



# v QUORN



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**United Counties League Premier Division South**  
Winners 2023

**Midland Alliance League Cup**  
Winners 2010

**Midland Combination Premier Division**  
Champions 2007  
Runners-up 1996, 2002, 2005, 2006

**Midland Combination Challenge Cup**  
Finalists 1999  
Winners 2002, 2005

**Coventry Evening Telegraph Cup**  
Winners 1966, 2005, 2006

**Coventry Charity Cup**  
Winners 2007

**BCFA Midweek Floodlit Cup**  
Winners 2007

**Tony Allden Cup**  
Winners 2007

**FA Vase**  
Quarter Finalists 2008

## OTHER HONOURS

**United Counties League Programme of the Year**  
Winners 2023

**Midland Alliance Programme of the Year**  
Winners 2008  
Runners-up 2009

**Midland Combination Programme of the Year**  
Runners-up 2005  
Winners 2006, 2007

**Midland Combination Hospitality Award**  
Winners 2006 (Division 3)  
Winners 2007 (Division 2)



## CLUB OFFICIALS

Chairman: Daniel Cahill  
Vice-Chairman: Joseph Fletcher  
Finance Officer: Neil Buswell  
Club Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Matchday Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Youth Secretary: Sharon Taylor  
Pitch Allocator: Dave Bull  
Welfare Officer: Joanne Bull  
Ticket Manager: Mandy Seddon  
Programme Editor: Chris Nee

### FIRST TEAM STAFF

Joint Manager: Shaun Thomas  
Joint Manager: John Woodward  
First Team Coach: Nigel Starkey  
First Team Coach: Tom Cross  
First Team Coach: Dan Gibson  
Goalkeeping Coach: Damian Morgan  
Goalkeeping Coach: Michael Taylor  
First Team Physio: Kirk Holland  
Kit Manager: Paul Seddon  
Chief Scout: Jim McClean

### GROUNDS TEAM

Paul Wright, Martin Sutton

### MEDIA TEAM

Chris Nee  
Liam Cook

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Marcus Robinson  
Stuart Guest

### MATCHDAY HOSPITALITY

Leanne Talbot & Donna Crouch

### MATCHDAY VOLUNTEERS

Martin Sutton, Dave Bull, Alan Townsend

### Coventry Sphinx Football Club

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena, Sphinx Drive, Coventry, CV3 1WA  
024 7645 1361

Coventry Sphinx Football Club is a non-for-profit organisation



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## Upcoming fixtures

AWAY



### Gresley Rovers v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Tuesday 15th August 2023 | 7.45pm

The Moat Ground

Moat Street, Church Gresley, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 9RE

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Sporting Khalsa

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Tuesday 22nd August 2023 | 7.45pm

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena

Sphinx Drive

AWAY



### Spalding United v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Saturday 26th August 2023 | 3.00pm

Sir Halley Stewart Field

Winfrey Avenue, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1DA

HOME



### Coventry Sphinx v Bedworth United

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Monday 28th August 2023 | 3.00pm

Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena

Sphinx Drive

AWAY



### Sutton Coldfield Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands

Saturday 2nd September 2023 | 3.00pm

Central Ground

Coles Lane, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1NL

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Welcome back to the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena for the start of another league season. This time it's a little bit different.

When we last played a competitive match here it ended up being the greatest day in the long history of Coventry Sphinx. A 7-0 win over Eynesbury Rovers ensured that the party started early as John Woodward and Shaun Thomas led us to an historic league title.

As a result, today's match against Quorn is our first in the eighth tier of English football. We are now proud members of the Pitching In Northern Premier League. We'll be competing in Division One Midlands, to be precise, and you'll already have noticed a few changes as a consequence.

It's an exciting challenge for us and for Quorn, too, and we're delighted to welcome the visiting supporters, players, management and officials to Sphinx Drive this afternoon.

I'd also like to extend a personal welcome to the new faces in our playing squad. You've all joined a team that's developing a habit of making history.

We've been able to bring in a number of quality additions over the summer, as well as retaining the vast majority of our squad from last year, and it was notable in a recent friendly that John and Shaun were able to make a raft of substitutions with no effect on the quality of the side.

It's been a little while so there are some important new dates for your diary. On Saturday 9th September we'll visit Farley Way to play Quorn once more in our first game in the Isuzu FA Trophy.

In the league, the August Bank Holiday on Monday 28th brings Bedworth United to Sphinx Drive,

before which we play Gresley Rovers away (on Tuesday), Sporting Khalsa at home (22nd) and Spalding United away (26th).

The return fixture against Bedworth United takes place at The Oval on New Year's Day. Our Boxing Day fixture this year is a home game against Lye Town. We end the season away at Hinckley LR after a final home game against Boldmere St Michaels on Saturday 20th April.

Micky Bell's youth team will be competing in the Midland Floodlit Youth League Southern Premier Division again this season. Their first fixture is here against Solihull Moors on Thursday 17th August. You can watch the next generation for £3 (£1 for kids aged 15 and under).

Coventry Sphinx Ladies also won the league in 2022/23. As a result, they've been promoted to the Premier Division of the West Midlands Regional Women's Football League.

The ladies team play their home matches at the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena and their first is against Solihull Sporting on Sunday 3rd September.

Back to today. When I think about what these boys achieved last season, about the level they've brought us to, I want to say I can't believe it. But I can. I knew we were going to win the league months before we did because I had such faith in the players that I simply couldn't imagine anything else.

