

Saturday 25th April

Today we welcome Waterloo currently bottom of the table and destined for North 1 next season but have had a resurgence of form beating Stourbridge and Mounts Bay in their last two home games.

They have a final game to play on 9th May away to Cinderford.

We have two games left, today's game and then a visit to Stourbridge and our league position means that two wins are desirable in order that we don't join today's opponents in being relegated to North 1.

The other teams in the shake-up for relegation are Westcombe Park on 48 points and with two difficult away games at Blackheath and Cinderford - Wharfedale on 54 points with only one game to play today against Cinderford. Also, Stourbridge on 57 points, still need a further point to avoid relegation should all the other teams mentioned above, win all their games. Stourbridge's two games left are at home to Cambridge, a difficult task, and at home to ourselves.

Hopefully, we will win today and either Westcombe Park or Wharfedale will lose meaning that we would avoid fourth bottom position.

Last week's result against Cinderford losing 35 - 30 was somewhat disappointing considering we were 30 - 19 up with a bonus point in the bag by the break but injuries and the lack of ball saw the home team score 2 penalties in the last ten minutes to sneak the match. However, every credit to the team that travelled considering the unavailability of several squad members and the two precious bonus points we achieved.

On the bright side last week, our 2nd XV won the County Cup against Darlington Mowden Park 48 - 14 and also The Bricks XV won their County Cup defeating Barnard Castle 2nds 26 - 0 and thus being County Cup Winners for the first time in many seasons. Congratulations to both teams and management who have successfully guided them through the season.

Tonight sees the End of Season Presentations and also the retirement of David Guthrie after 15 years as Captain of the 1st XV. Blaydon have indeed been lucky to have a Captain such as David and he has always been a credit on the field and a great ambassador for the club.

Also leaving us will be Nick Gandy our Director of Rugby for the past 4 seasons. We wish him well in his new post in Yorkshire and hope that he and his family enjoy the future - many thanks Nick for your superb contribution to Blaydon Rugby Football Club - we will miss you!

This morning at 11.00.a.m. Blaydon U11's hosted Harrogate who are on a weekend tour to the North East taking in the Alnwick Tournament on Sunday. They will be watching our game this afternoon and we hope that the players and their parents enjoy the weekend trip.

Next Saturday we visit Stourbridge for the last match of the season and the bus will be leaving at 8.30.a.m. A limited number of places are available for spectators for this final trip of the season.

Can we also welcome today our Sponsors for the season who have all been invited to the final home game. Can we thank them for their support and hope that they can continue to support Blaydon in future seasons - many thanks!

Finally, we welcome today's Match Sponsors - CROMWELL TOOLS LIMITED and hope that Derek Richards and his guests have an enjoyable experience at Crow Trees. Once again, many thanks for your support.

Jim Huxley

Page 2 - ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S LEAGUE GAMES:

BLACKHEATH v WESTCOMBE PARK :

This 'London Derby' will surely be a tough encounter with 'The Combe' requiring two wins to guarantee their place in the league next season - that is providing Blaydon win at least one more match. 'Combe's recent form has been good with four wins out of the last four matches but with no love lost between the two clubs, and Blackheath determined to finish on a high, their big pack may well clinch a home victory - HOME WIN.

STOURBRIDGE v CAMBRIDGE :

Although the first encounter was very close with the visitors still in with an outside chance of promotion should Birmingham Solihull slip up today against Redruth, there is no doubt that the superb visiting three quarters, should they get adequate possession, will control the game. However, the Birmingham side are still fighting for their league place and require at least one more point from their two remaining games - the final one being against ourselves - AWAY WIN.

BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v REDRUTH:

Long-time league leaders Redruth have the unenviable task of taking on the current league leaders who are in brilliant form, having just broken Tynedale's long-standing undefeated league record last week and no doubt with home advantage, they will again turn on the style to clinch promotion today. This means that the game next week against Cambridge would be virtually a non-event - HOME WIN.

MOUNTS BAY v TYNE DALE :

A long trip for our near neighbours to take on one of the relegated clubs. Mounts Bay, like many others, have faced severe financial problems this season which has led them to fielding in recent weeks, a much weakened side and no doubt 'Tyne' will take advantage of this and should run out easy winners - AWAY WIN.

WHARFEDALE v CINDERFORD :

The Dalesmen have only one match to play against their visitors today Cinderford and being only four points in front of ourselves, and six in front of Westcombe Park, both clubs having two matches left to play, they desperately need to win against the Gloucester side. Failure to do so would mean that their ever present league status would be out of their hands and reliant upon other clubs losing their final matches. Cinderford are also on a roll and since Christmas have only lost on two

occasions, meaning that they have now moved up to sixth place in the table and should they continue that form, they could sneak a victory - AWAY WIN.

LAUNCESTON v SOUTHEND :

Both clubs have little to play for, Launceston being comfortable in mid-table but without several regular players at this stage of the season and Southend are already relegated. Nevertheless, the Essex side have won here and also defeated Wharfedale last week and may well surprise everyone in this final match - AWAY WIN.

Saturday 11th April

Today we welcome Cambridge currently in third place in the table, 7 points behind the leaders Birmingham Solihull with each having 4 games to play.

Cambridge, in addition to ourselves, have to visit Blackheath, Stourbridge, and then the league leaders - a difficult programme but with Birmingham Solihull also having to visit Tynedale and then host Redruth - who knows!

