

Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Club members

Issue 37 • August 2018

Continued support from MNP

We are pleased to offer some thoughts now that we are in our 3rd year sponsoring the club, our 2nd as lead sponsor. We would like to thank all our fellow sponsors for their continued commitment and thank the hundred+ volunteers that make the club such a unique community.

The mini and youth are in rude health and we look forward to seeing them continue in their winning ways after so much success last season. With player numbers approaching 700, we are sure this will continue particularly with the youth girls who found both league and cup success.

The ladies section were immense last year and it is great to see them turn out in such buoyant numbers each week. The summer fitness initiatives have again been fantastic, and we love their enthusiasm.

It was disappointing to see our 1st XV relegated at the end of the season despite a strong final few months that saw the 3rd XV win the cup final at Letchworth. But ultimately the poor start to the season and the inability to close out narrow score lines cost the team. We hope the players have the ambition to climb out of this league and work hard in strong, regular numbers during pre-season and during training throughout the season. We wish Tom Tidey the best of luck as this year's club captain and



1 XV 2017-18

offer our full support to him and this year's campaign.

Having spent time around the club throughout the summer as we make plans for this season sponsors initiatives, it is clear the club is not short of energy or commitment off the field. As sponsors we want to support the club where we can as they push forward with plans to improve the club and upgrade the facilities. We are committed to providing the funds and resource until at least 2022 and want to see the club fulfil its maximum potential. There is no doubt success on the pitch is where we need things to happen in order to increase momentum.

We all very much enjoyed taking part in Back2Schoolival in early August and seeing so many Hitchin players and club members supporting this great community event.

As for MNP, we continue to expand our geographical base with a new office opened in the heart of Manchester

during the summer to support the design and construction of a number of large projects in the northern regions. Despite the uncertainty in the world of development, we continue to fight for our share of the market and have maintained a base of work exceeding £1.4bn in construction cost. These projects range in scale and sector from 36 storey residential towers in London and Manchester, the largest Jaguar LandRover showroom in Europe, a 3-acre mixed use campus in Hammersmith, London's only Bugatti centre, Soho House Hotels, large office developments for WeWork as well as continuing our 20-year association with the Duke of Westminster as we look after many developments on the Grosvenor Estate.

We're very proud to sponsor Hitchin Rugby Club and wish all teams every success this season.

Stuart Pledge
Managing Director, MNP



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Stuart Pledge presents the 'Back2Schoolival' trophy

2 3XV cup win

3 Meet Tim Jeffries

4 U17's triumph

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Captain's Report 2017-18

1XV

It has been a disappointing season for the 1XV which ultimately led to relegation from London 3 North West to Herts Middlesex 1. The 1XV did however manage to make it to the Herts' Presidents Tankard semi-final, unfortunately falling short against Datchworth.

Some performances that the squad have put in this season have shown that the team can be competitive at this level, taking some of the top teams in the league close to defeat. Inconsistency proved to be the greatest downfall where the team struggled to field the same squad week after week, this is shown with over 50 players being capped for the 1XV this year.



Other Senior Teams

The 2XV were disappointingly removed from their league for not being able to fulfil away fixtures. There are actions being looked at for next season to assess what we can do to encourage players to play away from home.

The 3XV managed to win their cup beating Letchworth on their home ground in the Final, always a good win.

The senior section has also been successful in fulfilling mid-week fixtures along with the occasional vets Friday night fixture.

Playing numbers continue to increase at the club with a number of new faces seen throughout all playing sides. This has been down to a large recruitment drive across social media, something that we shall look to capitalise upon next season. **JB**



Tidey vows to bring his "passion for Hitchin" to Captaincy

New captain Tom Tidey says he is going to bring his passion for Hitchin into his leadership in a bid and get the first team winning regularly again after a disappointing 2017-18 season.

Hitchin have been relegated from London NW 3 to Herts Middlesex 1 and 26-year-old Tidey, who has been a member of the club since he was five, says he wants the side to have more self-belief.

