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Saturday 16th March 2024  
Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

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**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)



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Vice-Chairman: Joseph Fletcher  
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Club Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Matchday Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
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Programme Editor: Chris Nee

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Joint Manager: John Woodward  
First Team Coach: Nigel Starkey  
Goalkeeping Coach: Damian Morgan  
Goalkeeping Coach: Michael Taylor  
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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

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## Upcoming fixtures

AWAY



### Loughborough Dynamo v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Saturday 23rd March 2024 | 3.00pm

The Newton Fallowell Stadium  
2 Watermead Lane, Loughborough, LE11 3TN

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Sutton Coldfield Town

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Saturday 30th March 2024 | 3.00pm

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena  
Sphinx Drive

AWAY



### Lye Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Monday 1st April 2024 | 3.00pm

Sports Ground  
Stourbridge Road, Lye, DY9 7DH

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Walsall Wood

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Saturday 6th April 2024 | 3.00pm

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena  
Sphinx Drive

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Shepshed Dynamo

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Tuesday 9th April 2024 | 7.45pm

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena  
Sphinx Drive



CoventrySphinx



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If Coventry Sphinx can hold on to our status as a Step Four football club, we'll look back on March 2024 as one of the most important months in our history.

Visitors who've been here before, even as recently as three weeks ago, will find that the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena looks bit different for this afternoon's match.

By the end of the month it'll be unrecognisable. Not for the first time, I'd like to kick off today's programme by paying tribute to the incredible amount of work that's happening behind the scenes to ensure our ground is up to standard.

Of course, what happens off the pitch is only part of the story. This is scheduled to be our third home fixture on the spin and the previous two yielded only a draw and a defeat. But don't be fooled. There were positives aplenty.

Drawing in the thrice postponed match against Loughborough Dynamo was, we hope, a significant staging post for the Sphinx. With teams below us losing on the same night, we demonstrated our ability to snatch a point or three out of nowhere.

We didn't get anything from the following match against Harborough Town but even that defeat was evidence of progress. For long stretches Sphinx went toe to toe with the best team in the division and had them rightly playing for time at the end of the game.

It should be as much a boost for the team's confidence as the draw a few days earlier. With almost no damage to our goal difference — and let's be honest, it wouldn't have been the first time Harborough made a dent — it might yet turn out to be just as important in the final reckoning.

This afternoon we welcome the supporters, players, management and officials of Cambridge City to Sphinx Drive for what's sure to be a thrilling Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands encounter.

Our visitors are one place above us in the league table and there's not much in it. The gap is three points and Sphinx have a game in hand. Today's fixture is crucial for us both.

Sphinx and Cambridge City are showing enough quality and character to be able to keep themselves out of trouble as we head into the final month of the season, and it's no surprise after the close nature of the previous meeting.

We came out on top in St Ives thanks to a very late goal against a team that played much of the match with ten men. Those points were massive and they came at the best possible time, but they certainly didn't come with a guarantee of more today.

The only way we'll take all three today, and indeed the only way we'll maintain the buffer between us and the dotted line, is to dig deep as a club and show off the Sphinx spirit: ability when we have the ball and sweating blood to get it when we don't.

The end of the 2023/24 season is approaching and we're in a good position to stay in the division. Our destiny is in our own hands and, if we've learned anything about this club in the last year, it's that our players and management team thrive in control of their own outcomes.

There are nine matches remaining, five of them at home. I believe this team has proved itself worthy of a spot at this level, and that the players have the quality and guts to be able to keep it. If we can win one of the next few, we can perhaps end the season with a little glance up the table as well as down.

**Chris Nee**  
Programme Editor



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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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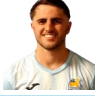












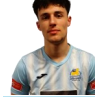

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# MEET THE SQUAD

	<b>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>Kyle Carey</b>	Incisive and creative attacker who returned to Sphinx in March 2023 to help secure the league title.	Sponsored by <b>STUART GUEST</b>
	<b>Antonio Cristofaro</b>	Skilful former Walsall youth midfielder with dribbling ability, sharp creative instincts and an eye for goal.	<b>BLOCK109</b> ALWAYS THERE.
	<b>Ashton Demulder</b>	A former Sphinx junior player who rejoined the club on loan from Solihull Moors after a spell with Coleshill Town.	Sponsorship available
	<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>Cardiac Risk in the Young</b>
	<b>Luke Downes</b>	Creative midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2021 after countless impressive performances here as a youngster.	<b>PARTY PROPS</b>
	<b>Jamie Draper</b>	Defender who emerged from the Sphinx youth team and has become a regular starter in our best ever team.	<b>KA KITS ACADEMY</b>
	<b>William Edjenguele</b>	Experienced former Coventry City central defender who joined from Bedworth United after spells with Barwell and Nuneaton Borough.	<b>JUST4KEEPERS</b> HELPING GOALKEEPERS SINCE 1999
	<b>Sam Ellis</b>	Entertaining attacking midfielder who joined Sphinx after spells with Sutton Coldfield Town and Hinckley in 2022/23.	<b>SPHINX</b> Industrial Supplies Ltd
	<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>IB CONSTRUCTION</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>3urbank</b> fresh produce

