



► Jamie Elliott

RUGBY THE BEDFORD CONNECTION

“Offence wins you matches; defence wins you championships.” This statement was made by one of the most renowned sporting icons of our time, Michael Jordan, in 1998 after Chicago Bulls completed their second ‘three-peat’ in America’s National Basketball Association. It may not have seen the light of day had it not been for ‘The Last Dance’, Netflix’s acclaimed behind-the-scenes documentary which went viral during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

Nearly 4,000 miles away from Chicago’s ‘United Center’, never a truer word spoken as our own Bedford School sporting dynasty recalls the defensive solidity which has underpinned its rugby history in the 151 years since contesting a first fixture. In that time, the school 1st XV can claim 33 unbeaten school seasons, five of which have brought a perfect record, while in the early decades of the sport pre-1900, no schoolboy crossed our line for five successive rugby terms.

The school is very proud that so many Old Bedfordians have gone on to achieve international honours - 22 full internationals across the home nations, four British & Irish Lions and 32 Barbarians.

BEDFORD SCHOOL RUGBY INTERNATIONALS

ENGLAND	Robert Henderson (1872-73)
	Percy Christopherson (1882-85)
	Philip Jacob (1884-94)
	Francis Palmer (1891-96)
	Charles Hammond (1897-98)
	Ernest Chambers (1897-1901)
	Freddie Brooks (1897-1902)
	Jumbo Milton (1893-1903)
	Cecil Milton (1896-1903)
	Arthur Blakiston (1901-03)
	Henry Vassall (1898-1906)
	Stanley Harris (1906-10)
	Gilbert Cook (1922-29)
	Leo Oakley (1932-43)
	Budge Rogers (1949-57)
Martin Bayfield (1980-85)	
Andy Gomarsall (1988-93)	
George Furbank (2013-15)	
IRELAND	Basil Maclear (1893-99)
	Basil McFarland (1911-16)
WALES	Bobby Jones (1916-19)
SCOTLAND	David Callam (1991-2001)



James Hinkins

In addition to this, there are dozens of OBs who have gone on to play for the 1st XV at the town's premier sporting club, Bedford Blues.

The most iconic of Bedfordians has achieved all those accolades, being none other than "rugby's greatest gentleman", Budge Rogers. The first English player to be honoured by the Queen for services to the game, Budge remains the record appearance holder for Bedford Blues, playing 485 matches, most of which as captain, leading the side to RFU Club Competition glory in 1975 at Twickenham.

Bedford's coach that day at rugby HQ was another local legend, Pat Briggs, who taught at Bedford School for 22 years, was a pillar of the Blues team for much of that time and whose son, Simon (77-82) is currently the Chairman of the Bedford School Association (BSA) Committee. The school lost just twice in 18 matches in the early 80s.

Through this period players of the calibre of Martin Bayfield and Ian Peck (65-76), another two to head to Goldington Road, were nurtured. Ian is equally renowned for his abilities with a cricket bat, representing Bedfordshire then Northamptonshire in First Class County Cricket, as well as playing for the Blues in the mid-1980s. He also spent time on the teaching staff at the school. Martin, is the last player born and bred in Bedford to represent England, and was a serving police officer during his stint at Bedford, before going on to represent his country and the Lions. More recently, he has acted as a body-double for Robbie Coltrane's Hagrid character in the Harry Potter franchise, while becoming one of the most high-profile rugby reporters on the circuit, particularly at BT Sport.

Someone else gaining prominence in rugby broadcasting is OB and current teacher at Bedford, Sam Roberts (85-96). One of the most recognised voices associated with the game, Sam continues to lead the Public Announcements at Goldington Road while juggling his extra-curricular activities.

Further links to Bedford Blues on our current teaching roster include Simon Lincoln (94-96) and James Hinkins. Until recently, former Blues captain Matt Allen, part of the 2005 Powergen Shield winning side – Blues' last trophy – was also teaching at the school. Formerly in his career, Matt won club rugby's greatest prize, the European Heineken Cup with Northampton Saints.

James Hinkins, another of the 2005 Bedford crop to lift the trophy at Twickenham, became Director of Rugby at the school in 2016, making the Champions Trophy final in his



Martin Bayfield



Budge Rogers

first campaign, only to lose out to a strong Tonbridge XV. Since then, the squad have also made the semi-finals of the National Sevens, following a highly impressive run through the tournament, and are now returning to normality post COVID.

That run in the 2016 Champions Trophy came under the direction of James and the captaincy of former Head Boy, Fraser Dingwall (13-17) who has become a regular at Premiership giants, Northampton Saints and scored against the Blues in this year's pre-season encounter.

Fraser's Northampton teammate, George Furbank, is the most recent Old Bedfordian to receive England honours and is another emerging stalwart of the current Northampton side which are riding high in England's topflight. George's grandfather, Richard Furbank (54-64), was a former captain of the Blues in the post war years, making 249 appearances.

There are three Old Bedfordians in Blues' top 20 appearance holders, with Jack Smith (49-54) joining Budge and Richard Furbank Snr at the top of the honours board at Goldington Road. There is a Smith family connection to both the school and the rugby club, with Jack the most prominent, having made 343 appearances, whilst his brother, Peter (1949-54), and son, Simon (77-82), also played for the Blues.

While the more recent school starlets, Fraser Dingwall and George Furbank, never passed through Goldington Road as part of their 'rugby education', it is likely that more Old Bedfordians will star in the future thanks to the Blues' Strategic Partnership with Northampton Saints, announced in June 2020. This includes the sharing of multiple resources such as some of

1905 1st XV - Henry Vassall front right



Basil Maclear



Charles Hammond



◀ Saints' brightest young talent heading across here on dual registration. Once he has recovered from injury, the very promising OB, Kayde Sylvester (12-20), will feature in this arrangement and run out at Goldington Road!

Jamie Elliott (03-10), another high-profile Old Bedfordian, has recently signed up with the Blues for this season following a four-year stint in Italy with United Rugby Championship outfit, Zebre.

Jamie was in the school 1st XV side which lost just once during the 2008 and 2009 seasons and went on to sign for Northampton Saints, making over 150 appearances for the club and scoring one of the most renowned tries in Premiership history, against Gloucester in 2013. The Blues are now delighted to have him on board. Let's not forget that Jamie's

father, Rex (58-69), also represented the 1st XV during his time at the school.

Another notable OB and Bedford Blue is influential scrum-half Andy Gomarsall (88-93), formerly a Blues captain in the early 2000s and member of the England World Cup winning squad in 2003 and, later, England squad which reached the final of the 2007 Rugby World Cup.



Leo Oakley

Going much further back is the story of the fleet-footed Freddie Brooks (1897-1902), a wing three-quarter who in 1906 became Blues' second ever international when scoring the only try for England in the drawn test against South Africa at Crystal Palace. An outstanding athlete, Freddie was schools champion in the 100m, 110m hurdles, plus the long jump and high jump. He also played cricket for Bedfordshire - a true all-rounder!

There's no doubt of the integral and historic link between Bedford School and Bedford Blues; it is reassuring to know the pathway is continuing today and will live on in the future. ■

Ryan Robinson, Media Manager, Bedford Blues



There can be no doubt that this school and the Blues are two major institutions that are woven into the fabric of the town, they have enjoyed a fantastic relationship throughout their histories and this bond will continue to thrive going forward.

**David Owen –
Bedford School Governor and Board
Director at Bedford Blues**

