

MATCH DAY



EVESHAM UNITED FC
VS

STRATFORD TOWN FC

26 SEPTEMBER
SATURDAY | **15:00**



SPIERS AND HARTWELL



Spiers & Hartwell



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2026/27

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Coach

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"Evesham United Football Club is an unincorporated association"



FORD'S FOCUS



Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's FA Trophy fixture against Stratford Town.

There isn't much distance between the two clubs, and with both sides competing at Step 3, I think both teams will come into the game genuinely believing they can progress to the next round. That should make for a competitive and entertaining cup tie.

Last weekend's FA Cup result against Redditch was obviously disappointing. We have a young group, and with that will come occasions where performances and results don't quite go our way. What matters now is how we respond.

I fully back this group of players to remind not only our supporters, but also themselves, of what they are capable of. We have already seen that when the players, staff and supporters all connect on the same day, with the right intensity and belief, we are capable of competing with and beating anyone at this level.

Today gives us an immediate opportunity to respond. Cup football is about performing on the day, and we know Stratford will arrive with exactly the same ambition as us.

Hopefully we can get a big crowd behind the lads, create a brilliant atmosphere and give everyone an entertaining game of football. Thank you, as always, for your fantastic support.

Up the Robins!

Mike Ford

Manager, Evesham United FC



THE THOUGHTS OF THE CHAIRMAN...



Hi all and welcome to Ged and his team from Stratford town who are good friends but we hope we can come out on top today. Ged is always a top host on my visits to Stratford town.

After last week's disappointing result at Redditch let's hope for a better result today. For some reason we never got going last week, but it happens to the best take a look at Arsenal.

Hopefully everyone will try the new Robins food shack to their liking as we try to improve the matchday food experience with nice hot pies, sausage rolls and real Cornish pasty's.

Lets all get behind our young team and look forward to another round in the cup.

Up the Robins!

Brenzo



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MATCH REPORT



Redditch United 3 vs Evesham United 0 – Saturday 19 th September **Emirates FA Cup 2 nd Qualifying Round** **Match Report by Simon Purfield**

Evesham United travelled to Redditch United for a Worcestershire derby in the FA Cup Second Qualifying Round on Saturday, suffering a 3-0 defeat with all three goals arriving before half-time.

After a quiet start, Redditch opened the scoring in the 13th minute when Szhem Whyte-Hall headed Harrison Hazard's cross into the bottom corner.

Evesham's first effort on target came five minutes later as Kai Churchley struck from the edge of the area, but Rory Brown saved comfortably. Redditch nearly added a second shortly afterwards when William Fielding's header from a Whyte-Hall cross was tipped away by Oscar Varney.

Churchley remained a threat and delivered a dangerous low cross in the 27th minute, but no one could convert. Redditch doubled their lead three minutes before the break when Alex Foreshaw tapped in after Hazard's free-kick glanced off Owen Foye's head. Hazard then went close himself before Fielding was denied from close range.

Deep into first-half stoppage time, Danny King headed home another Hazard corner to make it 3-0.

Evesham changed shape at the interval in an attempt to get back into the game. Following a subdued opening to the second half, Churchley burst down the right but fired over from a tight angle. King then threatened again for the hosts.

Evesham's best chance came on 64 minutes when Josh Barlow's cross found Foye at the far post, but the defender headed over. Redditch continued to create opportunities, with loan Richards clearing a Fielding effort off the line with 12 minutes remaining. Jeval Thompson-McKenzie later shot narrowly wide before Aaron Bishop saw a close-range effort blocked.

In the final minute, substitute Sopuru Obieri latched onto a long ball from Foye, shrugged off a defender and shot wide. It was a disappointing display from Evesham, ending a three-match unbeaten run and rarely troubling the Redditch defence. Redditch progress to the Third Qualifying Round for the first time in 15 years, while Evesham now turn their attention to next Saturday's FA Trophy home tie against Stratford Town.



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LEAGUE TABLE



	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	P
1	Uxbridge	6	4	2	0	12	6	6	14
2	Plymouth Parkway	6	4	1	1	17	6	11	13
3	Hanworth Villa	6	4	1	1	11	3	8	13
4	Frome Town	6	4	0	2	10	4	6	12
5	Taunton Town	6	4	0	2	19	14	5	12
6	Chichester City	6	4	0	2	11	7	4	12
7	Chertsey Town	6	3	1	2	12	10	2	10
8	Berkhamsted	6	3	0	3	9	10	-1	9
9	Poole Town	6	3	0	3	7	9	-2	9
10	Evesham United	6	3	0	3	11	14	-3	9
11	Bath City	6	2	2	2	6	6	0	8
12	Yate Town FC	6	2	2	2	7	9	-2	8
13	Gosport Borough	6	2	1	3	7	7	0	7
14	Basingstoke Town	6	2	1	3	11	12	-1	7
15	Sholing FC	6	2	1	3	6	9	-3	7
16	Chippenham Town	6	2	1	3	7	12	-5	7
17	Bracknell Town	6	2	1	3	8	14	-6	7
18	Wimborne Town	6	1	3	2	4	4	0	6
19	Gloucester City	6	1	2	3	8	10	-2	5
20	Hanwell Town	6	1	2	3	4	7	-3	5
21	Havant & Waterlooville	6	1	1	4	7	12	-5	4
22	Malvern Town	6	0	2	4	7	16	-9	2

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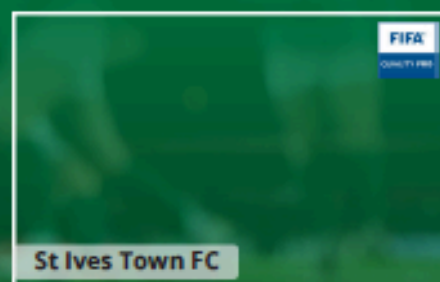
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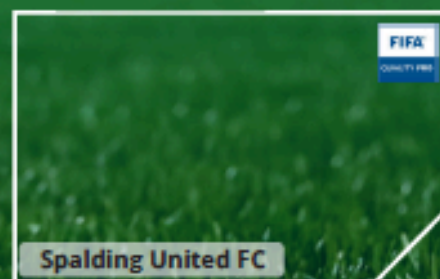
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MEET THE MANAGEMENT



MIKE FORD – MANAGER

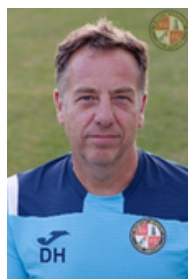
Mike, as a player, represented Cardiff City and Oxford United, clocking up close to 500 league appearances and gaining two promotions during that time. Following retirement due to injury, Mike has managed Oxford United (twice in caretaker roles) and was also assistant manager there for a period. He then went on to manage Oxford City (2009-2014), leading them to promotion to the National League Southern Division. He then moved to Banbury United (2015-2020), where he gained promotion from Evesham's level in 2016, before establishing them in the Premier Division from that point. He helped manage St. Ives Town in the 2021/22 season. Mike is a UEFA A-licensed coach who has experience working with and developing young players, including being the Oxford United Youth Team Manager.



