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Saturday 18th November 2023  
Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

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08

## CLUB HONOURS

**United Counties League Premier Division South**  
Winners 2023

**Midland Alliance League Cup**  
Winners 2010

**Midland Combination Premier Division**  
Champions 2007  
Runners-up 1996, 2002, 2005, 2006

**Midland Combination Challenge Cup**  
Finalists 1999  
Winners 2002, 2005

**Coventry Evening Telegraph Cup**  
Winners 1966, 2005, 2006

**Coventry Charity Cup**  
Winners 2007

**BCFA Midweek Floodlit Cup**  
Winners 2007

**Tony Allden Cup**  
Winners 2007

**FA Vase**  
Quarter Finalists 2008

## OTHER HONOURS

**United Counties League Programme of the Year**  
Winners 2023

**Midland Alliance Programme of the Year**  
Winners 2008  
Runners-up 2009

**Midland Combination Programme of the Year**  
Runners-up 2005  
Winners 2006, 2007

**Midland Combination Hospitality Award**  
Winners 2006 (Division 3)  
Winners 2007 (Division 2)



## CLUB OFFICIALS

Chairman: Daniel Cahill  
Vice-Chairman: Joseph Fletcher  
Finance Officer: Neil Buswell  
Club Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Matchday Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Youth Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Pitch Allocator: Dave Bull  
Welfare Officer: Joanne Bull  
Ticket Manager: Mandy Seddon  
Programme Editor: Chris Nee

### FIRST TEAM STAFF

Joint Manager: Shaun Thomas  
Joint Manager: John Woodward  
First Team Coach: Nigel Starkey  
Goalkeeping Coach: Damian Morgan  
Goalkeeping Coach: Michael Taylor  
First Team Physio: Kirk Holland  
Kit Manager: Paul Seddon  
Chief Scout: Jim McClean

### GROUNDS TEAM

Paul Wright, Martin Sutton

### MEDIA TEAM

Chris Nee  
Liam Cook

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Marcus Robinson  
Stuart Guest

### MATCHDAY HOSPITALITY

Leanne Talbot & Donna Crouch

### MATCHDAY VOLUNTEERS

Martin Sutton, Dave Bull, Alan Townsend

### Coventry Sphinx Football Club

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena, Sphinx Drive, Coventry, CV3 1WA  
024 7645 1361

Coventry Sphinx Football Club is a non-for-profit organisation



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## Upcoming fixtures

AWAY



### Harborough Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands  
Tuesday 21st November 2023 | 7.45pm  
Harborough Town Community Football Ground  
Northampton Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9HF

AWAY



### Boldmere St Michaels v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands  
Saturday 25th November 2023 | 3.00pm  
The Trevor Brown Memorial Ground  
Church Road, Boldmere, B73 5RY

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Loughborough Dynamo

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands  
Saturday 2nd December 2023 | 3.00pm  
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena  
Sphinx Drive

AWAY



### Cambridge City v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands  
Saturday 9th December 2023 | 3.00pm  
St Ives Town FC  
Westwood Road, St Ives, PE27 6DT

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Gresley Rovers

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands  
Saturday 16th December 2023 | 3.00pm  
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena  
Sphinx Drive

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coventrysphinx.co.uk | youtube.com/@CoventrySphinx

There's something quite strange about watching your team lose and still thinking it was one of the best performances of the season.

On Tuesday night Coventry Sphinx were knocked out of the Birmingham Senior Cup by Nuneaton Borough in a game that was switched to Sphinx Drive as a result of the ongoing situation at Liberty Way.

Nuneaton's inability to access their home ground dominated the build-up to the match. Even on the night, the BBC were here to shine a light on the latest developments.

Looking in from the outside, you might think the tie was all about the visitors. Their story was playing out in front of the media. Their team is in form. Their status in the pyramid suggested for all the world that they should win the game.

And they did win the game. But Sphinx took them all the way, equalising twice in an entertaining match. For me, the better team lost. That's football. But the boys were magnificent.

Sphinx refused to be bullied by a team built on Step Three physicality but, to be honest, that's really the minimum I expect now because the effort and character of these players are beyond question.

They were in charge of the game for an hour and they did it by focusing on slick, progressive football that produced a high number of chances and a couple of goals, and made sure the Boro had to rely on some Premier League pedigree in order to win.

All in all it was a very satisfying night at the football. Quality players sweating blood is about as much as we can ask of our club as supporters and we certainly got that on Tuesday.

Before that, Sphinx were on a run of four consecutive draws in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands.

Steadily collecting points away from home is a good way to edge towards safety at this new level and positive results at Shepshed Dynamo and Walsall Wood shouldn't be underappreciated. Both took an almighty effort.

The two home draws came against Coleshill Town and Anstey Nomads, both of whom have made a mark in the league already this season. Again, I think those were solid points.

After a slight shock to the system in August, I now see a Sphinx team proving week in and week out that they can compete at Step Four. We're taking points off some very decent and well established teams. Now we need them in threes, not ones.

Football logic dictates that drawing away and winning at home is the way to climb the table. Today is our last home fixture of November before two aways to close out the month.

I'd like to welcome the supporters, players, management and officials of Hinckley LR back to the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena for today's league fixture.

Hinckley pushed Harborough Town to the last couple of matches to claim promotion from the United Counties League Premier Division South the season before Sphinx won it to join them earlier this year.

Hinckley have settled nicely and our job now is to follow suit. Sphinx are in great nick at the moment and this fixture has all the makings of an absolute cracker. Come on you blue boys!



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# OUR HISTORY

The history of Coventry Sphinx began in 1946. Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft FC had been highly successful in the city before and during the Second World War and changed their name to Sphinx FC.

AWA's legacy was replicated by the new club. Sphinx won a number of league and cup competitions throughout the 1950s and 1960s before playing a major role in the formation of the Coventry Alliance and continuing to win trophies in the following decades.

Coventry underwent significant socioeconomic change in the 1990s. The recession led to the closure of factories in the city and surrounding areas, which in turn led to the dissolution of many of Coventry's football clubs. Sphinx needed a new challenge and joined the Midland Combination Football League in 1993.

In our first season in the Midland Combination we were promoted from Division 2 and reached the semi-finals of the Birmingham Sunday Vase. A second consecutive promotion followed thanks to a second-placed finish in Division 1 the next season.

With promotion to the top division of the Midland Combination secured it was decided that the club should be linked more closely to our city. We became Coventry Sphinx and the first match under our new name was against a Coventry City XI at our home ground.

Throughout its history, our club has been served by countless loyal and hard-working local people who've contributed enormously to Coventry Sphinx on and off the field. Through their dedication we

have achieved some unbeatable highs. There have also been times of great tragedy.

In November 2001, Sphinx manager Willie Knibbs was killed in a car accident on the way home from a cup match at Meir KA. Willie was a former Sphinx player in his second spell as manager. His death was a terrible loss to our club and to local football in Coventry.

After a painful season, Sphinx went on to win the Midland Combination Challenge Cup and it was renamed the Willie Knibbs Cup as a mark of respect. Our main stand is also named in Willie's honour.

Sphinx became one of the leading teams in the Midland Combination Premier League, finishing as runners-up in our first season and again in both 2005 and 2006. We reached the final of the Endsleigh Challenge Cup on three occasions, losing to Alveston at Villa Park in 1999 but beating Coventry Marconi in 2003 and Feckenham in 2005.

We also won the Coventry Evening Telegraph Cup in successive seasons, making Sphinx the last winners of the competition at Highfield Road and the first at the Ricoh Arena.

