

# PREVIEW

# MAG

ISSUE #04 | 29-31 AUGUST 2025



YOUR FRIDAY GUIDE  
TO ALL OF THE  
WEEKEND ACTION



Emirates  
FA CUP

EMIRATES  
FA CUP  
PREVIEW



# FUTURE FANS



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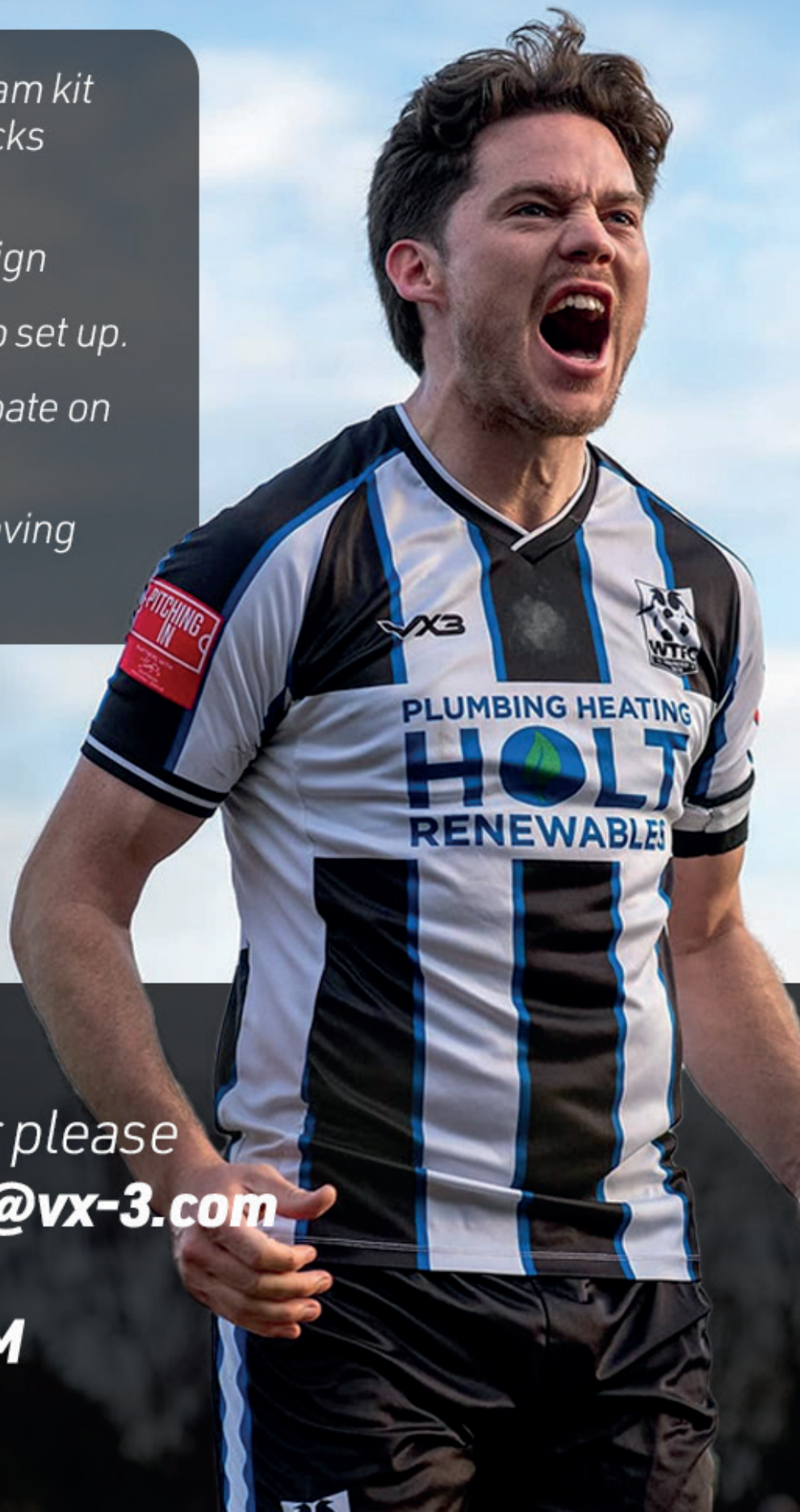
## OFFICIAL KIT PARTNER OFFER

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

Pitching In Southern League Premier Central outfit, Bromsgrove Sporting, had a visit from their local MP at last Saturday's home game against Needham Market.

Bradley Thomas MP visited the Victoria Ground in his constituency where he spoke to volunteers, supporters and the match officials before volunteering to serve behind the bar in the Clubhouse.