ALEX SYKES – ASSISTANT MANAGER

In May 2011, Alex was appointed as manager of Bishop's Cleeve. In his first season as manager, he led Bishop's Cleeve to the club's then record high league finish of 11th in the Southern League South & West

At the end of his second season as boss, in April 2013, he stepped down from his role as manager at the club. In May 2013, he became joint manager at fellow Southern League club Shortwood United alongside John Evans. He would eventually take sole charge of the club following the retirement of John Evans at the end of the 2015-16 season. After leading the side for the 2016-17 season, he left Shortwood in April 2017. In January 2018, Alex was appointed as assistant manager of Redditch United. In October 2021, he was appointed manager of Cinderford Town and left at the end of the 2022-23 season. Alex started his playing career in the Football League with Mansfield Town. However, he is best known for his time at Forest Green Rovers from 1996 to 2004, where he played 295 times, scoring 73 goals in two spells and a loan. He was also a fans' favourite at Gloucester City, where he scored 60 goals in 160 appearances. Alex played for other teams such as Nuneaton Borough, Bath City, and Bishops Cleeve. He is a former England Futsal international.



DAN HEAD – GK COACH

Dan is an experienced coach and Head of Senior Goalkeeping at Evesham United. Having played academy football at an early age, Dan played the majority of his senior football at representative level in the Services, but stopped playing due to injury at a relatively young age. Turning his attention to coaching, he became an ECB-accredited cricket coach and was involved at the minor counties level before turning his focus back to football. Dan is a UEFA B-qualified outfield and goalkeeper coach and is also a member of the GK Nexus set-up. A small group of goalkeepers, mainly working in the professional game, who are mentored by former Derby and Manchester City goalkeeper Eric Steele, who was Sir Alex Ferguson's goalkeeper coach at Manchester United. Dan also works across the junior setup at Evesham United and previously coached at Cheltenham Town Academy.



STEVE COOK – COACH

Cook has had numerous roles at Evesham United for a number of years. He has acted as the manager of the U18 and Development sides but most recently acted as manager of Evesham United Reserves in the Hellenic Alliance West. Cook was added to the First Team coaching staff for the 2026/2027 season.



MEET THE MANAGEMENT



MIKE BYRNE – COACH

Across his 35 years as a professional football coach, he has developed a reputation for high standards, consistency, and a deep commitment to improving players and people. His career spans elite Academy environments, formal teaching, national coach education, and leadership roles that have shaped both young athletes and future industry leaders as an MBA coach. What defines his work is a 360-degree coaching approach and an unwavering belief that every player can grow under the right guidance.



LIAM CHANDLER-JOHNSON – PHYSIO

Liam joined Evesham United during the 23/24 season, previously being at Longlevens AFC. With a background in Sports Therapy, he studied at Hartpury University. During this time, he went on placement with Cheltenham Town's 1st team. Using his experience working in



PLAYER PROFILES



BRENDON BEARD – GOALKEEPER

Beard is a promising goalkeeper who rose through the ranks of the Evesham youth set-up before joining Cheltenham Town. He rejoined The Robins from Stoke Gifford United in 2024/25 but made no appearances due to injury. He returned fully fit for the 2025/26 season and provided cover for Alex Harris, keeping a clean sheet on his debut in a 1-0 win against Hanwell Town and made four appearances over the course of the season.



IOAN RICHARDS – DEFENDER

Richards is a Welsh-born defender who was on a short-term loan from Gloucester City at Swindon Supermarine. He signed at Gloucester City after a trial period in preseason, having previously been with Redditch United and Taunton Town, and had a previous short spell with Gloucester City in 2019. He was initially on a one-month loan until mid-October, which was extended until the end of the season, but Richards left City in December and joined Swindon Supermarine for the 2024/25 season. Ioan signed for The Robins permanently for the 2025/26 season, making 37 league appearances, scoring once. Ioan quickly became a staple of the side and fan favourite, winning both Evesham United Supporters' Club and Staff Player of the Season in his maiden season at the club.



JYREL BOJANG – DEFENDER

Jyrel joined Evesham from Pershore Town, where he was a standout at Step 5. Previously, he played at Studley. Jyrel is a solid defender at either full back or centre back when called from the bench or in the starting XI. Jyrel is into his third season at the club, making 38 appearances last season and 80 total appearances in that time.



LIAM HUTT – DEFENDER

Hutt came through the ranks of Swindon Town, making his debut for the club in the EFL Trophy against Reading. Hutt is able to operate across the back line but primarily operates from right back. He gained experience of senior football through a loan move to Weymouth in 2024-2025. Hutt joined Evesham United on loan in November 2025/26, making 28 appearances, scoring twice in that time. After impressing throughout the season Hutt signed permanently ahead of the 2026/27 season.



OWEN FOYE – DEFENDER

Foye also came through the ranks of Swindon Town and was a highly touted prospect, captaining their youth side. Foye made his debut for The Robins in 2024-25 in the EFL trophy against Tottenham Hotspur U21 and played one game in League 2, coming on as a late substitute away against Fleetwood. The left back impressed Ian Holloway in the 2025/26 pre-season and earned a work experience loan to Swindon Supermarine. He joined Evesham United on loan in November, making 20 appearances, netting once. Foye is no stranger to surging forward and creates chances from set-pieces and dangerous crosses. The 18 year old joined Evesham United permanently ahead of the 2026/27 season.



PLAYER PROFILES



ROCCO SUGHAYER – DEFENDER

Sughayer signed for Evesham United after impressing as a trialist in the person of the 2026/2027 season. The defender, previously of Bristol Rovers Academy and Forest Green Rovers Academy, was sent on loan to Didcot in the November of the 2025/2026 season on an initial one month loan. For The Railwaymen, the 18 year-old made 17 appearances across the season.



ANTHONY MCCORMICK – DEFENDER

McCormick spent 13 years as a junior at Swindon Town before being released at the close of the 2025/2026 season. He made his first team debut in November 2024, starting against Tottenham Hotspur U21 in the EFL Trophy at just 17. McCormick was loaned to National League South Salisbury in 2024/2025. The 19 year-old signed for Evesham for the 2026/2027 season.



JOSHUA BARLOW – MIDFIELDER

Barlow started his career at Cheltenham before making the move to the Salop Academy in the 2020/21 season. Whilst impressing in the middle of the park, Steve Cotterill, the Shrewsbury manager, took a shine to Barlow and rewarded him by naming him on the bench towards the end of the 21/22 season as a scholar. During the 22/23 season, he started three games in the EFL Trophy, making his debut in a 2-1 defeat against Wolverhampton Wanderers. Barlow went on to feature twice more in the same competition, with Shrewsbury eventually bowing out in the group stage. Despite the results in the EFL Trophy. He joined Banbury in June 2023 before leaving them in December. A solid member of the squad with good vision on the ball and vast passing range. Barlow has been an ever-present in Mike Ford's side across the past three seasons and has made 91 appearances. No stranger to a worldie, Barlow has scored 9 times for the club.



MACKENZIE STRETTON – MIDFIELDER

Stretton, 19, rose through the Coventry City Academy before signing a professional contract ahead of the 2025/26 season. To gain experience in senior football he joined Gloucester City on loan in March 2026, making 8 appearances and scoring once.



