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Midland Combination Premier Division
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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

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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

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Winners 2006 (Division 3)
Winners 2007 (Division 2)



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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

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Marcus Robinson
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MATCHDAY HOSPITALITY

Leanne Talbot & Donna Crouch

MATCHDAY VOLUNTEERS

Martin Sutton, Dave Bull, Alan Townsend

Coventry Sphinx Football Club

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



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Upcoming fixtures

AWAY



Coleshill Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 27th January 2024 | 3.00pm
Pack Meadow
Packington Lane, Coleshill, Birmingham, B46 3JJ

AWAY



AFC Rushden & Diamonds v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 3rd February 2024 | 3.00pm
Hayden Road Sports Ground
Hayden Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0HX

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Rugby Town

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 17th February 2024 | 3.00pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive

AWAY



Corby Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 24th February 2024 | 3.00pm
Steel Park
Jimmy Kane Way, Corby, NN17 2FB

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Shepshed Dynamo

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 2nd March 2024 | 3.00pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive

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In this issue

6	Editorial	22	2023/24 Season Overview
8	Our History	26	Report: Sphinx 0-1 Spalding United
12	Meet The Squad	34	Today's Opponents
16	Report: Bedworth United 1-0 Sphinx	36	Report: Sporting Khalsa 3-0 Sphinx
18	2023/24 Player Statistics	40	NPL Midlands Update
20	Football Is To Blame	44	Match Squads

If you looked at Coventry Sphinx's January fixtures at the end of last year and expected a difficult month in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands, it certainly hasn't disappointed.

The results have gone against us so far but the manner of our three defeats on the spin hasn't been without variation. No two losses have been alike and Sphinx's performances in them have lurched from bad to good and back again.

The New Year's Day game at Bedworth United was tame, a lacklustre outing at The Oval exacerbated by a pair of late red cards and the subsequent suspensions to Finlay Shorrocks and Jack Downes.

Five days later we played second-placed Spalding United here at the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena, conceded an early goal and then put in a terrific shift that had them on the ropes and, it seems, gave them a thing or two to moan about.

Last Saturday we visited Sporting Khalsa and flattered to deceive in spells but ultimately didn't have enough to defy a good display from our old Midland Football League rivals.

3-0 felt like a harsh outcome but the second Khalsa goal had been in the post for a while and it's hard to argue that a team who scored three on the day and hit the woodwork three times in one half didn't deserve a comprehensive win.

Though we have games in hand on a couple of the teams above us the shape of the league table is now established, at least at the bottom. AFC Rushden & Diamonds are adrift but above them is a mini-league of four teams.

Sphinx are currently top of that pack. Our job over the next three months is to stay there or climb out.

It really is that straightforward now and the consistently solid collection of points is the name of the game. We've wavered this month. We'll get back on track.

Our first substitution at Sporting Khalsa was notable for the involvement of two familiar faces. Kyle Carey's made a couple of appearances since coming back into the side but unfortunately picked up a knock in the first half in Willenhall.

His replacement was Ryan Harkin. The marksman played for us on a short-term arrangement with his club, Highgate United, and it was great to see him back in a Sphinx shirt.

Our joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas will be under no illusions about the challenge facing their team when we host league leaders Harborough Town in this afternoon's match. We've seen what they can do.

We welcome the supporters, players, management and officials of the Bees to Sphinx Drive today for this meeting of the last two United Counties League Premier Division South champions.

The reverse fixture in Market Harborough was less than impressive from a Sphinx point of view but my reaction at the time was that we'd come up against a very good team playing very well. I'm sure our visitors would agree.

They're capable of repeating that sort of quality but we've got much more in our locker. We only need to look as far back as our previous home game to see that, and the baseline expectation today is to earn a chance to win the game.

Let's show this division what we're made of. 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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MEET THE SQUAD

	Harvey Billing	Former Sphinx youth team captain who returned to the club after spells with Stratford Town and Easington Sports.			Jordan Hayward	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 IAN AND PAULINE MCINTOSH
	James Bryson	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 MANDY SEDDON		Alex Lock	Highly rated midfield player signed from Rugby Town in October 2023.	Sponsorship available
	Kyle Carey	Incisive and creative attacker who returned to Sphinx in March 2023 to help secure the league title.	Sponsored by STUART GUEST		Callum Martin	Pacy former Coventry City junior full back who loves a tackle and causes opponents problems in the attacking third.	
	Antonio Cristofaro	Skilful former Walsall youth midfielder with dribbling ability, sharp creative instincts and an eye for goal.			Dawid Peplinski	Future Pro Academy scholar and former Sphinx youth central defender who joined the first team ranks after playing Step 5 football in 2022/23.	
	Jack Downes	Versatile, battling midfielder with a tremendous engine. Outstanding since returning to Sphinx Drive and a league winner in 2022/23.			Leigh Phillips	Experienced wide player who returned to Sphinx ahead of 2023/24 after a successful career in armed forces football.	 024 7644 2838
	Luke Downes	Creative midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2021 after countless impressive performances here as a youngster.			Joe Pursey	Sturdy defender who came in late in 2022/23 and had an instant impact in Sphinx's title quest.	 024 7644 2838
	Jamie Draper	Defender who emerged from the Sphinx youth team and has become a regular starter in our best ever team.			Jac Redhead	Creative midfield player with experience at Barwell and Halesowen Town.	Sponsorship available
	William Edjenguele	Experienced former Coventry City central defender who joined from Bedworth United after spells with Barwell and Nuneaton Borough.	Sponsorship available		Matthew Shipman	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 BF ESSENTIALS 07927 649288
	Sam Ellis	Entertaining attacking midfielder who joined Sphinx after spells with Sutton Coldfield Town and Hinckley in 2022/23.			Finlay Shorrocks	Versatile left-sided player who joined Sphinx in September 2023 and debuted in our first win in eighth tier football.	INSTARMAC®
	Keelan Fallows	Talented goalkeeper who joined from Tamworth at the start of Sphinx's first season in the eighth tier of English football.			Callum Whiteside	Versatile defensive player who joined Sphinx at the start of 2022/23 and quickly became a reliable regular for John Woodward and Shaun Thomas.	
	Louis Guest	A former Sphinx junior and now a leader in our squad, Guesty is a long-serving central defender and the club's vice captain.			Callum Woodward	Long-serving legendary club captain, a battling mainstay in the Sphinx midfield and a vital source of goals and creativity.	 Exhibitors · Displays · Bespoke Filings