Invited by Southern League main sponsor, Pitching In, he found out more about the Volunteer Hub and the importance volunteers at all of our member clubs as well as learning about the various club community projects that the Pitching In grants support.

Pictured here we see Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas with Southern League chairman, David Martin.

Find volunteering opportunities at your local club via: [pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk](http://pitchinginvolunteers.co.uk)



## SCORE PREDICTOR

Throughout the 2025/26 season we are going to pit the players against the media and supporters in our score prediction competition.

The rules are simple; each week we select a game at random from each of our four divisions and then invite representatives to make their predictions. It's three points for getting the score correct, one point for getting the right result and nothing an incorrect score/result.

To take part, email: [news@southern-football-league.co.uk](mailto:news@southern-football-league.co.uk)

Last week the honours went to Henry Fealty, Poole Town supporter, who scored four points for the Fans, beating off the challenge of Bishop's Stortford's Luka Chalwell who managed two points for the Players and Willand Rovers' David 'Dumper' Cork who mustered a single point for the Media

This week we are joined by Raynes Lane goalkeeper, Charlie Patmore who takes on Quorn FC media man, Adam Etheridge, and Kettering Town supporter, Ted Russell.

| WEEK FOUR                                     | Patmore | Etheridge | Russell |
|---|---------|-----------|---------|
| Chertsey Town v Thame United (FA Cup)         | 2-0     | 3-1       | 4-0     |
| Evesham United v Bromsgrove Sporting (FA Cup) | 1-2     | 2-0       | 1-3     |
| Malvern Town v Melksham Town                  | 1-1     | 2-1       | 2-1     |
| Welwyn Garden City v Biggleswade FC           | 2-2     | 1-1       | 2-0     |

| LEADER BOARD | Score Correct | Result Correct | Points |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| Players      | 2             | 4              | 10     |
| Media        | 1             | 3              | 6      |
| Supporters   | 1             | 1              | 4      |



# LEAGUE STANDINGS 2025-26



## Premier Division South

| #  | Team                   | P | W | D | L | F  | A | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|----|------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----|
| 1  | Sholing                | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5  | 11  |
| 2  | Farnham Town           | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 4  | 11  |
| 3  | Walton & Hersham       | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8  | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 5  | 10  |
| 4  | Gloucester City        | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7  | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5  | 10  |
| 5  | Taunton Town           | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6  | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4  | 10  |
| 6  | Berkhamsted            | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1  | 10  |
| 7  | Poole Town             | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 0  | 10  |
| 8  | Hungerford Town        | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6  | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2  | 9   |
| 9  | Wimborne Town          | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 8  | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3  | 8   |
| 10 | Uxbridge               | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 1  | 7   |
| 11 | Hanwell Town           | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0  | 7   |
| 12 | Basingstoke Town       | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3  | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1  | 6   |
| 13 | Evesham United         | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2  | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1  | 6   |
| 14 | Chertsey Town          | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0  | 5   |
| 15 | Bracknell Town         | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7  | 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | -1 | 5   |
| 16 | Gosport Borough        | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6  | 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | -3 | 4   |
| 17 | Havant & Waterlooville | 5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3  | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 | -3 | 4   |
| 18 | Weymouth               | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | -4 | 4   |
| 19 | Plymouth Parkway       | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2  | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | -5 | 4   |
| 20 | Tiverton Town          | 5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | -5 | 3   |
| 21 | Dorchester Town        | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5  | 9 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | -5 | 2   |
| 22 | Yate Town              | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 8 | -6 | 2   |

### Weekend Action

Emirates FA Cup First Round Qualifying fixtures take place this weekend...



## Premier Division Central

| #  | Team                | P | W | D | L | F | A | W | D | L | F | A | GD  | PTS |
|----|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| 1  | Harborough Town     | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 9   | 13  |
| 2  | Bishop's Stortford  | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 10  | 12  |
| 3  | Kettering Town      | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 6   | 12  |
| 4  | Quorn               | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 7   | 10  |
| 5  | Spalding United     | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 4   | 10  |
| 6  | Banbury United      | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 4   | 9   |
| 7  | Halesowen Town      | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0   | 8   |
| 8  | Leiston             | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0   | 8   |
| 9  | Alvechurch          | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1   | 7   |
| 10 | Redditch United     | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0   | 7   |
| 11 | Needham Market      | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | -1  | 7   |
| 12 | Bury Town           | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | -2  | 7   |
| 13 | Barwell             | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | -2  | 6   |
| 14 | Worcester City      | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1   | 5   |
| 15 | Stourbridge         | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0   | 5   |
| 16 | St Ives Town        | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | -2  | 5   |
| 17 | Real Bedford        | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | -2  | 5   |
| 18 | Stratford Town      | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 7 | -6  | 3   |
| 19 | Bromsgrove Sporting | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | -8  | 3   |
| 20 | AFC Sudbury         | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 9 | -10 | 3   |
| 21 | Royston Town        | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | -4  | 2   |
| 22 | Stamford            | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | -5  | 2   |

### Weekend Action

Emirates FA Cup First Round Qualifying fixtures take place this weekend...