PLAYER PROFILES



AMER AWADH – MIDFIELDER

28-year-old Amer Awadh is an attacking midfielder who came through the youth system at Oxford City, playing primarily for their Nomads side, though he progressed to make a few first-team appearances. He had been playing for Fanja SC in Oman before joining Banbury United in February 2018, for whom he made 84 appearances. In 2021-22, he started the season at Nuneaton Borough before moving to North Leigh later that term, where he helped the club to promotion through the play-offs. For the Oxfordshire outfit, he turned out on 70 occasions, scoring 6 goals. Awadh captained the Robins promotion side in 2024/25 and continues in the role this season. He has become a stalwart of the club, making 134 appearances for the Robins, scoring 17 goals and creating many more with his elegant, mesmerising technical ability.



BRANDON LIGGETT – MIDFIELDER

Liggett started with Cheltenham Town Under 18s in the 2023/24 season before being loaned early in the year to Gloucester City. He made his Cheltenham Town debut against West Ham U21 in November 2023 in the EFL Trophy. Liggett signed a professional contract for Cheltenham in June 2024 and during the 2024/2025 season was sent on loan to Salisbury during the season on a one month deal. Liggett joined Evesham on a free transfer for the 2025/26 season. The combative Liggett made 38 appearances for The Robins last season.



LEWIS MIDDLETON – MIDFIELDER

18-year-old Lewis joined Evesham from Kidlington in 2024/25. In the playoff semi-final that season, Lewis had a breakout performance, coming on as a sub and netting twice against Exmouth, helping the Robins to overcome a 1-0 half-time deficit to win 4-1. He recently scored his first FA Cup goal for the Robins, hopefully the first of many. Lewis is often used as a super sub, causing our opponents' defence many problems with his speed and dribbling. Lewis is entering his third season under Mike Ford and has made 50 appearances in his first two seasons, netting 7 times.



AARON HEAP – MIDFIELDER

The versatile Heap joined Evesham United from North Leigh prior to the 2023/2024 season and became a regular member in Mike Ford's side. Heap played for Oxford United at youth level and made 3 appearances for Northern Ireland U19. He previously had a spell at Banbury United. Being deployed across the midfield, Heap made 113 appearances for the club before signing for Ardley United of Step 5 on dual registration in February 2026, though he made 2 appearances for the Robins in April amid an injury crisis, helping The Robins to retain Step 3 status.



PLAYER PROFILES



JOSH MCCONELL – MIDFIELDER

McConnell is a technical central midfielder who joined the club initially on loan from Oxford City in December of the 2025-26. McConnell made two appearances in the National League North for The Hoops against Bedford Town and Chester as a substitute. McConnell played 17 times for the Robins last season and scored once away at Havant and Waterlooville. McConnell joined the club permanently ahead of the 2026/27 season.



DANIEL HANSON – MIDFIELDER

Hanson joined the club after a successful trial period in preseason. Hanson plied his trade in both the Leicester City and Hamburger SV academies. He has previously played for Brimscombe and Thrupp and Hartbury University. Hanson most recently had spells with Slimbridge, where he scored a pivotal last minute winner from outside the box against Worcester Raiders, and for Pershore Town.



KAI CHURCHLEY – FORWARD

Kai had an excellent 4-year spell (2 years scholar and 2 years pro) with Bristol City, where he played a key role in the Robins' successful Under-21s team in the Professional Development League Two. Kai also had a loan spell with Gloucester City during their National League North campaign in 2023/24, before having a spell with Tiverton Town in the Southern League Premier South during the 2024/25 season. Kai comes to the Robins as a loan signing from Merthyr Town. The 21-year-old attacker joins the Robins on a deal that will run until at least the New Year.



THOMAS CONTEH – FORWARD

Conteh is a pacey and direct forward who is able to operate across all positions of the frontline. Conteh joins the club on a season-long loan from Forest Green Rovers. Last season Conteh spent time on loan at Alvechurch and Hungerford and looks to gain more senior experience with The Robins.



SOPURUCHUKWU OBIERI – FORWARD

The young forward signs on a season-long loan from Cheltenham Town where he became the youngest player to represent the club, making his debut aged 15 years and 303 days old in the EFL Trophy against West Ham U21s. Obieri has had several successful loan spells at Step 3 and 4, representing Hungerford Town, Worcester City and most recently Gloucester City. Obieri has been described as a pacey, physical player who can link play together with a hunger to score goals.



PLAYER PROFILES



MICHEAL MEADOWS- FORWARD

Meadows signed on non-contract terms in August. Meadows was part of Evesham United Reserves in 2025/2026, scoring three times.



OSCAR VARNEY-GOALKEEPER

Varney is a 19 year-old goalkeeper who joined on loan from Coventry City U21. Varney began his career progressing through the ranks of Fulham, where he was for a decade from 2015 before joining Coventry City U21 in July 2025.

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Evesham United Foundation

August 2026

The Foundation continues to work for the benefit of the local community and to promote sport for all. Three major projects continue to be realised and the Foundation is thankful to all those individuals and companies who have made contributions both financial and materially. In addition, applications have been made to various trusts and sporting bodies to realise funds for these projects.



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- To provide multi-sport kit bags to the 6 local primary schools for use in PE lessons and at play times – cost £1200
 - To plan and install a modern fitness suite at EUFC for use by the disabled learning group, the Academy section of U14 -18 players and as a 'private' sole use facility for club members and the general public – c£24000
- To provide additional kit for the 70 coaches now working for the club on a voluntary basis. - £4000