They earned that trust. They're an incredible group. Whenever they fall short, they dig a little deeper and come out swinging. After last week's FA Cup exit I trust them totally to put it right.

We've never been here before. We're right here with you, boys. Welcome to 2023/24. Living history.

**Chris Nee**  
Programme Editor



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# OUR HISTORY

The history of Coventry Sphinx began in 1946. Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft FC had been highly successful in the city before and during the Second World War and changed their name to Sphinx FC.

AWA's legacy was replicated by the new club. Sphinx won a number of league and cup competitions throughout the 1950s and 1960s before playing a major role in the formation of the Coventry Alliance and continuing to win trophies in the following decades.

Coventry underwent significant socioeconomic change in the 1990s. The recession led to the closure of factories in the city and surrounding areas, which in turn led to the dissolution of many of Coventry's football clubs. Sphinx needed a new challenge and joined the Midland Combination Football League in 1993.

In our first season in the Midland Combination we were promoted from Division 2 and reached the semi-finals of the Birmingham Sunday Vase. A second consecutive promotion followed thanks to a second-placed finish in Division 1 the next season.

With promotion to the top division of the Midland Combination secured it was decided that the club should be linked more closely to our city. We became Coventry Sphinx and the first match under our new name was against a Coventry City XI at our home ground.

Throughout its history, our club has been served by countless loyal and hard-working local people who've contributed enormously to Coventry Sphinx on and off the field. Through their dedication we

have achieved some unbeatable highs. There have also been times of great tragedy.

In November 2001, Sphinx manager Willie Knibbs was killed in a car accident on the way home from a cup match at Meir KA. Willie was a former Sphinx player in his second spell as manager. His death was a terrible loss to our club and to local football in Coventry.

After a painful season, Sphinx went on to win the Midland Combination Challenge Cup and it was renamed the Willie Knibbs Cup as a mark of respect. Our main stand is also named in Willie's honour.

Sphinx became one of the leading teams in the Midland Combination Premier League, finishing as runners-up in our first season and again in both 2005 and 2006. We reached the final of the Endsleigh Challenge Cup on three occasions, losing to Alveston at Villa Park in 1999 but beating Coventry Marconi in 2003 and Feckenham in 2005.

We also won the Coventry Evening Telegraph Cup in successive seasons, making Sphinx the last winners of the competition at Highfield Road and the first at the Ricoh Arena.

Although first team success is a driving force, the heartbeat of our club is the thriving junior section. Formed in 1997, it started with just three teams and has grown ever since. There are now hundreds of players representing Coventry Sphinx and we were the first club in Coventry to achieve the FA Charter.

Our youth team started competing in the Midland Floodlit Youth League in 2003 and one of the

biggest successes to date came in the 2014/15 season, when they won the double after suffering only one league defeat and beating Stourbridge 3-0 in the Birmingham County FA Midweek Floodlit Youth Cup.

Under manager Paul Charnley, Coventry Sphinx's men's first team completed a remarkable treble achievement in May 2007.

In addition to finally becoming champions of the Midland Football Combination – achieving promotion to the Midland Football Alliance in the process – Sphinx won the Coventry Charity Cup and the BCFA Midland Floodlit Cup.

The 2007/08 season saw Sphinx enjoy our best ever run in the FA Vase, reaching the quarter-final for the very first time and losing controversially to Kirkham & Wesham, the eventual Wembley winners, in a replay at Sphinx Drive.

We made a run to the semi-finals of the League Cup in the same season and went on to win the Midland Alliance Polymac League Cup by beating Westfields in the final in 2009/10.

In 2014/15 the club was honoured to become a founder member of the Midland Football League Premier Division. After a top ten finish under Stuart Dutton, Lee Knibbs took over as manager in the autumn of 2017.

Lee is the son of Willie Knibbs and returned to the club after an earlier spell as assistant manager to Danny McSheffrey.

He guided Sphinx to some of our most memorable results of the decade before deciding to step aside in November 2019.

Knibbs was succeeded by his assistants, John Woodward and Shaun Thomas, who became the club's joint managers and ended the truncated 2019/20 season on a long unbeaten run, the foundation of Sphinx's greatest achievement to come.

Sphinx made a sideways move as part of FA restructuring ahead of the 2021/22 season, competing in a newly formed Premier Division South in the United Counties League.

In our first season we finished in fourth place, losing only twice in the second half of the season, and enjoyed a long run in the FA Vase, narrowly missing out on another quarter-final.

The following season saw Sphinx lose on penalties again in the same round of the FA Vase but 2022/23 was the best season in our history.

In the space of one week in April, our club acquired the freehold to the Sphinx Drive ground for the very first time and secured the United Counties League Premier Division South title with a 7-0 win against Eynesbury Rovers.

Sphinx won all of the last eleven league matches to close a big gap at the top and become champions. We scored 106 goals and ended the season three points clear of runners-up Rugby Town to confirm promotion to the Northern Premier League Midlands Division. 2023/24 is our first ever season at Step 4.

Football never stands still. Local football in Coventry has declined over the years, so to be playing at our highest ever level after more than seventy years is an achievement of which the players, officials and supporters of our club can be proud.

The structure in place at senior, youth and junior levels for both men and women promises a bright future for Coventry Sphinx as we work towards the progress Willie Knibbs' memory deserves.



