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Runners-up 1996, 2002, 2005, 2006

Midland Combination Challenge Cup

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Winners 2002, 2005

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Winners 1966, 2005, 2006

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Winners 2007

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Winners 2007

Tony Allden Cup

Winners 2007

FA Vase

Quarter Finalists 2008

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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

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



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Upcoming fixtures

AWAY



Corby Town v Coventry Sphinx

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 24th February 2024 | 3.00pm
Steel Park
Jimmy Kane Way, Corby, NN17 2FB

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Shepshed Dynamo

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 2nd March 2024 | 3.00pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Loughborough Dynamo

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Tuesday 5th March 2024 | 7.45pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Harborough Town

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 9th March 2024 | 3.00pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive

HOME



Coventry Sphinx v Cambridge City

Pitching In Northern Premier League - Midlands
Saturday 16th March 2024 | 3.00pm
Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena
Sphinx Drive



CoventrySphinx



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A couple of Coventry Sphinx matches have fallen to the weather recently and, by a fluke of the calendar, those postponements have disproportionately affected one fixture in particular.

The ability to take these frustrations in stride is the least we should expect in non-league football. We are, after all, supposed to be a hardened bunch with a keen sense of realism.

Sadly, social media means we're also exposed to idiots, and perhaps the most reliable mark of an idiot is thinking that any football club at our level wants to swerve a match out on purpose.

It's ridiculous nonsense — albeit not the only ridiculous nonsense among the reaction to the latest postponement, the result of an enormous downpour late in the day — and it says a lot about the kind of person who suggests it.

Back here in reality, I think the weather is our worst enemy at the moment. It's not beyond the realms of possibility that today's match will be postponed too. It would do us no favours.

Sphinx have endured a stuttering start to 2024 in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands. Six weeks in, we've already experienced long gaps in between matches when what we need most, I'd argue, is momentum.

It's more than a month since our last home game. In that time we've played just three away fixtures. One was a win against Coleshill Town, one was a draw against AFC Rushden & Diamonds, one was a loss against Sporting Khalsa.

We have games in hand on the teams around us but the mini-league at the bottom of the table has been compressed since the turn of the year and the

battle to avoid relegation has started to look like a thrilling prospect for anyone looking in at it from the outside. There are some long months ahead of us and Sphinx will need to be at our best.

This afternoon we're pleased to welcome the supporters, players, management and officials of our neighbours, Rugby Town, back to the Sphinx Industrial Supplies Arena.

There's little to separate today's teams and this match is impossible to call. It's bound to be a spicy one and I'm looking forward to seeing how it turns out. The points are important to us both.

After such a long history apart, Sphinx and Rugby have become incredibly familiar adversaries in recent years. Our first teams and youth teams compete frequently and there are players in both squads who've made the switch from the other.

We're entering a crucial phase of the season and the postponed games against Loughborough Dynamo and Harborough Town have been rearranged for 5th and 9th March respectively.

That means that six of our next eight matches will be at home, including four on the spin. I think we're as good away as we are at home but what we can be sure of is that we'll know, by the end of that little run, what we need from the run-in. It's down to us.

You'll see today that we're undergoing significant ground works at the moment, which is testament to the effort that goes in off the pitch as well as the dedication that John, Shaun and the players put in every week. Please observe the restrictions.

The all-important second half of the season hopefully, finally, starts here. Let's see what our brilliant Sphinx boys are made of.



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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.



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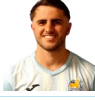