Meanwhile, we have slipped to the other end of the table with final games away to Cinderford and Stourbridge and Waterloo at home.

On our early season form, this would not have been a problem but since Christmas we have slipped down the table and need now to win at least 2 games as Westcombe Park below us, in 4th bottom position, strive to catch up.

The 'Combe are 4 points behind us but we have a game in hand and they have to play Launceston, Blackheath and Cinderford all of which they could win.

Last week's result against Southend was a big disappointment considering that on the hour mark, we were 28 - 17 in front and looking good only to too easily concede possession, giving away 4 tries in the last 20 minutes. Hopefully today we will see a big improvement.

However, last week did produce some good club results with our 2nds and 4ths both winning their County Cup Competitions 48 - 14 against Darlington Mowden Park and 26 - 0 against Barnard Castle respectively.

Congratulations to both teams and their managers, in particular to Phil Ritson from the 2nd team who with his partner, became proud parents of a baby boy in the days running up to the final - hope he is as good a player as his father was!

Leaving us at the end of the season will be our Director of Rugby Nick Gandy who has been with the club since 2003. Nick has guided us successfully to our current position in National League 2 and we hope that his new career in Humberside goes well.

ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S RE-ARRANGED GAMES:

WHARFEDALE v TYNEDEALE :

Last week the Yorkshire side lost surprisingly 18 - 13 at home to Westcombe Park and in the process did us no favours and being still themselves mathematically in the relegation zone, they will be hoping to improve somewhat on their 48 - 24 defeat at Corbridge earlier in the season.

However, Tyne are going well recovering last week from 19 points down in the first half to sneak home 31 - 27 at Stourbridge. On this form Tyne will be difficult to beat - AWAY WIN.

LAUNCESTON v BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL :

Although the home side drew 18 - 18 in their last match at home to Blackheath, they will find today's opponents much tougher opposition although home advantage in Cornwall does help.

The visitors amassed 115 points against bottom club Waterloo last week and now with 4 games to go, are nearing the 1,000 point mark for the season. Today's game will be a harder contest for them also but on current form, they are favourites although Cambridge will be hoping otherwise - AWAY WIN.

BLACKHEATH v CINDERFORD :

Blackheath are comfortably in mid-table and Cinderford need only one point for safety. The Club have had a stop-start season losing 28 - 14 here two weeks ago and gaining a draw in Launceston last week. However, their big pack with leading scorer penalty tries (9), one more than the rest of the league put together, may well take the honours against a side who have improved since the turn of the year - HOME WIN.

Saturday 4th April

Today we welcome Southend for what will be their last visit to the North East for at least a season as they have already been relegated, this despite the fact that all season they have played enterprising rugby only to finish many times a few points short.

Last season they finished a creditable 8th in the table but this year's defensive record has been their downfall, having already conceded nearly 100 points more than the last campaign with still 4 more games to go after today.

Last week we made the long trip to Westcombe Park and when we eventually got there (four and a half hours to King's Cross) our display matched the weather - miserable.

It was probably the coldest Saturday of the season and when the wind and hail completely changed direction at half-time, we finished up playing 80 minutes against the elements. However, that does not excuse our display and when 2 metres from the line in the final minute we opted to give away the inevitable penalty, that about summed us up.

Victory today for ourselves and defeat for the 'Combe at Wharfedale would put us in a position whereby the first named club would need three bonus point victories to move out of the fourth relegation position and ourselves to accumulate less than three more points in our remaining four games two of which are at home to Cambridge and Waterloo.

Next week, Easter Saturday, we have an attractive visit from Cambridge who are still in with a mathematical chance of promotion if either Redruth or Birmingham Solihull slip up. However, it is most likely that Birmingham Solihull will be champions.

Tickets for the end of season Presentation Night to be held on Saturday 25th April incorporating the retirement of Dave Guthrie after 15 years as Captain, are now available priced £20. Entertainment for the evening will be provided by Brendan Healy, the North East's premier comedian/raconteur.

Supporters are reminded that Durham County Committee have abandoned this year's Senior Cup due to the backlog of fixtures and are trying to play the cup earlier next season - in the autumn. As far as Blaydon are concerned, that is still a problem as our first blank date in the season is the last week in November.

Presently, the club have applied for Planning Permission for an erection of a new garage, outside toilets and a laundry room to be positioned on the southern side of the Aerobics Studio and a decision from the Council is awaited.

Today, the U15's have played Tynedale in an earlier kick-off and they will be coming round at half time collecting for contributions towards their Easter Welsh Tour - please give generously.

Finally, may we thank ARTINGENCE LIMITED for this their first match sponsorship and we hope that Mark Gilbert and his guests have an enjoyable day at Crow Trees.

Jim Huxley

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ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S LEAGUE GAMES:

BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v WATERLOO :

Despite their surprise victory over Stourbridge last week, there cannot be any possibility of Waterloo gaining points at Sharman's Cross - HOME WIN.

CAMBRIDGE v REDRUTH:

Both sides need the points, Redruth to recover from their defeat last week at Tynedale, and hope that Birmingham Solihull may lose a couple games. Similarly, the home team need points to keep alive their mathematical chance of promotion. However, both sides will find it difficult to overtake the current leaders. Cambridge won away by a single point in late November ending the Cornish side's unbeaten run and may well again take the points - HOME WIN.