## Division One South

| #  | Team                    | P | W | D | L | F | A  | W | D | L | F | A | GD  | PTS |
|----|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| 1  | Bishop's Cleeve         | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 10  | 12  |
| 2  | Malvern Town            | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1  | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6   | 10  |
| 3  | Shaftesbury             | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9   | 9   |
| 4  | Portishead Town         | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 9   | 9   |
| 5  | Frome Town              | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6   | 9   |
| 6  | Winchester City         | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4   | 9   |
| 7  | Mousehole               | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3   | 6   |
| 8  | Swindon Supermarine     | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2   | 6   |
| 9  | Westbury United         | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1   | 6   |
| 10 | Brixham                 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | -3  | 6   |
| 11 | Melksham Town           | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1   | 5   |
| 12 | Exmouth Town            | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1   | 4   |
| 13 | Hartpury                | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 3  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1   | 4   |
| 14 | Bristol Manor Farm      | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | -4  | 4   |
| 15 | Larkhall Athletic       | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | -3  | 3   |
| 16 | Sporting Club Inkberrow | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | -5  | 3   |
| 17 | Tavistock               | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 | -8  | 3   |
| 18 | Falmouth Town           | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | -1  | 2   |
| 19 | Willand Rovers          | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | -5  | 2   |
| 20 | Bashley                 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5  | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | -4  | 1   |
| 21 | Didcot Town             | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | -12 | 1   |
| 22 | Bideford                | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | -8  | 0   |

### Weekend Action

Saturday 30th August  
Hartpury v Willand Rovers  
Malvern Town v Melksham Town



Charlie Johnson, Malvern Town FC

Image | Malvern Town FC

## Division One Central

| #  | Team                | P | W | D | L | F | A  | W | D | L | F | A | GD | PTS |
|----|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----|
| 1  | Biggleswade FC      | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 5  | 10  |
| 2  | Leighton Town       | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 7  | 9   |
| 3  | Welwyn Garden City  | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 3  | 9   |
| 4  | Flackwell Heath     | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0  | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 6  | 7   |
| 5  | Beaconsfield Town   | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 3  | 7   |
| 6  | Barton Rovers       | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3  | 7   |
| 7  | Hitchin Town        | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3  | 7   |
| 8  | Hadley              | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4  | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2  | 7   |
| 9  | Biggleswade Town    | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 7   |
| 10 | Leverstock Green    | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3  | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1  | 7   |
| 11 | Hertford Town       | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4  | 6   |
| 12 | Ware                | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | -1 | 6   |
| 13 | AFC Dunstable       | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | -2 | 5   |
| 14 | Aylesbury United    | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | -2 | 4   |
| 15 | Enfield             | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 0  | 3   |
| 16 | Marlow              | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0  | 3   |
| 17 | London Lions        | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | -4 | 3   |
| 18 | Rayners Lane        | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 7 | -5 | 3   |
| 19 | Northwood           | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6  | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | -4 | 1   |
| 20 | Thame United        | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | -6 | 0   |
| 21 | Stotfold            | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6  | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 9 | -7 | 0   |
| 22 | Milton Keynes Irish | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | -8 | 0   |

### Weekend Action

Saturday 30th August  
AFC Dunstable v Milton Keynes Irish  
Welwyn Garden City v Biggleswade FC



Bailey Stevenson, Welwyn Garden City

Image | Welwyn Garden City FC



# EMIRATES FA CUP FIRST ROUND QUALIFYING

Featured Match

## GLOUCESTER CITY v AFC PORTCHESTER



**The end of the summer is on the horizon. The nights are drawing in and soon the leaves will be turning brown.**

Over at Gloucester City, a month of City Soccer Camps have just come to an end.

Headed up by first-team players, Kieran Phillips and Ed Williams, the camps have proved extremely popular, catering for youngsters of all abilities between the ages of five and 11.

Amongst the many happy customers is season-ticket holder and lifelong fan, Mark Carter, whose sons Alfie and Charlie, have had the times of their lives, sharing a pitch with the players they cheer from the terraces each week.

"The Soccer Camps that the club has put on over the summer holidays have been absolutely fantastic," said the 39 year-old who has been attending game since the early 1990s. "My boys have loved every minute of it; it makes them feel so attached to the club and I'm sure that every youngster there feels the same.