	<b>Tyler Haddow</b>	Dynamic and respected wide attacker who arrived at Sphinx in January 2024 with a fearsome reputation locally.	Sponsorship available
	<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>Callum Martin</b>	Pacy former Coventry City junior full back who loves a tackle and causes opponents problems in the attacking third.	<b>DESIGN RIGHT</b> Windows & Doors
	<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>Joe Pursey</b>	Sturdy defender who came in late in 2022/23 and had an instant impact in Sphinx's title quest.	<b>LOURDES GARDEN ROOMS</b> 024 7644 2838
	<b>Jac Redhead</b>	Creative midfield player with experience at Barwell and Halesowen Town.	<b>LOURDES GARDEN ROOMS</b> 024 7644 2838
	<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>Finlay Shorrock</b>	Versatile left-sided player who joined Sphinx in September 2023 and debuted in our first win in eighth tier football.	<b>INSTARMAC®</b>
	<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>SPHINX</b> Industrial Supplies Ltd
	<b>Leo Wood</b>	Promising striker who joined Sphinx on loan from Solihull Moors in early 2024.	Sponsorship available
	<b>Callum Woodward</b>	Long-serving legendary club captain, a battling mainstay in the Sphinx midfield and a vital source of goals and creativity.	<b>D Dream Displays</b> Solutions • Displays • Bespoke Fixings



## 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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## COVENTRY SPHINX 2 LOUGHBOROUGH DYNAMO 2

**Pitching In NPL**  
**Division One Midlands**  
Tuesday 5th March 2024

A determined Coventry Sphinx performance saw the boys in sky blue and white capitalise on a bad night for the teams around them by claiming a point against high-flying Loughborough Dynamo.

The visitors had to come back from two goals down after a blistering Sphinx start, salvaging a 2-2 draw thanks to a couple of goals at key times in the match. Neither team should be disappointed with the outcome as Sphinx gained another point on both Rugby Town and AFC Rushden & Diamonds.



Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas restored captain Callum Woodward to the starting line-up after suspension and he played in midfield with Jack Downes, with Ashton Demulder operating behind striker Matty Shipman.

Shipman was flanked by Tyler Haddow and Jordan Hayward, while goalkeeper Keelan Fallows was protected by a back four without Louis Guest. Will Edjenguele and James Bryson got the nod at centre back, with Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock in the full back positions.

The home team kicked off and got the ball forward quickly, and led after just a few seconds. Demulder made the decisive run with the ball, got it back off a defender and fired past Dynamo goalkeeper Lewis King and into the bottom corner from the edge of the penalty area.

A great start looked as if it might become a phenomenal one in only the third minute. Hayward forced his way through a couple of tackles and shifted the ball onto his left foot,

only to see his shot drift just wide of the Dynamo post.

Sphinx looked sharpest in the early exchanges but the visitors edged their way into the match, responding to the shock of the first-minute goal with a good amount of possession.

But it was an opening on the counter-attack that came their way first. A first-time effort in the ninth minute lacked the curl required to find the corner of Sphinx's goal. Three minutes later, Fallows denied a shot at the near post.

The match started to even out after quarter of an hour and Loughborough carved out first a few threatening attacks and then a noticeable spell of pressure.

Sphinx's second goal, with 27 minutes played, was somewhat against the run of play, at least in terms of possession.

Hayward was the architect. He made a powerful run through the left channel and showed excellent tenacity to stay on his feet when the defender who came across to meet him lost his.

A composed cut-back from the byline left striker Shipman with the simple task of knocking the ball past King and into the Dynamo net to double the home side's advantage.

Loughborough made Sphinx defend well throughout the first half. One of their better sources of danger was goalkeeper King's free kicks from the middle of the park. They tended to drop in between the penalty spot and the goal, and in the 32nd minute Fallows had to thwart a resulting header.

Dynamo's first goal of the evening was equally direct. With five minutes left in the first half, a corner from their left was met by defender Mitch Robinson, who guided his header past Fallows to pull one back and halve the half-time Sphinx lead.

The home side started the second half well, albeit without the instant impact they had in the first. With the league's fourth-placed team

expected to come out all guns blazing in search of an equaliser, Sphinx settled nicely.

It seemed that the fourth goal of the match might have gone either way and it arrived just after the hour in the form of a second for the visitors.

They quickly turned transition into attack and Evan Garnett was on hand to apply a confident finish having been given a clear look at goal for the first time in the game.

The last quarter of the match was feisty, sparked in no small part by what Sphinx thought should be a penalty in the 68th minute. Haddow nicked the ball past King and was clattered by the goalkeeper, but the referee wasn't interested.



A few minutes later the away team put together a dangerous move and forced Fallows to make a really good save with his toes.

It was a demonstration that Dynamo, often direct, had a bit about them on the ball too.

The match was relatively even after the equalising goal, competitive and occasionally ill-tempered. Ten minutes from time Robinson inexplicably kicked Pursey's boot after failing to tackle him, escaping a second yellow card.