# OLD FOES AND NEW FRIENDS

Today is a momentous day for our football club. The players selected by John Woodward and Shaun Thomas against Quorn this afternoon will make history as the first to represent Coventry Sphinx in the eighth tier of the English game.

Last season was truly special. It was magical. In winning the United Counties League Premier Division South, the Sphinx team made themselves legends. It was a season we'll never forget and nor should we. But we didn't reach our highest ever level without looking forwards and that future we wanted begins today.

This is Sphinx's first fixture at Step Four and our first game in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands. Our visitors, Quorn, are among more than a few known opponents in our new division.

We met many times in the Midland Football League before our sideways move into the UCL and we'll be playing against them again on another historic day — the start of the Isuzu FA Trophy campaign — in less than a month.

The Midlands division is brimming with old rivals from our days in the MFL. Boldmere St Michaels, Coleshill Town, Lye Town, Sporting Khalsa and Walsall Wood have all visited Sphinx Drive from other parts of the West Midlands in the last five years. Gresley Rovers and Shepshed Dynamo, like Quorn, made the journey over from the East Midlands for MFL fixtures.

We played Rugby Town twice in our title-winning second season in the UCL and will renew acquaintances with them in 2023/24 along with Harborough Town and Hinckley LR, the teams who finished above Sphinx and Rugby to win promotion the season before last.

We've faced Anstey Nomads, Bedworth United and Sutton Coldfield Town in cup competitions — and Loughborough Dynamo in a friendly — in recent seasons.

There's a certain familiarity to much of the division even as we embark upon a whole new adventure but the teams we'll come up against over the next eight months will have changed since the last time we met — even Rugby, Harborough, Hinckley LR and Bedworth, who we played in 2022/23 or the season before, have made moves in the meantime.

Our time in the MFL and UCL was full of highs and lows. There were good days and bad. Such is football. Sphinx enjoyed some fantastic battles with lots of opponents in the latter years and the teams we've rejoined in 2023/24 would be right up near the top of the list.

There are new memories to make with them. New stories to tell. And there are even fresher challenges ahead too.

The NPL Midlands pits Sphinx against four teams we know rather less well and those matches, the away trips especially, are as exciting as any.

An early League Cup tie took us to the home of Spalding United last season, but it was on a Sunday to take on tenants Pinchbeck United.

AFC Rushden & Diamonds, Cambridge City and Corby Town also lie in wait. These are big non-league names but not teams we'll fear. Regardless of what's to come, today marks the start of a season to remember. We're looking forward to locking horns with our old foes and new friends between now and April.

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Photos by Stuart Guest and Marcus Robinson







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# MARCH OF THE GUESTIES

On Sunday 17th September, our vice-captain Louis Guest and his dad, Stuart, will be walking from Wembley Stadium to Wycombe Wanderers FC in order to raise money for Prostate Cancer UK. They're participating in **Jeff Stelling's Football March 2023**, which aims to raise money to fund better tests and treatments to save and improve the lives of men affected by prostate cancer.

stadium to raise money for a genuinely excellent cause that we can all get behind.

If you are in a position to make a donation, you can do so at [justgiving.com/fundraising/stuart-guest2](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stuart-guest2)

Prostate cancer has impacted countless lives in non-league football and Prostate Cancer UK is a charity that's close to Stuart's heart. The Guesties have our full support as they walk a marathon from the national



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# MEET THE SQUAD

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	<b>Harvey Billing</b>	Former Sphinx youth team captain who returned to the club after spells with Stratford Town and Easington Sports.			<b>Sam Jackson</b>	Winger who made a welcome return to Sphinx in early 2023 and made an instant impact wide on the right.	Sponsored by <b>JOHN MELLOR</b>
	<b>James Bryson</b>	Strong and steady central defender with a knack for a goal. A crucial part of the title-winning Sphinx team in 2022/23.	Sponsored by <b>MANDY SEDDON</b>		<b>Max Johnson</b>	Classy former Bedworth United midfielder who debuted for Sphinx in October 2022 and went on to claim a league winner's medal.	
	<b>Kyle Carey</b>	Incisive and creative attacker who returned to Sphinx in March 2023 to help secure the league title.			<b>Callum Martin</b>	Pacy former Coventry City junior full back who loves a tackle and causes opponents problems in the attacking third.	
	<b>Antonio Cristofaro</b>	Skilful former Walsall youth midfielder with dribbling ability, sharp creative instincts and an eye for goal.	Sponsorship available		<b>Dylan Parker</b>	Dangerous forward player who signed for Sphinx in November 2022 and has been a consistent scorer ever since.	Sponsored by <b>DANNIE CAHILL</b>
	<b>Jack Downes</b>	Versatile, battling midfielder with a tremendous engine. Outstanding since returning to Sphinx Drive and a league winner in 2022/23.			<b>Dawid Peplinski</b>	Future Pro Academy scholar and former Sphinx youth central defender who joined the first team ranks after playing Step 5 football in 2022/23.	
	<b>Luke Downes</b>	Creative midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2021 after countless impressive performances here as a youngster.			<b>Leigh Phillips</b>	Experienced wide player who returned to Sphinx ahead of 2023/24 after a successful career in armed forces football.	
	<b>Jamie Draper</b>	Defender who emerged from the Sphinx youth team and has become a regular starter in our best ever team.			<b>Joe Pursey</b>	Sturdy defender who came in late in 2022/23 and had an instant impact in Sphinx's title quest.	Sponsored by <b>LENA MELLOR</b>
	<b>Sam Ellis</b>	Entertaining attacking midfielder who joined Sphinx after spells with Sutton Coldfield Town and Hinckley in 2022/23.			<b>Kurtis Selley-Haywood</b>	A key member of the coaching set-up at Sphinx and a goalkeeper with an exceptional record when called upon.	Sponsorship available
	<b>Keelan Fallows</b>	Talented goalkeeper who joined from Tamworth at the start of Sphinx's first season in the eighth tier of English football.			<b>Matthew Shipman</b>	Physical and mobile striker who led the line in the UCL Premier Division South title season after signing from Long Buckby in 2021/22.	Sponsored by <b>BF ESSENTIALS 07927 649288</b>
	<b>Louis Guest</b>	A former Sphinx junior and now a leader in our squad, Guesty is a long-serving central defender and the club's vice captain.			<b>Callum Whiteside</b>	Versatile defensive player who joined Sphinx at the start of 2022/23 and quickly became a reliable regular for John Woodward and Shaun Thomas.	
	<b>Jordan Hayward</b>	Former Long Buckby wide player who scored on his debut in August 2022 and went on to win the UCL Premier Division South in his first season.	Sponsored by <b>IAN AND PAULINE MCINTOSH</b>		<b>Callum Woodward</b>	Long-serving legendary club captain, a battling mainstay in the Sphinx midfield and a vital source of goals and creativity.	