#### STOURBRIDGE v TYNEDALE :

After last week's surprise defeat at Waterloo , and a huge injury list, the Midlands' side will find 'in form' Tyne a difficult task. Last week the visitors lasted the game well coming from behind late in the game to beat Redruth 35 - 24 and they should again take the points - AWAY WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v CINDERFORD :

With all sorts of troubles, The Bay failed to raise a side to go to Southend and have now refused, because of holiday reasons, to travel there on Easter Saturday. No doubt, with no costs involved, they will play at home today. The result may not be in their favour, with their Gloucester visitors having a good second half to the season - AWAY WIN.

#### WHARFEDALE v WESTCOMBE PARK :

Let us hope that The Dalesmen, who have had a good second half of the season, account for the 'Combe thereby almost certainly guaranteeing Blaydon's National 2 status for next season. The Yorkshire side's current form should account for the visitors, particularly if their backs get a supply of the ball - HOME WIN.

LAUNCESTON v BLACKHEATH :

With the home side already experimenting for next season, The Club's heavyweight pack may well take charge and dominate proceedings aided by their leading scorer - Penalty Tries (9). Their number of penalty tries totals one more than the rest of the league put together. Perhaps we should ask today's referee - "what is the secret of their success" - AWAY WIN.

BLAYDON v BLACKHEATH - SATURDAY 21ST MARCH 2009

Today we welcome Blackheath RFC to Crow Trees at the end of what has been a hectic week for the visiting team. A number of their squad represented England Counties at Twickenham last Sunday and on Wednesday night they hosted the Barbarians as part of their 150th anniversary. They have built their success this season around a dominant set-piece and will probably feel that their league position should be slightly higher due to some injustices earlier in the season. I would like to wish Harvey well in his future pursuits, as he leaves 'The Club' at the end of this season.

After another abortive weekend due to England Counties commitments, we are glad to return to league duty for what will hopefully be a consistent run of fixtures between now and the end of the season. I believe we can still attain our highest ever league finish if we can build on our last performance at Launceston RFC. where we showed a great deal of desire, commitment and spirit. With better decision-making and less interference from the touch judges, we feel that we could have won the game quite comfortably. It was however a far more positive performance than many I have witnessed since the turn of the year.

Pete Browne returns to the side today to add some physical presence to the back row, while Chris Clark replaces Pete Phelan at the pivotal position of scrum-half. Ben Mercer replaces Simon Barber on the wing and Keith Laughlin can count himself unlucky to be demoted to the bench, following a terrific performance in Cornwall . Elliott O' Brien will provide cover at fly-half.

Fan's favourite Selwyn St. Bernard has regrettably had to step back from 1st XV action due to his new job in the Police force. I would like to thank Selwyn for his immense contribution in recent seasons and he will continue to play for the A XV when he can. 'The Cow' will go down in the history books as the scorer of the crucial bonus point try at Preston Grasshoppers in our promotion season of 2006-7.

Since our last home game, Andrew Fenby has become a household name (!) and achieved national recognition, including an appearance on Sky Sports. We have agreed to release Andrew to play for the Falcons at Bath this weekend, but he should be back in the fold next week. I am personally delighted that 'Fenners' has eventually made the breakthrough at Premiership level, although those who have witnessed his performances in recent years will probably agree that this recognition is long overdue. It will be interesting to see whether he is offered the chance to pursue a professional career in the sport.

Special mention must be made of Number 8 Jason Smithson, who started for the England Counties XV at Twickenham last weekend. Jason's performances over the last 2 years have made him a vital member of our team, and it is most pleasing to hear Counties Manager Danny Hodgson speak so highly of him. Hopefully he will have done enough to be selected for this Summer's tour.

Next week we make the crucial trip to Westcombe Park , where our National 2 adventure started some 18 months ago.

Enjoy the day!

Nick Gandy.

Back from Barbados and enjoying the early spring weather after watching some poor cricket highlighted only by the Barmy Army and a surprise visit from The Queen (a Gareth Southgate look-a-like!).

We welcome to Crow Trees today, The Club who are celebrating their sesquicentenary season (150th) and on Wednesday Blackheath hosted The Barbarians as part of their celebrations.

The history of these two exceptional rugby institutions is forever linked by W P Carpmael, a Blackheath member and Barbarians' founder. Carpmael it was who, in a restaurant in Bradford in 1890, came upon a plan to collect a touring side from all sources to take on the leading sides in the land during the then dead days of March, all self respecting clubs at the time having packed away their boots for next season at that stage.

The first side featured eight Blackheath players, including Carpmael, and in due course a pattern of approximately six games per season was established until the beginning of World War Two.

The Barbarians have previously played Blackheath on their 75th and 100th celebrations and this year's side included amongst others, James Shanahan ( Cambridge ) and Simon Hunt (Birmingham Solihull) both of whom have had outstanding seasons for their clubs in our league.

Last week was a non-event due to the English Counties match against their French counterparts and that side included Jason Smithson who was gaining his second cap at this level. Blaydon would like to congratulate Jason on this achievement.

Despite there being no game last week, there was great local interest in our top try scorer Andrew Fenby who was making his second appearance for Newcastle Falcons adding to his debut match against Sale the previous weekend. He did of course score a try at Sale with his second touch of the ball and I am sure has been on a high ever since!