"These are the potential supporters of the future and if you stimulate their interest early, it will hopefully lead to getting them and their parents through the turnstiles and attending games. Once you achieve that then I firmly believe that they will enjoy the experience so much that they will keep coming back.

"Getting the club's name out there in the public domain and within the local community is massive. Now we are back playing in the City following our exile, we need to tap in to every potential supporter we can get.

"The mascot opportunities offered by the club are also brilliant and junior clubs from all over the local area have taken part. It's great to see how proud and special the kids feel when they lead the club out in front of over 1,000 fans and then take part in a penalty shoot-out at half-time.

"There's so much more being done to engage with the youngsters these days. My dad brought me and my brother, Paul, along from an early age in the early 1990s and then when I was old enough, me and a mate would jump on a bus and attend games on our own.

"I had to stop attending as regularly when I began playing Saturday football, but then started attending again in 2018 during our time playing 'home' games in Evesham.

"My 'other' team is Tottenham Hotspur, but I've always been a big advocate of supporting local football. The top level is losing its soul year after year; the money at the top level is just ridiculous these days and it's nice to know that every penny you spend at your local club means so much and keeps them alive.

"My boys absolutely love coming to watch City. It's ten minutes from my house and great value. We really feel part of the whole experience and have made many friends here. This is a welcoming, family club; Alfie loves getting his pre-match hot dog and catching up with his mates, whilst I enjoy having a cheeky piny pitch-side, something you can't do in the FA Premier League!

Just one defeat from their opening five Pitching In Southern League Premier South fixtures has represented a solid start for the club, but on Saturday attention turns to the Emirates FA Cup as they set out with a home tie against AFC Portchester of the Isthmian League South Central Division, one step below.

"The FA Cup is a special competition and I have many memories watching it as I was growing up," Mark Carter added. "Every year you wonder whether it's your club's turn for an adventure; it's a chance to make memories and really capture the imagination.

"You have to be cautious because anything can happen, however being at home to lower level opposition is all you can ask for at this stage.

"In the League, it's been a good start. It was disappointing to lose the game at Plymouth Parkway, but overall we are looking strong.

"I like how our new manager, Daf Williams, sets us up to play exciting, attacking football and you can clearly see he's made his mark on the team already.

"I'm expecting another exciting season. It's hard to tell this early how teams will do, but already everyone is beating everyone. I think it'll be more open this year after Merthyr Town and AFC Totton dominated last season.

"The aim for us has to be to win the League; the play-offs are a minimum, but I believe we have got the squad to challenge for the title."

Ed Williams added: "The Soccer Camps went really well. It was brilliant to see so many young players enjoying themselves, learning new skills, and, most importantly, smiling throughout the sessions.

"Being able to engage with the next generation of fans and players is always rewarding. Their energy and excitement remind us why we love the game so much. Hopefully we've inspired a few of them to keep playing and stay connected with the club."

There's already been a special milestone reached for Williams this season as he passed the 150-appearance mark for the club.

"It's been a positive but challenging start to the campaign," he added. "Personally I feel physically good. I'm really enjoying working with the new management team, building a strong relationship with them and understanding our style of play.

"As a team, I think we are disappointed not to have maximum points; we've shown a lot of promise, there have been good performances and positives, but we feel we can do better in certain moments of games to give us the best chance of winning.

"The Premier South is always competitive. Every game is tough, and you can't afford to switch off against any side and we're ready to embrace that challenge. The goal is promotion; the club is moving in a positive direction thanks to the tireless work of everyone involved to ensure we are supported in the right way.

"As players we want to make the fans and club proud."

Image | Gloucester City



Gloucester City are engaging with local youngsters

## THE REST OF THE EMIRATES FA CUP ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH CLUBS

**There's a South v Central clash taking place at Berkhamsted where the home side, who have settled down well into life back at Step 3, play host to a St. Ives Town outfit who have just one win from their opening five encounters so far.**

An interesting battle takes place at Division One Central high-flyers, Bishops Cleeve, as they welcome Wimborne Town, who have made a solid start to the campaign. Hot on the heels of securing their first League victory of the season last weekend, Bracknell Town have home advantage for the visit of Dartford.

Also looking to make home advantage count are Chertsey Town who host a Thame United outfit who just missed out on the play-offs in Division One Central last term but have started with three straight defeats this term.

Hitting the road are Hanwell Town, who go to Cray Wanderers, and Poole Town who face a Didcot Town side who have had a tricky start to their Division One South campaign, although they did secure their first point during the course of the Bank Holiday weekend.

Building on the momentum of promotion at the end of last term, Farnham Town are unbeaten in five this season and they go to Erith Town. There's a Worcestershire derby at Evesham United as they play host to Bromsgrove Sporting who, despite being situated just over 25 miles away, compete in the Premier Central.

