

FROM THE ARCHIVES

CLUB CONNECTIONS

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

Bedford's first game against Bristol was an away fixture in 1925 which we lost 15-10. The records show we didn't play each other again until 1938, also at Bristol, but this time Bedford won 18-9. World War II postponed the return match until 1945 when Bristol gained a convincing 26-3 win. This evening, we welcome the current Bristol squad and supporters to Goldington Road.

There are several former players connected to both teams. I have selected players I know well and who played here after I arrived at the club in 1966.

Rich Lane

Full Back. 2017-2022 & 2023.
101 appearances. 33 tries.

It seems appropriate to start with a current Bristol player and one of Bedford's outstanding recent players.



Rich joined Bedford Blues from Jersey Reds in 2017. At the end of the 2018-19 season, he won the 'Players' Player of the Year Award'. He was made captain for the 2021-22 season before he went on loan to Bristol Bears in 2022. Following his loan spell, he was offered a permanent deal at Ashton Gate. However, the loan was reciprocated by Bristol when Rich returned in 2023 to make four more appearances to take him into the century club. Congratulations to Rich on his very successful Premiership career with Bristol Bears!

Roy Winters

Back Row / Second Row. 1996-2000. 116 appearances. 10 tries.

Roy first played for us in 1996 while still a student at Loughborough University. He was introduced to the club's Chairman Ian Bullerwell who gave him the opportunity to try professional rugby. This turned out to be a life-changing experience for Roy.

When he left Loughborough, he joined Bedford on a permanent basis and became a very popular player at Goldington Road. In 2000, he made the difficult decision to leave Bedford to join Harlequins. Unfortunately, his time in London was interrupted by injury including three ankle operations, a ruptured achilles and a shoulder 'clear-out'.

In 2005, he left Harlequins to join Bristol where he stayed until he retired from the game in 2013.

International career. 2 caps.

Roy was selected for the 2007 England tour of South Africa. He made his international debut against South Africa in Bloemfontein.

Bristol stats. 2005-13 188 appearances.

Roy retired in 2013 and the club showed its respect and gratitude with these words, 'Roy will go down as one of the all-time greats at the Memorial Stadium. He can be immensely proud of what he has achieved at Bristol.'

It was great to meet Roy at Ashton Gate when we went to Bristol last November to play in the Premiership Cup.



Junior Paramore

Back Row. 1996-99 & 2004-06.
113 appearances. 33 tries.

29 caps for Samoa.

Played in 3 World Cups.

Junior, of course, is one of Bedford's legends. It's not difficult to recall our supporters' voices echoing around the ground with shouts of 'Junior, Junior!'

In Junior's first season with us, we reached the Premiership Play-Off. Our opponents were Bristol, but in relatively close games we lost 20-11 at home and 19-12 away. Junior was named as Bedford's Player of the Year. However, the following season we finished top of Allied Dunbar Premiership Two and gained promotion to Premiership One. Junior was named as the League's Player of the Year.

Gloucester R.F.C. 1999-2004. 97 appearances. 33 tries.

In 1999 Junior left to join Gloucester RFC where he played for five seasons before Rudi Straeuli encouraged him to return to Bedford as a player/coach which he did for two years before injury ended his playing career. He continued coaching in clubs and schools until his new role as kit manager in Bristol in 2018.

Playing Bristol this season in the Premiership Cup has been a bonus as we have been able to reunite with Junior, his wife Debra and their children Daniella, Petrina, Jemina and Peter, who spent much of their childhood in Bedford. We look forward to welcoming Junior back to Goldington Road again this evening.



Nick Fenton-Wells

Back Row / Hooker. 2012-16.
69 appearances. 11 tries.
Captain 2014-16.

Nick is the only South African captain on our Honours Board, although Rudi Straeuli and Andre Fox may have captained some games while playing for us.

Nick came to the UK in 2012, joining Saracens on a six-month contract as a medical joker, but when players returned from injury, he was offered an opportunity to play regular rugby for Bedford. He was captain from 2014 until he left to join Bristol in 2016, where he made the positional change to hooker. In 2019, he won the Gallagher Community Player of the Season Award.

After he finished playing, Nick spent some time as Team Manager at Bristol before working full-time in corporate business and continuing to enjoy life with his family in the West Country.



A short Bedford/Bristol quiz to finish

Name the following with connections to both clubs.

1. Back row. An England International. Coach.
2. Fly-half. Also played for Plymouth Albion.
3. Scrum Half. Top of our 'Social' Honours Board!
4. Centre. Now playing in Ireland.

Answers on Page 38