Although first team success is a driving force, the heartbeat of our club is the thriving junior section. Formed in 1997, it started with just three teams and has grown ever since. There are now hundreds of players representing Coventry Sphinx and we were the first club in Coventry to achieve the FA Charter.

Our youth team started competing in the Midland Floodlit Youth League in 2003 and one of the

biggest successes to date came in the 2014/15 season, when they won the double after suffering only one league defeat and beating Stourbridge 3-0 in the Birmingham County FA Midweek Floodlit Youth Cup.

Under manager Paul Charnley, Coventry Sphinx's men's first team completed a remarkable treble achievement in May 2007.

In addition to finally becoming champions of the Midland Football Combination – achieving promotion to the Midland Football Alliance in the process – Sphinx won the Coventry Charity Cup and the BCFA Midland Floodlit Cup.

The 2007/08 season saw Sphinx enjoy our best ever run in the FA Vase, reaching the quarter-final for the very first time and losing controversially to Kirkham & Wesham, the eventual Wembley winners, in a replay at Sphinx Drive.

We made a run to the semi-finals of the League Cup in the same season and went on to win the Midland Alliance Polymac League Cup by beating Westfields in the final in 2009/10.

In 2014/15 the club was honoured to become a founder member of the Midland Football League Premier Division. After a top ten finish under Stuart Dutton, Lee Knibbs took over as manager in the autumn of 2017.

Lee is the son of Willie Knibbs and returned to the club after an earlier spell as assistant manager to Danny McSheffrey.

He guided Sphinx to some of our most memorable results of the decade before deciding to step aside in November 2019.

Knibbs was succeeded by his assistants, John Woodward and Shaun Thomas, who became the club's joint managers and ended the truncated 2019/20 season on a long unbeaten run, the foundation of Sphinx's greatest achievement to come.

Sphinx made a sideways move as part of FA restructuring ahead of the 2021/22 season, competing in a newly formed Premier Division South in the United Counties League.

In our first season we finished in fourth place, losing only twice in the second half of the season, and enjoyed a long run in the FA Vase, narrowly missing out on another quarter-final.

The following season saw Sphinx lose on penalties again in the same round of the FA Vase but 2022/23 was the best season in our history.

In the space of one week in April, our club acquired the freehold to the Sphinx Drive ground for the very first time and secured the United Counties League Premier Division South title with a 7-0 win against Eynesbury Rovers.

Sphinx won all of the last eleven league matches to close a big gap at the top and become champions. We scored 106 goals and ended the season three points clear of runners-up Rugby Town to confirm promotion to the Northern Premier League Midlands Division. 2023/24 is our first ever season at Step 4.

Football never stands still. Local football in Coventry has declined over the years, so to be playing at our highest ever level after more than seventy years is an achievement of which the players, officials and supporters of our club can be proud.

The structure in place at senior, youth and junior levels for both men and women promises a bright future for Coventry Sphinx as we work towards the progress Willie Knibbs' memory deserves.



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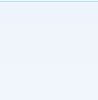
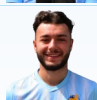





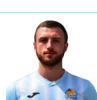

















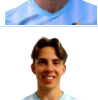




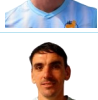



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# MEET THE SQUAD

	<b>Khaellem Bailey-Nicholls</b>	Explosive forward player with high-level experience. Signed for Sphinx in the autumn of 2023.	 024 7644 2838		<b>Jordan Hayward</b>	Former Long Buckby wide player who scored on his debut in August 2022 and went on to win the UCL Premier Division South in his first season.	Sponsored by <b>IAN AND PAULINE MCINTOSH</b>
	<b>Harvey Billing</b>	Former Sphinx youth team captain who returned to the club after spells with Stratford Town and Easington Sports.	 HELPING GOALKEEPERS SINCE 1999		<b>Max Johnson</b>	Classy former Bedworth United midfielder who debuted for Sphinx in October 2022 and went on to claim a league winner's medal.	
	<b>James Bryson</b>	Strong and steady central defender with a knack for a goal. A crucial part of the title-winning Sphinx team in 2022/23.	Sponsored by <b>MANDY SEDDON</b>		<b>Alex Lock</b>	Highly rated midfield player signed from Rugby Town in October 2023.	<b>Sponsorship available</b>
	<b>Antonio Cristofaro</b>	Skilful former Walsall youth midfielder with dribbling ability, sharp creative instincts and an eye for goal.	 ALWAYS THERE.		<b>Callum Martin</b>	Pacy former Coventry City junior full back who loves a tackle and causes opponents problems in the attacking third.	 Windows & Doors
	<b>Gio Dainty</b>	Experienced and versatile midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2023 after a long and successful spell with Coleshill Town.	Sponsored by <b>STUART GUEST</b>		<b>Dylan Parker</b>	Dangerous forward player who signed for Sphinx in November 2022 and has been a consistent scorer ever since.	Sponsored by <b>DANNIE CAHILL</b>
	<b>Jack Downes</b>	Versatile, battling midfielder with a tremendous engine. Outstanding since returning to Sphinx Drive and a league winner in 2022/23.			<b>Dawid Peplinski</b>	Future Pro Academy scholar and former Sphinx youth central defender who joined the first team ranks after playing Step 5 football in 2022/23.	
	<b>Luke Downes</b>	Creative midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2021 after countless impressive performances here as a youngster.			<b>Leigh Phillips</b>	Experienced wide player who returned to Sphinx ahead of 2023/24 after a successful career in armed forces football.	 024 7644 2838
	<b>Jamie Draper</b>	Defender who emerged from the Sphinx youth team and has become a regular starter in our best ever team.			<b>Joe Pursey</b>	Sturdy defender who came in late in 2022/23 and had an instant impact in Sphinx's title quest.	Sponsored by <b>LENA MELLOR</b>
	<b>William Edjenguele</b>	Experienced former Coventry City central defender who joined from Bedworth United after spells with Barwell and Nuneaton Borough.	<b>Sponsorship available</b>		<b>Jac Redhead</b>	Creative midfield player with experience at Barwell and Halesowen Town.	Sponsored by <b>JOHN MELLOR</b>
	<b>Sam Ellis</b>	Entertaining attacking midfielder who joined Sphinx after spells with Sutton Coldfield Town and Hinckley in 2022/23.			<b>Matthew Shipman</b>	Physical and mobile striker who led the line in the UCL Premier Division South title season after signing from Long Buckby in 2021/22.	Sponsored by <b>BF ESSENTIALS</b> 07927 649288
	<b>Keelan Fallows</b>	Talented goalkeeper who joined from Tamworth at the start of Sphinx's first season in the eighth tier of English football.			<b>Finlay Shorrock</b>	Versatile left-sided player who joined Sphinx in September 2023 and debuted in our first win in eighth tier football.	<b>Sponsorship available</b>
	<b>Louis Guest</b>	A former Sphinx junior and now a leader in our squad, Guesty is a long-serving central defender and the club's vice captain.			<b>Callum Whiteside</b>	Versatile defensive player who joined Sphinx at the start of 2022/23 and quickly became a reliable regular for John Woodward and Shaun Thomas.	
					<b>Callum Woodward</b>	Long-serving legendary club captain, a battling mainstay in the Sphinx midfield and a vital source of goals and creativity.	 Exhibitors · Displays · Bespoke Fittings

