

# the Seaside

THE OFFICIAL 2023/2024 MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

Respect 



v Basildon United



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**SATURDAY 27TH JANUARY 2024, 3PM**  
ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH

# VICE CHAIRMAN: **ANDY CLARKE**



## **Good afternoon everyone, a warm welcome to the AGL Arena for today's Isthmian North encounter with Basildon United.**

Our visitors today have enjoyed one of their best seasons to date for many a year, sitting in 6th place, very much looking to be in the mix for a play-off place. I don't see them coming to thr AGL today and giving us anything on the cheap, we will need to win our individual battles and as a collective to ensure we get something from the match.

With Lowestoft winning another game in hand during the week we find ourselves five points behind the leaders, so it's vitally important to stay in touch with another three points today, particularly after our super impressive victory over the leaders in our last league encounter.

To say we hadn't been firing on all cylinders for a number of games leading up to Lowestoft's visit was probably an understatement. However, as you may recall my words "form

is temporary, class is permanent" and boy, did we show some class in the top of the table clash.

In an incredibly entertaining game, I thought 6-2 would have been a fair result but we settled for a convincing 3-0 and an impressive clean sheet, after six consecutive games in which we had conceded.

The display was one of the most complete I have seen from us in some time and we seemed to get everything right from the kick off. Tactics and formation, spot on, work rate at a high level, ball retention much improved, quality finishing... I could go on. In the end goals from Josh, Billy and Callum sealed a well-earned victory, sending our visitors back up the coast knowing full well that this title race isn't over till it's over!



Interesting to read on social media the other day that Jack Ainsley has played every minute of every match so far this season. That is a really impressive achievement but for me, Jack has been the signing of the season. Not for being a flash ball player, or being loud,

being dirty or being especially tough but for just being a top class, non-league footballer who consistently produces 8/10 performances week in week out, whether at the back, middle of the park or on the odd occasion leading the front line, although for me, centre back is his best position.

**“Keeping Jack fit and injury free along with the rest of our talented squad could well be the difference between top spot and the play offs”**

The ability to read the game is often understated but it’s the reason that Jack so often makes clearing up at the back look so easy, and why he is always able to be calm in the tightest of situations.

Keeping Jack fit and injury free along with the rest of our talented squad could well be the difference between top spot and the play offs. Up until this point we have been plagued by injuries, although it does look much better on this front as we march into the second half of the season.

Just a quick note on young Harry Blackburn, who has departed the club to try and find regular first team football in step 5. A cracking young footballer that in another year would have played a lot more games but unfortunately, circumstances dictate. I wish him all the very best at Hadleigh and would love to see him back at the club in the Felixstowe shirt in years to come.

Enjoy the game.  
**Andy**

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FROM THE DUGOUT:  
**ANDY CRUMP**



# Welcome back to the AGL Arena for this afternoon's fixture with Basildon United and a warm welcome to AJ, his coaching staff and players.

The quality of the performance last time out pleased the Gaffa and I for so many reasons. The quality within the group is unquestionable but as a staff group we still have a responsibility to make sure the squad goes into fixtures equipped to have the best chance of claiming those vital three points available.

Stuart has mentioned the work that went into our prep for Lowestoft so I thought I would give a little insight to what goes into the prep for games like today. It all normally starts with reviewing oppositions recent results, using connections within the league to get insights on performances, sometimes sending scouts to watch them in the week leading up to the game and using the level of social media content that is becoming more and more available.



We then pull it all together and spend time ensuring our training and match prep sets the team up with a clear plan. It can often come with a few roles of the eyes from our wives as we regularly end up speaking multiple times in a day to make sure we have it right.

Lowestoft wasn't any different to a normal week but it did come with a satisfaction that once Callum Harrison had put the result to bed, we could stand and enjoy the final few minutes reflecting on the satisfaction of two weeks of hard work paying off!

There was a similar satisfaction at Brentwood seven days earlier, but for different reasons. Preparation followed its normal form but on arrival at the ground, the weather conditions meant we had to think quickly, adjust (change personnel, adjust set pieces, tactical adjustments to our shape) and prep the squad in 45 minutes before kick off.

The players deserve a huge amount of credit though and with such a talented group they are able to adapt quickly in those situations as well as they can take on information over a couple of training sessions in the lead up to games. What is evident is this group wants to win and achieve things for our football club and that rightly comes with them having high expectations of the coaching team to give them the best environments and platform to win. Another big plus this week has been the move to a new training facility we have recently developed at my day job, Inspire - meaning we have a much improved facility for training.

Back to today and looking at our oppositions season so far, they deserve huge credit and I am sure AJ will build on the impressive start to the season that Darren made before moving onto Grays. We have often said of how important the three points were back in September and I hope we can maintain the same levels as last time out and enjoy watching the boys at their very best!

Look forward to seeing you all!