The car boot season re-commenced on 1st March and to date we have had three fine Sundays in direct contrast to the poor start of last year - long may it continue!!

The first Sunday in May (Bank Holiday Weekend) sees the boot sale move to Monday 4th May to accommodate the inaugural the Mini-Midi Tournament which is hosting clubs from all over the country. The Tournament begins at 10.00.a.m. and will finish circa. 2.30.p.m. Why not come along and enjoy the day.

Finally, thanks to John Archibald of A & P Associates Limited for today's Match Ball Sponsorship. Unfortunately the anticipated Match Sponsor needed to subscribe to the former Chief Executive's pension fund.

#### BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v SOUTHEND:

The Midlands side are slowly eating into Redruth's lead and now only 4 points separate the leaders with the Midlands side still having a game in hand. Everything may depend on the last game of the season which sees the Cornishmen travel to meet the League's form team. In today's fixture the home side should register another 5 points against visitors who, whilst having been involved in several close games, always seem to come second - HOME WIN.

#### CAMBRIDGE v TYNEDALE:

Two sides just off the pace and waiting for the leading two clubs to slip up meet in what must be the match of the day. Cambridge still fancy their chances but their recent form is, however, not convincing and with Tyne in superb form in the second half of the season, they may well, despite their poor away record, complete the double - AWAY WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v WESTCOME PARK :

If Blaydon, Cinderford or Wharfedale slip up badly, either of these sides could avoid relegation but today's losers will more or less be relegated. With their financial worries not helping, The Bay could if they win this game, pick up points against Southend and Waterloo but a miracle is needed. The visitors have the easier run-in but home advantage should tell - HOME WIN.

REDRUTH v WATERLOO :

A home banker against bottom club Waterloo by a large score should maintain the leadership for the Cornish side - HOME WIN.

STOURBRIDGE v CINDERFORD:

Looking for their third win on the trot, the Gloucester side's pack may well keep them in the game but the home side are now out of trouble and with their stylish back play should eventually give the visitors the runaround - HOME WIN.

WHARFEDALE v LAUNCESTON:

Coating along in fifth place, the Cornish side have little to play for and having released a couple of players, they are now finding life a little difficult. Meanwhile The Dalesmen, although not completely out of trouble, should make home advantage tell and enjoy another victory thus continuing their status in this league - HOME WIN.

Saturday 21st February:

Today we welcome Wharfedale for this return league encounter, having lost away in October 15 - 14 when the referee denied us the opportunity to re-set the ball for a penalty kick in the final play of the game.

Everyone realised this mistake and we duly received the referee's apology on the following Monday too late to alter the result. Of course many will say Charlie Rayner may have missed this kick but we will never know, however, had we won, we would have exchanged league positions with our opponents today.

The encounter in October was played in extremely wet and windy conditions with Blaydon completely dominating the first half but not making their territorial advantage tell and as the game progressed, gradually the Dalesmen took control to take the lead with ten minutes left and we all know the rest of the story.

The recent bad weather has seen no rugby at Crow Trees thus leading to a postponement of league games and a backlog of County Cup Ties at the lower levels.

Every effort is being made to clear up this backlog and next week sees the 2nd team travel to Horden in their Cup, the 3rd team at home to Westoe, and this week the 4th team entertaining Chester-le-Street on the adjoining pitch behind the stand, weather permitting.

Next week we are again at home, this time to Cinderford who will make their first ever visit to Crow Trees. Postponements have meant that next week's visitors are also up the valley at Tynedale this week.

Our last league match saw us fly to Cornwall to play Mounts Bay on what can only be described as a 'mud heap.' The tactics to be employed in that game were explained at the pre-match lunch and

the home side played the game plan well marching up and down in front of the stand in ankle deep mud. Being a top of the ground side, we did not compete well and although drawing the second half 0 - 0, two first half tries gave The Bay a much needed victory.

Off the field, the plethora of advanced bookings has filled up much of our diary for outside functions in the next twelve months. Since Christmas, Sharon has taken over 80 bookings for weddings, birthdays and social functions.

In addition, the driving school for 'transgressing offenders' has re-affirmed their contract to the club for the next two years.

Our gymnasium 'Sportique' is now fully operational after the September floods and amazingly membership numbers have remained more or less constant. The Aerobics Studio has been completely refurbished with new speakers, 15 new spinning bikes, and completely decorated throughout, including a new floor.

Sunday 1st March sees the re-commencement of our annual Car Boot Sale now in its 21st season.

Finally, may I thank today's match sponsors TARMAC LIMITED for their continued support and hope that they and their guests have an enjoyable day at Blaydon.

Page 2 - ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S MATCHES:

TYNEDALE v CINDERFORD:

Currently chasing the top two sides, Tyne will be looking to extend their excellent home run against a side who have played little league rugby since the end of November. Consequently, after having climbed up the table into a comfortable spot, they are now back in 5th bottom place but with four games in hand on some of the sides directly above them. Next week they again make the long journey to Tynedale to play ourselves - HOME WIN.

REDRUTH v SOUTHEND:

The league leaders seem to have an easy task at home to 2nd bottom Southend who, according to their website, are already accepting relegation. The home side, who have slipped of late, desperately need the five points on offer to maintain their lead over second placed Birmingham Solihull - HOME WIN.