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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Pitching In NPL
Division One Midlands
Monday 1st January 2024

After the high of a Boxing Day win, Coventry Sphinx suffered a frustrating away loss against Bedworth United in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands on New Year's Day.

The first fixture of 2024 ended in a 1-0 win for the Greenbacks as Sphinx had two players sent off late on for what the referee deemed to be their second bookable offences.



Red cards aside, the match was an ugly repeat of the reverse fixture at Sphinx Drive. The same player scored the only goal of the game and Sphinx struggled again to create the chances required to test a less than impressive Bedworth outfit.

The visitors were without Callum Whiteside so the returning Louis Guest slotted back into the defence with James Bryson and Will Edjenguele in front of goalkeeper Keelan Fallows. Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock started in the wing back positions.

The absence of Jac Redhead meant that Jack Downes and Luke Downes both played in midfield with captain Callum Woodward. Gio Dainty started up front with Matty Shipman.

The visitors made a positive start and looked dangerous but it quickly fizzled out as Bedworth came into the game. The first real attempt on goal came for the Greenbacks when Desean Martin took on a Sphinx defender and smacked his shot over the crossbar from the edge of the penalty area.

Bedworth penned Sphinx back through the middle of the first half and scored the only goal of the game with 25 minutes played. The home

team took a throw-in on their left and worked the ball to former Sphinx player Leo Stone, who tucked the ball across Fallows and into the corner to open the scoring as he did at Sphinx Drive in the previous fixture.

Sphinx's response to going behind was uncharacteristically lacklustre and Bedworth had control of the ball for the remainder of the first half, which was punctuated by a long delay after an injury to Bedworth forward Nuno Gomez.

The away team improved after half time, keeping the ball better in the Bedworth half and showing their intent to draw level. Ten minutes into the second half a long throw-in from Bryson created one of their better openings. Guest flicked it on and Dainty's ambitious overhead effort sailed wide of the post.

Despite that opening, Sphinx weren't winning second balls and the inevitable outcome was that Bedworth regained the momentum, enabled in large part by a polished performance by Reece Blackmore in midfield.



Shorrock and Jack Downes picked up yellow cards before Jordan Hayward and Alex Lock came off the bench to freshen up what had become a timid Sphinx display.

The teams exchanged half chances. Elliot Parrot dragged an effort for Bedworth. Jack Downes hit a left-footer that took a nick off a defender and went wide only for a goal kick to be awarded. With quarter of an hour remaining

another former Sphinx man, Bedworth captain Will Grocott, had a shot blocked at the other end.

All that remained was a wholly unsatisfactory end to the match from a Sphinx point of view. Bedworth had held the game at arm's length for much of the half but mustered a late push to render any Sphinx resurgence negligible.



Fallows made an excellent one-on-one save in the final minute but there was additional damage in the form of one red card before it and another after.

Shorrock was dismissed in the 82nd minute, shown a second yellow card despite the unusual decision by the referee to allow play to continue first before returning to the incident and the very obvious fact that he was the player fouled.

In stoppage time Jack Downes was shown his second yellow card. On a day when technical cautions for simulation and kicking the ball away were not given, the strict application of the letter of the law after the final kick of the game was difficult to stomach.

Losing to Bedworth by a single goal for the second time this season was a disappointment for Sphinx but their lack of impact in a poor game was the real concern.

They've picked up points at a solid rate so far but improvement is needed if they're to continue to do so.

However Sphinx are able to line up with the extra burden of impending suspensions, the rest of January promises to be the toughest month of the season so far.

Spalding United visit Sphinx Drive before a visit to Sporting Khalsa and home games against Loughborough Dynamo and Harborough Town.

The month ends at Coleshill Town. By then, Sphinx will need to have taken a few points people aren't expecting them to take.

TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 James Bryson
- 3 Finlay Shorrock ■
- 4 Luke Downes ▼ Lock (62)
- 5 Louis Guest ■
- 6 Will Edjenguele ■
- 7 Joe Pursey ▼ Hayward (62)
- 8 Callum Woodward ■
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jack Downes ■
- 11 Gio Dainty ▼ Adams (74)
- 12 Jordan Hayward ▲ Pursey (62)
- 14 Jamal Adams ▲ Dainty (74)
- 15 Alex Lock ▲ L. Downes (62)
- 16 Callum Martin
- 17 Antonio Cristofaro

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH
JAMES BRYSON



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
Adams, Jamal	4	133	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Bailey-Nicholls, Khaellem	6	96	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Brown, Leo	5	448	5	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	10	681	8	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	7	530	6	5	1	2	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	9	534	7	1	2	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Downes, Jack	23	1910	21	15	2	10	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	22	1470	17	11	5	6	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	15	1187	14	10	1	3	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	23	2070	23	23	0	4	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	23	1932	22	20	1	7	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	15	774	9	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
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	14	910	10	7	4	3	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	23	1965	22	20	1	4	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	16	1237	14	7	2	4	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	24	2160	24	24	0	6	0	0	8	3	0.089	0.033	0.122
Shorrock, Finlay	17	1337	16	11	1	1	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Whiteside, Callum	25	1855	21	17	4	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	15	1231	15	8	0	6	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
Adams, Jamal	4	133	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
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Brown, Leo	5	448	5	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	10	681	8	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	5	404	5	4	0	1	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	8	464	6	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Downes, Jack	20	1640	18	12	2	9	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	19	1228	14	9	5	5	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	14	1097	13	9	1	3	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	20	1800	20	20	0	3	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	21	1752	20	18	1	6	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	13	648	8	4	5	1	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
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	13	856	9	7	4	3	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	21	1785	20	18	1	3	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	15	1147	13	6	2	4	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	21	1890	21	21	0	6	0	0	8	3	0.089	0.033	0.122
Shorrock, Finlay	16	1283	15	11	1	1	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Whiteside, Callum	22	1599	18	15	4	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	14	1169	14	8	0	6	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033



Football supporters are well attuned to the red flags that wave unashamedly above a club at existential risk. Whether it's a self-inflicted and gradual slide towards the abyss or the sudden shock of a sale to asset strippers, history has trained us well.

We see through promises of future glories beyond a club's wildest dreams. We sniff out overspend like cadaver dogs. We know the lies because we've heard them before. We know the moves because they've been pulled by carpetbaggers for decades. We might be jaded but we are experienced in matters of boardroom duplicity.

One red flag in particular stands out. A club being forcefully separated from its stadium by its ownership isn't a harbinger of doom, exactly, but it certainly steps up the threat level. "That's not good," we grumble, secure in the knowledge that it seldom ends well.

There are many reasons to unshackle a stadium from its football club. Often it's a case of the owner being more interested in the land all along. Increasingly, it's an accounting trick that's intended to release transfer clout or service other financial commitments but which leaves a club vulnerable.

It wouldn't be true to say all clubs own their grounds unless and until they've been shafted by unscrupulous suits. Some non-league clubs rattle along quite nicely – albeit with that risk always present – in shared or council-owned facilities. In other parts of the world it's the norm for municipal stadiums to be in use even at the top level.

But in England there's usually a reason behind a club not owning its home or at least holding a very long lease on it. When clubs move from owning the ground to not

owning the ground, we can assume something has gone wrong or has the potential to go wrong in the future.

Kingstonian can vouch for that and theirs is a particularly unusual and unfortunate case. What happened was, broadly, football stuff. It was football demonstrating an ability to damage itself even without prominent and nefarious outside influences. It's a story of three clubs, their needs and wants, and the evolving patch of real estate that tore one of them apart.

Construction at Kingsmeadow in Norbiton was completed in 1989 and Kingstonian called it home until they left at the end of the 2016/17. What happened in the last twenty years should serve as a lesson for English football irrespective of where Ks end up in the future. Six years after the last game at Kingsmeadow they were one place outside the relegation zone in the Isthmian League Premier Division and still playing outside the borough.

In 2003 the stadium lease was sold by the owners of Kingstonian to resurgent AFC Wimbledon. Kingstonian stayed at Kingsmeadow but the money reportedly did not. Kingstonian were in difficulty at the time but there's no denying that this was the decision that unlocked the end.

Wimbledon continued to rise and the possibility of building a new stadium at their traditional home at Plough Lane finally presented itself as they became established as an English Football League club. The parallels between what happened next and how Wimbledon ended up in Norbiton in the first place weren't lost on anybody.

Kingsmeadow was sold to Chelsea in the summer of 2016 and is now the home of Chelsea Women.

Kingstonian left ten months later and have groundshared at Leatherhead (very much not in the borough) and Corinthian-Casuals (inside the borough, though Ks consider themselves a Kingston club not a Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames club anyway) and Tooting & Mitcham United.

Morden and Kingston aren't far apart. Tooting's Imperial Fields is about six miles away from Kingsmeadow. Spiritually they might as well be in different cities. Kingsmeadow's address still places it at Jack Goodchild Way.

The progress being made in women's football means that there are chapters yet to be written into the Kingsmeadow manuscript. In the 2023 portion of the 2023/24 season Chelsea played seven home matches in the Women's Super League and the UEFA Women's Champions League.