**Andy**



# SEASIDER PHIL GRIFFITHS



## Not many people know this...

Speaking to fellow Vice President Chris Ryan in the week, he reminded me about 'the old days' at Dellwood Avenue with Ben the Dog who became a quite famous celebrity around the league grounds, getting his picture in the local football paper (Green 'Un) for being an avid watcher of the Seaside. He sat behind the goal in his Felixstowe scarf, eyes fixed on the ball, wherever it went.

He was here the foggy night we reached our attendance low point, when a game against Clacton Town kicked off in decreasing visibility, with the official attendance at kick off a grand total of FIVE which included Ben the Dog!

The game was abandoned quite early, but no one told the five hardy watchers who thought the game was a bit one sided as they weren't seeing much of the play from where they were standing, only when the floodlights started to go out did they discover the game had been abandoned, and the gates were due to be locked imminently.

How Times Change ... From 5 to 500 plus... It's all about the numbers, looking back just over the last decade at the figures coming through the gate to watch the Seaside play football - in 2013/14 playing in the Eastern Counties League Premier Division our average gate was 114 and our top gate just 204.

Currently in 2023/24 our average home gate is 376 which is third highest in the division behind Bury Town (538) and Lowestoft Town (422), the two clubs we need to use as our marker for where we want to get to as our next level and we attracted over 2,000 when we hosted Ipswich Town for a pre-season friendly back in July.

If we could consistently serve up the level of football the side produced in our last home game, then I think our average gate would be pushing up around that 400 mark sooner rather than later!



Picture of Ben the Dog in his away scarf at Hadleigh United circa 1999.

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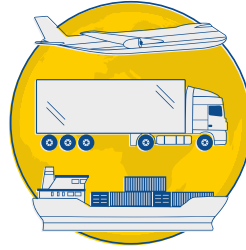
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# ISTHMIAN NORTH DIVISION TABLE 2023/24

POS		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Lowestoft Town	19	14	1	4	55	24	+31	43
<b>2</b>	<b>Felixstowe &amp; Walton United</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>+24</b>	<b>41</b>
3	Bowers & Pitsea	21	12	3	6	40	30	+10	39
4	Brentwood Town	20	11	5	4	38	19	+19	38
5	Heybridge Swifts	20	11	5	4	35	23	+12	38
<b>6</b>	<b>Basildon United</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>36</b>
7	Maldon & Tiptree	20	10	3	7	40	32	+8	33
8	Bury Town	19	9	5	5	45	31	+14	32
9	Brightlingsea Regent	20	10	1	9	39	33	+6	31
10	Walthamstow	18	8	5	5	29	29	0	29
11	Gorleston	19	7	5	7	26	24	+2	26
12	New Salamis	20	5	7	8	32	46	-14	22
13	Wroxham	18	5	6	7	29	28	+1	21
14	Witham Town	19	5	6	8	26	33	-7	21
15	Redbridge	16	4	5	7	26	33	-7	17
16	Ipswich Wanderers	19	5	1	13	17	35	-18	16
17	Enfield	19	4	3	12	23	50	-27	15
18	Grays Athletic	18	2	5	11	20	36	-16	11
19	Stowmarket Town	22	0	4	18	23	70	-47	4

LAST UPDATED: SATURDAY 20TH JANUARY 2024 AT 17:11:53



## ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH FIXTURES

### FRIDAY 26TH JANUARY

Witham Town v Heybridge Swifts

### SATURDAY 27TH JANUARY

Bowers & Pitsea v Ipswich Wanderers  
 Brentwood Town v Walthamstow  
 Bury Town v Stowmarket Town  
 Felixstowe & Walton Utd v Basildon Utd  
 Lowestoft Town v Grays Athletic  
 Maldon & Tiptree v Brightlingsea Regent  
 New Salamis v Redbridge  
 Wroxham v Enfield





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# MATCH PHOTOS

MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY  
ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH  
**Felixstowe & Walton Utd 3  
Lowestoft Town 0**

PHOTOS  
BY THOMAS  
BRADFORD  
& STEFAN  
PECK



Leaders Lowestoft Town headed to second place Felixstowe and Walton United with a five point lead at the top. Could they increase it? The Trawler Boys had looked a little vulnerable of late, losing two of their previous four, but luckily for them their closest challengers had also been dropping points, so the Seaside would have been desperate to win this one – and they went ahead on eleven minutes, **Josh Mayhew** with the opener, then doubled their advantage nine minutes later, **Billy Holland** making it two-nil. Could the Trawler Boys respond? They couldn't – indeed right at the end **Callum Harrison** made it three-nil to close the gap at the top to just two points.



## HOW WE LINED UP

1. Joshua Blunkell
2. Lamell Howell
3. Stuart Ainsley
4. Billy Holland
5. Jack Ainsley
6. Joe Whight
7. Henry Barley
8. Noel Aitkens
9. Josh Mayhew
10. Josh Hitter
11. Charlie Warren

## SUBS

12. Callum Bennett
14. Sam Ford
15. Callum Harrison
16. Zak Brown













# OUR SQUAD

Introducing the Felixstowe & Walton United playing squad and management team of 2023/2024.