#### CAMBRIDGE v WATERLOO:

Back to the league campaign after their 23 - 22 defeat at London Welsh, the home side should have little difficulty in overturning the league's bottom side who have only two recorded victories this season although one of those was against Cambridge - HOME WIN.

#### STOURBRIDGE v WESTCOMBE PARK:

The home side have been more consistent of late and last week lost closely away to Blackheath and providing they get their pitch inspections correct, they should account for The Combe who are struggling in 3rd bottom place and although their recent form is much improved, they cannot string together a run of victories - HOME WIN.

#### BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v BLACKHEATH:

The Club make the relatively short trip up the M1 following last week's 23 - 17 win over Stourbridge courtesy of their 8th penalty try of the season to meet a home side currently playing the best rugby in the league and with home advantage, they should improve their promotion prospects - HOME WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v LAUNCESTON :

Fourth bottom Bay, still in the National Trophy, desperately need points to move out of the relegation zone but having played two games more than most of the sides above them, they have a mountain to climb. However, recent form has been better and with their Cornish rivals having released several players now that their promotion hopes have been extinguished, a home win is possible particularly since The Bay won the previous encounter 8 - 6 in October - HOME WIN.

Saturday 3rd January

This week we welcome Redruth who make the long journey from Cornwall immediately after New Year, thank goodness it's not in reverse!

According to earlier information, the organisers of league fixtures were endeavouring to have Derby Matches around the festive period and whilst it is realised that every club would not be able to have Derby Matches, surely shorter travelling distances could have been arranged for this time of the year.

Similarly, we travel to Mounts Bay in late January and now find no flights on the Saturday from Newcastle to The Duchy at this time. At present we are investigating a private charter through Graeme Kalbraier but even this is not without its problems and next year if the RFU's expenses are for buses only, then flying will be a huge financial problem.

The pre-Christmas defeat at Tynedale, having seen them visit our twenty two on only two occasions in the whole game, was a difficult pill to swallow and our second half tactics did not pay off after leading at the interval by Jason Smithson's try.

However, the home side must have been pleased with the estimated 1,500 gate, their biggest for some time.

Our visitors today regularly have gates in excess of 1,000 and in the pre-Christmas match against Mounts Bay, the gate was 2,200 and over 1,000 turned up to see a Redruth XV play Cambourne in the annual Boxing Day match which all goes to show the level of support for rugby in the South West.

Following our EDF Cup victory over Macclesfield we have been drawn away to Nottingham in the next round having played there two seasons ago in the cup when we lost 33 - 17 after leading 12 - 6 going into injury time in the first half.

At present, there is no news from the host club on the venue or indeed a Sunday match. Apparently, according to Nottingham, there is a problem on the charges made by Notts County FC for the hire of the ground to the rugby club. The club's website has messages on it suggesting a Sunday match on their training ground!!

Questions were raised on the day of the draw - 15th December - by ourselves regarding the above points and we are now within three weeks of the game and a date and venue has still not yet been offered.

We need the date in order that certain players can arrange work duties and we can only assume that with time running out, the match will be played as usual on a Saturday.

Apologies are offered to supporters requiring information but the matter is out of our hands.

For the information of those travelling to support, the rules of the competition state that failure to agree to a time and date means that the tie should be played between 2 and 3.00.p.m. on the Saturday.

As soon as confirmation is required, notices will be posted within the club and on the website.

Finally, may I on behalf of Blaydon RFU wish everyone a prosperous 2009.

ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S LEAGUE MATCHES:

#### BLACKHEATH v CINDERFORD:

Two formidable packs fighting for the spoils with both clubs sitting just below us in the table, Cinderford having a game in hand to be played here at Crow Trees.

Home advantage and the top scoring penalty try count (6) may well lead to another Blackheath victory - HOME WIN.

#### WESTCOMBE PARK v SOUTHEND:

Both sides are struggling at the bottom end of the table with the visitors seemingly well adrift in second bottom place. However, a win for The Combe could see them move out of the bottom four today if other results go their way and home advantage tells - HOME WIN.

#### BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v CAMBRIDGE:

After their victory at Redruth, the visitors may again fancy their chances against the second top home side particularly after Tynedale's impressive win here in early December.

Defeat for the Midlands side could seriously dent any promotion challenge and they may well just take the points - HOME WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v STOURBRIDGE:

The Bay need to win their home matches if they are to stay in the league and they currently lie tenth in the table but just two points below them, with a game in hand, are Wharfedale.

Heavily defeated in their earlier meeting with Stourbridge, they may well, having strengthened their side, prove more difficult today. Should the visitors lose, they would move closer to the drop zone and Neil Mitchell will need to be utilizing all his experience to ensure that this does not happen but home advantage at this time of the year may well be the difference - HOME WIN.

#### WHARFEDALE v TYNEDEALE:

The Dalesmen need points notwithstanding their two games in hand on Mounts Bay but Tynedale are on a roll and their recent league victory 8 - 5 over Blaydon and 27 - 22 at Birmingham Solihull, enforces this point.

Another Tynedale victory looks on the cards but with their difficult pitch conditions and home crowd, it will be a battle - AWAY WIN.