A trip to lower level Fairford Town awaits early Premier South leaders, Sholing, whilst League rivals, Gosport Borough and

Basingstoke Town, separated by just a couple of points, lock horns. Havant & Waterlooville welcome Chichester City and Hungerford Town host AFC Stoneham.

Familiar opponents await Plymouth Parkway as they face a Frome Town side who were relegated out of the Premier South after just one season back at the end of last term. Dorchester Town hit the road with destination Slimbridge and Weymouth, whose Chairman stepped down this week amidst a challenging start to the campaign, face a trip to Tadley Calleva.

Also heading into the unknown are Walton & Hersham who face an away tie at Three Bridges. There's much more familiarity as Tiverton Town and Taunton face off once more, as they did as recently as Monday. After an unbeaten start to the season after five games, Uxbridge will be full of confidence as they host Welling United.





# EMIRATES FA CUP FIRST ROUND QUALIFYING

Featured Match

## HALESOWEN TOWN v STRATFORD TOWN

**The draw for the Emirates FA Cup first round qualifying has pitted two Pitching In Southern League Premier Central clubs against each other and it's fair to say that they both go into the tie having experienced contrasting fortunes on Bank Holiday Monday.**

For visitors, Stratford Town, they travel to The Grove with the glow of finally getting off the mark with their first win of the season, at the fourth attempt, following a 2-1 victory at Alvechurch. Meanwhile Halesowen Town were hit with a 3-0 home reverse at the hands of previously winless Worcester City.

"The performance was simply not good enough," said Yeltz boss, Russ Penn, at the end. "As long as I am here I will fight, but I saw none of that from my players on this occasion and it was extremely disappointing.

"To be fair, Worcester played amazingly well and could have easily won by a much bigger margin, such was their dominance.

"We have to take it on the chin; it was a very bad day at the office for us and we have to ensure that we are much better on Saturday as the FA Cup comes around for another year.

"We should be taking the game to any side that comes here, whether it's an FA Premier League outfit or a fellow Step 3 team. There were over 2,000 supporters here on Monday and it was a wasted opportunity for us.

"It was a perfect Bank Holiday setting and we failed to rise to the occasion. We've gone away and licked our wounds for a few days and now we're ready to set about the task of making amends and responding in the right way.

"The amount of chances that we've created and goals conceded has been a worry across the season so far. It's disappointing, but

all we can do is pick ourselves up, dust ourselves down and be ready to go again on Saturday as we take a break from the battle for League points.

"The FA Cup can be a competition in which memories can be created. Our full focus is on the challenge that Stratford Town will present. They come here upbeat having got their first win on Monday, but as far as we are concerned, we have to react; there will be players who will come in and there will be players who won't be here, but I am confident that whoever takes to the field, they will start to get things moving in the right direction for us."

Penn's side have won two of their five League games so far and sit five points ahead of Saturday's opponents, Stratford Town, who have only played four games following the abandonment of their home encounter with Bishop's Stortford due to a serious injury sustained by one of the opposing players.

The Bards had lost each of their opening three encounters, but in the Worcestershire sunshine on Monday they managed to battle out a much-needed 2-1 triumph at Alvechurch.

"It was a massive victory for us on Monday for so many reasons," admitted long-serving midfielder, Josh Hawker. "We dug in and showed a tremendous amount of character in tough conditions and against a good Alvechurch side.

"During the first three games of the season, we really didn't perform at all. There's a lot of new faces in the team and maybe that played its part? From a personal point of view, I'm still getting my fitness levels up to scratch after a stop-start pre-season where I have carried a knock into the season.

"But hopefully now there's a lot more to come from myself and the team as we look to build on Monday's performance.

"The addition last week of both Paul Robinson and Paul McCone to the managerial staff will only strengthen us; they will bring fresh ideas to the table and experienced eyes. We've already seen the benefits of this and I'm sure there is plenty more to come.

"We know that it's going to be very tough this season, it always is in this League. There are a of good teams who have joined us for this season, the likes of Quorn and Worcester City, plus others who, judging by the way they have started, have come into this level well-prepared and ready to face the challenges head-on.

"Every week it's a tricky fixture regardless of who you are up against, but I certainly relish this kind of challenge.

"The last two seasons have seen us fall just short of reaching the play-offs, so our aim this time is to improve on that and get into that top six.

"I want to be able to play as many games as I can



Image | Steve Evans

Halesowen Town are seeking a response on Saturday

and perform to the level that I know I am capable of to help the team achieve its objectives. I want to be able to help those around me and play my part in helping to make us a better team."

As a former Halesowen Town player, Hawker has extra reason to look forward to Saturday's FA Cup clash.