## **STUART BOARDLEY** MANAGER

Stuart started his footballing career at Ipswich Town leaving in 2004 after 10 years. He went on to play for Torquay United, Sudbury, Leiston and Felixstowe. In 2018 he was appointed as Manager of Leiston but left in 2019 to become Manager of Felixstowe & Walton United.



## **ANDY CRUMP** ASSISTANT MANAGER

Andy returned to Felixstowe & Walton United as Assistant Manager following the appointment of Stuart Boardley in 2019. Having enjoyed success in previous spells at the club as both player and First Team Coach.



## **DANNY POTTER** GOALKEEPER COACH

A former pro footballer/TV star, Danny was cast into the Sky TV programme 'Dream Team' where he played for the fictional team Harchester United. Danny boasts clubs such as Torquay, Colchester and Cambridge as former employers. Recently appointed as Goalkeeper Coach, Danny brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and professionalism to Stuart's management team.



## **STUART STEVENSON** COACH

After hanging up his boots Stuart joined Felixstowe Utd as a fitness coach/physio, then on to Trimley to help coach his son's team from the U8s-U16s. Stuart rejoined the Seaside's to coach the U18s which lead him on to being part of the first team staff. Stuart is an FA level 2 coach and an FA level 1 mentor.



## **CHARLOTTE LONG** SPORTS THERAPIST

Charlotte graduated from the University of Worcester in 2014 with a BSc (Hons) in Sports Therapy. She had previously worked with Leiston FC before joining the Seaside's in 2019. Her main focus is overseeing the recovery programmes of injured players through her private practice.





## **DOUG FRENCH** **KIT MAN**

Doug started his career in 1986 and played for East Anglian Customs, Walton United, Felixstowe United and Tattingsstone, breaking his leg four times in the process. Whilst playing for Ipswich Wanderers vets, Doug finally hung up his boots. Having found his vocation in washing players dirty pants, Doug is excited for a new challenge with the Seaside.



## **JOSHUA BLUNKELL** **GOALKEEPER**

Josh joined the club in January 2024. The former AFC Sudbury keeper signed a professional contract with Wycombe Wanderers after impressing in Sudbury's televised FA Cup in 2021. Previous clubs also include AFC Sudbury, Bowers & Pitsea, Braintree Town and Kettering Town.



## **STUART AINSLEY** **LEFT BACK**

Stuart joined the club for his second spell in 2014 from Lowestoft Town. Previous clubs include Chelmsford City and AFC Sudbury. Stuart spent 10 years at Ipswich Town, winning the FA Youth Cup in 2005. Stuart has a sweet left foot and a great work ethic.



## **JOE WHIGHT** **DEFENDER**

Joe came through the ITFC Youth system before playing for the likes of Needham, Bury and most recently AFC Sudbury where he captained their side. A left sided defender, Joe offers composure, a wonderful left foot and a toughness and desire to defend to the back line.



## **CALLUM BENNETT** **RIGHT BACK**

Callum is in his second spell at the club having re-joined in late 2018. An attacking full back with one of the best ball deliveries in non-league football. Callum has plenty of experience from his time at Ipswich U18s, Stoke City U21s and Notts County.



## **JACK AINSLEY** **DEFENDER**

Rejoins from Stowmarket. Jack played professionally for ITFC after coming through their academy and went on to make 4 appearances playing under Roy Keane. Jack went on to have spells at Step 3 Lowestoft and Leiston but finds himself back at the Seaside where many describe him as a "Rolls Royce" type of player who can play in any position for the team.



## **TOM BULLARD** **DEFENDER**

Another who joins us from Stowmarket. 'Bully' has experience across Step 3 and 4 with long and successful spells as captain at both Leiston and Bury Town. Tom is a serial winner who's experience, defensive qualities and leadership skills will add to an already impressive back line.



## **BILLY HOLLAND** **MIDFIELDER**

Billy started life at Ipswich Wanderers and has had spells at Needham, Leiston and AFC Sudbury. He's established himself as a mainstay in the centre of midfield. Players player and Supporters player of the year last season has led to him being appointed captain for the forthcoming year.



## **NOEL AITKENS** **MIDFIELDER**

Noel's signing for the club in 2020 caused a stir amongst the non-league world, joining from step 3 Leiston and being described by manager Boardley as "the best midfield player in this area". Noel is quick, strong, can tackle, is athletic and can really play football!



## **LEON OTTLEY-GOOCH** **MIDFIELDER**

Leon signed for the club in 2020 and is another vastly experienced player at step 3 and 4 level. Previous clubs include Leiston, Bury Town, Hadleigh Utd and Stowmarket Town. Leon is very versatile but is predominantly a dynamic midfield player.



## **JOSH HITTER** **MIDFIELDER**

Josh signed for us in 2021 having played his football at Step 3 side Leiston for the previous three seasons and gained a vast amount of experience at that level. Josh is a dynamic attack minded player who likes to arrive in the box late and score goals.