"Losing can be a bit of a habit and I think in the middle of last season everyone started thinking in a match that we were going to lose it," the hooker said. "Hopefully I can change that."

"It is the first time I have done this but everybody knows I am passionate about the club and that I always put 100 percent into a game. I want to try to lead by example."

Tidey's 55-year-old father Mark has been playing for Hitchin since 1980 and the two have played together many times.

"Dad made me a member as soon as he could and I started playing when I was about five," Tidey said. "I quit for a while when I was 14 but I came back at 17. Dad really wanted me to come back."

Mark Tidey added: "We are the first father-son partnership ever to play in the first team. When he first got into the first team at 18, Tommy got man-of-the-match against Datchworth. I think he will bring his leadership skills to the team."

Editor's note

Our thanks to James (Nuts) Bolter for five years at the helm, always leading by example. Not since 1958-1964 (Jim Proctor) has anyone held the post for so long.

However, the arrival on 1st June of Isaac Hugh Bolter – 9lb 7 oz – has changed the

lives of James and Becky, and both have stood down from their roles in the club. Becky after two exciting and productive years as sponsorship chair.

Tom Tidey will be taking over the captaincy next season and we wish him all the best for the 1XV's battle out of Herts Middlesex 1.



James and Becky with Issac, their new baby hedgehog!

3 XV cup win

Hitchin 3s, off the back of a mixed league season, were in high spirits leading up to the Merit Table Final against local rivals Letchworth.

Bragging rights were up for grabs here, and the game started slowly with both defences standing strong. Forwards and backs, both around rucks and out wide, not giving any quarter to each other. With scrum half Paul Marvell commanding the forwards and fly half Ross Howard directing the backs, Hitchin looked to be the team most likely to score, which



Feeling glorious... the Hitchin 3XV team

happened from a quick ball from a ruck near the right touch line out to Greg Ranson on the wing, beating his man and the covering Letchworth full back to put down the first score near the end of the half.

The second half started with Letchworth coming up strong and scoring after increased pressure

in Hitchin's half (5-5). The second half was level for over 30 minutes, with tired defences still holding strong, and Hitchin moving towards the Letchworth try line regularly. Until captain Tim Rainey took control of a Penalty after the mandatory 80 mins was up, and split the uprights to give Hitchin 3's a glorious 8-5 win.

VP'S CORNER

Hello one and all – and especially to our latest members.

Once again I would like to thank you for all your help and support over the last year. Your constant support and generosity really does make my job so much easier, and more importantly makes a huge difference to the Club.

Last year we welcomed our new President – none other than our very own Welsh Wizard – who has made an exceedingly good fist of taking over from Tim.

This season's VP lunch dates are:

- 6th October – Saracens Amateurs
- 15th December – St Albans
- 16th February – Wasps
- 30th March – Staines

Please put these dates in your diary, but please do not try to book your place until you get the invitation from me around four weeks in advance of the lunch because I will not accept it on the basis that it would not be fair on others who have waited.

It is also time to send your nomination for the Vice President of the Year Award to me. The Hwyl Jones trophy is given annually to the VP who, in the eyes of his or her peers is deemed to have "gone above and beyond" to help our Club keep running during the season.

Please send your nomination to me either by email (martin@markate.co.uk), text (07944 574 604) or a note left behind or sent to the Bar. The Award will be presented at the first lunch of the season.

I look forward to seeing you all in September!

Martin Howard



Life Member: Tim Jeffries

At the 2018 AGM, Chris Kelly and Tim Jeffries were awarded Life Memberships. In the first of two articles we talk with Tim Jeffries.

When did you first join the club?

In 1983. Brian Chapman saw me in the Goat Pub in Codicote wearing my Old Meads shirt and hijacked me to train at Hitchin.

Which teams have you played for?

Just about every team in the club! Mostly in the back row and preferred blindside. In later years played no.8 and second row. Spent most of the 1980s in the 2XV's playing for great captains like John Drew and Colin Abiss and had the joy of playing for Roger Cobby's Vets. In latter years playing for Gary Hawtin's 4XVs prolonged my playing career.

