

2024-25

A SEASON OF COMMEMORATION



The upcoming campaign of 2024-25 will be a very special one as Bedford Blues commemorate some of the greatest players, and teams, to ever wear the badge as some of the greatest trophy successes reach remarkable milestones.

They say anniversaries of the sporting kind should only occur on years which end with a zero or a five, and 2025 coincides with three of the club's greatest moments, including the unquestionable finest hour when Budge Rogers held a trophy aloft at Twickenham.

In the grand scheme of things, success at Bedford Blues and Goldington Road is about more than just lifting silverware above the captain's head; having the best support in the Championship is a success, evidencing a sustainable business model another, and many more.

But trophies are always the thing that the casual observer will first research and analyse, so here's three that we'll be looking back upon in greater detail throughout the coming season.



BUDGE ROGERS WITH THE 'CUP'

50 Years On – RFU Club Competition (1975)

In what essentially was the 'FA Cup' of rugby back in the 1970s, Blues celebrated their first ever trip to Twickenham by taking home the grandest prize on offer thanks to a 28-12 victory over Rosslyn Park.

This was just the fourth season of the RFU national knockout competition and Blues had to battle through some difficult fixtures just to make it to the showpiece in the capital.

A comprehensive 66-6 away victory at Bournemouth was followed by home successes against Sale (23-3) and Gosforth (13-6), before Bedford edged a close semi-final against old rivals and Cup holders Coventry (12-6) at Goldington Road.

A real arm wrestle ensued in the final as both sides came to Rugby HQ with momentum on their side. Pat Briggs' side weren't to be denied, however, as they sought the ascendancy early doors and never looked back.

Blues' greatest every try scorer, Derek Wyatt, started the ball rolling before Chris Bailward, Brian Keen and Bob Demming (2) also got in on the act. Neil Bennett was pretty much faultless from the tee.

It marked the perfect Twickenham swansong for former Lions legend, England captain and Blues record appearance holder, Rogers, who marked his final appearance at HQ with great aplomb.

BEDFORD BLUES TEAM THAT DAY:

Tony Jorden*, Bob Demming, Richard Chadwick, John Howard, Derek Wyatt*, Neil Bennett*, Alun Lewis*, Brian Keen, Norman Barker, Chris Bailward, Clive Hooker, Bob Wilkinson*, Andy Hollins, Budge Rogers (c)*, Foster Edwards

REPLACEMENTS: Chris Davies, Alistair Johnson, David Jackson, Guy Fletcher, Steve Wells, Brian Page

*denotes full international

THE BEDFORD SQUAD BEFORE KICK-OFF



30 Years On – Courage League Three (1995)

A thrilling final day victory over Richmond saw Blues again lift silverware aloft in what was affectionally known as the catalyst for Blues' meteoric rise in the 1990s which saw the club reach the Premiership during the Frank Warren days.

The 1994/95 season was the penultimate one of the amateur era and they possessed an incredibly talented roster of players under Mike Rafter's tutelage; captain Paul Alston, fly-half Andy Finnie and Ben Whetstone to name but a few.

It was an incredibly competitive campaign with Blackheath also fighting hard and both sides had their promotions wrapped up with time to spare. That left a straight shootout for the title in the final weeks and in this case, it went to the last day.

Blues had the advantage of destiny being in their own hands, but they were ravaged by injury leading into the game and had to hand schoolboys their debuts on both wings.

Nothing is ever done easy at Goldington Road and Rafter's men had to withstand a bombardment of Richmond attack to secure the league title thanks to a 21-20 victory.

Club legend, Whetstone scored that day; as did Steve Harris and Marcus Cook – all converted by the ever reliable Finnie to make it another memorable night in the club's history.



PAUL ALSTON CELEBRATES WITH THE TEAM AFTER WINNING PROMOTION

20 Years On – Powergen Shield (2005)

The most recent piece of silverware secured by the men's senior team as Rudi Straeuli signed off his time in charge of Bedford by making it two from two in terms of Twickenham appearances.

Again, it was by no means plain sailing as Blues had to rely on a dramatic late penalty from Leigh Hinton to see off Plymouth Albion – who that day were boasting Blues' greatest points scorer in history, James Pritchard.

The success completed the collection of trophies for the town of Bedford after Blues had also won the RFU Club Competition in 1975, Bedford Queens won the Junior Vase equivalent in 1995 and Bedford Athletic won the Intermediate in 1998.

Bedford were behind for 74 minutes of the contest, but fortunes favoured the brave and the familiar steely grit and determination helped Blues over the line in front of an estimated 5,000 travelling supporters.

Two Hinton penalties had Blues in the game at 13-6 behind at the break, before they finally crossed the whitewash on 64 minutes through Mark Harris to set up the grandstand finish.

Hinton may have missed the conversion to level the scores, but he made no mistake when next presented with the tee to cue bedlam in the ground and back at base with a party that went on into the night as Bedford rose to the top once again.

BEDFORD BLUES TEAM THAT DAY:

Mark Harris, Craig Moir, Leigh Hinton, Matt Allen (C), Mike Staten (Spencer Brown), Ali Hephher, Ian Vass; Matt Volland (Soane Tonga'u'iha), Chris Johnson, John Brooks, Jon Phillips, Arthur Brenton, Nic Strauss, Ben Lewitt, Junior Paramore (Shaun Brady)