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MEET THE SQUAD

	James Bryson	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 MANDY SEDDON		Jordan Hayward	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 IAN AND PAULINE MCINTOSH
	Kyle Carey	Incisive and creative attacker who returned to Sphinx in March 2023 to help secure the league title.	Sponsored by STUART GUEST		Alex Lock	Highly rated midfield player signed from Rugby Town in October 2023.	Sponsorship available
	Antonio Cristofaro	Skilful former Walsall youth midfielder with dribbling ability, sharp creative instincts and an eye for goal.	BLOCK109 ALWAYS THERE.		Callum Martin	Pacy former Coventry City junior full back who loves a tackle and causes opponents problems in the attacking third.	DESIGN RIGHT Windows & Doors
	Ashton Demulder	A former Sphinx junior player who rejoined the club on loan from Solihull Moors after a spell with Coleshill Town.	Sponsorship available		Dawid Peplinski	Future Pro Academy scholar and former Sphinx youth central defender who joined the first team ranks after playing Step 5 football in 2022/23.	
	Jack Downes	Versatile, battling midfielder with a tremendous engine. Outstanding since returning to Sphinx Drive and a league winner in 2022/23.			Leigh Phillips	Experienced wide player who returned to Sphinx ahead of 2023/24 after a successful career in armed forces football.	 024 7644 2838
	Luke Downes	Creative midfield player who returned to Sphinx in 2021 after countless impressive performances here as a youngster.	PARTY PROPS		Joe Pursey	Sturdy defender who came in late in 2022/23 and had an instant impact in Sphinx's title quest.	 024 7644 2838
	Jamie Draper	Defender who emerged from the Sphinx youth team and has become a regular starter in our best ever team.	KA KITS ACADEMY		Jac Redhead	Creative midfield player with experience at Barwell and Halesowen Town.	Sponsorship available
	William Edjenguele	Experienced former Coventry City central defender who joined from Bedworth United after spells with Barwell and Nuneaton Borough.	JUST4KEEPERS HELPING GOALKEEPERS SINCE 1999		Matthew Shipman	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 BF ESSENTIALS 07927 649288
	Sam Ellis	Entertaining attacking midfielder who joined Sphinx after spells with Sutton Coldfield Town and Hinckley in 2022/23.			Finlay Shorrock	Versatile left-sided player who joined Sphinx in September 2023 and debuted in our first win in eighth tier football.	INSTARMAC®
	Keelan Fallows	Talented goalkeeper who joined from Tamworth at the start of Sphinx's first season in the eighth tier of English football.			Callum Whiteside	Versatile defensive player who joined Sphinx at the start of 2022/23 and quickly became a reliable regular for John Woodward and Shaun Thomas.	
	Louis Guest	A former Sphinx junior and now a leader in our squad, Guesty is a long-serving central defender and the club's vice captain.			Leo Wood	Promising striker who joined Sphinx on loan from Solihull Moors in early 2024.	Sponsorship available
	Tyler Haddow	Dynamic and respected wide attacker who arrived at Sphinx in January 2024 with a fearsome reputation locally.	Sponsorship available		Callum Woodward	Long-serving legendary club captain, a battling mainstay in the Sphinx midfield and a vital source of goals and creativity.	 Exhibitors · Displays · Bespoke Filings

FIRST TEAM MANAGEMENT

John Woodward	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Shaun Thomas	Joint Manager	Sponsorship available
Nigel Starkey	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
Sharon Taylor	Club Secretary	
Martin Sutton	Matchday Volunteer	CNS SPORT 
Liam Cook	Match Commentator	
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COLESHILL TOWN 2 COVENTRY SPHINX 3

Pitching In NPL
Division One Midlands
Saturday 27th 2024

It's rare in football to see two gratifying performances in one match but Coventry Sphinx produced a terrific game of two halves to win 3-2 against Coleshill Town in the Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands.

After a winless and goalless start to 2024, Sphinx were by far the superior side in the first half and had the 2-0 lead to prove it. But a red card for captain Callum Woodward in stoppage time forced his team to dig deep in the second half.



Stuart Guest

Woodward was joined in midfield by Jac Redhead and Alfonso Castellano, making his first start for the club. Goalkeeper Keelan Fallows played behind Joe Pursey, Louis Guest, Will Edjenguele and Finlay Shorrock.

Striker Matty Shipman was flanked by two new signings. On the right, long-time Sphinx junior Ashton Demulder made his senior debut against his old team. On the left, former Coventry United and Barwell man Tyler Haddow went straight into the eleven.

Sphinx were on top from the start, on the front foot early and with the new players brought in by John Woodward and Shaun Thomas at the heart of their attacking play.

In the eighth minute, captain Woodward fired in a free kick that had to be tipped over by Coleshill goalkeeper Lewis Fenney.

The resulting corner was another good Woodward delivery. Guest got a toe to the ball but could only send it over the crossbar.