#### LAUNCESTON v WATERLOO:

The Cornish All Blacks have fallen off the pace into fifth place but still have two games in hand on all the top four sides and no doubt they still think they are still in with a chance of promotion.

Today's game against The Drummers who have only one victory to their credit, looks a certainty particularly if you have read the Chairman's Christmas message on finance - HOME WIN.

From the Touch Line - Saturday 13th December

A break from League rugby gives us an opportunity to welcome Macclesfield for this Third Round EDF Cup Tie.

Macclesfield currently play in League 3 North and are lying in 4th place following last week's excellent victory over leaders Caldy. They won the last round of the cup at Chinnor and should be, according to the match report, quite at home playing at Blaydon as during the previous match, Red Kites were spotted flying around! We, of course, in addition to the Red Kites up the valley, have our secret weapon Panda!!

This season Macclesfield have recorded home wins over Hull Ionians, Preston Grasshoppers, Leicester Lions, Fylde, and Caldy with an away victory at Bradford & Bingley. They have lost on their travels to Huddersfield, Kendal, Nuneaton and drawn with bottom club Halifax.

In the past, Macclesfield have always proved strong opponents and no doubt this Cup Tie will be a similarly keen contest.

The winner today will go into the 4th round where National 1 clubs enter - so whoever wins will be looking hopefully for a home draw.

Next week we take the short travel up the Tyne Valley to Corbridge to meet a buoyant Tynedale who recorded their first away victory last week at Birmingham Solihull - no mean achievement as the Midlands side were rated by many as the best in the league.

We earlier this season met Tynedale on week 2 winning a good contest 24 - 5 outscoring them 4 tries to 1. Since then, the West Tyne side have won all their home matches, thereby extending their unbeaten home record to 32 consecutive games since we won there 38 - 17 in September 2006 and continued on to promotion from League 3 North.

What better time to end this sequence of results, after all, we are already one up this season.

Last week's game against Cinderford was called off due to the weather but the previous week we travelled to Southend with a much changed team due to injuries and the Dubai Sevens and came away with a 24 - 14 victory in very muddy conditions which made open play a bit of a lottery. However, we stuck to our game plan and were unlucky not to get the bonus point when James Clark and Matt Hall were stopped short in the final few minutes but we still enjoyed the fish and chips at the Wetherby Wailer on the way home!

The curtailed league programme last week saw Mounts Bay climb out of the bottom four for the first time this season and also a definite points gap now exists between the top and bottom clubs with seemingly Waterloo and Southend well adrift.

DIY enthusiast 4th official Barrie Urwin's latest exciting project is the installation of an overhead TV hanging from his bedroom ceiling which could be a 'neck cricking experience' - he is taking orders!!

Finally, may I on behalf of the club, wish all players, members and supporters a happy Festive Season.

JIM HUXLEY

ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S CUP TIES:

BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v REDRUTH	-	HOME WIN.
BLACKHEATH v KENDAL	-	HOME WIN.
BLAYDON v MACCLESFIELD	-	WHO KNOWS?
BROAD STREET v WESTOE	-	HOME WIN
CALDY v HULL IONIANS	-	HOME WIN
BARNSTAPLE v SOUTHEND	-	AWAY WIN
DINGS CRUSADERS v WESTCOMBE PARK	-	HOME WIN
HENLEY v STOURBRIDGE	-	AWAY WIN
LONDON SCOTTISH v BASINGSTOKE	-	HOME WIN
MOUNTS BAY v BARKING	-	HOME WIN
PRESTON GRASSHOPPERS v HULL	-	AWAY WIN
RUGBY LIONS v BRIDGEWATER & ALBION	-	HOME WIN
TYNEDALE v WADEBRIDGE CAMELS	-	HOME WIN
WATERLOO v CINDERFORD	-	AWAY WIN
WHARFEDALE v LAUNCESTON	-	AWAY WIN

15<sup>th</sup> November

This week we welcome the players and supporters of Westcombe Park who make their second visit to Crow Trees having entered the league last season.

Last season we met for the first time with our visitors recording two victories in closely contested games and going on to finish a creditable 5th in the table. However, this season mostly without the influential Tom Hayman, Gideon Roux having returned to South Africa , and flyhalf James Whittingham injured, they have struggled and currently occupy 12th position in the table and no doubt today will be looking to move up the table.

After last week's defeat at Blackheath, where once again our supporters were well looked after, we slipped to 7th place - if only our away form could match our undefeated home record where we have accounted at Crow Trees for Tynedale, Launceston, Stourbridge, and the rejuvenated Mounts

Bay but away, all we have to show is a victory at Waterloo 48 - 8 and five defeats albeit some close contests.

Since our last home game we have successfully held our annual Bonfire Night which was an outstanding success and many thanks must go to all helpers in particular John Pacitti and his gatemmen/car park attendants, the admin. staff, Sharon and Andy in-house, John Boyd, Gypsy and George the Battery for the magnificent bonfire which burnt very well! In-house entertainment was supplied by 'Special Brew' who as usual were top of the bill and a good night was had by all.

Next week is a blank league date with National Cup Ties being played by sides in the leagues below with Blaydon not entering until the next round which is held on 13th December.

Today sees the Annual Players' Reunion which was instigated by Ken Sykes who played in the late sixties and he is here today together with many other players from that era. In particular several members of the 1969 side who opened the original floodlights (the first in the North East) on 19th October 1969 when we played Hawick then the current Scottish Champions in front of a crowd of 3,500 losing 15 - 14 - a momentous evening.