Foundation web site: www.eveshamunitedfoundation.co.uk

Or contact the CEO: ceo@eveshamunitedfoundation.co.uk



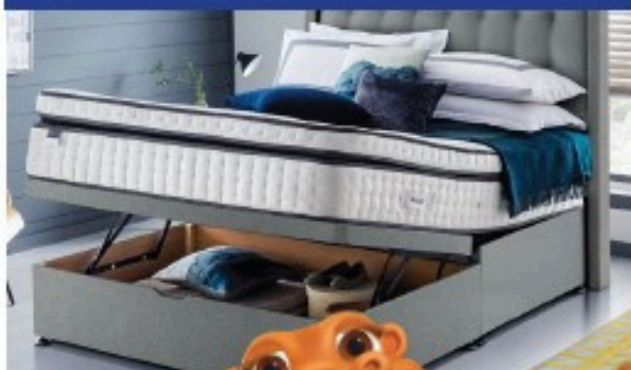
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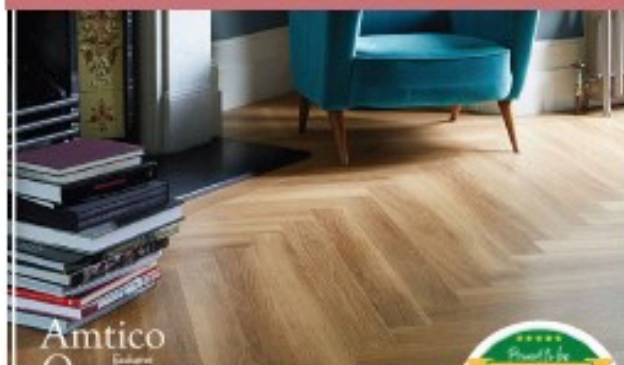
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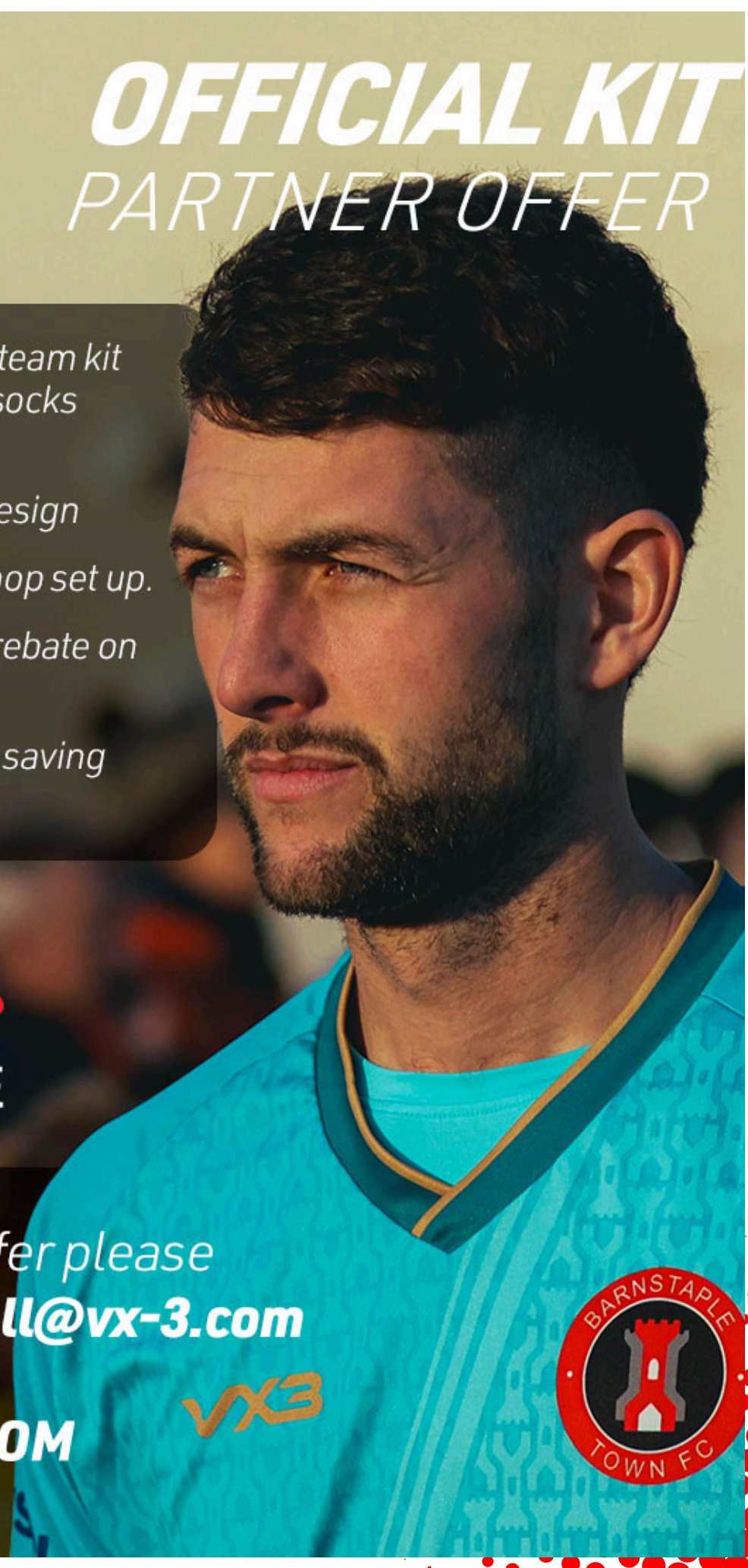




PLAYER APPEARANCES & GOALS 2026-27



	LEAGUE Starts	Subs	Goals	CUP Starts	Subs	Goals	TOTAL Starts	Subs	Goals
Aaron Heap	4	2		1			5	2	
Amer Awadh	5	1		1			6	1	
Antony McCormick		4						3	
Brandon Liggett	6		5	1			7		5
Brendan Beard (GK)	4			1			5		
Daniel Hanson		2			1			2	
Ioan Richards	5			1			6		
Josh Barlow	6			1			7		
Joshua McConnell	5	1			1		5	2	
Jyrel Bojang	6		2	1			7		2
Kai Churchley	3		3	1		1	4		4
Lewis Middleton		3						3	
Liam Hutt	4	1		1			5	1	
Mackenzie Stretton		1			1			2	
Oscar Varney	1						1		
Oscar Varney (GK)	1						1		
Owen Foye	6			1			7		
Rocco Sughayer	3	2			1		3	3	
Roger James		2						2	
Sopuru Obieri	1	3			1	1	1	4	1
Thomas Conteh	3			1			4		
Zidan Sutherland	2						2		



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STRATFORD TOWN FC CLUB HISTORY

The Club was founded by Paul Bartlett in 1941, as Stratford Rangers, changing its name to Stratford Town in 1949.

Stratford competed in local leagues until 1947 when they joined the Birmingham Alliance (which became the Warwickshire & West Midland Alliance). Following league and cup successes, Stratford joined the Worcestershire Combination (which became the Midland Combination) in 1954.

Over the following years Stratford played in various leagues including the Birmingham & District League and the Hellenic League, until 1994 when they became founder members of the Midland Football Alliance.

Alan Hawkins - Town's Mr Stato has unearthed previously undocumented history of STFC.

A Brief Outline of the Club prior to joining the Worcestershire Combination in 1954/1955...

Although being first registered with the Birmingham County FA in 1944, the Club was formed under the name of Stratford Rangers in 1943 by Paul Bartlett with the original intention to give local serving players on leave during the Second World War the opportunity of a game as there was no organised football. From initially playing "friendly" games at a number of locations (including the Recreation Ground and a field off the Birmingham Road) to playing competitive football after the war, the team achieved rapid progress and became a successful junior club in its formative years. The team won 24 and lost 6 of their 35 games in season 1945/1946. After winning the Alcester Nursing Home Cup and finishing Division 1 runners-up of the Stratford-upon-Avon & District League in 1946/1947 a suggested merger with champions and the longer established Stratford Men's SC did not materialise but both clubs left the Stratford League for the 1947/1948 season, MSC joined the Leamington & District League while Stratford Rangers joined the Birmingham Alliance.

During their seven seasons of membership in the senior division of this league, the Club won many trophies and by the late 1940's were playing on the Alcester Road Ground (which was adjacent to the present site) with the pitch being moved on at least one occasion. Off the field a strong committee was complemented by a thriving supporters club.

In their first season outside local football, 1947/1948, Stratford Rangers finished in a good position in the league with the Club's record victory being achieved in an away game at Terrys Athletic, 19-0 ! The team also competed in the Birmingham Junior Cup while membership of the Stratford League was retained when the Club ran a Reserve side which replaced the first XI in Division 1.