"It's an enjoyable competition to be involved in," he added. "Every team involved at the weekend will be hoping that they can go on

a bit of a run, and we're no different. The rewards are there and whilst we know it will be a tricky first hurdle, we go into it with plenty of confidence and belief.

"It's got the extra edge for me having previously played for Halesowen and I am looking forward to getting out there and building on our last performance."

## THE REST OF THE EMIRATES FA CUP ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL CLUBS

**Home advantage is with AFC Sudbury as they take on Mildenhall Town, whilst two Premier Central outfits slug it out at Alvechurch as they entertain a Barwell side who have had a solid start to the campaign following their summer reprieve from relegation.**

St. Ives Town test themselves against Premier South opponents as they go to Berkhamsted, whilst Bury Town head to Brightlingsea Regent. Another team with a tricky away assignment are Leiston, who travel to Cheshunt and Bromsgrove Sporting who go to Worcestershire neighbours, Evesham United, who were placed in the Premier South following their play-off final success at the end of last term.

Also facing an away draw is Stourbridge as they go to Hanley Town, whilst Harborough Town will be looking to make home advantage count as they take on Leek Town from the Northern Premier League Premier Division. Spalding United go to Ilkeston Town as Kettering Town face a stern test with a trip to Long Eaton United in what is sure to be a hard-fought encounter.

It will be a big occasion for Mangotsfield United as they welcome Banbury United, who are unbeaten in their opening five games of the season, albeit they have drawn three times. Needham Market host Tilbury, whilst Quorn have home advantage against Sherwood Colliery.

Two Premier Central sides go head-to-head at Real Bedford as they play host to a Bishop's Stortford side who have started the season in impressive fashion. Royston Town go to Redbridge looking to make progress as Redditch United face a home tie against Skegness Town and Stamford AFC welcome lower level opponents in Coventry Sphinx.

Finally, Worcester City, who have enjoyed some special FA Cup moments over the years, face a Chasetown outfit who also have some memorable moments to look back on over the years. This is what the FA Cup is all about and there is sure to be a large crowd at Sixways Stadium on Saturday.



The Stratford Town players applaud their fans following Monday's first win

Image | Granty, Stratford Town FC



## Featured Matches

### HARTPURY v WILLAND ROVERS

### MALVERN TOWN v MELKSHAM TOWN

**There are only two fixtures taking place in Division One South on Saturday due to the Emirates FA Cup first round qualifying.**

New-boys, Hartpury, will be looking to extend their two-game unbeaten run when they host Willand Rovers.

Having secured their first-ever Step 4 victory with a 3-1 triumph over Bristol Manor Farm, they followed it up on Monday with a dramatic 2-2 draw with local rivals, Malvern Town, in a game which saw them turn a 1-0 deficit into a 2-1 lead thanks to a last minute goal only for their opponents to level matters deep into stoppage time.

Skipper, Billy Osborn, was able to open his scoring account for the season in the game but admitted that he had mixed emotions at the end.

"The first half we did really well to stay in the game," he admitted. "We came under a lot of pressure and we know that our standards are much better than that.

"But we were able to weather the storm and then I managed to grabbed an equaliser on the break.

"We were able to sort a few things out at half-time and we looked a much better team after the break, particularly towards the end.

"It was mixed emotions at the end as we conceded so late. We felt let-down by some of the decisions, but at the same time we know that we have to be able to deal with certain situations better and be more clinical going forward so we can get the points we deserve.

"We felt that we started this game too slowly; we weren't aggressive enough early on but managed to get a grip on the game as it went on.



Hartpury huddle

"There are lots of things that we need to work on; we're new to this level so we're learning all of the time. That said, you can clearly see things building with each new game.

"Make no mistake, Malvern Town are a good side who made the play-off final last season and are expected to be right up there again this time around, so for us to be disappointed with only taking a point, shows how far we have come and is a good sign.

"From a personal point of view, it was nice to finally open my scoring account. My goal was something that we had worked on in training, so hopefully more will follow now.

"It's all about building and learning. The games will come thick and fast; our fitness levels are good and we're looking forward to each new challenge that comes our way, starting on Saturday when we face Willand Rovers."

The Devon outfit arrive still searching for their first victory of the season after two draws and two defeats in their opening four League games.

Manager, David Steele, had bemoaned their Jekyll & Hyde display in Monday's 2-2 home draw with Falmouth Town.

"We've pulled together a group of players who should be doing much better than they current are," he admitted. "Our first half performance on Monday shows exactly why I am concerned, but then after the break we were able to display what we are capable of.

"The performance levels between each half were night and day. We need to be able to what we did after the break throughout the full 90 minutes.