Sphinx ended the game with a handful of half chances but the closest either team came to winning it was at the other end, when Jack Downes covered Fallows to make a

crucial clearance off the line in the first minute of stoppage time.

Losing a two-goal lead is usually cause for disappointment, sometimes it's just getting the goals in the first place that matters. Sphinx had to score twice to pick up a result against one of the better teams in the division and so be it.

The challenge only gets tougher from here. Sphinx will play consecutive home fixtures against Harborough Town and Cambridge City over the next two Saturdays, the first a return game against the league leaders and the second a crunch battle nearer the bottom.

After that, they'll visit Loughborough Dynamo. If the home fixture is anything to go by, it should be an entertaining encounter and Sphinx certainly have the ability to get a result again.

### TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Jack Downes
- 5 Will Edjenguele
- 6 James Bryson
- 7 Tyler Haddow ▼ L. Downes (90+4)
- 8 Callum Woodward @
- 9 Matty Shipman ⚽
- 10 Ashton Demulder ⚽ ▼ Lock (61)
- 11 Jordan Hayward ▼ Wood (85)
- 12 Luke Downes ▲ Haddow (90+4)
- 14 Callum Whiteside
- 15 Alex Lock ▲ Demulder (61)
- 16 Leo Wood ▲ Hayward (85)
- 17 Alfonso Castellano

**SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH**  
**JOE PURSEY**

MATCH HIGHLIGHTS



# 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	13	951	11	9	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	6	273	3	1	3	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
Demulder, Ashton	6	325	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Downes, Jack	28	2349	26	19	2	11	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	28	1658	18	12	10	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	20	1637	19	15	1	4	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	29	2610	29	29	0	4	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	27	2292	26	24	1	8	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Haddow, Tyler	5	450	5	4	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	18	1001	11	5	7	1	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033
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	17	1009	11	7	6	4	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
Purseley, Joe	29	2505	28	26	1	6	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	19	1436	17	7	2	5	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	30	2700	30	30	0	8	0	0	11	4	0.122	0.044	0.167
Shorrock, Finlay	23	1814	22	16	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Whiteside, Callum	27	1951	22	18	5	6	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Wood, Leo	5	217	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	18	1456	18	10	0	7	0	1	1	3	0.011	0.033	0.044

# 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
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	13	951	11	9	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	5	253	3	1	2	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
Demulder, Ashton	6	325	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Downes, Jack	25	2079	23	16	2	10	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	25	1416	15	10	10	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	19	1547	18	14	1	4	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	26	2340	26	26	0	3	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	25	2112	24	22	1	7	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Haddow, Tyler	5	450	5	4	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	16	875	10	4	6	1	0	0	1	2	0.011	0.022	0.033
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	16	955	10	7	6	4	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
Purseley, Joe	27	2325	26	24	1	5	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	18	1346	16	6	2	5	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	27	2430	27	27	0	8	0	0	11	4	0.122	0.044	0.167
Shorrock, Finlay	22	1760	21	16	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Whiteside, Callum	24	1695	19	16	5	6	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Wood, Leo	5	217	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Woodward, Callum	17	1394	17	10	0	7	0	1	1	3	0.011	0.033	0.044





# CONSTRUCTIVE DISMISSAL

There was a time in my youth when I wanted to be a journalist. Though I was mad about sport it was the more serious side of the fourth estate that attracted me. Looking at news, politics and current affairs now, I don't know what possessed me.

When I was deciding whether to do A-Levels, and subsequently which ones to take, I would tell my teachers, when prompted, that journalism was the aim. I was keen on writing and curious about society and the world. And I wanted to have a career with meaning.

Then came crunch time and I cast English into the dirt, moving on instead to study the humanities. I regret that for many reasons but guiding myself away from journalism isn't one of them. Nevertheless, it's a career I hold in high esteem.

Influence might be corrupting but I believe that journalism is important because society needs knowledge, and power needs checks and balances. Nothing in life is pure but there's a nobility of intent about any journalist worth a damn.

Yet we live in a digital world and the news industry has wholly fumbled its transition from print to pixels. Online newspaper businesses were clueless from the start and

hindered further by the web's decimation of the notion of people paying for things.

Despite lofty expectations of journalistic intent, I'm a realist. I understand the conundrum. I know that journalism costs money and that it's expected to make money, and I realise that if people won't pay for that content – and they won't – newspaper companies will turn to an old ally that will: advertisers.

Local newspapers are crucial. They serve purposes no other media can or will – not the web, not national newspapers, not local television or radio. Their websites are fundamentally unusable and that's a big issue.

These cesspits of pop-ups and pop-overs, invasive banners and nefarious placement, are nothing more than a toxic advertising assault, barely moderated and entirely destructive to any semblance of a user experience. If it were in newsprint you wouldn't even wrap your chips in it.

That brings us on to the always delightful Reach plc. Reach probably owns your local newspaper website whether you know it or not, and therefore it's vital. They own some national newspapers as well as two of the biggest city titles in the north-west and many, many others besides.