In 1948/1949, with the help of trainer Harry Shaw, the team finished 8th, entered the FA Amateur Cup and reached the semi-final of the Birmingham Junior Cup. Over 1,000 supporters travelled to Villa Park to see the team narrowly lose to Castle Rovers in the Aston Villa Cup Final. At the end of the season the Club, with approval from the town's Council, changed name to the present title of Stratford Town, inheriting the town's crest for its badge and colours.

In their first season as Stratford Town, 1949/1950, the team finished 7th in the league and became the first winners of the RAFA Cup.

The 1950/1951 season saw the team finish runners-up under the guidance of manager Vic Manley. The highest scoring victory under the name of Stratford Town was achieved when Walsall Colts were beaten 14-1 in a home league game. The Town also became joint-holders of the League Cup (Alliance Senior Cup) after two drawn Finals against Coventry Amateurs. The Final of the Aston Villa Cup was again reached but The Town lost to Hall Green Amateurs.

However, in 1951/1952 The Town gained revenge by beating Hall Green Amateurs in the League Cup Final which was played at Lockheed Leamington FC. The team finished 4th in the league.

By the 1952/1953 season the West Midland Alliance as it had become known (which incorporated the Birmingham Alliance in which The Town's Reserve team were members) had changed title to the Warwickshire & West Midland Alliance and Stratford Town finished runners-up under player-manager Len Livingstone who older supporters remembered as the best centre half to play for the Club. The Aston Villa Cup was won for the first and only time as was the Presidents Cup. A massive 164 goals were scored in all competitions of the campaign.

A prolific goal-scorer for The Town during their membership of the Alliance was Gordon Hillman and his 50 goals scored in the 1953/1954 season contributed to the Club becoming league champions, the title being secured when Dudley Town Reserves were beaten 6-2 in front of a "record crowd". Stratford Town again lost to Castle Rovers in the Aston Villa Cup Final and Birmingham City Colts beat them in the League Cup Final which was played at St Andrews. A friendly against Pegasus attracted over 2,000 spectators at the Rugby Club and an end of season friendly against Evesham United attracted 1,000. The Reserves finished in a high position while Stratford Town Colts held their own scoring 126 goals in their inaugural season.

With further building development of what was becoming an industrial use area ongoing (the fire station had only opened in 1953), the pitch was moved northwards and enclosed with the installation of changing rooms and a stand. The Ground, which initially had only a short lease, has changed very little until the move to the new stadium in Knights Lane.

With improved facilities the Club were accepted into the Midland Combination (then known as the Worcestershire Combination) for the 1954/1955 season, replacing Kingswinford & Wall Heath FC, although the original intention appears to have been joining the stronger semi-professional Birmingham Combination which had ceased at the end of the 1953/1954 season. A new manager was also appointed, Allan Sands.

In their first season, Stratford finished 4th. In 1956 Stratford were runners-up and the following year they won the title by 5 points from Wolverhampton Wanderers. In 1955-56 Stratford reached the Challenge Cup Final, but were beaten by Bromsgrove Rovers. Between 1954 and 1957 the Club played 102 games, winning 65, drawing 15 and losing 21, scoring 313 goals and conceded 138. As a result Stratford decided to join the Birmingham and District League and were in Div 2 for 3 years, before the League was reorganised. It was a very strong League and Stratford's fortunes slipped, although they did win the Birmingham Senior Cup beating Lockheed Leamington in the Final 2-1 in 1963, the game was played at Moor Green, and Sid Keenan scored both goals.

In 1970-71 Stratford went back to the Midland Combination, where they stayed for 5 seasons before joining the Hellenic League. In their first season they finished 10th but the next year they finished bottom and they went back to the Midland Combination. However lack of success continued as they finished with only 13 points and were relegated to Div 2. Being relegated gave the Club time to regroup and within 3 years they were back in the premier Division. After winning the League in 1987, Stratford applied to join the Southern League, but the Ground was not up to standard. A new Club House and Changing Rooms were built and floodlights were installed in 1990.

In 1994 Stratford were elected as a founder member of the Midland Football Alliance and finished 3rd in their first season. To cap this, Andy Smith was voted MFA player of the season. In 1997-98 the Club suffered severe financial problems, and a number of local business men got together and took over the Club to get it back on its feet.

Lennie Derby was brought in as manager, but it was not until the 1999-2000 that things improved when they were runners-up to Alliance new boys Oadby Town. The next two seasons saw Stratford setting the pace and sitting top of the table at Christmas. However spells of bad weather and postponements led to a backlog of fixtures with Town failing to hold onto the top spot.

For the 2002-03 campaign, Stratford were in contention for most of the season with Stourbridge, Rushall Olympic and early pace setters Oadby Town who got to the semi final of the F A Vase. Stourbridge won the league, but it was not until the last game of the Season that Rushall, piped Stratford for 2nd place. Stratford won the League Cup for the first time beating Causeway United 1-0, with Leon Mitchell getting the goal in extra time.

The 2003-04 season got off to a great start, Stratford winning their 2nd trophy in 3 months, beating Stourbridge 1-0 to win the Joe McGorian Cup and Stratford were unbeaten after the first 12 games of the season, winning the Team of the month for August. After 3 mid season defeats Stratford only lost twice in the next 20 games to keep in the title

race, suffering 3 more defeats Town Came back with 5 wins. A win or a draw in the last game of the season against Willenhall at Masons Road, would secure 2nd place and promotion but Willenhall won and gained the promotion spot.

The 2004-05 season got off to a great start when Stratford became the first team to retain the League Cup with a 3-1 win over Rushall Olympic in the rearranged Final at Willenhall. However it was the opposite in the League with Town losing their first 4 League games and were in the relegation zone for the first half of the season. It was a shock when Lennie Derby resigned in January. In his 6 years at the Club he had been close to promotion several times. With his departure Assistant Manager Ian Britton took charge for the rest of the season.

After being reinstated in the FA Cup after Sutton Coldfield played an ineligible player, Stratford got to the 3rd qualifying round the best they had ever done, but were beaten 3-0 at Masons Road by Southport and were beaten 3-0 by Sutton Town in the FA Vase.

Stratford striker Craig Pountney won the MFA Golden Boot award for the 2nd time in 4 years, scoring 32 goals, and was supporter's player of the year.

After a good pre season build up to the 2005/06 season hopes were high, but this form was not transferred to the new League campaign, despite winning the first two games, results were indifferent and again Stratford were fighting in the lower half of the table. With a good win against Stourport Swifts in the FA Cup it looked as if things might improve, but no, as Stratford went out of every other cup competition at the first hurdle. With results not improving and not being able to bring in new faces to strengthen the Squad, manager Ian Britton resigned.

Former player Dennis Mulholland was appointed as the new manager. Bringing in a lot of new faces to try and improve results had little effect, as Stratford were still having a mixed bag of results and eventually finished 14th in the League at the end of the season, their lowest position for a number of years.

The 2006/07, season was a successful one for Stratford, finishing 4th in the League and having good runs in the FA Cup and the FA Vase. Going out to Conference South side Bishops Stortford away 2-0, in the 3rd qualifying round and losing 2-1 to MFA rivals Quorn 2-1 at Sutton Park in the 4th round respectively.

The 2007 / 2008 season saw the appointment of Micky Moore and Town riding high in the MFA until a disastrous post Christmas run put an end to any promotion hopes.