JIM HUXLEY

#### ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S LEAGUE GAMES:

##### REDRUTH v TYNEDALE:

Undoubtedly the match of the day, sees the high flying Cornishmen against in-form Tynedale who last week demolished the aspirations of Cambridge despite the latter's rumoured £500k budget.

Redruth at home, with their vociferous support, domineering pack, and fast backs, present a problem and they will no doubt fancy their chances but it will be a very close encounter against a North East side who have won five out of their last six league games - HOME WIN.

##### CAMBRIDGE v LAUNCESTON:

Both sides were amongst the early season favourites for promotion but now, even though we are not half way through the season, they look as if they have a lot to do to catch Redruth - unless the RFU do not alter the promotion placings, which is rumoured.

After last week's heavy defeat up the Tyne Valley, the home side cannot afford another loss. Similarly, their visitors need to build on their 38 - 10 victory last week over Wharfedale - this was achieved following three successive defeats by Birmingham Solihull, Blaydon, and Mounts Bay. An interesting game with the deciding factor being Launceston's huge pack - AWAY WIN.

##### STOURBRIDGE v WATERLOO :

Since their surprise victory over Cambridge, the Drummers have again fallen away and are still firmly entrenched at the bottom of the table although recent games have seen them compete but still lose. Stourbridge, after a poor start to the season, seem to have turned the corner and with Ali

Bressington the league's leading scorer in fine form, they should make home advantage tell - HOME WIN.

#### BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v CINDERFORD:

Now in second place, the Bees need to consolidate and try to close the gap on Redruth. At home they seem to play well and although Cinderford are a solid outfit they may well find the fluent play of the home three quarters a bit too much - a bit like Redruth when they lost 51 - 12 - HOME WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v SOUTHEND:

Three wins out of three has seen the Penzance side climb up to 11th position and with this fixture and the next one against Waterloo also at home, they can see the light at the end of the tunnel. They have also strengthened their side with loan signings and with the Essex boys currently in second bottom place, they should make it four wins on the trot - HOME WIN.

#### WHARFEDALE v BLACKHEATH:

Without their fortuitous over Blaydon by a single point, courtesy of a very poor refereeing decision for which we have received an official apology, the Dalesmen would be in the bottom four. Their pack today will again struggle against The Club whose front five should again dominate - penalty tries being the club's top scorer this season! When their pack get on top, the Club's three quarters have the speed on the wings and whilst it will be a close game, the away team might just sneak it - AWAY WIN.

Saturday 1st November

We have the pleasure of welcoming Launceston or referred to as the Cornish All Blacks (more of this later) for their first ever visit to Crow Trees.

One of the early season favourites for promotion, they are currently in fourth place after last week's home defeat by rivals Mounts Bay and they clearly cannot afford to lose further points if promotion is to be achieved.

Last week on our visit to Wharfedale, we lost in controversial circumstances by one point against a side who, despite being under pressure for most of the game, stuck to their task scoring the winning try in the 72nd minute. However, we did have a kickable penalty opportunity with the last play of the game only for the wind and an inadequate referee to deny the chance when Charles Rayner opted for a kick at goal, not withstanding the blustery wind, but after placing the ball and commencing his run-up, the ball fell off the tee. The kicker looked at the referee who surprisingly waved play on, a Wharfedale forward advanced, and there was a general melee despite Blaydon clearly having retained possession. The referee then blew for the end of the game.

If it had been a conversion attempt, the kicker, once he had begun his approach, would have had to go through with the kick no matter what and Wharfedale would have been entitled to charge. However, as it was a penalty and meant that no charge is allowed, and because the game does not re-start until the kick is taken, the kicker should have been allowed to replace the ball.

Law 21.5 confirms this point.

Wharfedale therefore had no right to approach the ball when it blew over and the referee should have allowed Charles Raynor to replace it and start again.

Since the game, the RFU Referee Manager has confirmed this point and said that the referee was completely wrong on a point of law and that the ball should have been re-set.

The referee has admitted his error and apologised to Blaydon.

At the end of the season, either at the top or bottom of the table, the points won by Wharfedale and lost by Blaydon could be crucial.

Further to the reference of the Cornish All Blacks, it is understood that they have a legal battle on their hands in that the New Zealand All Blacks are considering taking legal action on the brand name "All Blacks" - the Cornish All Blacks wish to register this as their trademark for commercial purposes. To date, no contact has been received by our visitors from the Southern Hemisphere.

The question of promotion and relegation and the restructuring of the leagues from National 1 downwards rumbles on and apparently FDR have not yet agreed with finance being the problem. According to the RFU a final decision on this matter, if somewhat belatedly, is to be made on the 14th November - a situation hardly fair on teams in National 1 and promotion contenders in National

JIM HUXLEY

#### ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S LEAGUE GAMES:

##### TYNEDALE v WATERLOO:

Last week's victory by the Drummers over the much fancied Cambridge side may have kick-started their season, but they will need to dig deep against our neighbours Tynedale who, like ourselves, have made a good start to the season. Tyne's home record shows 38 consecutive victories since Blaydon last won there in September 2007 and they should today continue that record - HOME WIN.