I think I've now hung-up-my-boots. But if I have finished then 35 years playing for Hitchin is OK.

What club-roles have you done?

Captained the 2XV. Then started coaching in 1997 when my youngest joined aged four. Took on his age-group at under13s as Coach and then Manager.

Progressed to M&Y Vice Chair in 2004 and then Chair from 2006-2011. A great time blessed with an active and inspirational committee and age-group parents. We improved M&Y rugby not just in numbers, but in communication, ethos and playing standards - way beyond a little club in Hertfordshire.

After that helped Jim Panter, Amos Brand and Brian Baines set up the Academy for 16-18 year olds.

President from 2012-2017. Loved every minute and saw it as the club recognising it's more than just for senior men as I came from M&Y. I also tried to keep VPs informed - although I suspect



Tim Jeffries' (centre) proudest moment: September 2011 playing in the same team with his two sons Tom (left) and Will (right)

it'll be my long speeches that I'll be remembered for!

What do you like most about the club?

Great people everywhere of all ages. I've made friends for life in a club that kept its focus on being a community club.

What were your proudest moments?

Playing in the same team with both my boys when Tom turned 17 in September 2011. And how they looked after me on the pitch.

Walking out onto KGV on a Sunday morning seeing 400+ happy kids in Hitchin shirts. My mantra was "play rugby with a smile on your face."

And your hopes for the club?

To find more effective ways to feed M&Y boys and girls into senior rugby and to embed a long-term strategy that ensures the health of amateur rugby for all ages and sexes at Hitchin.



On the weekend of June 7th - 9th we co-hosted the 2018 Hitchin Beer and Cider festival at King George's playing fields.

Joining our friends from North Herts CAMRA and the Hitchin Round Table we welcomed over 3000 guests. The happy crowds drank or took away 10,000 pints of cask ale over 2000 pints of cider and perry and numerous exceptional foreign and craft beers.

The visitors were sustained by delicious offerings from Hitchin Street food and our very own BBQ run by Tom, Martin, Donato and other members of the Thursday club. Major regional and local festival sponsors, Oakham's, New River, The Victoria, The Red Lion (Preston), The Highlander and Raymond James, along with individual cask and programme sponsors also contributed to the festival success.

Away from the fun, great effort went into building the festival with marquees and stillage to erect, beer and cider to rack and much more beside. This is a fantastic community event and working together with the other groups is a great experience. All the volunteers enjoyed themselves and know that they have contributed to a significant boost to our finances. It was a great festival and I hope that next year you will join us as volunteers, visitors or both to repeat this success.

Sponsors' dinner

This popular annual event, held to thank the club's sponsors, took place on 21 March, with 140 + sitting down to an excellent meal, and being entertained by the guest speakers.

Immediate past president of the RFU, **Peter Baines** (the first President from Hertfordshire), got things going reminiscing about his worldwide travels watching England play.

Ex international **David Trick** followed, with the reputation of one of the best after dinner speakers on the circuit. He joined Bath RFC in 1978 and played almost 300 games, scoring 191 tries. He gave a light hearted speech and kept the audience entertained with his stories and charm.

Liverpool comedian **James Sutherland** closed the evening and had us in stitches with his observational humour, involving several of the guests.

Our thank to **Sue Stanbury** for the catering, and to **Becky Bolter** for her organisational skills!



U17's triumph

The U17's had an outstanding season last year winning the Herts & Middlesex Division One League and Cup, the first side in the clubs history to do the "Double".

The league was a tough affair but the team played some excellent rugby throughout the season as they won 6 out of their 7 league matches, scoring 26 tries and securing try bonus points in all games, which is a testament to the type of exciting, fast, attacking rugby they played.

With the league secured



The future's bright: our winning team

they then comprehensively beat Bishop Stortford in the Hertfordshire Cup Final 35-10 which was a fitting finale to all the boys attitude, effort and play during the season.

It has been great to see the development of the players and squad especially over the last three seasons as they have established themselves as the top team in the county.