The 2008 / 2009 season was Town's first full one at its new Knights Lane facility and expectations were high for the season ahead. An historic run in the FA Vase ended in 5th round defeat to eventual winners Whitley Bay but again league form was inconsistent. Despite a great run in the last two months Town ended in 6th place having never threatened the top three and manager Micky Moore paid the price at the end of the season. New manager Rod Brown was appointed, with the task of bringing that elusive promotion top of his list of priorities. A first season finish in third place was followed by a dismal start to the 2010 / 2011 season and by September Brown had left.

Former player Morton Titterton replaced Brown, once again a top six finish was gained, along with a fine end of season league cup win over Boldmere St Michaels. The 2011 / 2012 season was again disappointing and Carl Adams was brought in as co-manager for the 2012 / 2013 campaign. Unfortunately Morton Titterton had to relinquish his duties leaving Carl Adams in sole charge. Town went top of league in early September and remained there, at one point opening up a 19 point lead. But with the terrible winter causing fixture chaos Town secured the title with 4 games left to play thus ending their 19 season stay in the MFA and promotion to the Southern League Div 1 South & West.

The 2013/14 season saw Town finish in 10th position playing a brand of attacking football that produced 103 goals and the league's leading goalscorer in Richard Gregory with 39.

The 2014/15 season saw the majority of the previous year's squad re-signed and together with some additional signings Town made an impressive start hitting the top of the table after 10 consecutive wins. Despite a poor run of results around the turn of the year they produced a 12 match unbeaten run to secure a 3rd place finish and reach



the play off's. Having overcome Taunton Town 2-1 in the semi-final they beat Lakhall Athletic in the final in front of a ground record crowd of 1054 supporters to gain promotion to the Evostik Southern Premier League.

After winning promotion to the Southern League Premier the 2015/16 season was all about consolidation. The previous season's end of season form continued with Town making a bright start to life at the highest level in their history.

By Christmas Town were comfortable in mid table but a poor run of form into the new year meant a promising start turned into a 19th place finish. Mission accomplished and onto a tough second season in the Division.

2016/17 saw Town achieve their highest league position. A young developing side finished 14th and but for 14 drawn games could have been higher.

Season 2017/18 saw a 15th place finish highlighted with a good run in the FA Cup with Town being beaten in a replay in the 3rd Qualifying Round by Scarborough.

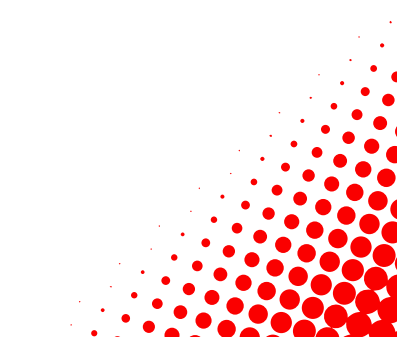
2018/19 was a year of changes with a new board taking over the running of the club. Carl Adams 300 match reign as manager ended with the appointment of Darren Byfield as manager, but after an indifferent start he was replaced by former Kettering Boss Thomas Baillie. It proved to be Town's most successful season reaching the 1st Round of the FA Trophy, winning the Southern League Cup and finishing 5th in the League, losing to Kings Lynn in the play off semi-final.

2019/20 saw Thomas Baillie depart to Tamworth and Town appointed former Darlington and Corby manager Tommy Wright. In what proved to be a difficult season he was replaced by Paul Davis and Town struggled to emulate the form of the previous year. The Covid pandemic cut the season short with 9 games left play with them lying in 18th place.

The 2020/21 season was officially ended on 19th March 2021, with the last matches being played on Wednesday 4th November 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. All results were expunged. The Bards were in 3rd spot when the season came to an end after just 8 games.

2021/22 was an historic season for The Bards as they reached the 1st Rd Proper of the Emirates FA Cup with the game against Shrewsbury shown live on TV. But the league form dipped after the excitement of the FA Cup and flirted with relegation before finishing in 13th place.

2022/23 saw the appointment of new Management pairing of Dean Holdsworth and Gavin Hurren but Holdsworth departed after the FA Cup exit to Banbury in September. This was followed by a run of just two wins in 24 games. But with relegation looming a change in the squad in mid February saw a dramatic change of events and a championships winning run of form which saw The Bards finish the season in 14th place. But the season will be remembered for the tragic death of Cody Fisher on Boxing Day which had a huge impact on the football club.



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Paul Davis - 1st Team management

Paul returned to the club as coach having been the Manager when The Bards experienced their most exciting FA Cup run in their history. Paul brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the club and has now chalked up more than 130 games with The Bards.

Coaches

The Bards backroom team consists of Andy Darylsyn Coach, Paul McCone, Player and Coach, Richard Bell Fitness and Conditioning Coach, Nadine Tipple Sports Therapist plus Ian Weaving Kit Manager.

1. Jake Weaver:

The Bardy Army will be pleased to know that 'Weavo' AKA Jake Weaver is returning for another season at Shakespeare's Theatre of Dreams. The 29-year-old has a plethora of experience at this level, joining from Rushall Olympic where he enjoyed promotion, and prior to that was a fan favourite at Leamington. He came through the ranks with Birmingham City, competing at an under 18 and under 23 level, before having loan spells at Hungerford and Kidderminster. This will be his third season with The Bards after joining in 2024, and the penalty relishing shot stopper has registered 22 clean sheets during his first two seasons.

2. Dan Vann:

The versatile defender is back for season number eight with The Bards, something highly welcomed and celebrated by all stakeholders here at Stratford Town. There's no surprise he won Chairman's Player of the Season last season, with an immense mentality and a real dedication to the club. 'Vannsy' played both centrally in the defence, and as a fullback, always stepping up when Paul Davis needed him, and has not let minor knocks get the better of him. He started out at Walsall where he progressed from the youth team to the first team – he had a few loan spells but finally settled at Stratford Town where the 27-year-old can certainly be considered orange and blue through and through.

3. Finlay Brennan:

Fin is a highly technical footballer who is Paul Davis' undisputed first choice left back, having played every game for The Bards last year. The Luton born lad started his career at Milton Keynes Dons, progressing through their academy to make two appearances in the EFL Trophy in the 2019/20 season. The 24-year-old just needs nine more appearances to hit a century of games for The Bards, and I'm sure there will be no doubt of this occurring sooner rather than later. Fin is both resilient and intelligent in his defensive capabilities but is equally strong going forward and loves to pop up with the odd goal.

Being voted Supporters' Player of the Year capped off a brilliant campaign for him which everyone is confident he will build on further.

4. Josh Hawker:

Hawker was the first player announced by the club to be retained for the upcoming season. The midfield maestro has now made 135 appearances for The Bards after rejoining from Halesowen Town in 2023. The experienced 32-year-old was another example of someone who featured in Birmingham City's youth setup, being part of their under 18s before joining Leamington which kickstarted his now established non-league footballing career. 'Hawks' holds a strong presence in the midfield and knows where the back of the net is, being the joint top scorer for The Bards just two seasons ago. He has

also enjoyed spells at Hereford and Solihull Moors over the years, and the over decade-long run in 6th and 7th tier football may be the experience The Bards need to aid their promotion charge this season.