## FIRST TEAM MANAGEMENT

John Woodward	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Shaun Thomas	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Nigel Starkey	First Team Coach	Sponsorship available
Michael Taylor	Goalkeeping Coach	Sponsorship available
Damian Morgan	Goalkeeping Coach	Sponsorship available
Jim McClean	Chief Scout	Sponsorship available
Kirk Holland	First Team Physio	Sponsorship available
Paul Seddon	Kit Manager	Sponsored by CEFOVID UGANDA
Sharon Taylor	Club Secretary	
Martin Sutton	Matchday Volunteer	CNS SPORT 
Liam Cook	Match Commentator	
Chris Nee	Programme Editor	

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# 2023/24 Player Stats (all competitions)

Player	Apps	Mins	Starts	Full 90	Sub On	Yellows	Second Yellows	Straight Reds	Goals	Assists	Goals Per 90	Assists Per 90	G+A Per 90
Bailey-Nicholls, Khaellem	2	25	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Brown, Leo	2	178	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	5	258	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	5	396	4	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Castellano, Alfonso	1	20	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cristofaro, Antonio	4	105	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Dainty, Gio	3	176	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Downes, Jack	14	1175	13	10	1	7	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Downes, Luke	14	951	11	7	3	5	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Draper, Jamie	1	90	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Edjenguele, Will	8	648	8	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Ellis, Sam	10	239	2	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fallows, Keelan	13	1170	13	13	0	2	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	15	1260	14	14	1	5	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	6	344	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hedge, Zach	3	270	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Jackson, Sam	1	28	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Johnson, Max	12	539	5	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Lock, Alex	5	414	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Martin, Callum	7	463	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Parker, Dylan	15	1125	12	7	3	3	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Peplinski, Dawid	4	168	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Phillips, Leigh	3	125	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pursey, Joe	13	1156	13	12	0	3	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	7	514	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shipman, Matty	14	1260	14	14	0	3	0	0	6	2	0.067	0.022	0.089
Shorrock, Finlay	8	684	8	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Whiteside, Callum	16	1289	15	12	1	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	9	716	9	4	0	3	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033

# 2023/24 Player Stats (NPL Midlands only)

Player	Apps	Mins	Starts	Full 90	Sub On	Yellows	Second Yellows	Straight Reds	Goals	Assists	Goals Per 90	Assists Per 90	G+A Per 90
Bailey-Nicholls, Khaellem	2	25	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Brown, Leo	2	178	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	5	258	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	3	270	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Castellano, Alfonso	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cristofaro, Antonio	3	91	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Dainty, Gio	2	106	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Downes, Jack	11	905	10	7	1	6	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Downes, Luke	11	709	8	5	3	4	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Draper, Jamie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Edjenguele, Will	7	558	7	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Ellis, Sam	8	183	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fallows, Keelan	10	900	10	10	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	13	1080	12	12	1	4	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	4	218	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hedge, Zach	3	270	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Jackson, Sam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Johnson, Max	10	449	4	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Lock, Alex	4	360	4	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Martin, Callum	6	427	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Parker, Dylan	12	891	9	5	3	2	0	0	2	3	0.022	0.033	0.056
Peplinski, Dawid	4	168	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Phillips, Leigh	2	63	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pursey, Joe	11	976	11	10	0	2	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	6	424	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shipman, Matty	11	990	11	11	0	3	0	0	6	2	0.067	0.022	0.089
Shorrock, Finlay	7	630	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Whiteside, Callum	13	1033	12	10	1	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	8	654	8	4	0	3	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033

## COVENTRY SPHINX 2 ANSTEY NOMADS 2

**Pitching In NPL**  
**Division One Midlands**  
Saturday 4th November 2023

Coventry Sphinx drew a second consecutive home fixture in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands, this time an entertaining affair against unbeaten Anstey Nomads.

Sphinx and the Nomads were both promoted in 2022/23 as winners of their respective divisions in the United Counties League but the visitors started the day in third place after a flying start to life at Step Four.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas had one new signing on the Sphinx bench and another in the starting eleven. Forward Matthew Reed was named among the substitutes after joining from Coventry United. Striker Leo Brown is on loan from Alvechurch and had an instant impact on his debut.

Brown started with Matty Shipman in a reshuffled attack backed up by Jac Redhead, Alex Lock and Luke Downes in midfield with Jack Downes serving a suspension.

Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock flanked a back line of Callum Whiteside, captain Louis Guest and Will Edjenguele. Keelan Fallows started in goal.

The home team took just 55 seconds to take a 1-0 lead. Pursey was played into space on the right and clipped a lovely pass in behind for debutant Brown. He brought the ball down well and forced it through goalkeeper Conrad Logan, after which it span slowly over the line to put Sphinx in front.

A couple of minutes later Sphinx built up some more good pressure around the box and Brown fired over on the turn.

Then, after an attacking free kick, Brown set the ball back for Redhead whose volley sailed wide of the Anstey goal in the fifth minute.

The Nomads came into the game after a fast start for the hosts and in the 16th minute a swinging free kick from Andy Kanga dropped onto the roof of the Sphinx net.

Brown was quickly involved again with a good win and a driving run towards goal but didn't quite get hold of his shot at the end of it. Shipman followed suit a minute later but the pair combined to great effect in the middle of the half.

In the 23rd minute, Brown went through with pace and showed tenacity to recover when tackled inside the box. He also had the composure to roll the ball to his right, where Shipman was on hand to tap it into the empty net and double Sphinx's lead.

The connection between Shipman and Brown flourished but midfielder Lock was next to squeeze off a shot as the home team edged an increasingly competitive and occasionally ill-tempered match but Logan was able to make a comfortable save.

The Nomads had a chance from a corner ten minutes before the end of the first half but it came

to nothing. Thanks to Fallows, their best opportunity of the half was fruitless too. Nyle Blake got in on the right but was thwarted by an excellent one-on-one save by the Sphinx stopper.

The visitors remained goalless until half time but three minutes into the second half they had a goal back. Luis Rose slotted in at the back post to make it 2-1 and pile the pressure on a Sphinx team whose performance before the break had warranted the lead.



A few minutes later Henry Bestwick fired over for the Nomads just before Sphinx's two key moments of the second half came and went.

In the 54th minute, Brown was released in behind the away defence once more and chipped a confident finish past Logan and into the far corner.

Sphinx were denied a renewed two-goal lead by a late and hotly contested flag from the assistant referee on the far side, who deemed the debutant to be offside.

Brown went close again with 56 minutes played. After playing a one-two with partner Shipman, a clearly inside Brown beat Logan again but saw his strike cannon back off the Nomads crossbar.

On such fine margins are points won and lost.

Anstey continued to force the issue with both their play and their ongoing dialogue with the match referee, who awarded them a penalty with 20 minutes left to play for a foul by Shorrock.

It was a marginal call at best and it gave the visitors a golden opportunity to equalise. Rose blasted the ball down the middle to make it 2-2.

With the pitch heavy due to the rain and the game noticeably energy-sapping for the players, the last quarter was largely devoid of goalmouth action but was thick with tension.

The outcome was on a knife-edge right into stoppage time, when Fallows again made a tremendous save to maintain parity at the death.

It's fair to say both teams considered this a case of two points dropped. Anstey came to Coventry expecting to win and Sphinx lived to regret wasted chances at 2-0 and 2-1.

But this season is about building up the points for Thomas and Woodward's side and performing well to add another against a very robust Nomads team represents a more than satisfactory outcome. On another day, it might have been three.