Only three were played at Kingsmeadow. The Champions League fixtures and WSL games against Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur were played at Stamford Bridge. This trend is happening across the WSL, with the likes of the Emirates Stadium and Villa Park hosting women's matches as either a response to demand or an intended catalyst for it.

It's a positive development for WSL and the women's game but where does it leave Kingsmeadow? With a couple more good tournaments for England and continued success in domestic and European football, Chelsea Women could feasibly outgrow it in fairly short order. What then?

The hopefully imminent independent regulator is perhaps the most important weapon football has in its arsenal when it comes to preventing this kind of situation from happening in the future. We've seen from the Kingsmeadow debacle as well as other more straightforward stadium uncouplings that it's a complex matter. It requires insightful and impactful measures.

The regulator would have (and, let's face it, government and Parliament already do have) a number of options to consider. They range from the obvious to the creative, and the most obvious of all is to legislate.

Stadium protection measures in law would include regulatory protections for clubs against their owners, specifying some extremely strict conditions under which a club could be uncoupled from its stadium. They would also provide supporters with legal recourse should it be necessary, most likely through an officially recognised supporters' trust.

Legal safeguards could also be included in the sale of a club to new ownership, or, if necessary after the fact, in any sale of a stadium. In essence, there's a need to recognise that football grounds matter and that they serve as protective tissue around our clubs, and to codify that in law in order to make it almost impossible

for a club and a ground to be owned by different entities.

This should all have happened long ago but the independent regulator would do well to look very seriously at some fresh options too. Tight regulation around the geographical location of clubs would be complicated and probably more of a hindrance than a help in the long run, but it's worth thinking about. The recent history of Kingsmeadow highlights both the rationale and the difficulty.

Community status mandates would enshrine stadiums as community assets and give them greater protection from asset strippers, sketchy owners and unnecessary sales in the name of financial chicanery. Such protection would be contingent upon a stadium's use by the community, encouraging greater ties with local people and businesses through subsidised use of facilities.

But existential risk calls for radical responses and the independent football regulator should consider the unthinkable. Maybe clubs and their stadiums being separated isn't just the problem. Maybe it's the solution too.

Imagine, if you will, an English football in which every club's stadium is protected or even owned by supporters by way of an independent stadium trust.

Supporters would have more than a say on the sale of a stadium and on matters of multifunctional usage or redevelopment. They'd have a veto. Not every club can be supporter-owned but putting control of important community assets in their hands would be a long stride in the right direction.

The point of all this isn't to criticise Wimbledon. They wanted to rise back through the divisions and go back to Plough Lane. Nor is the intention to chastise Chelsea Women. They took the opportunity to adopt a relatively local base and their shift back towards Stamford Bridge will be in good faith. There are legitimate criticisms to be levelled but they've been covered elsewhere.

Kingstonian, Wimbledon and Chelsea Women are just three clubs operating in a regulatory environment that's left one of them out on a limb. Really, this isn't about Kingstonian being collateral damage from Wimbledon and Chelsea's ambitions but football's responsibility towards itself.

Ultimately this is a bigger question even than stadium trusts or legal protections for community assets. The answer has to be that the independent regulator has actual power over this matter and others. More importantly, it demands supporter representation with teeth – big, pointy, sharp, ferocious teeth – in the boardroom.

Chris Nee
hbbp.substack.com

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	Purse	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Parker	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Ellis	Jackson	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Billing	Martin	Selley-Haywood
12 Aug	Quorn	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Purse	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	Purse	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Parker	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Carey	J. Downes	Johnson	Peplinski	Ellis	Jackson	Cristofaro		
22 Aug	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Purse	Martin	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Hayward	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Parker	Ellis	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Jackson		
26 Aug	Spalding United	NPL M	A	4-0	L	Hedge	Purse	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Hayward	Woodward ©	Parker	Ellis	Johnson	L. Downes	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Draper			
28 Aug	Bedworth United	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Purse	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Parker	Cristofaro	Johnson	Phillips	Peplinski	Ellis	Penton			
2 Sep	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	A	4-1	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Peplinski	Purse	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	Peplinski	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	Peplinski	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	Purse	Bailey-Nicholls	Castellano	Ellis	Phillips		
7 Oct	Corby Town	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	Whiteside	Guest	Edjenguele	Purse	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 ©	Purse	J. Downes	Shipman 1	Lock	Parker 1	Guest	Ellis	Johnson	Cristofaro			
21 Oct	Coleshill Town	NPL M	H	0-0	D	Fallows	Purse	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	Purse	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	Purse	Lock	Shipman	Redhead	Brown 1	Dainty	J. Downes	Johnson	Parker	Hayward		
14 Nov	Nuneaton Borough	BSC 2R	H	2-3	L	Fallows	Purse	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	1-1	D	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Brown	Lock	Shipman	Redhead 1	Dainty	Edjenguele	Hayward	Bailey-Nicholls	J. Downes	Draper		
21 Nov	Harborough Town	NPL M	A	6-1	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguele	Purse	J. Downes	Shipman	Brown	Dainty	Redhead 1	Lock	Bailey-Nicholls	Hayward			
25 Nov	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	A	3-1	L	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	J. Downes	Redhead	Shipman	Brown	Dainty 1	Woodward	Edjenguele	Lock	Bailey-Nicholls	Hayward		
9 Dec	Cambridge City	NPL M	A	0-1	W	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Edjenguele	Lock	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Hayward	L. Downes	Adams	Bailey-Nicholls	Whiteside			
16 Dec	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Adams	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Hayward	L. Downes	Bailey-Nicholls	Lock	Bryson			
23 Dec	Quorn	NPL M	A	4-2	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes ©	Edjenguele	Bryson	Purse	J. Downes 1	Shipman	Redhead 1	Lock	Woodward	Hayward	Dainty	Adams	Bailey-Nicholls		
26 Dec	Lye Town	NPL M	H	2-0	W	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	J. Downes 1	Edjenguele	Bryson	Purse	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Dainty	L. Downes	Adams	Hayward 1	Lock			
1 Jan	Bedworth United	NPL M	A	1-0	L	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguele	Purse	Woodward ©	Shipman	J. Downes	Dainty	Hayward	Adams	Lock	Martin	Cristofaro		
6 Jan	Spalding United	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Fallows	Bryson	Hayward	Lock	Guest	Edjenguele	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Carey	Purse	Whiteside	L. Downes	Dainty	Shorrock		
13 Jan	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	A	3-0	L	Fallows	Purse	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest	Bryson	Lock	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Carey	Edjenguele	Whiteside	Harkin	Martin			
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																				