## FIRST TEAM MANAGEMENT

John Woodward	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Shaun Thomas	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Nigel Starkey	First Team Coach	Sponsorship available
Tom Cross	First Team Coach	Sponsorship available
Dan Gibson	First Team Coach	Sponsorship available
Michael Taylor	Goalkeeping Coach	Sponsorship available
Damian Morgan	Goalkeeping Coach	Sponsorship available
Jim McClean	Chief Scout	Sponsorship available
Kirk Holland	First Team Physio	Sponsorship available
Paul Seddon	Kit Manager	Sponsored by CEFOVID UGANDA
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## STOURPORT SWIFTS 2 COVENTRY SPHINX 0

**Emirates FA Cup  
Extra Preliminary Round**  
Saturday 5th August 2023

Coventry Sphinx were eliminated from the Emirates FA Cup in the Extra Preliminary Round for the third consecutive season.

Two unanswered first-half goals were enough to take a strong Stourport Swifts team into the next round as Sphinx were beaten at Walshes Meadow in their first competitive match of the 2023/24.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas selected goalkeeper Keelan Fallows for his first debut and there were first appearances off the bench for Sam Ellis and Antonio Cristofaro.

With Callum Woodward injured, Louis Guest captained the team and was partnered by Callum Whiteside at the back. Joe Pursey and Jordan Hayward started at right back and left back respectively.



Chris Nee

Jack Downes and Luke Downes were joined in midfield by Max Johnson. Kyle Carey and Dylan Parker played off striker Matty Shipman.

Johnson's powerful shot was deflected wide in the second minute as Sphinx made a good start but the game turned on a dime in the fourth.

Fallows was adjudged to have handled the ball outside the box at the end of a mix-up in defence and the resulting free kick took the wind out of the visitors' sails.

Lee Chilton curled the ball into the bottom corner to give the Swifts an early lead.

Sphinx initially responded well but with little joy in attacking areas. The match was sparked into life by a poor challenge on Shipman after quarter of an hour and it was Stourport who best maintained focus. Whiteside was forced into a clearing header wide from a shot from the home side.



Chris Nee

Thomas and Woodward's team started to get a foot on the ball in the middle of the first half but were unable to trouble the hosts in their defensive third. In the 27th minute Johnson gave them something to think about again.

His free kick from distance was nicely struck and saved well by Stourport goalkeeper Jamie Emery. The referee awarded a goal kick.

As second goals go, Stourport's was frustratingly straightforward from a Sphinx point of view. A corner was delivered from the left and Aaron Birch was the most determined player in the box, rose highest, and powered his header past Fallows to make it 2-0 with ten minutes left in the first half.

Fallows made a good save with his feet five minutes later with Stourport looking comfortable and keeping possession. Sphinx ended the half with four yellow cards and a mountain to climb in rainy Worcestershire.

Sphinx's goalkeeper was the first to be called into action in the second half. Another early chance fell the way of the Swifts but was fired over before Sphinx, finally, briefly, found another gear.

Woodward and Thomas turned to the bench just after the hour, bringing Sam Jackson and debutant Ellis into midfield in place of Johnson and Luke Downes.

The substituted players can feel there were team-mates who might have been replaced instead of them but the changes did result in Sphinx looking a little sharper.



Chris Nee

In the 69th minute a terrific incisive run from the left by Hayward led to a half chance in front of Emery for the previously isolated Shipman. The striker was unable to snaffle the ball as it squirmed through to goalkeeper Emery.

Cristofaro came on for Whiteside to make his competitive debut for Sphinx with 15 minutes remaining.

Emery made a fabulous save from a Shipman snapshot after Guest's flick-on in the box but that was the sum total of the away team's chances.

With six minutes left a clear handball in the Stourport box went unpunished but the truth is any sort of comeback always looked unlikely.

Sphinx put in the effort in the last quarter of the match but made no headway.

They took far too long to get going and were deservedly beaten. Guest picked up a yellow card in stoppage time – Sphinx's fifth of the day – and the justifiable frustration of the team was evident.