Reach is so large that it cannot be absolved of its culpability for the disgraceful standard of journalism. It's as responsible for the supposed desires of its readership as it is straitjacketed by them.

At the start of November, Reach announced its third round of job cuts of 2023. It made 450 additional roles redundant, leaving 450 additional people without jobs. It's believed that 320 of those were editorial roles.

There are 320 fewer journalists and they'll be replaced variously by artificial intelligence, mass producers of lowest common denominator social guff or – perhaps most dangerously of all – nothing.

Local football journalism will be hit hard as Reach's latest consultation rumbles on and reaches its conclusion. Reach goes on while good professionals lose their jobs and they're better than most of the click-hunting hacks who remain.

The football press is in the toilet precisely because the likes of Reach value eyeballs over brains and passive searchability over quality. There's no excuse for it. The responsibility of these businesses extends beyond supply and demand. They've made choices every step of the way and each one of them has led to the deterioration of football journalism.

These titles with their laughable crippled websites and total lack of editorial integrity have made it impossible for good football writers and journalists to use their abilities to justify their jobs. Then they've asked them every day to justify their jobs. Option one: lower your standards. Option two: pack your shit.

Standards have certainly lowered. The online football media is a wasteland, all cloying emojis and raucous mirth over repeatedly shared moments of such tame comedic value that even Michael McIntyre would think twice about bothering with them.

Flaccid banter, club fanaticism and transfer rumours win out because they're what people want. Not so long ago I used to think that wasn't true, that it was an excuse peddled by cost-cutting capitalists and attention farmers. I thought the impetus came from the media and not from consumers.

Maybe that was the case, once. Now, given the weight of evidence of the last seven or eight years, I'm willing to concede that humans are basically morons.

Give us an hilarious clip of a referee nearly falling over a little bit and we'll forward it to our friends and family while you tear apart the fabric of civilisation uninterrupted.

Nevertheless, I remain convinced that there is still a place for the positive impact of football journalism. Though it's long been in a perilous position because of the decline of print and the aforementioned shambles of the news media's transition online, I had hoped that local coverage could continue to be that place.

The people I know who did or do cover specific teams for the local media are among the very best press people I know. They're superior to so-called content creators because they are proper journalists. Their focus is news that's actually news and, through their expertise and contacts, they deliver genuine insight into their beats. And they care about them.

For supporters of football clubs beyond those with global newsworthiness – and the abysmal standard of coverage they get is a whole other story – the local club reporter is an essential component in the football mechanism.

Many of these reporters also happen to be truly great writers and that, perhaps, is the greatest loss of all. I envy their ability to write and the idea that their employers don't see the value in that because it doesn't reel in the football's cultural plankton doesn't bear thinking about.

Reach has chosen to jettison these people in favour of a clickbait bin fire, third-hand videos and transfer stories known to be baseless at the point of publication. If our news media in England can publish a football line, publish it they will. Whether they should doesn't even come into the conversation.

What's most bizarre is that there are people inside and outside businesses like Reach that call this innovation. It's not. It's lazy and reactive.

More questionable still is that we're constantly hearing more and more about the growth of data analysis in football. The game itself is heavily influenced by data, and the cleaning and crunching of those data represents genuine innovation in football journalism. If the local rag's website isn't the place for that level of spotlight and detail, maybe nowhere is.

The local football press needs journalists who get football, who understand what matters about it and what doesn't. Supporting the team isn't necessary but being able to generate a rapport with those who do should be considered an essential skill. That can't be learned on the internet. Take those people away from the industry and football supporters are unavoidably short-changed.

When people on the inside talk to each other about football media they love to get into the nitty gritty. They forensically examine why ads are placed where they're placed, about which discussions should be had about this or that line. Is the headline right? Is the subeditor making the right decisions for any given story? What are we hearing from the club?

It's molecular stuff because it's in their nature and their training to pick over the bones of a story. They apply the same dissection to their own profession. It's fascinating to observe their conversations about the football pages of local newspaper websites.

But the bottom line is that I, as a consumer rather than a producer of football reporting, will simply just not bother to read an article if the user experience puts me off it even for half a second. That's how the web works.

People do not care enough about the substance to clamber through the chaff. Thinking we do is a mistake that I can only hope eventually proves fatal.

When it does, quality football coverage will still be standing somewhere above the rubble and the more independent it is, the more money the journalists make for themselves, the better it will be for us all.