Sphinx now face a busy month with the usual Saturday schedule bolstered by midweek away games against Nuneaton Borough in the Birmingham Senior Cup Second Round and Harborough Town in the league.

### TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Callum Whiteside
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Luke Downes
- 5 Louis Guest @
- 6 Will Edjenguele
- 7 Joe Pursey ▼ Parker (76)
- 8 Alex Lock ■
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead ▼ Johnson (90)
- 11 Leo Brown ⚽ ▼ Bryson (88)
- 12 Dylan Parker ▲ Pursey (76)
- 14 Max Johnson ▲ Redhead (90)
- 15 James Bryson ▲ Brown (88)
- 16 Matthew Reed
- 27 Zach Hedge

**SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH**  
**LEO BROWN**

MATCH HIGHLIGHTS



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The  
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Foundation

*Providing Screening and Defibrillators to  
prevent Sudden Cardiac Death in the young*



The Daniel Wilkinson Foundation is a charity set up in memory of Daniel Wilkinson who died in 2016 aged 24, while playing the game he loved, from an underlying heart condition called Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Cardiomyopathy (ARVC).



Dan played football from an early age and joined Hull City AFC when he was 10, earning a professional contract aged 18. Loughborough University followed where he completed a degree in Accounting and Financial Management while playing non-league football. He was an athlete who enjoyed the gym and took his health and nutrition very seriously. He lived life to the full and had so much ahead of him.

Other than feeling light-headed on a few occasions in the month before he died, he had no symptoms!

## SUDDEN CARDIAC DEATH IN THE YOUNG (SCD)

- SCD is the leading cause of death in young athletes during sport and the majority of deaths occur with NO SYMPTOMS or family history.
- ARVC can be found in one in every 1,000 to 5,000 young adults - IF IT IS LOOKED FOR.
- Warning signs may include light-headedness, fainting, palpitations, swollen legs, breathlessness.
- Every week in the UK, 12 apparently fit and healthy young people (aged 35 and under) die from previously undiagnosed heart conditions.
- In Italy, where screening is mandatory for all young people engaged in organised sport, they have reduced the incidence of young sudden cardiac death by 89%.

## OUR MISSION

The Daniel Wilkinson Foundation has been set up to raise awareness of SCD and to provide funding towards heart screening, defibrillators and CPR/defibrillator training primarily for grass-roots sporting teams.

**Tragedies can be prevented through cardiac screening. It is vital that young people are identified and treated.**

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 [thedanielwilkinsonfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/thedanielwilkinsonfoundation)

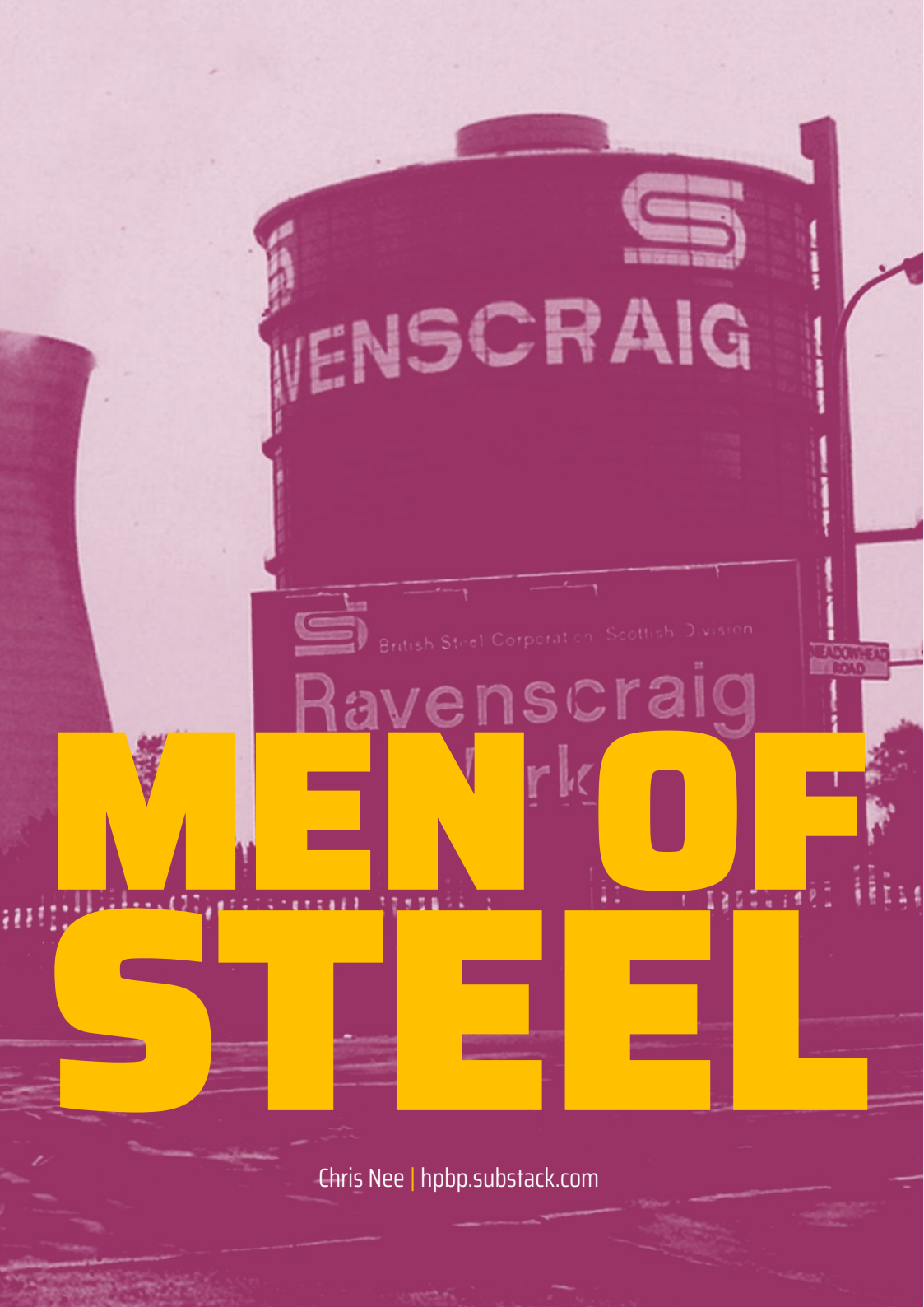
 [dwfoundation5](https://www.instagram.com/dwfoundation5)