## **CALLUM HARRISON** **MIDFIELDER**

Former Colchester United, Needham, Sudbury and more recently Chelmsford midfielder joined the Seasiders for the 22/23 campaign. A highly sought after creative and technically gifted midfielder that loves to get forward and provide the team with both goals and assists.



## **IVAN COSTA** **MIDFIELDER**

Promoted into the first team squad from our Academy after a strong preseason. Ivan is an industrious central midfield player whose work ethic and attitude is second to none.



## **KUBI KUSSAN** **MIDFIELDER**

Another young player promoted to the first team squad from our Academy. Kubi is a technically gifted midfield player who enjoys moving with the ball. He has an edge to his game that has impressed the management throughout preseason.



## **HENRY BARLEY** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Henry signed for the club in 2019 following his contract expiring at Ipswich Town. Another popular young player who had also been on loan from the then EFL Championship club the previous season.



## **LAMELL HOWELL** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Lamell signed from Brightlingsea Regent in 2020. He can play on both wings or in the number 10 position and brings pace and trickery to the side. He has previously played for Stowmarket Town, Debenham FC and Brantham Athletic.



## **CHARLIE WARREN** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Having initially joined on loan from Needham Market, Charlie made an instant impact on his debut in the FA Trophy win at Hastings. Following a number of impressive performances, manager Boardley moved quickly to secure the permanent services of one of Suffolk's brightest young players.



## **ZAK BROWN** **FORWARD**

A sought after and highly rated young striker with blistering pace and a great goal scoring record. At just 17, Zak penned a two year pro contract with ITFC where he was a regular marksman in the U23's. Zak started life in the Seasiders Youth sections and has returned to lead the forward line as the clubs No. 9.



## **SAM FORD** **FORWARD**

Having spent a successful period with Arbroath last season that saw them just miss out on promotion to the Scottish Premiership, Sam spent the Summer with Hume City FC in Australia before returning to Felixstowe. Coming through ITFC and later West Ham's academy, Sam is a local talent who will provide real firepower in front of goal.



## **JOSH MAYHEW** **FORWARD**

Josh joins us from promotion winners AFC Sudbury. An experienced front man who has been prolific at Step 4 and 5 with an impressive spell at Stowmarket yielding 136 goals in 173 games. Josh's physical presence will bring a focal point to our attack as well as a being natural finisher who is a proven goalscorer at this level.



## **NEXT UP** **AT THE** **AGL ARENA**

Saturday 10th February  
3pm Kick Off

**Felixstowe &  
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Walthamstow**

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PHOTOS FROM OUR MATCH EARLIER IN THE SEASON; PLEASE NOTE THAT BASILDON PLAYERS MAY HAVE MOVED ON SINCE

# THE OTHER SIDE BASILDON UNITED FC

Nicknamed 'The Bees', Basildon United came into being in 1967, having previously been known as Armada Sports; a junior club who were formed four years earlier.

In 1967/68 the renamed club joined the Grays and Thurrock League, moving into the Greater London League the following season.

The first major step forward came in 1970 when the Essex County FA granted the club senior status and it became a founder member of the Essex Senior League.

It was not long before The Bees got amongst the honours recording four consecutive championships from 1977 until 1980, which stands as a league record to this day.

In addition, Basildon finished runners-up in 1973 and 1975, whilst the League Cup was won in 1978 to complete that season's double. The following season the club were winners of the Essex Senior Trophy.

The Bees successfully applied for promotion to the Athenian League in 1980, but membership only lasted one season, as they finished runners up to Windsor and Eton and earned promotion to the Isthmian League Division 2. In this season, Basildon also progressed to the quarter finals of the FA Vase, before Irthlingborough Diamonds brought an end to progress in the competition with a 6-4 victory in a sixth-round replay.

After three seasons in the Isthmian League Division 2, Basildon achieved promotion as champions in 1984, pipping St Albans City by one point on the last day of the season. This season additionally saw the club reach the finals of both the Essex Senior Trophy and the Eastern Floodlight Competition.

Basildon found life a lot harder in the first division and eventually lost the struggle against relegation in 1989, dropping into the





Isthmian League Division 2 North. This was the first time that the club had suffered relegation in their history.

Two further seasons were spent in Division 2 North before the decision to de-regionalise the division led to the club resigning from the league, the club considering that an excess of travelling in the Isthmian League was not viable at that point.

The Bees re-joined the Essex Senior League in 1991/92 and quickly regrouped both on and off the pitch. It was not long before the successes of the late seventies were emulated, as The Bees finished in the top six in both 1991/92 and 1992/93 and made a League Cup final appearance in 1992.

A superb 1993/94 season saw Basildon again win the Essex Senior League double, with the championship being won for a record fifth time. The following season, 1994/95, the club battled through to the FA Vase quarter final for the second time in its history, before losing out to Raunds Town.

During 1997/98, The Bees equalled Brentwood's record of three Essex Senior League Cup wins by beating Burnham Ramblers 1-0 in the final. It was the club's sixth appearance in the final of this competition, which also remains a record. In the league, Basildon finished runners up to Concord Rangers.

