

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FESTIVE FIXTURES

Marie Davies looks at some of the key Christmas games held at Goldington Road.



Our festive fixture this season has moved from Boxing Day to December 28th. Fixtures such as these are always some of the best occasions – packed out crowds, great atmospheres, everyone in the Christmas spirit, and normally some fantastic and entertaining rugby on display.

Christmas games have been a staple of Bedford Blues history since inception in 1886, and the club retains a tremendously impressive winning record through the years – including scorelines such as a 90-3 victory in 1991 among others.

Before the professional era of the 1990s, games were even evidenced on Christmas Day; sometimes teams would turn out on consecutive days of Boxing Day, 27th and 28th!

Bedford Blues 67-7 Old Paulines Boxing Day 1974

When we arrived at the club in 1966, Old Paulines were already established as our regular Boxing Day opponents. Looking back through the club records this fixture was first played in 1913, and lastly in 1993 when we had an impressive 83-12 win.

Many of our former players will tell you they were given their first chance to play for the 1st XV when they were selected to play on Boxing Day for this fixture. Many were still at school when this happened, and most of them became regular players for the Rams, Rovers, Wanderers and the first team.

In 2025, the club will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its RFU Club Competition win at Twickenham, with most of the town travelling to watch the 28-12 victory over Rosslyn Park.

It was not our highest score of the competition because, in the first round, we travelled to Bournemouth where we won 66-6. This scoreline was only bettered on Boxing Day of that season with the 67-7 success at Goldington Road.



Bedford Blues 39-22 Bristol Boxing Day 2010

If I had to choose my favourite festive fixture, it would be Boxing Day 2010. We were having a great season with 14 wins and only two losses before Christmas. Bristol were our Boxing Day opponents, and we were expecting, maybe, a record-breaking crowd.

Also, a special former player and club coach and his family were travelling from their home in South Africa and intended to be at the game. However, would there even be a game? Overnight, snow had covered the pitch, but a 'help' call to the people of Bedford, as usual, brought a great response.

They turned out in force to clear the pitch until it was 'fit for play'. Rudi Straeuli, his wife Rene and children, Rieze and Ruhan, arrived at Gatwick at 7am and by 10am were at Goldington Road, where they witnessed the town's mammoth effort.

The volunteers and the 4,100 crowd were certainly rewarded by a great Blues performance. It was indeed a special day for the club and the town – one of three occasions the Blues Family have been required to get their snow boots on and shovels out, and three times the team have delivered with a rousing display.



Bedford Blues 28-19 Jersey Reds Boxing Day 2021

A match described by Mike Rayer as one of the greatest victories of his tenure as Director of Rugby. With close to 600 games and counting under his belt, that's quite something!

Blues were ravaged by injury – they didn't have a tighthead in training all week – and the pitch was tough and go whether it would be playable after a deluge of weather for a week. But with backs against the wall, Bedford rose like giants to see off title chasing Jersey in-front of over 4,000 inside Goldington Road.



The first festive fixture since the COVID-19 pandemic and what a fantastic occasion! Blues were in-front from pretty much the first whistle to the last in a real Christmas cracker that saw tries from hometown heroes, Rich Lane and Jamie Elliott, while Jack Hughes also got in on the act.

With Jersey sadly going out of business in 2023, this game will go down as the last time a Bedford squad tasted success against the team over on the island. Here's hoping the amateur side still playing out there can one day get to the heights of the Championship for a reacquaintance.