##### REDRUTH v CINDERFORD:

The league leaders face another stiff challenge from the newly promoted Gloucester club who, with last week's victory over Tynedale, are now in 5th place. Cinderford's pack is their strength but with the backing of the loyal home crowd in 'hellfire corner' they may meet their match and home advantage should tell - HOME WIN.

##### CAMBRIDGE v WHARFEDALE:

The home side were two tries up after five minutes last week at Waterloo and then apparently were outplayed by the Drummers who registered their first victory of the campaign. One of the promotion favourites Cambridge cannot afford to slip up again and they could well dominate the Yorkshire side who, despite winning four games, are as evidenced last week, only a mid-table side - HOME WIN.

#### STOURBRIDGE v SOUTHEND:

Today sees the meeting of two sides who at the beginning of the season, had higher expectations than their current league positions although Stour's huge win at Westcombe Park last week might well be a promise of better things to come. Both sides need a win to get clear of the drop zone but with home advantage, the Midlands side should be overall too strong for their southern opponents - HOME WIN.

#### BIRMINGHAM SOLIHULL v WESTCOMBE PARK:

The home side's excellent win last week at Blackheath achieved after being 20 - 5 down approaching half time, kept their promotion ambitions alive and today against a visiting side who are by no means as good as last season, they should again prove too strong for the opposition - HOME WIN.

#### MOUNTS BAY v BLACKHEATH:

Can The Bay register back-to-back wins and prove that they are still capable of escaping the relegation zone? At the beginning of the season they played many of the top sides which has resulted in their league position but their surprise victory over our opponents today, Launceston, could be a catalyst for improvement. However, the club's huge pack, which has seen them awarded four penalty tries this season, could cause a problem and control the forward exchanges - AWAY WIN.

MATCH SPONSOR - SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

BALL SPONSOR - MARJORIE THE ICE CREAM LADY

SHIRT SPONSORS - NEWCASTLE FEDERATION BREWERY AND SEC LIMITED

BLAYDON IN RED WITH BLACK AND WHITE PIPING

LAUNCESTON IN BLACK

SATURDAY 1ST NOVEMBER 2008 - KICK OFF 2.15.P.M.

REFEREE - PAUL KNOWLES

ASSISTANT REFEREES - FRASER GILL - JOHN PEARSON

25th September

#### NATIONAL DIVISION 2 TOP TRY SCORERS

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 6 | SIMON HUNT (BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL) |
| 5 | NATHAN PEDLEY (REDRUTH)            |
| 3 | ROB THIRLBY (REDRUTH)              |
| 3 | BEN MERCER (BLAYDON)               |

- 3 ANDREW FENBY (BLAYDON)
- 3 JOHN FABIAN (CORNISH ALL BLACKS)
- 3 LUKE FIELDEN (CAMBRIDGE)
- 3 MARK BILLINGS (SOUTHEND)

#### NATIONAL DIVISION 2 TOP POINTS SCORERS

- 43 MARK SCRIVENER (REDRUTH)
- 37 MARK WOODROW (BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL)
- 34 ALASTAIR BRESSINGTON (STOURBRIDGE)
- 30 SIMON HUNT (BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL)
- 29 ROBERT MILLER (TYNEDALE)
- 29 MARK BEDWORTH (WHARFEDALE)

FROM THE TOUCHLINE: 23rd April 2008

Today we have the pleasure of welcoming 'Combe' for this their first ever visit to Crow Trees and it is hoped that we can return the excellent hospitality provided for our supporters on that first game of the season when a larger than normal away support travelled to Kent to play against a side who had beaten near neighbours Tynedale quite easily in the play-offs storming home with a good second half display.

Tynedale are to be congratulated on being promoted this season having run away with the league losing only one game and having recorded 25 consecutive home league victories over the past two seasons with their only defeat being by guess who!

Yes, it was Blaydon who won the first game of the 2006/07 season at Corbridge and eventually taking the title by one point from the West Tyne club.

Next season will see the re-commencement of this exciting local derby and there is a possibility of another if Darlington Mowden Park can win their play-off at Cinderford today - a difficult task.

Since securing our status for next season in National League 2 on the 29th March, things have not gone well on the injury front and our depleted squad has struggled in recent matches particularly against Southend last week - a side who were there for the taking.

The scoreline did not do Blaydon justice with the opposition's first two scores coming from offside positions (a fact agreed by the touch judge after the match).

You might say - why did he not inform the referee? Well, the intercom system was still with the match referee whose car had broken down at 2.00.p.m. in Ayclife, 25 minutes away!

Apparently it was not possible to arrange transport and the No 1 touch judge Fraser Gill took over and both occasions admitted to being unsighted but with speechless TJ's, the tries were awarded.

Last week's results saw Otley clinch promotion with an excellent 47 - 0 win over Blackheath and it seems that current form must suggest that Manchester will win at Blackheath today and clinch the second spot.

Relegation from National League 1 is still unclear with Pertemps Bees already relegated and the other position being between Launceston 41 points or Sedgeley Park 39 points joining them.

Today Sedgeley Park are at home to nearby Rotherham and Launceston have the short straw, travelling to Northampton.

If Launceston come down, it will mean three trips to The Duchy next season - perhaps we could organise an Easter Tour or are those days gone forever!

Thankyou for your support - see you all next season.

Jim Huxley