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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%.

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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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COVENTRY SPHINX 0 SPALDING UNITED 1

Pitching In NPL
Division One Midlands
Saturday 6th January 2024

Coventry Sphinx began 2024 with two matches in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands and lost them both by a single goal.

On both occasions the goal was scored in the first half, leaving Sphinx to chase an equaliser and try to get something out of the fixture. On both occasions they came up short in that hunt. That's where the similarities end.

After a disappointing display against Bedworth United on New Year's Day, Sphinx dug in and battled to the end against Spalding United five days later. The Tulips ended the day top of the league but they were certainly made to work for it.



The grounds team did a brilliant job to get the pitch playable after the January deluge.

The difficult conditions did neither team any favours but you play the match that's put in front of you and nobody is obliged to make it easy.

Fallows fielded the first speculative shot of the match from Spalding before Sphinx set out their stall.

Despite a better start and good attacking intent early on, the home team fell behind with six minutes played.

Sphinx were unhappy with their defending when a direct pass from the Tulips was flicked on by Tyler Winters to Danny Draper. Draper

pulled the ball in and clinically slotted it past Fallows into the bottom corner.

Sphinx took the goal in stride. Spalding dominated possession for a while but the home team sought to hit them on the break.

Just a few minutes after the goal, Shipman and Carey exchanged passes to quickly cover half of the field and create an opening. Carey's cross picked out the striker but his header under pressure drifted wide.

Sphinx enjoyed a good spell in the middle of the half and looked much more threatening going forward than they did on New Year's Day. Hayward was a reliable outlet on the break out wide on the left.

A period of pressure from Spalding culminated in another comfortable Fallows save before Sphinx began to tilt the game in their favour.

Just after the half hour mark, Redhead did well to create a yard in the attacking third and hit a shot that was deflected away for a corner.

Woodward's deep delivery of that set piece was headed back across goal by Edjenguele beyond the back post and it was goalbound until a sharp clearance off the line.

A few minutes later Shipman forced Spalding goalkeeper Tony Breeden into the only real save either goalkeeper made. Shipman showed some pace to get in behind but Breeden was equal to his shot on target as he made his way into the box.

Tulips captain Nathan Stainfield headed wide from a corner with the last action of first-half stoppage time and Spalding's set pieces were especially concerning for Sphinx as the visitors looked dangerous in the early part of the second half.

Sphinx gradually gained the impetus in an entertaining second half full of blood and thunder. Shortly before the hour Shipman fired wide on the turn after being found by Lock at the end of a lovely move. The home team looked increasingly capable of levelling the score.

Halfway through the second half a Spalding free kick caused a problem in the Sphinx area but the ball ricocheted harmlessly off Tulips striker Riley O'Sullivan – a former Sphinx junior and a thorn in Sphinx's side, as he tends to be – allowing Fallows to grab it on the line.

With quarter of an hour remaining Sphinx's best chance of the match came and went.

Shipman combined well with Carey again, releasing his team-mate into the left channel with Spalding's defence turned. Carey produced a tremendous ball across goal and Pursey busted a gut to get there in time to meet it but could only guide his shot across the face of goal.

Redhead was in his element, the intelligent foot on the ball in the middle of a gutsy and physical team performance. Sphinx gave it everything in the second half, didn't give Spalding's players a moment's peace and never gave up on getting a result.

They were ultimately unable to find the all-important equalising goal but their attitude and work ethic throughout the 90 minutes were spot on.



Fallows had some saves to make after the Spalding goal but none was a real test. Sphinx had one effort cleared off the line and one well saved in the first half and can claim to have had the better openings in the second.

They just didn't have the finish on the day against a Spalding side who aren't in the habit of allowing many

chances. The Tulips continue on with their title challenge intact thanks to three hard-earned points. Sphinx must take the positives into tough games to come.



TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 James Bryson ▼ Pursey (63)
- 3 Jordan Hayward
- 4 Alex Lock
- 5 Louis Guest
- 6 Will Edjenguele ▼ Whiteside (71)
- 7 Jack Downes ▼ Shorrocks (83)
- 8 Callum Woodward @
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead
- 11 Kyle Carey
- 12 Joe Pursey ▲ Bryson (63)
- 14 Callum Whiteside ▲ Edjenguele (71)
- 15 Luke Downes
- 16 Gio Dainty
- 17 Finlay Shorrocks ▲ J. Downes (83)

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH
JAC REDHEAD



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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	3-0	W	Atherstone Town	Joel Richards Memorial Cup R2
Tuesday 5 December	*1-1	D	Rushall Olympic	Colin Lowe Memorial League Cup R3
Thursday 14 December	1-6	L	Stourbridge	Joel Richards Memorial Cup QF
Monday 8 January	5-3	L	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 11 January	5-1	L	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 22 January	A	A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 1 February	A	A	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Friday 9 February	A	A	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	A	A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	A	A	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	A	A	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC	H	A	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division

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HARBOROUGH TOWN

HISTORY

Harborough Town F.C is the realisation of the merger of Harborough Town Juniors, Harborough Town Spencers and Harborough Minis in 2007, which created one club for all ages, gender and ability for the Market Harborough community.

We are based in Market Harborough, where our impressive facilities cater for all of the club's teams. The club became an FA Charter Standard Club in 2004 and through consistent development has achieved FA Charter Standard Community Club status which is the highest accolade currently available and recognizes best practice, on-going development and a positive impact within the local community.

The club currently has teams that include Minis, Girls, Junior, Youth, Ladies, Inclusive, Senior, Veteran and Walking Football sides. Harborough Town Juniors was formed in 1975, running teams from U11 to U16. After initially playing at Symington's, they developed facilities on Northampton Road in the 1990s.

However, there was a desire to have senior football for the youngsters to move on to, and consequently they formed links with Spencers United, and in 2007 they merged with Harborough Town Spencers, as they had become called.

In the early 2000s Harborough Minis had been formed to cater for U11s, and in 2007 they also joined the merger to create Harborough Town FC.

After three seasons in the Northants Combination, managed by Andy 'Stan' Wilson, the club won promotion to the United Counties League.

On 14 August 2010 Market Harborough witnessed the return of UCL football for the first time since Symington's FC's last game in 1954, and by 2012 'The Bees', as they had become known, had won promotion to the UCL Premier Division.

In the early years of HTFC the Northampton Road ground had seen much improvement, with a new clubhouse, first team pitch, two stands and a 3G artificial pitch.

The Bowden's Park ground had become a fine ground, but in 2018 the installation of a Class 1 artificial pitch (3G), funded by Market Harborough District Council, a Stadium Improvement Grant and the Football Foundation, saw the creation of The Harborough Town Community Football Ground, but known as The Beehive. This was opened on 1 November 2018 with a game against an FA Representative XI.

The senior side made steady progress in the UCL and the two aborted Covid-19 seasons saw us have good starts, reflecting the clubs on field progress.

In 2020 experienced UCL manager Mitch Austin joined the club and immediately changed the mindset to a much more professional one.

After 10 years of steady progress at Step 5 HTFC's ambitions in the FA Pyramid were met when we won the UCL Premier Division South in 2022.

A place in the Northern Premier League Midland Division was the reward, with an excellent 8th place finish.

PEN PICS

MITCH AUSTIN, Manager: an exciting young manager who has managed in the United Counties League and was Assistant Manager at Kettering Town and St Ives Town, who joined 'The Bees' from in October 2020. His brilliant player recruitment and leadership led to the UCL Premier Division South title and the UCL's Champions Trophy in 2022 and an eighth place finished in the NPL Midlands Division in the club's first Step 4 season.

ELLIOT TAYLOR, goalkeeper: an excellent all round keeper, who is quick off his line and a fine shot stopper; in his fourth season at the club. Ever present again last season last season.

JAKE WILLIAMS, goalkeeper: a young keeper of great promise who has risen through the ranks at Brooke House Academy. Made his HTFC debut last season.

DAN COOPER, full back: a powerful, raiding, consistent full back, with an amazing long throw and chips in with the odd useful goal. Club Player of the Season 2022/23.

ISAIAH BAZELEY, full back: a great signing for the club, the ex.Aston Villa player made 33 appearances for Peterborough Sports at Step 2 last season.

BEN WILLIAMS, central defender: our goal scoring, dominating centre half and captain. He has played over 350 senior games for the club having been a junior with us.

ALEX MORRIS, central defender: the description everybody seems to use of Alex, is 'towering defender'! Captained Gresley Rovers last season, a seasoned player, but still only 27.

PAUL MALONE, central defender/midfield: a hugely impressive and experienced quality defender who dominates in both boxes and scores goals. Joined the club from Peterborough Sports.

RHYS KELLY, defender/midfield – a quality young defensive player, who is quick and reads the game well. A great acquisition for 'The Bees' from Wellingborough Town he has the ability to go far in the game.