"We've spoken about it this week and now is the time to start putting the words into action. Hopefully the fact that we were able to get a point out of Monday's game will see us turn a corner and we can get that elusive first win.

"We will be up against well-drilled, fit and young opponents on Saturday. For the first time this season, I will have a squad to choose from with a number of players returning, so there are players who will miss out, which is where you want to be as a manager.

"After our second half display, we go there in good spirits, hoping to pick up where we left off."

Saturday's other game sees Malvern Town welcome Melksham Town to the HDANYWHERE Community Stadium.

The Hillsiders enjoyed a productive Bank Holiday weekend where they became the first team to topple Shaftesbury before bringing home a point from the Hartpury heat to leave them second in the embryonic League table, with ten points from their opening four games.

"Looking back at the busy Bank Holiday weekend, it proved to be a good one for us in the end," manager, Lee Hooper, told us. "Last Saturday saw us lock horns with a strong Shaftesbury outfit who arrived here unbeaten and are sure to be right up there fighting for the play-offs this season.

"Having fallen behind, we showed tremendous determination and resolve to turn the scoreline around to get the victory with a late winner coming from a well-worked corner, which was pleasing to see come off.

"We knew that going to Hartpury on Monday would be tough, for many reasons but especially with it coming just 48 hours after such a hard-fought and demanding display against Shaftesbury, whilst our hosts were without a game. In fact, we had played three times since Hartpury last had a game, so it meant that we needed to take the game to them early.

"In what were extremely hot conditions, we did this but failed to take our chances and make the most of the possession we had. We were hit on the break to concede an equaliser going into the half-time interval and at that stage, we knew the second period would be tough as our tired legs would start to tell.

"There were chances for both teams and penalty shouts, with the game finely balanced. It could have gone either way but our resolve was broken in the final minute when we fell behind. But, showing the kind of character and resilience that we have in abundance here, we managed to find an equaliser in the 96th minute from another set-piece.

"It was our never-say-die attitude which saw us pick up a good point in the end and had we been offered four points from the two games at the start of the weekend, we would have snapped it up, particularly given the circumstances.

"Now we get ready to face opponents who I expect to be in amongst the leading pack this season."

Meanwhile Melksham Town head for the hills on the back of their first League defeat of the season, a 3-2 reverse at Larkhall Athletic on Monday.

"We started the game well enough," stated manager, Mark Collier. "We were looking a real threat going forward and asking plenty of questions, but ended up falling behind.

## THE REST OF THE EMIRATES FA CUP ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH CLUBS

**Unbeaten Bishops Cleeve will have their record tested when they host Premier South club, Wimborne Town. Also at home to opponents from the Premier South are Didcot Town, who will be looking to kick-start their campaign as they take on Poole Town.**

Two of our clubs go head-to-head at Falmouth Town as the Cornish outfit welcome a resurgent Brixham AFC. There's an away trip for Frome Town as they head down to Plymouth Parkway,



Melksham Town will be hoping to be jumping for joy on Saturday

"What I did like was our reaction to the set-back; we got ourselves quickly back on the front-foot in our search for a way back into the game.

"We showed good movement, got our front three closer and it saw us turn the scoreline around to go 2-1 up through being proactive rather than reactive.

"To be fair, I expected us to continue in a similar vein after the break, despite coming up against the wind, but we didn't get close to anyone and failed to look a threat.

"We went on to concede two really poor goals and I was disappointed with us as a collective. We showed the kind of soft underbelly which affected us last season.

"We have to be able to manage games better; there is lots to work on, our mind set has to be better and there's plenty of thinking to do ahead of Saturday's game against what I expect to be big, strong and physical opponents.

"I expect Malvern Town to be right up there again this season, so we know that we will have to be a whole lot better than we were on Monday if we are to take anything from the game."

whilst another couple of all Division One South encounters sees Shaftesbury and Exmouth Town battle it out and Tavistock AFC host Swindon Supermarine.

Westbury United have home advantage for the visit of last season's title winners, Yate Town, as Winchester City welcome Fareham Town in what is sure to be a thrilling afternoon of Emirates FA Cup action for our member clubs.



# PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

## Featured Matches

### AFC DUNSTABLE v MK IRISH

### WELWYN GARDEN CITY v BIGGLESWADE FC

Once more, there are only two fixtures taking place in Division One Central on Saturday due to the Emirates FA Cup first round qualifying.

Two teams who are licking their wounds following disappointing defeats in their last outings go head-to-head as AFC Dunstable, 5-2 losers at Enfield on Monday, look to respond in the right way against an MK Irish outfit who suffered their fourth successive set-back at the hands of Leighton Town, falling to a late goal following a spirited display.

AFC Dunstable manager, James Townsend, knows that there will be plenty of competition in Division One Central this season as he looks to guide his young team onto the next step having finished just below halfway last term.