Chris Nee  
[hbbp.substack.com](http://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	Shepsheo 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			
27 Jan	Coleshill Town	NPL M	A	2-3	W	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock 1	Castellano	Edjenguele	Guest	Demulder	Woodward ©	Shipman 2	Redhead	Haddow	L. Downes	Lock	Wood	Whiteside	Bryson		
3 Feb	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	A	0-0	D	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	Castellano	Guest ©	Edjenguele	Demulder	J. Downes	Shipman	Redhead	Haddow	L. Downes	Lock	Whiteside	Wood			
17 Feb	Rugby Town	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	J. Downes	Edjenguele	Guest ©	Wood	Lock	Shipman	Redhead	Haddow 1	L. Downes	Demulder	Bryson	Whiteside	Castellano		
24 Feb	Corby Town	NPL M	A	3-0	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Bryson	Purse	Castellano	Shipman	J. Downes	Wood	Demulder	Hayward	Haddow	Redhead			
5 Mar	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	H	2-2	D	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	J. Downes	Edjenguele	Bryson	Haddow	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Demulder 1	Hayward	L. Downes	Whiteside	Lock	Wood	Castellano		
9 Mar	Harborough Town	NPL M	H	1-2	L	Fallows	Purse	Shorrock	J. Downes	Edjenguele	Bryson	Haddow	Woodward ©	Shipman	Demulder	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest	Wood 1	Castellano			
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																				
9 Apr	Shepsheo Dynamo	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

*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.**

## Find out more

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## COVENTRY SPHINX 1 HARBOROUGH TOWN 2

**Pitching In NPL**  
**Division One Midlands**  
Saturday 9th March 2024

After hitting the low point of their 2023/24 season in the reverse fixture in Leicestershire, Coventry Sphinx demonstrated their levels rather better even in a second defeat to Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands leaders Harborough Town.

The Bees ran out 2-1 winners thanks to goals either side of the half time break, with Leo Wood's first goal for the Sphinx ensuring the visitors knew they'd been a game.

Sphinx pushed them all the way and they had to draw on all of their championship credentials to take the points from this meeting of the most recent two United Counties League Premier Division South winners.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas named an unchanged starting line-up after a solid midweek draw against Loughborough Dynamo.

Louis Guest had to settle for a place on the bench on his return, with Will Edjenguele and James Bryson continuing in front of goalkeeper Keelan Fallows.

Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock got the nod in the full back positions, while Jack Downes and captain Callum Woodward anchored the midfield behind Ashton Demulder. Matty Shipman was flanked up front once more by Tyler Haddow and Jordan Hayward.

Buoyed by a positive display against Loughborough Dynamo, Sphinx came out of the blocks quickly and made a good start.

The game was delayed early on by an injury and a change of shirt for Harborough's Gary Mulligan, but Sphinx were able to get back on the front foot after Fallows made a simple save from Tendai Daire's header with seven minutes played. It was a significant warning shot.

Shipman turned and fired from a narrow angle a couple of minutes later, giving Bees goalkeeper Elliott Taylor his own save to make.

Harborough certainly didn't have it all their way in a very competitive opening quarter, but their

threat was obvious and their ability to play direct when required is an overlooked string to their bow.

Sphinx gave as good as they got in getting forward with urgency and the result was an entertaining half in which Harborough gradually started to enjoy the bulk of the possession but found themselves up against a home team willing to fight tooth and nail for the right to play.

The Bees' football on the deck in the attacking third started to come together and cause some problems.

Defender Alex Morris zipped a left-footer wide of the post from the edge of the box just before the half-hour mark and Daire gave the visitors the lead with 30 minutes played.

Harborough won a corner on the Sphinx right and the striker's header from the back post found the net with the help of a slight deflection – a fine finish from one of the better scorers in the division but far too simple from a Sphinx point of view.

The home team responded well to the setback and immediately won a couple of consecutive corners thanks to the dangerous delivery of Woodward, but Harborough started to turn the screw as half time approached.

Sphinx dealt with it well but Luis Rose squandered a golden chance just before the break when the ball bounced in front of Fallows.

Shipman tried his luck with a left-footed volley that never looked like troubling Taylor, leaving Harborough to take a one-goal lead back into the dressing room.

Though Sphinx's clear looks at goal were infrequent, the visitors will have known they needed a second goal to really take control.

Harborough piled on the pressure from the start of the second half and it paid off. Fallows made a fantastic double save in the first minute of the half before Josh Walsh smacked a shot over from the edge of the box, but it

was 2-0 as soon as the 52nd minute. Rose raced onto a bouncing ball into the left channel and showed good strength to get the better of Pursey.

He made no mistake with the finish, smashing a deadly drive past Fallows and into the roof of the Sphinx net.

Again, the home team reacted well. Soon after the restart, Shipman sent a shot over Taylor's crossbar after sharp close-quarters play between him, Haddow and Hayward in the Sphinx front three. Four minutes later, Woodward tried a speculative one from 25 yards but couldn't hit the target.

The last quarter of the match evolved into a terrific contest. Sphinx kept pushing and making Harborough work hard for the points even as they started to look a little like the team that scored six against Thomas and Woodward's side in November.



Stuart Guest

Their best chance of the remaining minutes came from a Sphinx corner. They cleared the ball, broke at pace and came close when Kai Tonge got a couple of bites at it but eventually put the ball wide.

The home team made all three substitutions in the space of nine minutes, first in the form of Leo Wood and later with Luke Downes and Alfonso Castellano coming into the midfield. In between the changes, Woodward's corner found Edjenguele and his thumping header went over the crossbar.

Wood made his mark three minutes from time. A long free kick out of midfield was flicked on by a Harborough player to send Haddow well clear and onside on the left.