JOSH WALSH, defender/midfield: he has come through the ranks at 'The Bees' and now in his sixth season. A versatile, quality midfielder/ defensive player, whose sweet left foot provides the ammunition for our strikers.

JAKE DUFFY, midfield: a member of Stamford Town's NPL winning team last season, he brings a wealth of experience to the club.

GARY MULLIGAN, midfield: joined the club from Corby Town and was a valuable acquisition in our promotion season, being an experienced holding midfielder player, although after nearly 50 games a goal would be good!

CONNOR KENNEDY, midfield: having played for Kettering Town and Peterborough Sports in the past two seasons Connor is a great capture. He gives us possession and drive in the centre of the park.

JOEL CARTA, midfield: now in his third spell with the club Joel is a creative goal scoring midfield player with a thunderbolt shot.

JORDAN CRAWFORD, midfield: a quality midfield player who has played for Kettering Town, Boston United and Brackley Town who returns to the club where his career began.

AMARVIR SANDHU, midfield: an experienced midfield player Amarvir joins us after five years at Coleshill Town.

DODZI AGBENU, midfield/attack: a strong running, skilful and goal scoring midfielder/striker, who can play centrally or out wide.

RHYS HOENES, midfield/attack: another of Mitch's great signings from higher clubs, proving to be a quick and tricky goal scoring forward.

JOHNSON GYAMFI, attacking midfield: an attacking winger who is direct and quick and loves to run at defenders; previously at Peterborough United's Academy.

JOHNNY CAREY – a young player, signed from Bugbrooke St Michaels, who he joined from the Northampton Football & Education Programme.

LUCA MILLER – a striker who has joined on loan from Kettering Town.

DAN FORBES, defender/midfield/attack: a long serving HTFC player who is really versatile, from wing back to forward.

KAI TONGE, midfield/attack: a proven goal scorer at Coleshill Town in recent seasons, who joins us from Step 2 side Rushall Olympic.

SPORTING KHALSA 3 COVENTRY SPHINX 0

Pitching In NPL
Division One Midlands
Saturday 13th January 2024

After a positive performance in defeat to high-flying Spalding United, Coventry Sphinx struggled to get going in a 3-0 loss at Sporting Khalsa in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands.

Khalsa took three of their chances and might have scored a couple more on a day when the woodwork denied them more readily than the opposition.

Sphinx had good spells on the ball but this was a comprehensive defeat that should pose some questions.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas started with Keelan Fallows in goal and opted for Louis Guest and James Bryson at centre back in between full backs Joe Pursey and Jordan Hayward.

Luke Downes, Alex Lock and captain Callum Woodward started in midfield, and Jac Redhead and Kyle Carey played in more advanced positions off striker Matty Shipman.

The visitors made a decent enough start but a mistake in possession gave Khalsa an early opportunity, culminating in a shot over Fallows' crossbar with two minutes played.

Less than a minute later the hosts had the lead when Gurjit Singh was teed up on the edge of the box and swept the ball across the goalkeeper and into the bottom corner, profiting from determined Khalsa play in the final third.

They were in the ascendancy for a while after the goal and Sphinx weren't able to keep the ball for any sustained period until the middle of the half. Khalsa, meanwhile, were getting forward with ease and at speed.

Sphinx enjoyed a positive patch before the half hour but a succession of offsides – initially correctly identified but later more doubtful – blunted their threat.

The home team steadied themselves and zipped a low drive wide of goal from 30 yards out in the 30th minute. Though Khalsa were back on the front foot, the rest of the first half

was end to end. Khalsa went close again after 36 minutes and Sphinx hit back after 39.

Some nice play in midfield freed up Carey, whose clever clip in behind created an opening for Shipman. The striker fired wide from a very tight angle.

Three minutes later Woodward delivered a corner only for the ball to be cleared back to him. He whipped it back in and it was headed out as far as Bryson, whose volley from the edge of the box dipped towards goal but sailed safely over Ben Whiting's bar.

Sphinx were forced into a change as half time loomed with a one-goal deficit. Carey had taken a knock earlier in the half and was withdrawn. His replacement was the familiar face of Ryan Harkin, who came on to make his first Sphinx appearance at Step Four.

After the break Sphinx fared well at first. Fallows saved and held a free kick but a couple of dangerous attacks showed the intent of the visitors. They were necessarily leaving the back door ajar, however, and Fallows was called into action again.

In the 52nd minute Khalsa generated a chance and clipped the crossbar from just inside the box. They had another couple of good looks at goal and from there it was their day. They moved the ball well and pushed Sphinx back, notably looking like scoring when the visitors went forward in numbers to hunt for an equaliser.

Pursey sent in a cross from the right just before the hour and Woodward arrived beyond the back post to turn the ball towards goal. It bounced wide of the post.

Sphinx were solid in possession in the middle of the second half but the sense that they were playing with fire was palpable. With 61 minutes played, Fallows had to make an excellent save to keep Khalsa out after his pass had been picked off by an opponent.

A thumping strike from 25 yards beat Fallows but not the crossbar in the 66th minute. Khalsa soon had their second goal anyway. In the 67th

minute a corner kick led to the ball bouncing around in the Sphinx box and the defence couldn't snag it in order to force it clear. James McGrady gathered it and thrashed the ball in from twelve yards to make it 2-0 and put to bed any serious hopes of a Sphinx comeback.