Sphinx's recent record in the FA Cup leaves much to be desired and losing to Step Five opposition isn't how Woodward and Thomas wanted the season to begin.

Stourport rarely make it easy for anyone, however, and were good value for a two-goal win.

Sphinx now move on to a new challenge. Their first ever season at Step Four begins with a home fixture against old Midland Football League rivals Quorn at the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena.

A visit to Gresley Rovers in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands quickly follows. Improved performances will be a must.

### TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Jordan Hayward
- 4 Luke Downes ▼ Jackson (62)
- 5 Louis Guest @
- 6 Callum Whiteside ▼ Cristofaro (74)
- 7 Dylan Parker
- 8 Jack Downes
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Kyle Carey
- 11 Max Johnson ▼ Ellis (62)
- 12 Sam Ellis ▲ Johnson (62)
- 14 Sam Jackson ▲ L. Downes (62)
- 15 Dawid Peplinski
- 16 Antonio Cristofaro ▲ Whiteside (74)
- 17 Harvey Billing
- 18 Callum Martin
- 20 Kurtis Selley-Haywood

**SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH**  
**JORDAN HAYWARD**





2023/24 Season



Date	Opponents	Comp	H A	Res	Starting Eleven														Substitutes ( <i>not used in italics</i> )				
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17 / GK	18	19 / GK	
5 Aug	Stourport Swifts	FAC EP	A	2-0	L	Fallows	Pursey	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Parker	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Ellis	Jackson	<i>Peplinski</i>	<i>Cristofaro</i>	<i>Billing</i>	<i>Martin</i>	<i>Selley-Haywood</i>
12 Aug	Quorn	NPL M	H																				
15 Aug	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	A																				
22 Aug	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	H																				
26 Aug	Spalding United	NPL M	A																				
28 Aug	Bedworth United	NPL M	H																				
2 Sep	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	A																				
9 Sep	Quorn	FAT 1Q	A																				
16 Sep	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	H																				
30 Sep	Rugby Town	NPL M	A																				
7 Oct	Corby Town	NPL M	H																				
14 Oct	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	A																				
21 Oct	Coleshill Town	NPL M	H																				
28 Oct	Harborough Town	NPL M	A																				
4 Nov	Anstey Nomads	NPL M	H																				
11 Nov	Walsall Wood	NPL M	A																				
18 Nov	Hinckley LR	NPL M	H																				
25 Nov	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	A																				
2 Dec	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
9 Dec	Cambridge City	NPL M	A																				
16 Dec	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	H																				
23 Dec	Quorn	NPL M	A																				
26 Dec	Lye Town	NPL M	H																				
1 Jan	Bedworth United	NPL M	A																				
6 Jan	Spalding United	NPL M	H																				
13 Jan	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	A																				
20 Jan	Harborough Town	NPL M	H																				
27 Jan	Coleshill Town	NPL M	A																				
3 Feb	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	A																				
17 Feb	Rugby Town	NPL M	H																				
24 Feb	Corby Town	NPL M	A																				
2 Mar	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
16 Mar	Cambridge City	NPL M	H																				
23 Mar	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	A																				
30 Mar	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	H																				
1 Apr	Lye Town	NPL M	A																				
6 Apr	Walsall Wood	NPL M	H																				
13 Apr	Anstey Nomads	NPL M	A																				
20 Apr	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	H																				
27 Apr	Hinckley LR	NPL M	A																				





Sphinx enter the fray for the first time in 2023/24. (Photo: Marcus Robinson)



Kyle Carey in action against Stourport Swifts at Walshes Meadow. (Photo: Marcus Robinson)



# YOUTH TEAM FIXTURES

Thursday 17 August	19.45	H	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 31 August	19.45	H	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 7 September	19.45	H	Stourport Swifts	FA Youth Cup Preliminary Round
Thursday 14 September	19.45	H	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 18 September	19.45	A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 28 September	19.45	H	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 5 October	19.45	A	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 19 October	19.45	H	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 23 October	19.45	A	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division





## TODAY'S OPPONENTS

# QUORN

The first football club in Quorn was established in the early 1880s, with the current club founded in 1924 by attendees of the local Wesleyan Chapel and, accordingly, was named Quorn Methodists F.C., changing its name in 1952. In 1937 the club joined the Leicestershire Senior League.

Immediately after World War II they played in the Central Division, and then from 1948 in Division 2 after a league re-organisation.

Over the next fifty years the club moved up and down between the divisions on four separate occasions, finally cementing their place in the renamed Premier Division in the late 1990s, before claiming the league title and, with it, promotion to the Midland Alliance in 2001.

In 2003 the club was the only one at its level to sell a player to a Football League team, when Luke Varney moved to Crewe Alexandra for £50,000.

In the 2006/07 season they finished 3rd in the Midland Alliance and, due to the expansion of the Northern Premier League First Division into two regional divisions, were accepted into the Northern Premier League Division One South. In May 2007 the club received a £500,000 windfall after Luke Varney's £2,000,000 move from Crewe to Charlton Athletic.

In 2011 Quorn won the Westerby Cup for the first time with a 5-4 victory over Hinckley United at Walkers Stadium under the management of Lawrie Dudfield, but were relegated from the Northern Premier League Division One South during the same season.

John Folwell was appointed as their new manager in May 2013, joining from local rivals Barrow Town. He

resigned in January 2015 due to disagreements with the chairman. Two time former manager Dougie Keast agreed to take over until the end of the 2014-15 season.