His drive into the box and pass across goal were exactly what was called for and Wood got across his marker to tuck in his first goal for Sphinx.

Despite a rousing finale at the end of a gutsy performance full of Sphinx attitude, the home side

couldn't carve out the opening they needed to grab an equaliser that had looked very unlikely for most of the second half.

By the end, Harborough's aim was to protect their narrow lead and that, from a team of their quality, should be taken as a compliment.

Sphinx can look back on a positive week against two extremely tough opponents with a point gained and negligible impact on their goal difference. With an eight-point cushion between them and the bottom two, holding their own in these matches could go a long way.

If one point from two difficult games is a positive, three in another crunch fixture against Cambridge City would be a massive boost. City visit Coventry on Saturday 16th March looking to balance the ledger after Sphinx's late winner in the reverse fixture, and both teams are capable of picking up results as they fight for their lives at Step Four.

### TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Jack Downes ▼ L. Downes (79)
- 5 Will Edjenguele
- 6 James Bryson
- 7 Tyler Haddow
- 8 Callum Woodward @
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Ashton Demulder ▼ Wood (70)
- 11 Jordan Hayward ▼ Castellano (79)
- 12 Luke Downes ▲ J. Downes (79)
- 14 Louis Guest
- 15 Leo Wood ⚽▲ Demulder (70)
- 16 Alfonso Castellano ▲ Hayward (79)

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH  
**CALLUM WOODWARD**



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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
Thursday 1 February	1-3	W	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Friday 9 February	1-2	W	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 12th February	6-3	L	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 26th February	1-6	W	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 7th March	6-2	W	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 25th March	19.45	A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 8th April	19.45	A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 11th April		H	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division



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# RESTORING FOOTBALL AS A CONTACT SPORT

It's easy for football supporters to find things to complain about. A century and a half after the formative years of football as an organised sport, it's popular enough that it's impossible for any vague notion of consensus to hold true.

The game has changed. The laws have twisted and turned and twisted again. Governance has followed in the wake of success. Strategy and tactics have taken on historical paths of their own but money rules all, from sovereign wealth funds at the elite level to mismatched playing budgets in non-league.

It's all but unrecognisable from what football used to be and every shift and shake-up along the way has branched off into a debate. We are but twigs and leaves, no two sets of opinions alike. Consequently, there's always someone to complain about everything that happens and everything that doesn't.

Widespread agreement on anything is rare but there are many talking points that seem to gather pace, basic assumptions accepted as public fact regardless of the available evidence or common sense; simple common sense.

One such pseudo truth is that tackling is no longer allowed and defending is dead. We all know it. It used to be an art form, you know. Real defenders used to make real tackles. Spend half an hour in a football stadium concourse or half a nanosecond on Twitter and you'll hear all about it. But it's bollocks.

The cult of the Proper Football Man seemed to reach its peak a few years ago, emerging as a social celebration of robust, earthy values in opposition to overthinking and over-complicating a sport whose single biggest selling point is its simplicity. The Proper Football Man was rapidly, roundly and rightly lambasted but his spirit lives on in the same supporters who saw his appeal in the first place. And by god, they love a tackle.

While much of the discussion is asinine, Paddy Power shite – “good tackle play on lol” – the nugget at its heart is true: football is a contact sport. Even those of us who like tactics and statistics and nutritionists and sports psychologists can presumably agree on that, yet this ostensibly straightforward idea is selectively forgotten.

The problem, at least as I see it, is not that tackling isn't allowed. That's patently untrue; we still have some artists of the form. No, the issue is in how easily it's overlooked that football is a contact sport when it comes to awarding fouls. Foul play consists of a complicated set of offences and reductive moaning is unhelpful. Blowing for fouls on the grounds of incidental contact between boots is no better.

In the era of re-refereeing incidents with the help of video – and don't be fooled into believing that isn't what video assistant referees are doing – every nick and snick is pored over and analysed to a ludicrous degree in the name of reaching a correct decision that doesn't even exist. That's not just a Proper Football Man lament.

The Laws of the Game are open to interpretation by design. Fouls and misconduct are covered by Law 12. A direct free kick, it states, is awarded if a player kicks or attempts to kick an opponent. That can include accidental contact. So can striking or attempting to strike an opponent. So that's that, then? Not quite. There's a very subtle clue in the very next

bullet point. A direct free kick is awarded if a player tackles or challenges an opponent. The key qualifier? “In a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force.”

That applies across the board; kicking an opponent is no more an offence than tackling one. Referees (and VAR) are not obliged to award free kicks for incidental contact. Football is a physical game and that must be protected. Safety developments are undeniably positive but the threshold shouldn't be too low. The physical tradition of the sport matters. It underpins the competitive spirit of two teams going toe to toe and nose to nose and that doesn't have to be excessively dangerous.

The beautiful game is so because of its combination of power and skill. If we increasingly outlaw contact then we're doing ourselves a disservice in that regard and tackling is a big part of that.