1999/2000 saw Basildon finish 13th, which was the club's worst league finish at the time and although a reasonable 8th position was achieved in 2000/01, two bottom half finishes followed for the next two seasons. The club finished 7th in both 2003/04 and 2004/05.

John Higley was The Bees manager at the start of the 2007/08 season, but he was replaced by Jason Emery in October. The club struggled for form all season and used 72 players, only to finish in 16th position, just one place off the bottom.

A new management team of Colin Cook and Gary Morris was announced for the 2008/09 season and the club won its first six matches, whilst reaching the second-round proper of the FA Vase. However, by December



the management team had left the club and ex reserve coach, Jody Prewell, was appointed manager, with Basildon eventually finishing the season in 8th place.

Prewell left the club by mutual consent in April 2010 and was replaced by Sean Merchant as caretaker manager. The Bees suffered the heaviest defeat to date on 24 April, losing 10-0 at Witham Town. The club eventually finished the season in 12th place.

In May 2010, John Doyle returned to the club as manager, bringing in former Romford boss, Mark Reed as his assistant and Paul Rogan as coach.

After a 12th place finish, John Doyle decided to step down at the end of the 2010/11 season. The club advertised for a new manager and in excess of 30 hopefuls applied, with Paul Larke being appointed manager in June 2011.

After a poor start to the season, Larke resigned following a 9-1 defeat at Witham Town, with John Doyle returning to oversee the forthcoming FA Vase match against Amphyll Town.

The following week, Chris Wood was appointed permanent manager, but unfortunately no improvement was seen in results and The Bees finished bottom of the Essex Senior League for the first time in the club's history.

Former Ramsden boss, Bobby Barnes, was appointed manager in May 2012 and at just 27 was one of the youngest managers in non-league football. After Barnes decided to resign due to work commitments, John Higley returned to the club and was assisted by Steve Brown senior.

After a number of managerial changes, the club ended the 2012/13 season with Bertie Brayley as player/manager and the club finished the season in 13th position. Laurie Carter was appointed manager for the 2013/14 season and the club finished in 8th position.

In May 2014 Colin Cook returned to the club for a second spell as manager and he was assisted by Craig Gillam. Cook left during





September being replaced by his assistant, who guided The Bees to a creditable 12th place finish.

Ahead of the 2015/16 season, Lee Connor was appointed as assistant to Gillam and the club enjoyed its best season for many years winning the League Challenge Cup and finishing runners up in the league. Additionally, Brad Warner won the league's Golden Boot award.

With Gillam opting not to remain with the club for the 2016/17 season, the club appointed Aaron Bloxham as manager, who had previously enjoyed success with White Ensign in the Essex Olympian League. A mid-table finish was achieved in the league as well as notable success in the Essex Senior Cup where the club reached the last eight before bowing out against Heybridge Swifts in the quarter finals.

In May 2017 the club parted ways with Bloxham and Marc Harrison joined the club as manager, with Liam Wallace also joining

as his assistant. Harrison and Wallace both joined the club from neighbours Basildon Town, where they had achieved considerable success winning Essex Olympian League Division One the previous season.

In their first season in charge, Harrison and Wallace enjoyed tremendous success leading the club to the runners-up spot in the league and with it promotion back to the Isthmian League for the first time in 27 years. Following a club reorganisation, Harrison and Wallace left the club in November 2018 and after a brief spell as Joint Manager with former Barkingside manager, Michael Walther, Lee Connor took temporary charge of team affairs. Subsequently, former Enfield 1893 and Laindon Orient manager, Neil Blackburn, took on the role as first team manager.

Blackburn stepped down as manager before the end of the 2018/19 season to be replaced by John Sussex who re-joined the club from Witham Town, having previously been a coach at the club. Sussex departed the club in November 2019 and after two short term caretaker appointments, Burnham Ramblers manager Alex Salmon was brought into the role with a view to building a new side focussed on much needed stability.

However, Salmon's tenure was to be short lived as he resigned after the first game of the 2020/21 season and former Bowers & Pitsea U23 manager John Guyton was appointed to the position to continue the work that had begun under his predecessor.

After a run of below par results, Guyton left the club in November 2021 and Jon Fowell was appointed as his successor. Due to personal reasons, Fowell left his position in January 2022 and local lad Marc Benterman was appointed in his place.

With Benterman moving on in October 2022, former Hullbridge Sports duo Darren Manning and James Wakeling were appointed to the lead the side, with Manning subsequently taking sole charge following Wakeling's departure, to continue the club's exciting journey.

# THE NON-LEAGUE PAPER



ESSENTIAL READING FOR FOLLOWERS OF THE NATIONAL GAME

**BY JON COUCH**

THIS week, we had the pleasure of talking to Warrington Town goalkeeper Dan Atherton, who has discovered a rather handy penchant for scoring goals.

