, 'I have been watching Mark Flanagan for some time and he has proved himself one of the most impressive lock forwards in the Championship.'

Mark spent two seasons at Saracens and was a member of the Premiership winning squad. During his second season with them, he spent three months on loan to Munster.

His second season at Bedford 2018-19 saw a fine second row partnership with Will Carrick Smith. At the end of that campaign, he returned to Ireland.

So, where is Mark now?



MARK IN ACTION FOR BEDFORD



BEDFORD TEAM 2015-16 - MARK, BACK ROW, 5TH FROM LEFT

Mark writes:

'I have been living in Dublin with my wife Aoife, since we moved home to Ireland from Bedford in 2019. We were married in Italy in September 2019, after I retired from playing rugby. We now have two children. James, our first born, came along in May 2020. Our daughter, Rae, was born in May 2022. Both are now in day care and loving it. James is due to start school in September 2025.

Aoife is a partner in Maples, a firm of solicitors. When I retired from playing professional rugby, I took up a role as an engineer in a Dublin firm, but later moved to Accenture to become a consultant in their financial services practice.

I continued playing rugby for Lansdowne F.C. for two more seasons. Both seasons were cut short by Covid so I took that as a sign to really hang up my boots. Since then, I've been coaching the senior first team in the All Ireland League. I am really enjoying the coaching element; it is keeping me engaged in the game and I'm enjoying the challenge that comes with coaching. It's no longer about going out and doing it on the pitch, it's about teaching the younger players how to - and that requires an understanding of what makes them tick and how to get the best out of a young group of men.

Then, outside of sport, I am looking forward to the start of good weather. I'll be out in our back garden with something cooking low and slow on the barbecue, and teaching the kids some of the core rugby skills. Hopefully, they'll be skillful enough to stay out of the second row!



MARK, AOIFE, JAMES AND RAE

I often look back on my two seasons with Bedford and recall great memories on and off the pitch. I am very thankful and honoured that I got to play my last season of professional rugby for Bedford. I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, I can return to Goldington Road with my family to watch a game and catch up with some familiar faces.

Sending my regards to all the crew!