It's as much a skill as shooting or passing. It's as technical and as tactical as any attacking aspect of the game. It is, lest we forget, one of very few catalysts for a change of possession in a game that lives and dies on its transition phase.

The safety of players is non-negotiable but any further move away from incidental contact in the process of tackles and physical duels should be resisted. How, exactly, do we find the balance between two competing principles?

Football, officiating and punditry would benefit from removing entirely the idea that contact between players has to be a foul (or that any sliver of a touch on the ball negates one). It should be more difficult to give away a foul and that should be the result of the interpretation returning more firmly into the hands of the referee.

All borderline tackles are not created equal. Restoring football as a contact sport is one thing. Allowing deliberate and cynical fouls to continue to proliferate would be quite another. Football is beginning to address those specifically and will continue to do so. Why not release one of the other constraints on highly skilled tackling at the same time as targeting the real scourge?

Perhaps the most unfortunate complication is that football is doing a relatively poor job for a game so fussily protecting its players. Player welfare matters and serious injury to individuals is as significant an influencing factor as anything else mentioned up to that point.

Yet the laser-like precision of refereeing and re-refereeing fouls doesn't seem to be applied with anything like the same gusto when it comes to actually protecting players. The answer isn't more fouls awarded on misguided technicalities – it's more willingness to show red cards.

Football's law-makers and officials should be working to maintain it as a contact sport but more consistently outlaw the truly dangerous. Hit players where they seek to hurt, not for making genuine attempts to execute one of the game's core skills. Let's be honest. Deep down, we can always tell the difference.

Chris Nee  
hbbp.substack.com





# CAMBRIDGE CITY

## CLUB HISTORY

### Early years

The club was formed in 1908 as Cambridge Town, the direct descendant of the earlier Cambridge St Mary's club which had folded at the end of the 1907-1908 season following a dispute with the local Cambridgeshire FA.

As a torchbearer for amateur football in the days when many clubs viewed the professional game with disdain, the new club affiliated itself with the recently established Amateur Football Association rather than the local FA.

Trophy success came early, with a notable victory being achieved in the International Du Nord Trophy in 1912 after beating host club Tourquennois in Northern France. Cambridge Town amalgamated with an earlier Cambridge United club in May 1914, joined the Cambs FA, and in turn gained entry into the FA Cup and the FA Amateur Cup for the first time, whilst retaining their AFA links.

The club's best ever run in the Amateur Cup came in 1928 when they reached the semi Final only to lose to Leyton at Fulham's Craven Cottage ground. Town had successes in the Southern Amateur League, winning the title five times between 1920 and 1931. The club joined the Spartan League in 1935, winning the Premier Division in 1948 & 1949 before stepping up to the Athenian League in 1950. Cambridge was granted City status in 1951 and with it the club's name change to Cambridge City.

### Southern League champions

City left the amateur game in 1958 and joined the Southern League, gaining a place in the Premier Division of the Southern League at the first attempt.

City won the Premier Division in 1962/63, edging out local rivals Cambridge United in an enthralling title race with the local derby at Milton Road being witnessed by over 11,500 people.

City were regular challengers for the title and had the highest attendances in non-league football up until the mid-1960s. But City lost their way and were relegated to Southern League Division 1 in 1968. Promotion back to the Premier Division followed in 1970, the same year that Cambridge United were elected to the Football League.

### Strife in the 1970s

City finished Southern League runners up in 1970/71, but the latter years of the decade were a real struggle. Relegation in 1975/76 saw crowds dwindle and the Club fall into decline. In 1977, Directors decided that the club should join the Isthmian League.

At the time this was seen as a backward step by many supporters. With scenes that would be repeated 30 years later, a subsequent fans' protest forced most of the Board to resign. The club thus remained in the Southern League.

### Better times

After the redevelopment of the ground in the mid 1980's, City gradually improved and a new generation of fans mobbed their heroes after the 1985/86 Southern League Southern Division championship was won on the last day of the season.

The goal scoring exploits of Gary Grogan were instrumental in City's recovery, according him a 'City Legend' status. Since the turn of this century, City have reached the 1st round proper of the FA Cup four times and the 2nd round once, a record far better than achieved by the more illustrious City sides of the 1960s.

### Ups and downs

Recent seasons have been a roller-coaster ride for the City faithful. City's best season for 30 years saw them finish runners up in the inaugural Conference South season in 2004/05, going on to lose in the play-offs.

Off the field the ground had been sold to pay off mounting debts and matters took a turn for the worse in 2006 when the then Board announced an agreement to allow City to be absorbed into Cambridge United.

With City on the brink of extinction, supporters were galvanised into a campaign which eventually forced Directors to resign, to be replaced by members of the Cambridge City Supporters' Trust.

The opening league match of 2006/07 was arguably the most memorable since the early 1960s – not merely because City won with a stoppage time winner at Havant & Waterlooville, but because it offered irrefutable proof that that City had survived a blatant attempt to kill it off and were very much alive and kicking.

City celebrated their centenary in 2008, but were demoted at the end the 2007/08 season due to over-zealously applied ground regulations.