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Date	Opponents	Comp	H	A	Res	Starting Eleven											Substitutes ( <i>not used in italics</i> )						
						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17 / GK	18	19 / GK
5 Aug	Stourport Swifts	FAC EP	A	2-0	L	Fallows	Pursey	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Parker	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Ellis	Jackson	Pepinski	Cristofaro	Billing	Martin	Salley-Haywood
12 Aug	Quorn	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Hayward	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside 1	Parker	Woodward ©	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	L. Downes	Ellis	Phillips	Cristofaro	Martin		
15 Aug	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	A	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Parker	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Carey	J. Downes	Johnson	Pepinski	Ellis	Jackson	Cristofaro		
22 Aug	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Hayward	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Parker	Ellis	Pepinski	Cristofaro	Jackson		
26 Aug	Spalding United	NPL M	A	4-0	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Hayward	Woodward ©	Parker	Ellis	Johnson	L. Downes	Pepinski	Cristofaro	Draper			
28 Aug	Bedworth United	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Parker	Cristofaro	Johnson	Phillips	Pepinski	Ellis	Penton			
2 Sep	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	A	4-1	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Pepinski	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Parker	L. Downes	Johnson	Ellis	Phillips	Cristofaro		
9 Sep	Quorn	FAT 1Q	A	4-0	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Phillips	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguele	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Parker	Johnson	Carey	Cristofaro	Pepinski	Ellis	Hedge	
16 Sep	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	H	2-1	W	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguele	Hayward	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	J. Downes	Parker 1	Johnson	Ellis	Pepinski	Bryson		
30 Sep	Rugby Town	NPL M	A	1-2	W	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Edjenguele	Whiteside	Woodward © 1	Shipman 1	Redhead	Parker	Pursey	Bailey-Nicholls	Castellano	Ellis	Phillips		
7 Oct	Corby Town	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	Whiteside	Guest	Edjenguele	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman	Ellis	Parker	Johnson	L. Downes	Phillips	Bailey-Nicholls	Redhead		
14 Oct	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	A	2-2	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Edjenguele	Bryson ©	Pursey	J. Downes	Shipman 1	Lock	Parker 1	Guest	Ellis	Johnson	Cristofaro			
21 Oct	Coleshill Town	NPL M	H	0-0	D	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguele	Parker	J. Downes	Shipman	Lock	Dainty	Whiteside	Bryson	Redhead	Ellis	Johnson		
4 Nov	Anstey Nomads	NPL M	H	2-2	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguele	Pursey	Lock	Shipman 1	Redhead	Brown 1	Parker	Johnson	Bryson	Reed	Hedge		
11 Nov	Walsall Wood	NPL M	A	1-1	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguele	Pursey	Lock	Shipman	Redhead	Brown 1	Dainty	J. Downes	Johnson	Parker	Hayward		
14 Nov	Nuneaton Borough	BSC 2R	H	2-3	L	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes ©	Whiteside	Draper	Parker 1	J. Downes	Shipman	Lock	Dainty 1	Martin	Hayward	Castellano	Guest	Redhead		
18 Nov	Hinckley LR	NPL M	H																				
21 Nov	Harborough Town	NPL M	A																				
25 Nov	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	A																				
2 Dec	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
9 Dec	Cambridge City	NPL M	A																				
16 Dec	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	H																				
23 Dec	Quorn	NPL M	A																				
26 Dec	Lye Town	NPL M	H																				
1 Jan	Bedworth United	NPL M	A																				
6 Jan	Spalding United	NPL M	H																				
13 Jan	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	A																				
20 Jan	Harborough Town	NPL M	H																				
27 Jan	Coleshill Town	NPL M	A																				
3 Feb	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	A																				
17 Feb	Rugby Town	NPL M	H																				
24 Feb	Corby Town	NPL M	A																				
2 Mar	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
16 Mar	Cambridge City	NPL M	H																				
23 Mar	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	A																				
30 Mar	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	H																				
1 Apr	Lye Town	NPL M	A																				
6 Apr	Walsall Wood	NPL M	H																				
13 Apr	Anstey Nomads	NPL M	A																				
20 Apr	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	H																				
27 Apr	Hinckley LR	NPL M	A																				



# MEN OF STEEL

Chris Nee | [hpbp.substack.com](http://hpbp.substack.com)

On Sunday 19th May 1991, an open-top bus carrying the winners of the Tennents Scottish Cup skirted the edge of the Ravenscraig steelworks.

Stevie Kirk had scored the final winner at Hampden Park the previous day, coming off the Motherwell bench to head in the only goal of extra time, his team's fourth of a seven-goal epic against Dundee United.

The moment wasn't lost on the striker from Kirkcaldy. "The bus went round the corner to where the steelworks were," he recalled later. "You have houses there attached to the steelworks. To realise the people there are not going to have a job shortly, I took my hat off to them. They deserve so many plaudits for the support they gave that team."

At the start of 1991 the closure of Ravenscraig escalated from probable to imminent and the effect on the North Lanarkshire town of Motherwell was profound. The steelworks was built in the 1950s and quickly ramped up production to three million tonnes of steel a year. It became known and respected all over the world for the quality of its output, which was produced from start to finish on the site.

Work at the blast furnaces seared Ravenscraig into the very fabric of Motherwell. The steelworks was described as the backbone and the heartbeat of the town. Although the staff had already dwindled significantly through the 1980s, the news of Ravenscraig's closure in 1991 and the finality of production's conclusion in June 1992 threw Motherwell into a spiral familiar in industrial Britain. Unemployment, deprivation and misery hit our towns hard.

Even as recently as the 1990s, local industries were central to the communities around football clubs. Like so many others, industry had birthed Motherwell FC and the two were inseparable throughout the twentieth century.

When we talk about football as the game of the people, what we really mean is that football is the game of industrial and post-industrial Britain.

The town of Motherwell followed a well trodden path. After post-war expansion, tower blocks went up in the 1960s only for systemic governmental vandalism in the decades that followed decimated the manufacturing sectors that populated them.

Ravenscraig was demolished soon after its closure a year after the Well's cup win, its symbolic posthumous potential quickly snuffed out as a town raged and mourned like many before it had, and many after it would.

Motherwell is in many ways a typical industrial town with a typical industrial town's history. The same is true of the football club. It has no more claim to uniqueness than any other, yet the timing of the team's Scottish Cup

win lends to its success a distinct and unusual air of magic. They are irrevocably linked and were before the final was even played.

The club lowered ticket prices, cognisant of the importance of football to the town's working class. The players were inspired by a manager, Tommy McLean, who was eager to use Ravenscraig as motivation throughout a cup run that meant so much to Motherwell's supporters.

The Steelmen's only previous Scottish Cup win was in 1952, right in the middle of the period between the end of the Second World War and the opening of what became Ravenscraig. They scored four times past Dundee that day, just as they would against Dundee's extremely local rivals 39 years later.

Motherwell's 1991 vintage were steered to the trophy by a man with a plan. McLean, a former Kilmarnock and Rangers player of some standing, was forthright with his players and valued their discipline.

He worked hard to tighten up a team with a reputation for conceding goals but their cup run in 1990/91 – during which McLean was notably less than happy with Motherwell's performance more than once – showed that scoring a few was just as viable a path to success.

Joining the competition in the Third Round, McLean's Motherwell started in impressive fashion by overcoming a poor record at Pittodrie in the league to knock out holders Aberdeen. Kirk's long distance strike after coming off the bench was the only goal of the game.

A 4-2 win at home against second-tier Falkirk followed in the next round to set up a quarter-final against Greenock Morton, also of the division below, at home at Fir Park. McLean was furious after the goalless draw and hardly ecstatic after the replay at Morton.

Tom Boyd scored the goal in a 1-1 draw before Motherwell won 5-4 on penalties.

The clinching spot kick was drilled in by Northern Irishman Colin O'Neill, who marked the moment with what might only be described as an acrobatic celebration with a serious dose of generosity.

Boyd, who went on to become a legendary player for Celtic and Scotland, was approaching the end of his time at Motherwell. McLean's captain left for Chelsea after the cup final despite competing interest from Nottingham Forest and Leeds United, the latter's approach enraging Motherwell to the point of legal action.

Celtic were plenty familiar with their future skipper. Shortly after dispatching Rangers in the Scottish Cup but losing to a surging Motherwell side in the league, they met the eventual winners at Hampden Park in the semi-final.

Another 0-0 draw necessitated a replay. Celtic led that game 2-1 at half time, during which McLean issued some choice words in the dressing room.