Dougie Keast remained at the helm until December 2017, when former Hinckley AFC manager Carl Abbott was appointed, joining the club from Northern Premier Division Market Drayton Town. On Wednesday 8 May 2019 - Carl Abbott left Quorn AFC to join Evesham United FC.

Following The COVID-19 Outbreak - The 2019/2020 playing season was expunged. Quorn was in first place in the United Counties league (Step 5) when the football season closed Officially on 16 March 2020.

Former Burton Albion and Scunthorpe United Midfielder - Cleveland Taylor was appointed as 1st Team Manager on 1 May 2020 but left his position on 14th October 2021.

Richard Lavery, who had been Assistant Manager at Nuneaton Borough, took over with the club languishing at the wrong end of the table in the UCL Premier North.

Fortunes turned immediately, with the club recovering to finish in the top half of the table. The following season Lavery led the side to the playoffs in dramatic fashion, as an injury time winner in the final game of the season lifted the club in to second place.

There was still work to be done though and a long journey to the Essex coast saw Quorn triumph 5-0 away to Great Wakering Rovers in the inter-step playoff, catapulting the club back up to step four, the highest level the club have achieved to date.

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# Balancing supporter ethics and the business of football

The announcement that gambling sponsors will be withdrawn from Premier League shirt sponsorships in the future is, at best, a step in the right direction. It will have a knock-on effect without a doubt.

Either the next band of scrotes comes along to replace the money or it will have to come from elsewhere or nowhere.

When a professional club signs up with a new partner, generally for a front-of-shirt or sleeve sponsorship in the case of the Premier League, the supporters inevitably have an opinion.

There are some very sketchy outfits on outfits at the moment and there are more to come, with the exposure of their shonky practices by the supporters of one club ignored by the decision makers of another later on.

The supporters don't ignore it. Loads of them don't care but many do and will rightly oppose their club's choice – and it is a choice – to get into bed with scumbag businesses in scumbag industries.

It's obviously true that there are some supporters of a club who want their club to behave ethically in every way reasonable in an elite sport, and that there are some

supporters who desire and demand investment into the playing staff and facilities.

It's also true that there is a very large overlap between the two. In that overlap there exists a tension that can never really be resolved.

There's nothing complicated here. Supporters want success but success is a hungry beast. It must be fed lest it go and live next door. It craves sponsors and partners. Revenue. Income. It demands player scouting and recruitment, coaching, training facilities and stadium infrastructure.

These gears can turn one another. Winning makes a club attractive to players. Players make a club win. But it's money that feeds the machine and that, in today's elite football world, means commercial competitiveness and compromise.

Transfer talk is largely asinine. An industry in its own right, the transfer market rumour factory is one of football's most tedious sidelines, a shameful racket that churns and burns the algorithms by getting fans all frothy about football-adjacent bullshit that isn't going to happen.

One of its damaging effects is the growth of fandom's interest in accountancy rather than the actual game. Transfer windows

can be 'won' and 'lost' now. It's all tallies and totals and the more information we think we have access to, the stupider we collectively get.

How many transfer Twitter accounts does it take to change a light bulb? Who cares. They're idiots.

But there is also a quite reasonable expectation among supporters that their clubs invest – although that's a word so loaded within football transfer discourse now that I despise it specifically – in players.

There's an unspoken ballpark at every football club within which the expected outlay on players intersects the wealth of the owners. Supporters expect the club to punch its weight in the market and build the facilities to match.

And it's not wrong to want that, is it? We want our teams to improve, even incrementally, to keep things fresh and exciting and competitive. Players age. They're a fluid piece of the machinery. It's a sport powered by player turnover. With fluidity comes the need to upgrade and improve, which in turn necessitates the readies to be able to do so.

This is the commercial imperative of a football club. It's why we have sponsors on the shirt and perimeter boards around the pitch. It's why people can pay for three-course sit-down dinners before a match. It's why Pink is performing at football stadiums. Weaponising a club's commercial appeal eventually leads back to the need to succeed on the pitch.

On the other hand, there are those of us who care about what our clubs represent and where they turn to for revenue. If ethics are what we do when nobody is watching then holding oneself to a consistent moral standard even when harbouring disappointment alone is unfortunately part of the deal. There's no real right or wrong here. Support your club your way. I want mine to act somewhat positively.

That expectation covers a range of choices and behaviours but in the context of commercial partnerships it means there are some sponsors who'd cause me to walk away, some who'd piss me off and some who'd make me tut and roll my eyes. I do – importantly, I think – understand that sticking to my parameters would hit the club in the pocket. I also understand why that's the very reason I'm in a tiny minority.

My football club represents the community in which it belongs. It represents itself. It represents me. I want it to act responsibly and ethically on my behalf and I will not budge on that view.

Football fandom is a broad church. Not everybody cares about issues like this. Equally, not everyone puts new signings above

everything else on their individual list of priorities. Football clubs face a challenge when it comes to balancing the two.

For every club that holds itself to a moral standard there is another willing to take money from human rights abusers to take their place in the pecking order. For every season with a charity shirt sponsorship is another with an overseas bookmaker that might not even exist.

Football's reliance on such dirty money stinks to high heaven but clubs cannot unilaterally extricate themselves and stay competitive. A large proportion of supporters wouldn't stand for it and I'm not completely certain that I'm right and they're wrong.