Golden boy Dan, the former New Saints and Hyde United stopper, netted the first goal of his career back in October to earn Mark Beesley's side a last-gasp 1-1 home draw with Farsley Celtic in National League North.

And he was at it again a fortnight ago, popping up to dramatically head home another last-minute leveller for the Wire in a 2-2 draw with Alfreton Town.

Somewhat humbly, Dan put his goalscoring prowess down to being in the right place at the right time, but whether you wear the number one jersey or 100, having that natural predatory instinct is an art in itself.

"I have no idea where it's come from, it's certainly not planned," Atherton told us. "I'm just glad to be able to contribute to the team. Even when I go up for a corner, I'm not really intending to score; I'm just looking to take a runner or two away and cause a bit of chaos. Fortunately, I've managed to get my head on a couple and they've gone in!"

A Liverpool trainee from the age of 11, Atherton learned his trade from the very top and put his ball skills down to working at the Melwood Training Ground with Pepijn Lijnders, the Reds' former Under 16 coach who is now Jurgen Klopp's first-team assistant.

There, he trained alongside Brazilian first choice keeper Allison, who famously scored a

95th-minute winner for Liverpool at West Bromwich Albion in May 2021 to earn Klopp's men a Champions League place.

While most goalkeepers would just be pleased to get on the scoresheet once in their careers, it's actually not as unusual as you might think.

Just having that extra strapping body in the box for a last-gasp corner or free-kick is enough to throw opposition defences, even more so these days with goalkeepers coached to be as comfortable with the ball at their feet than their outfield counterparts.

Who can remember enigmatic Paraguayan José Luis Chilavert? He was a free-kick expert for club and country and scored 67 times during his career, including eight for Paraguay. He is also the only goalkeeper ever to score a hat-trick.

The record for most goals scored by goalkeeper is held by the Brazilian Rogério Ceni, with 129. He scored his 100th goal in a 3-0 win for São Paulo on in 2011.

Two goalkeeper records, however, have been set in English football. On November 2 2013, Stoke City goalkeeper Asmir Begović recorded the fastest goalkeeper goal in football history (13 seconds), while Newport County's Tom King scored from the longest distance – 96.01 metres, in a match against Cheltenham Town in January 2021.

So, the next time your team are a goal down and in need of a saviour, don't be surprised to see your big number one surging up the field to provide some divine intervention. Like Dan Atherton, he could be your unlikely hero.



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# FIXTURES 2023/24

## AUGUST

SAT 12	MALDON & TIPTREE <i>Holland, Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 211
SAT 19	WELLINGBOROUGH <i>Ford, Harrison, Holland, Warren</i>	A	3PM	EMIRATES FA CUP	W 4-1	ATT 135
<b>SAT 26</b>	<b>BURY TOWN</b> <i>Ford, Harrison, Hitter</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 3-0</b>	<b>ATT 401</b>
MON 28	STOWMARKET TOWN <i>OG, Ford</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 433

## SEPTEMBER

SAT 2	WOODFORD TOWN <i>Holland, Brown, Hitter, Aitkens</i>	A	3PM	FA CUP FIRST QR	W 4-1	ATT 225
<b>SAT 9</b>	<b>BRENTWOOD TOWN</b> <i>Whight (P), Aitkens</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>ISUZU FA TROPHY</b>	<b>W 2-0</b>	<b>ATT 371</b>
SAT 16	ENFIELD TOWN	A	3PM	FA CUP SECOND QR	L 3-0	
<b>TUE 19</b>	<b>BOWERS &amp; PITSEA</b> <i>Warren, Harrison, Ford</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>ISTHMIAN LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 3-2</b>	<b>ATT 263</b>
<b>SAT 23</b>	<b>HERTFORD TOWN</b> <i>Harrison (2), Holland, J Ainsley, Barley, Mayhew</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>ISUZU FA TROPHY</b>	<b>W 6-3</b>	<b>ATT 225</b>
WED 27	LAKENHEATH <i>Mayhew, Warren (2), Barley</i>	A	7.45PM	SUFFOLK PREM CUP	W 4-1	
SAT 30	BASILDON UNITED <i>Whight, Bullard, Warren, Brown</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 4-2	ATT 112

## OCTOBER

SAT 7	BILLERICAY <i>Mayhew (2), Ford</i>	A	3PM	ISUZU FA TROPHY	L 4-3	ATT 527
<b>TUE 10</b>	<b>BRIGHTLINGSEA REGENT</b> <i>Mayhew (3), Otley-Gooch, Ford</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 5-3</b>	<b>ATT 402</b>
SAT 14	WALTHAMSTOW <i>Mayhew</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	ATT 434
<b>TUE 24</b>	<b>REDBRIDGE</b> <i>Warren (2), Ford, Harrison</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 4-0</b>	<b>ATT 313</b>
SAT 28	GRAYS ATHLETIC <i>Aitkens, Brown, Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-0	ATT 226