The highlight of a rousing second half was O'Neill's scorching strike to give Motherwell the lead at 3-2. A fourth wasn't far behind as the Steelmen booked a return visit to the national stadium for the final.

Quite apart from the mood in Motherwell, the circumstances around the final were extraordinary. It was the sixth Scottish Cup final for both clubs. Dundee United had lost all five, every one of them under the same manager.

Jim McLean had been in charge at United for two decades, winning the league in 1983 and reaching the final of the UEFA Cup four years later. Though hindsight reveals a United in between historic teams, they were favourites for the final in 1991. Yet their awful record in Hampden finals hung over them, evident in pre-match interviews with players and manager alike.

Motherwell v Dundee United was the non-Glasgow final the media would have chosen. Jim was Tommy's older brother. Though he was quick to make it clear he didn't seek any specific joy from beating Tommy's team, he said beforehand that, "We've got to cut his throat and we've got to win the Cup."

Given his fortunes in finals against them, he was probably just glad not to be playing Celtic. Tommy was happy his team had found some consistency towards the end of the season and revelled in their status as underdogs. The friendly managerial rivalry was sadly blunted when Tommy and Jim lost their father in the week before the match.

More than 57,000 watched on from the stands at Hampden as United's Hamish French had an early goal disallowed and Freddy van der Hoorn hit the post. The opening goal was headed in for Motherwell by striker Iain Ferguson. He'd played for United in the UEFA Cup final and both losing Scottish Cup finals either side of it.

Early in the second half United's John Clark poleaxed Motherwell goalkeeper Ally Maxwell under a high ball. With Kirk reluctantly warming up on the sidelines, Maxwell somehow played on with broken ribs, a ruptured spleen and double vision. Dave Bowman's long-range equaliser was almost inevitable and it ignited a classic half of football.

Motherwell went back in front thanks to a brave and determined header by teenager Phil O'Donnell. While much of the pre-match attention had been on the injury doubt over hotshot United youngster Duncan Ferguson – he was fresh-faced, once – O'Donnell's cup final goal was his first in senior football.

O'Donnell later won a single Scotland cap before leaving Fir Park for Celtic in 1994. After a short spell in England

with Sheffield Wednesday and a decade after leaving, he returned to Motherwell in 2004.

In 2007, O'Donnell went into cardiac arrest during a match against Dundee United and passed away. The main stand at Motherwell now bears his name. Only David Clarkson, O'Donnell's nephew and team-mate, has worn the number ten shirt since.

The tight-knit 1990/91 squad has lost others too young. The phenomenal Davey Cooper died at 39 four years after winning his fourth Scottish Cup. Jamie Dolan died from a heart attack in 2008, also at 39. Paul McGrillen died tragically the following year at the age of 37.

O'Donnell's goal at Hampden gave Motherwell a lead that was soon reinforced by a left-footed strike from the edge of the box by Ian Angus, formerly of the Dens Park end of the Dundee rivalry, but United hit back immediately when John O'Neil headed in Bowman's cross.

Despite mounting pressure it looked as if the Steelmen might hold on. No such luck. In the last minute a young Darren Jackson raced onto a long kick forward from United goalkeeper Alan Main, attacked the ball with gusto and beat the broken Maxwell.

Substitute Kirk headed the winning goal past Main four minutes into extra time. United were vehemently displeased by what they felt had been a foul on Main before the ball dropped to Kirk at the back post; referee David Syme was hit by a flying boot as United's players remonstrated with him after full time.

True to form, the match had given them one last chance to make it 4-4. Maxwell's late heroics miraculously ensured that Tommy McLean's throat remained untouched and Boyd would be the man to lift the trophy at the end of one of Scotland's greatest cup finals. Pundit Ally McCoist said it was one of the best games he'd seen in years.

Motherwell haven't won another cup but have remained in the top flight ever since. They finished sixth in 1990/91 and tenth in a newly expanded Scottish Premier Division in 1991/92. They qualified for that year's UEFA Cup Winners' Cup, of course, but Poland's GKS Katowice beat them on away goals in the First Round.

The Well have thrice finished second in the Scottish Premier League, under Alex McLeish in 1995 and Stuart McCall in 2013 and 2014. They've lost twice in the Scottish League Cup final in the same period.

Ravenscraig, meanwhile, is its own town now. The steelworks land was redeveloped in the 2010s and became a planned community with thousands of homes, schools, retail spaces, parkland and even a titanic leisure centre. The new Ravenscraig was funded, in part, by Tata Steel.



Leo Brown causing problems for Walsall Wood in a 1-1 draw for the Sphinx. (Photo: Stuart Guest)



Sphinx's defence working hard to keep Walsall Wood at bay. (Photo: Stuart Guest)

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## YOUTH TEAM FIXTURES

Thursday 17 August	1-4	L	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 31 August	2-1	W	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 7 September	5-2	W	Stourport Swifts	FA Youth Cup Preliminary Round
Thursday 14 September	1-1	D	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 21 September	0-6	L	AFC Wulfrunians	FA Youth Cup First Round Qualifying
Thursday 28 September	3-1	W	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 5 October	1-4	W	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 12 October	4-0	W	P S Olympic	Joel Richards Memorial Cup R1
Monday 23 October	1-0	L	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 9 November	3-4	L	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 16 November	19.45	H	Atherstone Town	Joel Richards Memorial Cup R2
Thursday 23 November	19.45	H	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Tuesday 5 December	19.45	A	Rushall Olympic	Colin Lowe Memorial League Cup R3
TBC		A	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division

## WALSALL WOOD 1 COVENTRY SPHINX 1

**Pitching In NPL**  
**Division One Midlands**  
Saturday 11th November 2023

Coventry Sphinx banked another point thanks to a fourth consecutive draw in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands. They hit the woodwork twice in a determined performance against former Midland Football League rivals Walsall Wood but had to settle for a hard fought 1-1 draw.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas named an unchanged starting eleven with Alvechurch loanee Leo Brown again playing up front with Matty Shipman ahead of Jac Redhead, Alex Lock and Luke Downes in midfield.



Stuart Guest

Keelan Fallows continued in goal behind Callum Whiteside, skipper Louis Guest and Will Edjenguele, while Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock got the nod in the wing back positions. Jordan Hayward returned to the bench after a spell on the sidelines with injury.

Walsall Wood built some early pressure and in the third minute an effort of goal was blocked into the side netting. Sphinx found their feet quickly and had a chance of their own in the tenth minute.

Shipman and Brown had combined well against Anstey Nomads a week earlier and did so again at the John Sylvester Stadium. They exchanged passes cleverly and Shipman's left-footed strike from 20 yards was held by Dale Eve, Walsall Wood's new goalkeeper who made his debut in this game.

A few minutes later Sphinx came close to opening the scoring in spectacular fashion. The ball dropped to Luke Downes 25 yards out and his superb volley dipped towards goal but clipped the crossbar on the way over.

Sphinx had enjoyed a good spell through the middle of the first half but Walsall Wood capitalised on their inability to clear the ball just before the half hour. Joe Fitzpatrick controlled the attempted clearance and struck a low shot from distance that

skipped off the turf and found the bottom corner past the grasp of goalkeeper Fallows.

The home team wasted a much clearer opportunity a few minutes after scoring. The next chance fell to Shipman, who pounced on a mistake in the Walsall Wood defence, chipped in onto his left foot to beat the last defender, and pulled the trigger. His shot flew over the bar and the referee awarded a corner for what he saw as a touch over from Eve.