A double substitution shuffled the defensive personnel for Sphinx and led to centre back Will Edjenguele getting a brief shift up front as the visitors tried in vain to get something from the match.

They had performed reasonably well in many aspects up to that point but didn't test Khalsa goalkeeper Whiting until the last ten minutes. He made a fine low save from Harkin's shot on target, the key moment in his quest for a clean sheet.



Stuart Guest

Far from a rousing finale from the visitors, the last five minutes were all Khalsa. Fallows made a superb save with the home team breaking and then another to keep the score at 2-0 soon afterwards. He could do nothing to deny them a third goal at the third time of asking. Sphinx failed to deal with another corner in the 88th minute and Khalsa captain Tesfa Robinson was in the right place to smash it into the roof of the net.

The hosts hit the base of the post in the final minute of normal time but the damage had long been done. The second goal killed Sphinx off and their paucity of chances made them easy to beat after conceding a very early goal.

Losing matches is just part of the reality of being promoted from Step Five to Step Four for a club of Sphinx's means. But not all defeats are created equal. Sometimes you don't get the rub of the green, sometimes

you don't show up and sometimes you fall a little short against a team that offers more on the day. This was the latter kind. Khalsa looked sharper, were quicker to second balls and, in the end, made enough headway to score three without reply.

Sphinx have been in a rough spot since the turn of the year but their heads haven't dropped and there are better days to come. There is quality in the side, the attitude is right throughout the squad and soon enough a good performance will translate into another three points.

Their next two matches are both at home. Loughborough Dynamo will visit the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena for the rearranged league fixture on Tuesday 16th January.

On the following Saturday it's Harborough Town who'll come to Coventry eager to continue their league-leading form. Time will tell whether Thomas and Woodward's team can get back on the right path.

TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Jordan Hayward
- 4 Luke Downes ▼ Whiteside (72)
- 5 Louis Guest ▼ Edjenguele (72)
- 6 James Bryson
- 7 Alex Lock
- 8 Callum Woodward @
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead
- 11 Kyle Carey ▼ Harkin (44)
- 12 Will Edjenguele ▲ Guest (72)
- 14 Callum Whiteside ▲ L. Downes (72)
- 15 Ryan Harkin ▲ Carey (44)
- 16 Callum Martin

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH
JOE PURSEY





COVENTRY SPHINX LADIES FC

Sunday 3 September	0-4	L	Solihull Sporting Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 September	3-0	L	Shifnal Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 September	1-8	W	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 September	1-6	L	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 1 October	0-5	W	AFC Telford United	Women's FA Cup 2QR
Sunday 8 October	5-5	D	Solihull Sporting Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 15 October	0-5	L	Stourbridge 1st	BCFA Women's County Cup
Sunday 22 October	7-5	L	Northampton Town	Women's FA Cup 3QR
Sunday 29 October	3-4	W	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 26 November	3-3	D	Burton Albion Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 December	3-2	L	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 December	5-1	W	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Premier Cup 1R
Sunday 7 January	4-0	L	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 January	4-3	W	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 January	14.00	H	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Premier Cup QF
Sunday 28 January	14.00	A	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 4 February	14.00	H	Burton Albion Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 11 February	14.00	H	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 18 February	14.00	A	Coundon Court Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 25 February	14.00	A	Knowle Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 March	14.00	H	Shifnal Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 March	14.00	H	Coundon Court Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 March	14.00	H	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 March	14.00	H	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 April	14.00	H	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 April	14.00	H	Knowle Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 28 April	14.00	A	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division



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PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS FIXTURES

Saturday 20th January

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

Tuesday 23rd January

Anstey Nomads	v	Quorn
Loughborough Dynamo	v	Sporting Khalsa
Walsall Wood	v	Shepshed Dynamo

Saturday 27th January

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

PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS LEAGUE TABLE

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Harborough Town	23	17	2	4	58	17	41	53
2	Spalding United	24	16	4	4	50	24	26	52
3	Anstey Nomads	22	14	7	1	54	24	30	49
4	Hinckley LR	24	13	7	4	41	30	11	46
5	Loughborough Dynamo	22	13	5	4	41	27	14	44
6	Lye Town	24	12	5	7	36	30	6	41
7	Sporting Khalsa	23	11	3	9	35	35	0	36
8	Quorn	22	10	5	7	41	32	9	35
9	Sutton Coldfield Town	23	10	5	8	39	34	5	35
10	Corby Town	24	9	6	9	53	37	16	33
11	Boldmere St Michaels	23	10	2	11	42	32	10	32
12	Walsall Wood	20	9	3	8	35	35	0	30
13	Bedworth United	25	8	6	11	29	32	-3	30
14	Coleshill Town	24	8	4	12	37	48	-11	28
15	Shepshed Dynamo	22	7	4	11	23	39	-16	25
16	Coventry Sphinx	23	4	8	11	21	40	-19	20
17	Cambridge City	23	5	4	14	25	45	-20	19
18	Gresley Rovers	25	4	6	15	27	63	-36	18
19	Rugby Town	24	5	2	17	26	54	-28	17
20	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	22	1	2	19	15	50	-35	5

16/1/2024



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