## NOVEMBER

<b>SAT 4</b>	<b>ENFIELD</b> <i>Harrison (3), Warren, Ford</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 5-1</b>	<b>ATT 360</b>
<b>WED 8</b>	<b>HADLEIGH UNITED</b> <i>Hitter, Warren</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>SP CUP QF</b>	<b>W2-1</b>	<b>ATT 208</b>
SAT 11	HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS <i>Warren, Harrison (2)</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-2	ATT 310

<b>TUE 14</b>	<b>WROXHAM</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L 2-0</b>	<b>ATT 467</b>
SAT 25	WITHAM TOWN <i>Harrison (2)</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 3-2	ATT 168

## DECEMBER

<b>SAT 2</b>	<b>GORLESTON</b> <i>Ford, Hitter, Warren, Harrison</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 4-0</b>	<b>ATT 223</b>
SAT 9	NEW SALAMIS <i>Harrison</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	ATT 78
<b>SAT 16</b>	<b>MALDON &amp; TIPTREE</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L 1-0</b>	<b>ATT 341</b>
SAT 23	IPSWICH WANDERERS <i>Ford, Barley</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	ATT 232
SAT 30	BOWERS & PITSEA <i>Holland</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 2-1	ATT 302

## JANUARY

<b>MON 1</b>	<b>STOWMARKET TOWN</b> <i>Holland, Whight</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 2-1</b>	<b>ATT 561</b>
SAT 6	BRENTWOOD TOWN <i>Aitkens, Mayhew</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 246
<b>SAT 13</b>	<b>LOWESTOFT TOWN</b> <i>Mayhew, Holland, Harrison</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 3-0</b>	<b>ATT 431</b>
<b>SAT 27</b>	<b>BASILDON UNITED</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		

## FEBRUARY

SAT 3	REDBRIDGE	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
<b>SAT 10</b>	<b>WALTHAMSTOW</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
TUES 13	BRIGHTLINGSEA REGENT	A	7.45PM	LEAGUE		
SAT 17	WROXHAM	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
<b>SAT 24</b>	<b>GRAYS ATHLETIC</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		

## MARCH

SAT 2	ENFIELD	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
<b>SAT 9</b>	<b>HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 16</b>	<b>BRENTWOOD TOWN</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
SAT 23	LOWESTOFT TOWN	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
SAT 30	BURY TOWN	A	3PM	LEAGUE		

## APRIL

<b>MON 1</b>	<b>IPSWICH WANDERERS</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 13</b>	<b>WITHAM TOWN</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
SAT 20	GORLESTON	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
<b>SAT 27</b>	<b>NEW SALAMIS</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		

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# PITCHING IN ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH ROUND UP

BY IAN TOWNSEND, TAKEN FROM [WWW.ISTHMIAN.CO.UK](http://WWW.ISTHMIAN.CO.UK)



Our big match in the North Division saw a top five clash between **Heybridge Swifts** and **Bowers and Pitsea**, with Bowers striker Matt Price returning to his former club – and, of course, it was Price who opened the scoring after nine minutes, scoring his ninth goal of the season for the visitors – each of them arriving in his last nine matches. Swifts were soon level, however, Sam Park with the equaliser, but right before half time Bowers struck once more, Luke Reeve making it two–one and sending the travelling fans cheerfully into the refreshment queue.

Swifts levelled again eleven minutes into the second half, Ben Sartain (pictured – Alan Edmonds) making it two–two, but Bowers had

the chance to win it late on, however Swifts keeper Eman Nwosu saved the penalty. That was that, Bowers in third, Swifts down to fifth, seeing red, Wranyel Hercules scoring a winner for the visitors, four–three the final score. New Salamis are thirteenth, Stow eight points from safety.

**Brentwood Town** travelled to East London to take on **Redbridge**. The Blues have been in fine form, with only one defeat from their previous ten, and a big part of that has been due to the form of Mekhi McKenzie. Their number ten made it eight goals in eleven matches when he put Town ahead midway through the first half, and they doubled their advantage eight minutes before half time, Shad Ngandu with the second.

Eight minutes into the second half Redbridge decided to make a match of it, Ayo Odukoya halving the arrears, but an own goal restored the two goal advantage for Brentwood with twenty two minutes left and calmed the nerves of the visiting fans. Right at the end Wyan Reid was dismissed for the Blues, but too late for it to make much difference to the outcome. Town are up to fourth.

**Stowmarket Town** went into their match with **Wroxham** still looking for that first win of the campaign despite much improved performances of late, and it looked like they'd continue looking when Ryan Miles put the travelling Yachtsmen ahead after sixteen

minutes. They levelled five minutes after half time, however, Ewan Gordon-Clement with the equaliser, but within five minutes Harley Black had put the visitors ahead once more, and twenty one minutes from time Miles had his brace, making it three-one. Stow then narrowed the gap, Seth O'Neill with the fifth goal of the afternoon, but the equaliser didn't come and Wroxham climb to thirteenth. Image of Seth from Stefan Peck.



