

FROM THE ARCHIVES

CLUB CONNECTIONS

Marie Davies looks at some of the key connections between Bedford Blues and Bath Rugby.

Bath's first visit to play Bedford was in 1935, nearly ninety years ago! Welcome to Goldington Road today to the team and the Bath supporters.

When former player Charlie Harrison contacted me to say he was hoping to be at Goldington Road to watch two of his former clubs play each other in the Premiership Rugby Cup, I realised we had quite a few former players connected to both clubs. There are certainly more connections than I can feature in this article, but these are some of the players I knew well and who played here after I arrived in Bedford in 1966.

Derek Wyatt

Wing. 1973-78. 152 appearances. 145 tries, 38 conversions, seven penalties and three drop goals.



Labour Member of Parliament for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (1997-2010).

Derek joined Bedford from Ipswich in 1973. As was the custom he had to earn a place in the 1st XV, but scoring 18 tries for the Wanderers in a few weeks, allowed him to play the rest of the season for the 1st team and score 33 tries!

In 1976 he came off the bench, replacing an injured David Duckham to gain a cap for England in the Calcutta Cup.

The highlight of his career at Bedford was winning the RFU Club Competition at Twickenham v Rosslyn Park in 1975.

In 1978, Derek left Bedford to play for Bath for four seasons. In his first two seasons there, he equalled their try-scoring record of 29 tries. He toured Wales with the Barbarians in 1979 and 1980 and gained a Blue at Oxford in 1982.

Derek is still Bedford's highest try scorer with 145 tries in five seasons! Blues' current wing Dean Adamson is hoping to overtake Derek. Dean currently has 135 tries.

Clem Boyd

Prop. 1996-99. 68 appearances. Three tries.

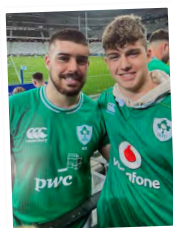


Clem is one of our Belfast-born former players. After studying at Edinburgh University, he returned to Northern Ireland and made 24 appearances for Ulster, before joining Bedford at the beginning of the professional era. Clem certainly made an impact at Goldington Road in a playing and social capacity! At the end of his second season, the Town greeted the club's promotion to the Premiership with euphoria. The players (many with recently dyed blue hair) went to Ayia Napa in Cyprus to celebrate. This was a particularly good move for Clem because he met Nicola, his future wife there. A great Scottish/Irish wedding followed in Edinburgh in 2001!

The 1998/99 season was difficult and Clem's rendition of 'Danny Boy' in the changing room was used to inspire Rudi Straeuli's team. Relegation was avoided in the Premiership play-offs v Rotherham.

Clem left to join Bath on a two-year contract, but family commitments meant he returned to Northern Ireland after a year and was given a contract with Ulster. He retired from playing in 2003. He is currently Director of Rugby at Instonians RFC.

Nicola and Clem's sons, Jacob and Adam, are rugby players. Jacob, also a prop, was in Ireland's team for the U20s World Cup in South Africa. Of course, the family was there to watch!



CLEM'S RUGBY
PLAYING SONS JACOB
AND ADAM BOYD

Charlie Harrison

Scrum Half. 1998-2000. 47 appearances. Two tries.



Charlie studied Economics and Politics at Bath University from 1994 to 1998 and played for Bath, first as an amateur and then as a professional. In 1998, he signed for the newly promoted Bedford where he remained for two seasons. Post Bedford, he played for Rotherham for four seasons before finishing his playing career at Doncaster, ending as player-coach in their first Championship season.

Charlie and his wife Emma moved to Wiltshire with their daughter Lucia and son Oscar. Charlie taught Politics and Economics at Marlborough College and was Master in Charge of Rugby. He has now been a Housemaster there for more than a decade.

Will Chudley

Scrum Half. 2007-11. 73 appearances. 11 tries.

Will was still a teenager when he joined Bedford but was soon noticed by Premiership sides.

His rugby career:

2007-11 Bedford Blues
2011-12 Newcastle Falcons
2012-18 Exeter Chiefs.
2018-21 Bath 55 appearances
2021-22 Worcester Warriors.
Players' contracts terminated in October 2022 when the club went into administration.
2022-24 Coventry



Will retired at the end of last season at the age of 36 and will now work full-time as a financial adviser.

Neal Hatley

Prop. 1997-99. 34 appearances. Two tries



Finally, I must mention our former player Neal Hatley, who has a strong connection with Bath. Neal was born in Lancashire but grew up in South Africa. He played in Bedford for two seasons before joining London Irish firstly as a player, then as coach to the Academy and scrum coach of the first team. From 2012-16, he was forwards coach at Bath before joining the England coaching team until 2019 when he returned to Bath. He is currently Japan's Coaching Co-Ordinator.

Father and son

This season the sons of two of Bedford's former players joined Bath.



Guy Pepper (back row) is the son of Martin Pepper who played here in the 1996-97 season, making 17 appearances and scoring 2 tries.

Eighteen-year-old Tyler Offiah (wing) is the son of Martin Offiah who also played here in the 1996-97 season, making 22 appearances and scoring 13 tries.

Also, Oscar, Charlie's son is enjoying rugby in Bath's Academy U16 side. Of course, as a Scrum Half!



A short Bath/Bedford quiz to finish

Name the following three players with Bath/Bedford connections.

1. Scrum Half. England international. Captained Bedford. MBE.
2. Centre. Transferred to Bedford from Bath mid-season. 33 appearances 14 tries.
3. Scrum Half. Three seasons with Bedford as player-coach.

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