So how can clubs find this moral balance? By deciding to do things that will cost them money. That will give them disadvantages to overcome and leave them short of quality as much as clean of conscience. It is, fundamentally, a test of a football club's very identity. No wonder so few of them even dip a toe into the water.

But clubs can do more than nothing without unreasonably setting themselves back. They can be more discerning when it comes to partnerships. Some of the agreements undertaken even by Premier League clubs in the last year or so have revealed a woefully inadequate level of due diligence.

We shouldn't be talking about clubs dealing with entities that turn out to be fictional or crooked. The minimum clubs should be doing is making informed decisions based on who they are, who they want to be and what any given partnership says about them.

Clubs should engage with supporters' groups as much as possible because those are questions that they should be asking too. Let's discuss it together. Let's get that unspoken ballpark out in the open.

Mutual trust between a club and its supporters is a lofty target but one that would allow for more transparency, better managed expectations and a reduced chance of the club making a massive moral misstep that ends up getting it kicked up the arse.

Asking football clubs to prioritise ethical responsibility over commercial potency, especially at the top level, is unrealistic.

That's just not how it works, and that's the way it is. But demanding that they care at least a little bit, that they work to raise the pathetically low bar just a touch, would be a start.





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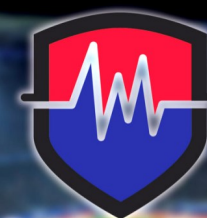
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Dan played football from an early age and joined Hull City AFC when he was 10, earning a professional contract aged 18. Loughborough University followed where he completed a degree in Accounting and Financial Management while playing non-league football. He was an athlete who enjoyed the gym and took his health and nutrition very seriously. He lived life to the full and had so much ahead of him.

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Sunday 17 September	14.00	A	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 September	14.00	H	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 8 October	14.00	A	Solihull Sporting Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 15 October	14.00	H	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 22 October	14.00	H	Coundon Court Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 29 October	14.00	A	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 12 November	14.00	H	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 19 November	14.00	H	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 26 November	14.00	A	Burton Albion Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 December	14.00	A	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 December	14.00	H	Knowle Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 December	14.00	A	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 7 January	14.00	A	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 January	14.00	H	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 28 January	14.00	A	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 4 February	14.00	H	Burton Albion Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 11 February	14.00	H	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 18 February	14.00	A	Coundon Court Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 25 February	14.00	A	Knowle Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 March	14.00	H	Shifnal Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division



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# Football's mythical match clock is entitled nonsense

Have you ever left a football match feeling short-changed? I have. I've been let down by the performance of my team, by the general quality of the match, by the overall experience. By refereeing? Sure. By food, weather and other supporters too. But I've never thought a match too short. It seems I'm in the minority.

It's long been my sense that the clamour for a match clock is in fact a tangle of issues and that none of them would be satisfactorily solved by freezing time – at least not when you take into account the unforeseen consequences along with the negatives we know about.

For many supporters there's righteousness in the battle against the perceived blight of time-wasting. It doesn't take much imagination to make a reasonable case against it, after all. They have the law on their side too.

But you and I both know that we only really take offence at time-wasting when it stifles our own teams. Put the boot on the other foot and we are far more amenable to players running down the minutes with their dastardly doings.

Time-wasting isn't always designed to waste time. It's done in any number of different situations and most of them are more to do with momentum and pressure. Killing the game – interrupting the rhythm – is its most common purpose. Stopping the clock would have no effect on that whatsoever.

In the 2022/23 Premier League season the average ball-in-play time has been 54 minutes and 46 seconds. That's not something I'll defend; it's the lowest since records began a decade ago.

But those records are from Opta and their recent feature on *The Analyst* editorialised the situation thus:

"At the basic, fundamental level, we are seeing less and less of the product we pay increasingly more and more for."

Well, sort of. The article on *The Analyst* also recognises that the Premier League doesn't have the lowest ball-in-play time in Europe's major leagues by either volume or percentage. Tellingly, the 2022 World Cup averaged slightly more than 58 minutes simply through more strictly adding stoppage time. That's more than the Premier League managed in any of the measured seasons.

The numbers beneath the numbers are more interesting but it's the value-for-money argument that sticks in my craw for a number of reasons. That the difference between the most and least ball-in-play time amounts to an unwhopping 57 seconds is just one of them. It's worth examining but it's not exactly a matter for *Watchdog*, is it?

Advocates of the match clock see the amount of ball-in-play time and subtract it from ninety, aghast at the squandering of what might have been.

But football isn't a ninety-minute game and it never has been. Supporters have never been promised ninety minutes. They've never paid for ninety minutes. Until fairly recently they'd never expected ninety minutes. Why now?

The match clock isn't a fix for a real problem. It's a sop to the entitlement that's now rife in football supporter culture. Just like video assistant referees and referees with microphones. Just like hour-by-hour injury updates. Just like transfers for the sake of transfers.

Nevertheless, there is a debate to be had. Feasibility should be explored and implications – predictable and otherwise – thoroughly considered.

The bud of my opposition is the same as it was prior to the introduction of goal-line technology (which works) and VAR (which doesn't and was never going to): I believe in the universality of football. As far as possible our sport should be played by the same rules from the bottom to the very top.

Make no mistake, the match clock is as unworkable in non-league and grassroots football as VAR. Any move towards it at higher levels is a hard no from me.

But are there other solutions? If we take the complaints at face value and in good faith – if we accept that time-wasting is a pressing matter and ball-in-play time is being maliciously reduced – how else might IFAB and FIFA get to grips with it while maintaining universality within reason?