In this new 2018/19 season they attempt to defend their title and a number of them will be looking to play senior rugby here at Hitchin. The future is bright!



M&Y grow in strength!

M&Y numbers

M&Y Membership increased significantly from 593 players in 2016-17 to 667 in 2017-18. That's a year-on-year increase of 12.5% and the highest membership the section has ever had.

- The Minis section grew by 12% from 365 to 407 players
- The Youth section grew by 5% from 196 to 206 players, and
- The Girls Rugby section grew by 69% from 32 to 54 players.

M&Y new members

243 new members joined the M&Y section in 2017-18, a massive 51.9% increase from 160 the season before. This compares to our previous record of 215 new members in 2015-16.

These numbers were significantly higher than we had anticipated and demonstrate the excellent reputation the M&Y section has in the local area.

The new season

This coming season will be the first time since 2014 that we will have a full complement of age-group squads. This will of course have a major impact on our numbers and we expect easily breaking through the 700 mark. We also anticipate girls rugby numbers to grow and so anticipate total numbers to go above 725 players.

Membership numbers at this level will continue to be a challenge. To meet this challenge we continue to invest heavily in our coaching and refereeing capabilities and each age-group encourages the parents of their players to get involved with the coaching, management refereeing and organization of their squads.

To find out more about how you can be involved contact Christophe Lavalie, M&Y Chair at MYChair@HitchinRugby.com

U15 Girls – full of team spirit

This season saw a rebuild of the U13 squad and again within weeks of the start of the season we got a full squad albeit very inexperienced losing heavily to Welwyn in our first match.

But near the end of the season we travelled to the St George's Day Festival at Wasps and had an excellent tournament with the highlight drawing vs Welwyn. The girls took this momentum to the Leicester Tigers festival in Minehead a few weeks later and won the cup.

The U15's saw the re-joining of the U13 team of 2015/2016 team and with a few new members we started the season with a full squad. The girls continued to improve their core skills and again team spirit was exceptional.

Six of the girls were selected for the Hertfordshire County squad which is a great achievement for everyone involved.

The big success for the team this year though was the Area 2 Int. Cup. The cup is played across six counties (Middlesex, Hants, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Berks and, Herts). There were some great matches and quite a lot of travel having to go to the south coast twice beating Trojans from Southampton away in the semi-final. We then drew Buckingham – who's record on paper was noticeably better than ours – at home for the final.

On the evening of Wednesday 25 April the girls played in some of the worst weather conditions seen all season under the lights at Old Hale Way in front of a really big crowd. They obviously hadn't read the script. They started the match with incredible intensity and didn't give Buckingham room to manoeuvre. Hitchin managed to keep up the same level of intensity and worked for each other for the entire duration of the match ending up winning 37-5 and lifting the cup.

It is a huge achievement for the club and girls rugby at the club and would not be possible without support from the club, sponsors, coaches, parents and the girls. We have over 40 girls and nine coaches over the U13, U15 and U18 age groups and are all looking forward to another great season.



The girls with their cup winning medals at the youth awards dinner



More than 100 women from the local area joined in our bootcamp sessions

100 ladies kick off on one night!

For the third year running the ladies team kicked off pre-season with a free bootcamp for the local community. Bootcamp ran on Tuesday nights for eight weeks and was free to women, over the age of 14, from the local area. Thanks to some excellent promotional work on social media and around the town there was a very high turn out every week – with more than 100 women attending on ONE night!

In total more than 100 non rugby club members joined the ladies team to get fit over the summer with ages ranging from 16 to 68! We had some great outcomes with people feeding back on their progress.

Rachael said "I could do zero push ups on week one and by the end I could do 25". Hanah said "A combination of bootcamp and diet change led to a weight loss of one stone".

Taster sessions for rugby ran after bootcamp and we are now into full rugby preseason. Beginners are always welcome and should come along 7.30pm Tuesday evenings.

For more information get in touch:

- twitter – @hitchinladies
- facebook – Hitchin Ladies RFC
- email – hitchinladies@gmail.com



Hannah Skeels runs in a try for the Ladies



Ladies calendar donation!