5. Paul McCone:

The ever-present skipper and now Assistant Manager Paul McCone is returning for another season with The Bards. The no-nonsense centre back can be heard from all over the field and is able to command his backline, ensuring that they rarely lose their shape. 'Maca' is another one of the lads who has accumulated over 100 appearances here at Stratford Town, returning for his fifth season with The Bards. He will be working alongside Paul to try and ensure promotion this season and will play a major role this season as always. The veteran 34-year-old is another example of a player with a colourful non-league history, playing for Stourbridge, Leamington, Hednesford, Telford Utd, Halesowen and Bromsgrove Spa over the last 15 years. He started his journey at Wolves where he featured in their under 18 setup.

6. Kory Roberts:

The centre half has already become a favourite at the club among fans and players alike, even being voted players' player of the year last season. So, it's no shock that he returns for another season at The Arden Garages Stadium for the 2026/27 campaign. He attained numerous Man of the Match awards last season for his calm, reliable defending and inventive play on the ball. He also made his presence known at the other end of the pitch, chipping in with three goals. Kory started his career with Walsall in their youth setup, going on to make 26 first team appearances for the club. Since leaving Walsall in 2020 he has played for Bromley, Telford Utd, Rushall, Dartford, Hemel and Hednesford where he won promotion but left to join The Bards last year.

7. McKauley Manning:

After making 215 appearances over the last seven seasons for Halesowen Town, 'Mini' as he was known by The Yeltz, has made the switch from royal blue to the orange and blue of The Bards. Before his departure from Halesowen, he was one of just two players left from their historic FA Trophy run in the 2019/20 season, where he scored in a 3-1 away win against then National League side Maidenhead United. The midfielder was a major catalyst in the Yeltz' promotion to step 3 of the non-league pyramid, and we hope he can succeed to the same effect in our aim to chase step 2. This is a massive signing for The Bards as he is someone who offers both goals and assists, cropping up with 11 goal involvements in the foregone campaign.

8. Reece Flanagan

Reece began his senior career with Walsall, making 39 appearances before moving into non-league football. He spent time with Leamington and Rushall Olympic before joining Stratford Town.

After leaving Stratford, he joined Hednesford Town, where he enjoyed an excellent 2021/22 season, scoring nine league goals in 37 appearances. He subsequently moved to Redditch United, producing an outstanding 2023/24 campaign with 17 league goals.

He later spent the 2024/25 season with Halesowen Town before returning to Redditch United for 2025/26

Flanagan combines technical ability with a high work rate and a willingness to contribute at both ends of the pitch. He's comfortable receiving possession and moving the ball through midfield, he also possesses the confidence to strike from range.

9. Tre Mitford:

Tre Mitford is an experienced centre-forward with extensive experience across the National League and Southern League levels. Tre provides a strong physical presence in the attacking third, while his finishing and experience make him a proven option leading the line for The Bards.

He has built a career across a number of established non-league clubs, including Brackley Town, Kettering Town, Gloucester City, Boston United, AFC Telford United and Hemel Hempstead Town. His career record includes more than 200 recorded senior club appearances.

Mitford also has international experience with Guyana, making six senior international appearances according to available records. He was included in Guyana's preliminary squad for the 2023 CONCACAF Gold Cup.

10. Dan Lafferty:

'Laffs' lies just three goals away from breaking the record for the most goals scored in the Southern League Premier for The Bards. The number 10 is entering his 6th season at Shakespeare's Theatre of Dreams, and needs just three appearances to reach two hundred for the club. Contrary to many of the lads, Lafferty has not competed with several clubs over the years and has stayed loyal to The Bards after joining from the Coventry City youth setup. He has bagged 40 goals during his time with Stratford, a number he will look to grow on this season as he will be a pivotal asset in terms of our chances of promotion. He shows true passion for the club and always fights for the badge. There is no doubt that everyone is happy to see Dan returning for another campaign.

11. Jack Bearne:

Jack Bearne is an exciting, versatile attacking player who brings Premier League pedigree, Football League experience and a winning mentality to Stratford Town FC.

He joined the Liverpool Academy as a 15-year-old and quickly established himself as one of the club's promising young attacking talents. Bearne's time at Liverpool saw him progress through the Academy ranks, featuring for the Under-18s, Under-19s, Under-23s and Under-21s. His pace, technical ability and versatility allowed him to operate in several positions across the front line, with the player himself identifying striker and right-wing roles among his preferred positions. One of the highlights of Bearne's Academy career came in 2019 when Liverpool's Under-18s won the FA Youth Cup.

After leaving Liverpool in 2023, Bearne began building valuable experience in senior football. He spent the 2022/23 season on loan with Kidderminster Harriers, gaining experience of the National League North and contributing to their promotion campaign.

For The Bards, his arrival provides supporters with the chance to watch a player who has experienced the unique environment of a Premier League club and competed for major honours, while now bringing that experience to the Arden Garages Stadium.

12. Harry Hawkins:

The Bards welcome the 20-year-old ex-Derby County Academy midfielder, who joined the Under 21 squad in the summer of 2024 on a full-time basis after two years with the Under 18s. He was awarded a two-year scholarship after excelling at youth level in the 2021/22 campaign, during which time he was named as the Academy Player of the Year for his

performances. In October 2022, he earned himself a spot on the bench against Manchester City in an Under 21 clash at Pride Park in the EFL Trophy. The midfielder continued to impress with The Rams and in 2023 became part of a senior matchday squad in which Derby defeated Wolves Under-21s in the EFL Trophy group stages. His first taste of non-league football came last year with AFC Telford, and his impact on the game continued as they achieved promotion to the National League North. Harry has consistently performed at a high level and will be sure to make an instant impression at Shakespeare's Theatre of Dreams.

14. Jack Storer:

Jack has had a rollercoaster of a career path, starting his days at Birmingham City's Academy, before agreeing to a scholarship with Stevenage. He made his football league debut in 2015 before making a move back to The Blues the following year. The striker then had two loan spells at Yeovil Town and Gloucester City, where he briefly departed English football to play in the Scottish Championship in 2018 with Partick Thistle. On his return, he had short spells with Redditch United, Mickleover Sports and Leamington. He has appeared for The Bards in three previous seasons making 91 appearances for the club, the first of which being in the 2021/22 season where he scored eight goals.

15. Zach McKenzie

Zach McKenzie is a talented right-sided defender from our home town Stratford-upon-Avon who developed through the academy at Forest Green Rovers. A late starter in football, McKenzie initially excelled in athletics before concentrating on the game, having competed at national level in triple jump.

After joining Forest Green, he progressed through the club's academy and made his first-team and EFL debut at just 17, coming off the bench against Cambridge United on the final day of the 2022/23 season.

McKenzie subsequently gained valuable senior experience with The Bards, featuring on loan as part of his development, before also spending time with Cribbs. He later joined Tamworth's U23 pathway and signed National League forms with the club.

Known as a right-sided defender, McKenzie's athletic background has complemented his footballing development, giving him an impressive physical foundation. His journey from Stratford athletics to professional football reflects both his versatility and determination to progress in the men's game.