Any alternatives are likely to belong to one of three categories. First, stuff the referee can do now. Second, stuff that involves a change in law to do with time-wasting. Third, stuff that requires a more substantial alteration to the game itself. I don't necessarily agree with any or all of these. Call it a thought experiment.

Time-wasting is already outlawed under the 'Delaying the restart of play' section of Law 12. That's within the 'Cautionable offences' subsection and actually dictates that the referee must caution a player who wastes time with the ball dead. Do that more and maybe it'll happen less.

That demands that officials are streetwise to the tricks employed by players so it'll never be perfect. But there's ground between leniency and perfection and our referees are capable of finding it. As evidenced by the World Cup, just adding time on more generously could also be an easy part of the fix.

There are updates to the laws that would be as applicable in non-league as the top flight. Most obvious offences are covered but how might they be managed differently? There's a certain fluidity about it – we ask referees to apply common sense and there is value, at least in my opinion, in individual referees approaching things in their own way.

Time-wasting is usually obvious, though, and a clampdown on that is preferable to a sixty-minute match clock. The introduction of a warning whistle followed by a no-questions-asked yellow card in every instance of time-wasting would go a long way towards snuffing it out.

Stoppage time is covered by Law 7, which refers to 'Allowance for time lost' due to a variety of stoppages including VAR checks and medical delays. Time-wasting is on the list too but there's no further detail within Law 7 itself and referees are instructed that time should only be added when delays are excessive.

Losing that guideline is an option and would service the rationale for a match clock while leaving timekeeping at the referee's discretion. Specific guidance on how much time to add for each type of delay is another possibility.

But that's all pretty unambitious, isn't it? Are we serious about ball-in-play time or not? If we're going to cry and scream and stamp our feet about Them taking football away from us, let's act decisively.

Let's talk about fewer free kicks by using the advantage rule more often irrespective of whether the team in question would rather have the game stopped. With clarity in law, that's achievable.

Let's talk about substitutions without stopping play. It would require a fourth official at all matches in the midst of a refereeing recruitment crisis but it would at least keep the Laws of the Game universal.

Let's talk about not stopping the game for treatment of minor injuries. That other sports do something is never an argument that sits well with me (our sport is better) but let's be honest, minor injuries are a time-wasting minefield. Why not spike it at source?

Let's talk about a mandatory time limit on every VAR check along with a stated reason for it. Looking for something, anything, isn't good enough and it leads to long periods with the ball dead. How about correcting the offside law, broken in order to suit VAR, to ensure fewer offences and therefore fewer stoppages?

The intellectual overlap between the supporters who want or wanted VAR and the supporters currently losing their minds about football matches being too short must be a scary and fascinating place. It won't be sparsely populated.

VAR is the real issue here. If the difference between the 'best' and 'worst' ball-in-play seasons on record is 57 seconds then is the culprit more likely to be active time-wasting or the massive delay cycle we've brought in for no good reason? We had time-wasting in 2013/14 too.

The ball-in-play dip doesn't mean a great deal to me and I truly believe it to be primarily a consequence of VAR. Yet the numbers are real and it's worth considering ways to deal with that. I am but one man and my opinion doesn't amount to much because people do care about this.

But any solution should be applicable in a way that leaves the match at ninety minutes and the referee in charge of the game and its timekeeping whatever the level. The horse has bolted when it comes to the universality of the sport but that shouldn't stop us being concerned about its welfare.



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# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS FIXTURES

Saturday 12th August

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

Tuesday 15th August

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

Wednesday 16th August

Corby Town	v	Shepshed Dynamo
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Monday 21st August

Coleshill Town	v	Lye Town
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# PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

## DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS LEAGUE TABLE

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Anstey Nomads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Bedworth United	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Boldmere St Michaels	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Cambridge City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Coleshill Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Corby Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Coventry Sphinx	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Gresley Rovers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Harborough Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Hinckley LR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Loughborough Dynamo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Lye Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Quorn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Rugby Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Shepshed Dynamo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	Spalding United	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Sporting Khalsa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Sutton Coldfield Town	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	Walsall Wood	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

12/8/2023







Jordan Hayward in the midst of a Man of the Match display at Stourport. (Photo: Marcus Robinson)



Sam Jackson on the move in the Emirates FA Cup. (Photo: Marcus Robinson)

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# MATCH SQUADS

Harvey Billing	Silvio Bello
James Bryson	Ryan Beswick
Kyle Carey	Kyle Bryant
Antonio Cristofaro	Mitch Candlin
Jack Downes	Ant Carney
Luke Downes	Thabang Dube
Jamie Draper	Reece Fyfe
Sam Ellis	Jordan Gough
Keelan Fallows	Courey Grantham
Louis Guest	Tom Hilton
Jordan Hayward	Fortune Maphoza
Sam Jackson	Charlie Marzano
Max Johnson	Cain Noble
Callum Martin	Jack Samples
Dylan Parker	Tyrell Shannon-Lewis
Dawid Peplinski	Carl Sibson
Leigh Phillips	Josh Steele
Joe Pursey	Paddy Webb
Kurtis Selley-Haywood	Tyree Wilson
Matthew Shipman	Charlie Woods
Callum Whiteside	Patrick Zito
Callum Woodward	

Referee: Harley Hetherington

Assistant referees: Michael Jones and Kurt Bartlett