After another hugely successful naked calendar by the Hitchin Ladies team, they were able to donate £2,000 to the GB Wheelchair Rugby Team who recently lost their lottery funding.

This money will go some way to allowing them to get to the 2018 Wheelchair rugby world championships.

Thank you to everyone that bought a calendar and supported this great cause. Stay tuned for the 2019 instalment!! If anyone would like to sponsor a page in the next calendar please contact Claire Crompton.

claire.crompton89@googlemail.com



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News from my time in Brazil...

I've been working as a Rugby development officer in Brazil on the TryRugby project since 2015. The project is run through Premiership Rugby and the British Council and has been in Brazil since 2012!

Since being here I have been developing and growing the sport of rugby in three different states of Brazil, São Paulo, Santa Catarina and Rio de Janeiro. We predominantly work with the growth of the youth game



A life changing experience for Gary

offering a variety of Rugby sessions in schools, local communities and various participation festivals! As well as coaching the game of rugby we try to focus on changing the lives of the participants using the incredible values incorporated within our sport. I have held Rugby sessions in many poor communities (favelas) where it's not uncommon to see a youths involved with drug trafficking and violent gun crimes. Within these communities Rugby can actually have such a positive impact with these youths as we can engage with them through the core values of respect, discipline and solidarity, as well as them being able to forget their personal trouble for an hour or two.

Since being here I have also been a head coach of two different teams and this year I am player coach of one of the Brazilian premier league teams. The standard is surprisingly good, some of the players would easily find their way into a Hitchin first team shirt!

Hitchin Rugby club has donated some shirts and other bits of kit over the last three years and it is very greatly



HRC shirts were greatly appreciated

appreciated here. From a country where most people have very little they appreciate every little thing and like to take advantage of every opportunity. Most people love to practice their English with me and are always open to learning new things about the British culture.

For me personally it has been an amazing learning curve, in the last three and half years I have been able to completely learn a new language, develop my coaching profile and make some life long friendships and relationships!

Gary Ayres



WEEK 1

Sat, 2 Feb 2019, 16:45

Aviva Stadium



WEEK 4

Sat, 9 Mar 2019, 16:45

Twickenham Stadium



WEEK 2

Sun, 10 Feb 2019, 15:00

Twickenham Stadium



WEEK 5

Sat, 16 Mar 2019, 17:00

Twickenham Stadium



WEEK 3

Sat, 23 Feb 2019, 16:45

Millennium Stadium



Application forms will be emailed to members soon. If you don't receive the email, please contact Chris Jones duvaljones@outlook.com



Feeling a bit dry... our not so green, green grass of home!

Officers elected at the AGM in May

- PRESIDENT Gerallt Morgan
- CHAIR Peter Tasko
- VICE CHAIR James Akrill
- SECRETARY Michael Emmerson
- TREASURER Chris Jones
- CLUB CAPTAIN Tom Tidey
- CHAIR OF MENS RUGBY Mark Tidey
- CHAIR OF WOMENS' RUGBY Lucy Kennedy
- CHAIR OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE Mike Rush
- CHAIR OF BAR COMMITTEE Gerallt Morgan
- CHAIR OF M&Y SECTION Christophe Lavalie
- HERTS RFU REPRESENTATIVE John Humphries

The End of Season Awards for the 2017-18 Season

- Team of the Season (President's Trophy) Men's 3XV
- 1st XV Player of the Season (Wally Hazard Trophy) Ben Wiggins
- Most Improved Player (Tony Else Trophy) James Akrill
- 2nd XV Player of the Season Matt Trussell
- 3rd XV Player of the Season Richard Chennells
- Women's Coaches' Player of the Season Casey Burgess
- Women's Players' Player of the Season Emma Cramphorn
- Women's Most Improved Player Flo Oetgen
- Women's unsung hero award Sarah Frith
- President's Silver Salver Jo Osman
- Chair of M&Y Award (Tony Mangold Cup) Geoff Stringer

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