16.Dennis Halliday:

Dennis Halliday is the latest exciting young player to join Stratford Town FC, bringing with him experience of football in England, Wales and Scotland and a desire to make his mark with The Bards.

The London-born Halliday, aged 21, has already enjoyed a remarkably varied footballing journey for a player of his age. His development began in the youth system at **West Ham United**, before he embarked on a career that has taken him across several different levels of the game.

His early football included a spell with **Newtown AFC in Wales**, followed by time with Market Drayton Town in the North West Counties League and Wolverhampton Casuals in

the Midland Football League. He subsequently moved to **Welwyn Garden City** and then **Corby Town**, where his performances at Step 4 level helped attract attention from clubs higher up the football pyramid.

His progression earned him an opportunity in the professional game when he moved to Scotland in January 2026 to join **East Fife**, who were competing in Scottish League One.

Halliday returned to England in the summer of 2026 and joined **Leamington** ahead of their 2026/27 campaign. Now at Stratford Town, Halliday has another opportunity to continue that development and establish himself as an important member of the Bards' squad.

17. Owen James:

The Bards' leading goalscorer and last season's golden boot winner for the club has agreed terms for another season with the club. The tricky winger with an abundance of pace started his career at Oxford United at age 14 and went on to make his senior debut in May 2018. 'OJ' was part of the Bards' successful FA Cup side in 2021/22 and continues to offer so much going forward. His directness and willingness to take on players in the final third is something opposition defenders struggle to deal with. He needs no introduction to The Bardy Army who will be overjoyed to see him step back on the pitch in orange and blue.

19. Kobe Hall:

Just three and half years ago, Kobe made his professional debut for Kidderminster Harriers at age 16, after becoming a graduate of their academy. Following a few loan spells at Quorn, Stourport Swifts, Alfreton Town and Rushall, the now 19-year-old has huge potential, something Paul Davis will be very aware of. His aerial presence and eye for goal, combined with such maturity on the pitch for a centre forward of his age, is something that the Bardy Army should hold genuine excitement for when watching this season. We will be desperate to cling onto this lad for all he has to offer. He is another player with National League experience, making two appearances in 2023/24; a somewhat decorated career already while still being a teen.

20. Tali Jarrow:

Tali joins us from Newport Pagnell Town and is expected to make an immediate impact. He has represented Gambia at Afcon U20s and brings quality, intelligence and stamina into the midfield. At times during last season The Bards often looked overrun or lacking legs in midfield, and Tali is the perfect acquisition to try and amend this going into the new season. He is a former MK Dons scholar whose all-round awareness and knowledge of the game has impressed the coaching staff upon arrival.

21. Charlie Farr:

A warm welcome to another wide player for The Bards; 24-year-old Charlie Farr who began his career with Aston Villa, rising through the ranks to feature in their under-18 and under-23 sides. He then would go on to sign for Brentford B and had a spell at Taunton Town. But he has joined the club from Northern Premier League side Rushall Olympic, where he will now compete in the Southern Premier League here at the Arden Garges Stadium. His experience in the Premier League 2 and EFL Trophy may just be what the squad needs when looking at options in the wide positions. Unfortunately Charlie suffered an ACL injury during pre season but we hope to see him back before the end of the season.

22. Dexter Dudley-Toole

Dexter burst onto the scene with Halesowen Town 21s, when during the 2021/22 season the Yeltz youngsters completed the treble. After impressing at this level, he was granted an opportunity with the first team, playing multiple times during the season that got them promoted to step 3, alongside McKauley Manning, another former Yeltz name now competing in orange and blue. Since then, the 6'3 centre half has been performing week in week out at Studley, following loan spells at Gresley Rovers and AFC Wulfrunians. He made his debut for The Bards against Royston Town and has already impressed the fans and coaching staff alike with his assured performances at the back. Unfortunately like Charlie, Dex suffered an ACL injury during pre season but we hope to see him back before the end of the season.

24. Reuben Wyatt

Reuben is another new signing for The Bards, courtesy of Tamworth FC where we signed the lively midfielder from. He is a Northampton FC scholar and prior to his time at Tamworth, he enjoyed spells at St Albans FC, Redditch United FC and St Ives Town FC. Reuben was the EFL League One Apprentice of the Year in the 2023/24 season and joins the cohort of youth in The Bards squad for the 2026/27 season.

25. Aksum White:

Stratford Town FC are delighted to announce the signing of fullback Aksum White. The 25-year-old has featured for many teams around this level; Worcester Raiders, Tamworth, Barwell, Sporting Khalsa, Coleshill Town, Kettering Town and Bromsgrove Sporting. His career started with West Bromwich Albion as a youth, but after an immense amount of footballing experience, it is here with The Bards that he will compete during the 2026/27 season!



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JUST the mere mention of the upcoming international break sends colleagues from our sister title The Football League Paper into a cold sweat.

The thought of two Saturdays without any Championship football along with less than half of the scheduled League One programme is enough to induce sleepless nights as they contemplate quite how to fill all their pages.

To make it worse, even some League Two games have been postponed because of call-ups, so how much longer will it be before National League games are under threat too?

The good news is The FLP team will produce great papers worth reading in the new reality of two international breaks – September and October – squashed together.

The move was approved in March 2023 with the later than usual 2026 World Cup finish because the tournament expanded – remember that bright idea – to reduce the number of journeys around the world so many players have to take.

It means England and Wales will be playing four games in this window rather than the usual two and the shutters come down on the top two divisions in England effectively for three weeks.

Step into the limelight. Non-League football. We all know about the rip-roaring success of Non-League Day, founded by James Doe to encourage fans to their local Non-League club when both the Premier League and Championship are on hold.

This upcoming break is a great opportunity to get out the Non-League Day textbook and entice fans through the turnstiles.

A lot of match-going fans will be starved of their usual fix but still keen to see some live action.

It has to be said, watching Non-League football – particularly in the National League – is becoming more expensive in some cases.

Many Step 1 clubs charge north of £20 now – and car parking fees seem to be on the rise too!

You have to go a bit further down to Pyramid fulfil the clichéd twenty quid gets you in the ground with change for a burger and a pint.

Of course, costs have gone up across the board. All businesses are feeling the pinch and it's never been more expensive to run a football club.

But great value days out still reign supreme in Non-League.

So let's see top special offers, the 'kids go free with an adult' deals, the extra events around the game that draw supporters in.

Forward-thinking clubs are working out how to get fans to their grounds earlier and keep them there longer.

While Wales' weekend games are on Sundays, England do play on Saturdays but, crucially, at 7.45pm and 5pm – ideal to get people in the ground for a 3pm game, then keep them on for a couple of pints and some evening football on the box (starting with England v Spain tonight), while bringing in valuable revenue before the winter months.

And also keep showing what a great level of the game this is.

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THOMAS CONTEH
SOPURU OBIERI

MANAGER: MIKE FORD

ASST MAN: ALEX SYKES

GK COACH: DAN HEAD

COACH - STEVE COOK

PHYSIO - LIAM CHANDLER-JOHNSON

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GK COACH: ADAM ROBINSON

COACH - PAUL SHABOLT

COACH - JAMES OUSTON

Next Home Match: Tuesday 29th 2026 vs. Chippenham Town
Kick off 19:45 Southern League Premier South