The visitors were forced into an early change with six minutes left in the first half. Edjenguele was withdrawn through injury and Jack Downes replaced him and Sphinx had to change their shape to adapt to the new personnel.

Just as Walsall Wood had scored with Sphinx in the ascendancy, Sphinx equalised with one minute remaining in the half and with the Wood having been the better side since taking the lead.

Shipman's flick-on released Brown, whose running at the home defence had caused problems throughout the half. This time, his early drive kicked up off a defender, looped up over Eve and dropped into the net behind him to make it 1-1. It was Brown's second goal in two Sphinx appearances on loan from Alvechurch.



Stuart Guest

The half ended with Sphinx on the hunt for a second goal and it looked like they had it when Shipman smacked a shot past Eve a couple of minutes into stoppage time. It seemed destined for

the top corner but sailed just past the angle on the wrong side of the woodwork.

After surviving a scare before half time, the Wood delivered a couple at the same end immediately after it.

A terrific and vital fingertip save from Fallows in the first minute of the second half led to a corner, from which Walsall Wood came up with a close range header against the bar and another that went just over it.

Sphinx sought to soak up pressure and use their dangerous front two to hit Walsall Wood at the other end. It looked a potentially fruitful route but by the middle of the half the visitors were putting in a shift but were largely penned into their own half.

Whiteside got a crucial head on the ball to divert a powerful shot over the crossbar after an hour. Ten minutes later, Fallows had to demonstrate strong hands to make another save and preserve parity.

The visitors were working themselves into the ground and still getting a few sniffs at goal, but it briefly looked as if they were simply going to have asked too much of themselves defensively as the Wood attacks continued to flow. Thankfully, nothing came of them because of some determined defending around the box.

The worst of the home pressure now in the rear-view mirror, Sphinx looked potent in the last quarter of the match and were playing more and more in the opposition half.

With 18 minutes left, Redhead and Brown linked up to generate the moment that looked like turning one point into three for the Sphinx. The in-form midfielder threaded a lovely pass through to Brown, who beat Eve to the ball, held off pressure from the defence and thumped the post with his shot. Shipman's follow-up was blocked.

Walsall Wood were presented with the last meaningful chance of the game when they were awarded a free kick 25 yards from goal. The curling shot arced harmlessly over the frame of the goal and the remainder of what had been an absorbing match finally fizzled away.

Sphinx had a couple of chances to win it but Walsall Wood can make the same claim after what was ultimately a fair result. The visitors had to work hard defensively to try and provide a platform from which to play, and soaked up plenty of pressure in the process.

Four draws on the spin represent the steady collection of points and a sequence of solid performances that show Sphinx's ability to compete with Step Four opposition on an equal footing.

Thomas and Woodward's team now move on to a pair of home games, first against ailing Nuneaton Borough in the Second Round of the Birmingham Senior Cup and then against Hinckley LR in the league.

After that it's two games on the road. Sphinx travel to Harborough Town on Tuesday 21st November and Boldmere

St Michaels on the final weekend of November. As welcome as a win or two would be, a few more points on the tally before the end of the month would go a long way.



Stuart Guest

### TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Callum Whiteside
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Luke Downes
- 5 Louis Guest
- 6 Will Edjenguele ▼ J. Downes (39)
- 7 Joe Pursey
- 8 Alex Lock
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead ▼ Dainty (74)
- 11 Leo Brown
- 12 Gio Dainty ▲ Redhead (74)
- 14 Jack Downes ▲ Edjenguele (39)
- 15 Max Johnson
- 16 Dylan Parker
- 17 Jordan Hayward

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH  
**JAC REDHEAD**





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# HINCKLEY LR



Leicester Road Football Club was formed immediately after Hinckley United Football Club went into liquidation in October 2013 to continue the development of the youth and junior players left without a club and was incorporated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 by the four surviving directors.

The former head Football Development and all his staff transitioned over to Leicester Road along with the U21, U18, U16, U15 and U14 squads.

This enabled all the squads to continue their football development seamlessly without any impact from the liquidation.

The U18 Youth Team continued in the Midland Youth Floodlit League Premier Division. The U16, U15 and U14 squads all retained their membership of the Midland Junior Premier League.

The U18 Youth Team completed a remarkable Midland Floodlit Youth League Premier Division North, Midland Floodlit Youth Cup and Leicestershire County Cup treble.

The Senior Squad was established from the U21 and U18 squads and applied for membership of the Midland Football League. Leicester Road Football Club started the 2014-15 season in the Midland Football league Division 2 and finished second to Coventry United to gain promotion to Division One.

Leicester Road Football Club was awarded the FA Chartered Standard on October 2015.

During the next four seasons Leicester Road finished in the top five of the Midland Football League Division One every season and in the first 3 of those seasons also won the Midland Football League Fair Play Award, Throughout the same period the club retained the same manager and

largely the same squad with most players amassing over 150 games.

When the 2019/20 season was eventually expunged Leicester Road sat in the top spot using the unweighted points per game mechanism and when the 2020/21 was curtailed again Leicester Road Football Club were top using the unweighted points per game mechanism.

When it was announced that the NLS would continue with its restructuring plan Leicester Road were invited to apply for upward movement and as a result placed at Step 5 in of the United Counties League Premier South for the 2021/2022 season.

In September 2021 a decision was made to rebrand Leicester Road football club to give the club a more locational identity and Hinckley LRFC was born.

The season was successful with Hinckley LRFC finishing runners up to Harborough Town having at one time going 27 games unbeaten and were promoted to the Northern Premier League Midland Division.

The 22/23 season saw Hinckley compete at step 4 for the first time, and a respectable outing saw them finish 13<sup>th</sup> in the league table.

**2023-24 Squad:** Will Highland, Callum Earls, Jarred Acton, Ben Humphreys, Spencer Edwards, Louie Gill, Yaegan Gore, Jordan Burrows, Simon Alcott, Joseph Lyne, Harry Smith, Dominic Brennan, Sam Carroll, Brogan Greenwood, Liam Read, Louis Samuels, Aaron Nuttall, Nick Reeves, Andre Williams, Tendai Daire

**Staff:** Neil Lyne (manager) Ken Hughes (coach) Joel Milner (physio)

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SEVERAL years ago, whilst living in Oxford, I invited a couple of friends to watch the mighty U's in action. Chris Wilder was in charge at the time and promotion to the Football League was finally on the horizon. James Constable was scoring for fun.

I'd hoped to show them that Non-League football wasn't the sporting wasteland of popular portrayal. That for the princely sum of £20 (twenty quid!) a ticket, they would be handsomely entertained by inventive football and skilful players.

It backfired. Oxford's opponents that day were Kettering, who even by the standards of the day were a brutally direct outfit. The ball spent more time in orbit than the International Space Station and the game was - to this day - one of the worst I've ever paid to watch.

Needless to say, neither of my guests were in a desperate hurry to ditch their season tickets at Newcastle. Truth be told, though, that was a true reflection of Non-League football back then. For every Oxford, there were ten or 20 Kettering Towns, with a hefty unit up top, a couple of headcases at full-back and a midfield that spent the 90 minutes making tackles or watching the ball sail overhead.

And why wouldn't that be the case? Attitudes remained old school. Players still enjoyed a beer, or ten. English clubs weren't yet producing the abundance of talent available today and with only a couple of nights to train every week, it was unrealistic to expect anything else.

Which is why watching Step 3 Horsham go blow for blow with League One Barnsley in the FA Cup last weekend was to be reminded of the incredible progress made by Non-League sides over the last decade.