This decision ended 22 consecutive seasons in the 2nd tier of non-league football. City lost out to Gloucester City in the 2008/09 play-off. In the 2009/10 season, City won the Southern League Cup for the first time and finished one point shy of a playoff place.

With the ground sold, a groundshare agreement was in place with Newmarket Town for the 2010/11 season but a last minute offer from the landlord meant that City had another season in its own stadium and celebrated by securing a place in the playoffs with a 4th place finish in the league. However, this was met with disappointment again as the team lost at Salisbury City.

Another reprieve following a new deal with the landlord gave City two more seasons at Milton Road, 2011/12 and

2012/13. Once again the play-offs were reached but again an away defeat in the semi final, this time at Oxford City.

This disappointment was however tempered by the news that the club has secured a site on which to build a new stadium and training complex.

City ultimately missed out on a play-off spot in the 2012/13 season, but the club enjoyed a FA Cup run, with a televised first round proper home tie with MK Dons producing a fantastic night with a nil nil draw at Milton Road before losing in the replay at Stadium MK.

With our lease on the stadium finally coming to an end, April 27th 2013 saw the last ever first team match at the ground before a large crowd with mixture of tears and smiles. Adrian Cambridge had the honour of scoring the last ever goal at Milton Road in the one nil victory over Redditch United.

### New era

A new era for the club commenced in August 2013 starting with a ground-share at Histon FC. City once again reached the play-offs that season but once again tasted semi final defeat, this time at home to St Albans City.

The 2015-16 season saw City move to share at St Ives Town FC. Manager Gary Roberts left in the summer of 2016 after 13 years at the club. His replacement Dan Gleeson had a short and ultimately unsuccessful spell in charge, former player Robbie Nightingale taking over as manager in December 2016.

Robbie won his first game in charge to boost City's hopes of avoiding the drop. City's playing record improved culminating in five wins and a draw in their last six games but ultimately it was not enough and the club were relegated to step four for the first time in our history. Hopes of bouncing straight back were dashed when City lost in the play-off to Hartley Wintney.

In the summer of 2019 City were moved laterally to The Isthmian League. City's debut season in the league seemed on course for an exciting conclusion with the club on an unbeaten 7 game run in February and March, with no goals conceded, and the play-offs were in sight.

However, as well all know the global pandemic saw the season declared null and void as was the 2020-21 season. Another league switch occurred in the summer of 2021, City being placed in the Northern Premier League.

Continued delays with City's new stadium have meant a further spell groundsharing at Histon and for 2023/24 season have an agreement to play at St Ives Town again, hopefully only for part of the 2023/24 season.





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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	3-3	D	<b>Burton Albion Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 December	3-2	L	<b>Worcester City Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 December	5-1	W	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Premier Cup 1R
Sunday 7 January	4-0	L	<b>Lye Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 January	4-3	W	<b>Crusaders Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 January	2-1	W	<b>Shrewsbury Town Women</b>	West Mids Premier Cup QF
Sunday 28 January	4-0	L	<b>Shrewsbury Town Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 4 February	2-3	L	<b>Burton Albion Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 25 February	3-0	L	<b>Knowle Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 March	14.00	H	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 March	14.00	H	<b>Lye Town Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 April	14.00	H	<b>Shrewsbury Town Women</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 April	14.00	H	<b>Knowle Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 28 April	14.00	A	<b>Lichfield City Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
TBC		H	<b>Coundon Court Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
TBC		A	<b>Coundon Court Ladies</b>	West Mids Regional Premier Division
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# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS FIXTURES

Saturday 16th March

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

Tuesday 19th March

Hinckley LR	v	Anstey Nomads
Walsall Wood	v	Boldmere St Michaels

Saturday 23rd March

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

# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS LEAGUE TABLE

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Harborough Town	28	22	2	4	69	18	51	68
2	Spalding United	29	20	4	5	64	29	35	64
3	Anstey Nomads	28	18	8	2	72	31	41	62
4	Loughborough Dynamo	30	17	6	7	60	44	16	57
5	Hinckley LR	29	15	8	6	47	34	13	53
6	Quorn	29	15	7	7	59	37	22	52
7	Lye Town	28	14	6	8	41	32	9	48
8	Sporting Khalsa	29	14	4	11	43	45	-2	46
9	Sutton Coldfield Town	30	12	6	12	46	45	1	42
10	Corby Town	30	11	8	11	59	42	17	41
11	Walsall Wood	27	12	5	10	44	45	-1	41
12	Bedworth United	31	10	7	14	34	38	-4	37
13	Boldmere St Michaels	29	10	4	15	46	43	3	34
14	Coleshill Town	30	9	4	17	46	68	-22	31
15	Shepshed Dynamo	28	8	5	15	34	49	-15	29
16	Cambridge City	30	8	5	17	39	60	-21	29
17	Coventry Sphinx	29	5	11	13	28	50	-22	26
18	Rugby Town	30	6	3	21	31	69	-38	21
19	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	29	5	3	21	25	60	-35	18
20	Gresley Rovers	29	4	6	19	29	77	-48	18

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