"With the likes of Hitchin Town and Biggleswade Town coming into the League it will make it even stronger, whilst there will be clubs with big budgets who will also be pushing hard and I expect Leighton Town to be up right up there too," he told us. "That said, we're being bold this season too and our target is promotion.

"A lot of hard work on the training pitch is required to be able

to do that, but I believe in the squad we have here. Last season was a real learning curve for our young players but we're more experienced and better physically this time around.

"We're desperate to do well and we're really looking forward to taking on the challenge of the season.

"There will be ups and downs, we know that, particularly with such a young group, but we're fully focussed on the task in hand and have the bit between our teeth.

"It was our first defeat of the season on Monday and now I will be looking at how we respond to that on Saturday against opponents who have found the early going tough following promotion at the end of last season."

For MK Irish, Monday's single-goal set-back at the hands of much-fancied opponents was their fourth straight defeat of the season as they look to adjust to the demands of this level following promotion from Step 5 at the end of last term.

"The performance was there on Monday," said manager, Terry Shrieves. "Our work-rate and quality was much better and we created chances. Had one or two things gone in our favour we could have come away with a result to show for our efforts.

"In each of our League games so far we've been in it; we've suffered from conceding late goals and it was a similar story at Leighton Town.

"We've got lads in the team who have come up from Step 7 and it does take time to adjust but football is unforgiving and it doesn't necessarily give you the time that is needed. What you have to do is roll your sleeves up, work extra hard and get on with it.

"When you're searching for points, it's the little things that don't tend to go for you. We need a spark at the moment to get us going, but we know that if we perform as we did on Monday, it will come sooner rather than later.

"On Saturday we come up against an established side at this level. It will be a tough game of football and we're looking forward to the challenge ahead. We have to prove that we deserve to be here, and I am sure that we will.

"What you put in to football, you get out of it."

Two teams who are amongst the early front-runners battle it out as Welwyn Garden City as they host early leaders, Biggleswade FC.

The home side have won three of their four League outings so far, including a hard-fought 1-0 triumph over London Lions on Monday, whilst the visitors dropped their first points of the season following a goalless draw at neighbours, Biggleswade Town.

Welwyn Garden City boss, Marc Weatherstone, said: "We've only played four games and I'm not going to get carried away, but we've played four games and won three of them.



James Townsend

Image | AFC Dunstable



Image | Biggleswade FC

Biggleswade FC will be hoping to strengthen their position at the top

"That's what I call a good start. You know, if you win three games out of every four, you'll be right in there.

"It's important to get a good start and I use the word confidence again, it breeds confidence and winning becomes a habit.

"It doesn't matter how the wins come, if you find a way it breeds a habit in your club.

"It'll be nice to look at the table and see us in third, but I need to see that in March and April.

"Against London Lions, I always felt confident with the quality we've got in the team. We weren't good but we got the three points.

"We huffed and puffed throughout the game and did create some chances and did get into the final third quite comfortably.

"We didn't test their keeper as much but I'm confident it will come and I'm confident we'll go to a team and really punish them, but at the minute, it's not clicking.

"But 1-0 or 5-0, it all equals three points and two clean sheets over the weekend too. I'll take that all day long. I want hunger from the boys to keep going, I want winners."

Playing his part in Biggleswade FC's solid start is Sonny oughlin-Brown.

"It's been a good start, but that's all it is; a start," he told us. "We know that we've got more to give and Saturday's game is going to really test us, as did the trip to Biggleswade Town in our last game.

"This club is definitely moving forward. I can see that even though I haven't been here for anywhere near as long as some of the other lads.

"I can see why they have stayed loyal for so long, playing for the Gaffers and in front of these fans is fantastic and I am thoroughly enjoying it.

"We've had some tough games already, so to still be unbeaten is testament to how well everyone has done. Hopefully we can carry this on at the weekend.

"The League this year is very competitive and there's lots of local games that I'm excited to be involved in.

"We definitely need to be aiming for at least the play-offs this season. Last year we were guilty of dropping points in important games, so we need to learn from that and hopefully come April, we will still be up there right in the mix."

## THE REST OF THE EMIRATES FA CUP ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL CLUBS

Heading on their travels are Barton Rovers who take on Billericay Town, also facing a road trip are Hertford Town who go to Bowers & Pitsea. High-flying Leighton Town will be given a good test at Brentwood Town, whilst Marlow head to Chatham Town.

Looking to kick-start their season are Thame United who go to Chertsey Town of the Premier South, whilst Enfield are at home to Ilford. There's an intriguing match-up at Flackwell Heath as they do battle with Lewes and Hitchin Town go to Potters Bar Town.



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