Whenever an underdog triumphs - and a 3-3 draw at Oakwell was most certainly that - it is tempting to talk about grit and heroism and manning



the trenches. To assume that only by outworking and outfighting a preening Goliath can an artisan like David ever hope to prosper.

Yet any such suggestion would do Horsham and their manager Dom Di Paola a massive disservice. Horsham grafted alright. Over the course of the night, they repelled 24 shots. But they never once looked ragged or desperate.

From the first whistle to the last, they adhered to a clear strategy and carried it out with discipline and intelligence. In transition - a word nobody even used 15 years ago - the Hornets were magnificent, snapping from a back five to a front five with a speed that would have made Pep Guardiola proud. All three of Horsham's goals resulted from rapid overloads on the counter.

What this tactic demonstrated was that Di Paola had analysed Barnsley and recognised that their high defensive line was vulnerable to quick breaks and balls in behind. It also showed that Horsham's part-time players were smart enough and fit enough to carry out a gameplan that, even for elite professional sides, is physically and mentally demanding.

Frankly, this sort of precision and planning would hardly have happened in the National Premier a decade ago, let alone at Step 3 - and it cuts to the heart of why Non-League football has improved so rapidly.

Back in 2011, AFC Wimbledon keeper Seb Brown was hailed as a visionary for using YouTube to research the preferences of Luton's penalty takers prior to his match-winning performance in the play-off final shoot-out.

Brown did that off his own back. He had to - only the very biggest clubs could afford access to meaningful data in those days, meaning someone like Di Paola couldn't have hoped to study Barnsley without actually visiting Oakwell.

Today, nobody needs YouTube. Clubs far below Horsham's level have access to GPS, scouting and analytics, and enough data to forensically examine the prevalence of backpasses in Timbuktu.

Players, in turn, don't require physical training time to understand a gameplan.

They can view clips online, analyse their own performance or understand how an opponent plays. Tactical intelligence is no longer the preserve of full-time pros, and nor are professional standards.

Non-League football may still be about having a post-match beer with punters in the clubhouse - and long may that continue - but the vast majority of semi-pro players (many of whom have come through the academy system) now live the lifestyle of an elite athlete.

These improvements - combined with an influx of overseas players at the highest level forcing domestic talent downwards - have changed Non-League football beyond all recognition, and the preponderance of upsets in this year's FA Cup only reinforces the point.

My old mates have had their fingers burned. But anyone introduced to the Non-League game by Horsham last weekend could not fail to be converted.

Chris Dunlavy



# COVENTRY SPHINX LADIES FC

Sunday 3 September	0-4	L	<b>Solihull Sporting Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 September	3-0	L	<b>Shifnal Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 September	1-8	W	<b>Crusaders Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 September	1-6	L	<b>Worcester City Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 1 October	0-5	W	<b>AFC Telford United</b>	Women's FA Cup 2QR
Sunday 8 October	5-5	D	<b>Solihull Sporting Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 15 October	0-5	L	<b>Stourbridge 1st</b>	BCFA Women's County Cup
Sunday 22 October	7-5	L	<b>Northampton Town</b>	Women's FA Cup 3QR
Sunday 29 October	3-4	W	<b>Kidderminster Harriers Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 26 November	14.00	A	<b>Burton Albion Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 December	14.00	A	<b>Worcester City Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 December	14.00	H	<b>Knowle Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 December	14.00	A	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 7 January	14.00	A	<b>Lye Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 January	14.00	H	<b>Crusaders Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 28 January	14.00	A	<b>Shrewsbury Town Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 4 February	14.00	H	<b>Burton Albion Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 11 February	14.00	H	<b>Kidderminster Harriers Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 18 February	14.00	A	<b>Coundon Court Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 25 February	14.00	A	<b>Knowle Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 March	14.00	H	<b>Shifnal Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 March	14.00	H	<b>Coundon Court Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 March	14.00	H	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
TBC		H	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Premier Cup 1R
TBC		H	<b>Lye Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
TBC		H	<b>Shrewsbury Town Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division



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# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS FIXTURES

Saturday 18th November

Cambridge City	v	Lye Town
Coleshill Town	v	Spalding United
Coventry Sphinx	v	Hinckley LR
Gresley Rovers	v	Corby Town
Quorn	v	Bedworth United
Rugby Town	v	Boldmere St Michaels
Sporting Khalsa	v	Shepshed Dynamo
Sutton Coldfield Town	v	Anstey Nomads

Tuesday 21st November

Harborough Town	v	Coventry Sphinx
Walsall Wood	v	Shepshed Dynamo

Wednesday 22nd November

Corby Town	v	Quorn
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Saturday 25th November

Anstey Nomads	v	Coleshill Town
Bedworth United	v	Gresley Rovers
Boldmere St Michaels	v	Coventry Sphinx
Corby Town	v	Loughborough Dynamo
Harborough Town	v	Sutton Coldfield Town
Hinckley LR	v	Cambridge City
Lye Town	v	Quorn
Shepshed Dynamo	v	AFC Rushden & Diamonds
Spalding United	v	Sporting Khalsa
Walsall Wood	v	Rugby Town

# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS LEAGUE TABLE

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Harborough Town	13	10	1	2	24	7	17	31
2	Loughborough Dynamo	14	9	3	2	30	16	14	30
3	Anstey Nomads	13	8	5	0	29	13	16	29
4	Spalding United	14	8	3	3	30	17	13	27
5	Lye Town	15	7	4	4	20	16	4	25
6	Hinckley LR	13	6	4	3	23	22	1	22
7	Sporting Khalsa	14	7	1	6	18	21	-3	22
8	Corby Town	14	6	3	5	30	18	12	21
9	Bedworth United	16	6	3	7	18	16	2	21
10	Coleshill Town	14	6	2	6	23	24	-1	20
11	Quorn	12	5	3	4	22	18	4	18
12	Sutton Coldfield Town	14	5	3	6	16	17	-1	18
13	Walsall Wood	13	5	2	6	23	24	-1	17
14	Shepshed Dynamo	14	5	2	7	18	27	-9	17
15	Cambridge City	14	4	3	7	18	22	-4	15
16	Rugby Town	14	4	1	9	15	29	-14	13
17	Coventry Sphinx	13	2	6	5	12	20	-8	12
18	Boldmere St Michaels	13	3	2	8	18	22	-4	11
19	Gresley Rovers	14	2	4	8	16	36	-20	10
20	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	13	1	1	11	7	25	-18	4

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Leo Brown	Simon Alcott
James Bryson	Dom Brennan
Alfonso Castellano	Jordan Burrows
Antonio Cristofaro	Sam Carroll
Gio Dainty	Tendai Daire
Jack Downes	Callum Earls
Luke Downes	Spencer Edwards
Jamie Draper	Louie Gill
Will Edjenguele	Yeagan Gore
Sam Ellis	Brogan Greenwood
Keelan Fallows	Will Highland
Louis Guest	Ben Humphreys
Jordan Hayward	Danny Jenno
Zach Hedge	Joseph Lyne
Max Johnson	Arron Nuttall
Alex Lock	Liam Read
Callum Martin	Domenico Roggero
Dylan Parker	Harry Smith
Dawid Peplinski	Andre Williams
Leigh Phillips	
Joe Pursey	
Jac Redhead	
Matthew Shipman	
Finlay Shorrock	
Duncan Van Den Top	
Callum Whiteside	
Callum Woodward	

Referee: James Lunn

Assistant Referees: Adrian Hall and Thomas Bartlett