**Walthamstow** welcomed **New Salamis** for a local derby, and went down to ten men when Adalberto Pinto was dismissed midway through the first half. It didn't take long before the visitors made the most of their man advantage, Joe Waight putting them a goal up eight minutes before the break, and they added a second just before the hour, Micah Jackson making it two-nil. The ten men then got themselves back into the match, Kevin Songolo making it one-two, and then the

visitors joined them on ten men, Can Arioglu seeing red. Right at the end it was two-two, Brian Moses-Songolo levelling for the hosts, who had already missed a penalty so perhaps will feel they should have won the match.

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BY MARTYN GREEN, THE UNTOLD GAME

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The Avanhard Stadium was supposed to hold 11,000 diehard supporters for its side. Newly built, it was supposed to be the symbol of a Stalinist regeneration in the area, led first by Leonid Brezhnev and then by a succession of Soviet General Secretaries. The side was founded by builders, who had been relocated to the area to construct the socialist utopia their leaders had imagined, an occupation found in their name - Stroitel Pripyat. The club had spent its decade of existence in the fourth division, but with a new ground, an excited and enthusiastic fanbase, and backing from Moscow, hopes were high that the future would be bright. But the stadium was never used. In 1986, just a week before it was due to be opened, disaster struck. Because the centrepiece of Pripjat's

regeneration, the reason for the builder's being moved to the town in the first place, was V. I. Lenin Nuclear Power Plant. Chernobyl.

When Brezhnev declared Pripjat to be a new atomgrad - a nuclear city - he could not have imagined how prophetic his words would be. Construction was started in 1972, and completed five years later. In the middle, builders who were conscripted for the project found they had little to do with their free time, so started a football team. Founded in the nearby village of Chistogaovka, Stroitel displaced the amateur side that was already in place, absorbing their fans and some of their players into the new club, as the population grew past 50,000. They were slowly joined by players from all over Ukraine, including Stanislav Honcharenko,



**AVANHARD STADIUM TUNNEL**

who would later enter the Ukrainian Hall of Fame. By 1979, the power plant was completed and operational, but the builders stayed, this time building their lives in Pripjat, and continued playing for and supporting Stroitel.

By the new decade, Stroitel Pripjat were becoming something of a local force. They finished strongly in the fourth tier between 1981 and 1984, but couldn't quite reach high enough to secure professional status for the club. But the announcement of a new stadium, they were convinced, would change that. In 1986, Stroitel went on an unprecedented run in the Ukrainian Cup, reaching the semi-finals and beginning to believe that destiny would deliver them the trophy, just as they moved into their new stadium. Fate, however, had other plans.

On the morning of 26th April 1986, Stroitel's players were going through some light training on the pitch of their existing stadium, warming up and preparing for what was expected to be a tough tie against FK Borodyanka later that afternoon. A helicopter flew overhead, and then to the confusion of the players, came down to land on the pitch. Men, wearing protective suits, disembarked. While some inspected their instruments, others made their way over to the training players. There would be no football today. There had been an accident at Chernobyl. Radiation levels were already too high.

The incompetence and corruption of the Soviet leadership meant that it would be another two days before the players - and everybody else in Pripjat - were evacuated to where the radiation levels were safe. Some returned soon afterwards as part of the cleanup



**FK PRIPYAT**

crew, half a million volunteers, whose heroic efforts belied the wilful mistakes of their leaders. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to suggest that their heroic efforts in preventing a meltdown saved pretty much the entire continent - fallout from such a disaster would have reached as far as the UK, covering the rest of Europe in between - at the cost of their own health.

The remaining players moved the club 30 miles east of the Dnieper River, to Slavutych, where they made an effort to reestablish themselves. Fans struggled to make the journey, but the players, brought together by the disaster, managed to finish third in the following season. But falling crowds, a lack of investment and - crucially - health problems caused by the accident at Chernobyl, the team disbanded for good in 1988.

The exclusion zone is a tourist attraction now, for those brave or foolhardy enough to enter it. The Chernobyl Power Plant itself was so badly irradiated that it won't be safe to enter for another 20,000 years. Pripjat is a ghost town, a terrifying reminder of what corruption and incompetence can cause. The official Soviet death toll from the disaster was around 30. The highest estimate is nearly 100,000.

The loss of a small amateur football team, who had existed for barely a decade and had won exactly nothing, is largely an insignificance compared to such a number of deaths. But in the middle of the exclusion zone, overgrown and forever empty, sits the Avanhard Stadium. A symbol of what might have been.

**Enjoy the game.**



# MATCHDAY SQUADS

Isthmian League North  
Saturday 27th January 2024, 3pm



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**Assistant Manager:** Andy Crump



Jack **Ainsley**



Stuart **Ainsley**



Noel **Aitkens**



Henry **Barley**



Callum **Bennett**



Joshua **Blunkell (GK)**



Zak **Brown**



Tom **Bullard**



Sam **Ford**



Callum **Harrison**



Josh **Hitter**



Billy **Holland (C)**



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Joe **Whight**

red/yellow = goals - played

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