The visitors kept the Coleman pinned back. Haddow was consistently able to get in behind

and went clear with 18 minutes played, only to be beaten by a tight angle and a fine Fenney save.

The goalkeeper denied him again two minutes later, this time with an even better save after Haddow met another Woodward free kick. The opening goal was coming and Sphinx didn't have to wait much longer.

Woodward clipped in the corner and Shipman towered above his marker at the back post to force a header beyond Fenney's reach and over the line for 1-0.

Now forced to chase the game, Coleshill – under the management of Craig Nicholls for the first time – built up some pressure around the Sphinx goal. It was short-lived. Haddow soon had them stretched again.

In the 28th minute, he did all the hard work himself to get clear on the right. He produced a superb ball across the face of goal but there were no takers.

Seconds later a poor clearance from Fenney fell for Woodward 35 yards from goal. The Sphinx captain adjusted his body brilliantly and hit a first-time shot that dropped agonisingly onto the bar.

A minute later it was Redhead who made Fenney work, rolling his marker and striking low to draw another very good save from the home goalkeeper. Redhead, Woodward and the front three were roaring as Sphinx dominated the play, ably anchored by Castellano.

Coleshill produced a speculative shot over Fallows' goal from distance shortly before they fell two behind. The visitors worked the ball from right to left and into the attacking third, where Haddow diverted it out wide for full back Shorrock.

He had to reach for it, which took him inside a defender and on to his right foot. His curling shot across Fenney and into the far top corner was every bit as crisp as he might have expected with his left, and Shorrock had doubled the lead.

Sphinx were cruising and Coleshill had Fenney to thank for keeping them in it, but the game changed in stoppage time at the end of the first half.

Woodward put in a heavy tackle on Alex Tomkinson and the match referee took exception, showing the Sphinx skipper a straight red card but showing rather more clemency to Coleshill's Dom Perkins for his part in the aftermath.

Thomas and Woodward Sr were forced into a change at the break as well as addressing the need to play on with ten men. Redhead had picked up an injury in the first half and was replaced by Luke Downes.

Coleshill inevitably began the half with the bit between their teeth. Fallows held a low free kick early on as Sphinx dug in. Crucially, they never gave up on getting forward too.

Sphinx played with composure and determination despite increasing pressure. A shot wide was followed by another save by Fallows on the hour mark, this time to thwart a shot with a little more venom.

The hosts pulled a goal back with 20 minutes left to play. Former Sphinx man Gio Dainty lifted the ball into the roof of the net from close range to make it 2-1 and leave both teams with everything to play for.

Shipman showed his very best to restore Sphinx's lead in the 75th minute. Shorrock's pass found him 30 yards from goal and he needed strength, speed and a cool finish to make it 3-1. He had all three.

The visitors needed the cushion of a third goal. Fallows easily saved a speculative shot ten minutes from time but could do nothing about Coleshill's second goal. George Washbourne received the ball from a short corner and curled it inside the far post.

The home team threw the kitchen sink at it for the remaining seven minutes of normal time and almost six of time added on. Fallows made a couple of simple saves and watched a powerful effort sail just past his top corner. Three minutes into stoppage time Fallows got a vital fingertip to the ball to send a shot onto the post.

After going down a man, Sphinx had to work hard and defend for their lives even with three goals in the bag. Coleshill pushed them hard but consistent handling from Fallows and a couple of crucial defensive headers from Shipman helped settle the game.

Shipman was outstanding and Haddow caused real problems for the Coleman throughout the 90 minutes. But, in truth, this was an excellent, gutsy team performance and everyone played their part without exception.

Sphinx finally got their 2024 moving. With big games ahead, it was vital that they banked three points to end January on a real high.



Stuart Guest

TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Alfonso Castellano ▼ Whiteside (84)
- 5 Will Edjenguele
- 6 Louis Guest
- 7 Ashton Demulder ▼ Lock (74)
- 8 Callum Woodward
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead ▼ L. Downes (HT)
- 11 Tyler Haddow
- 12 Luke Downes ▲ Redhead (HT)
- 14 Alex Lock ▲ Demulder (74)
- 15 Leo Wood
- 16 Callum Whiteside ▲ Castellano (84)
- 17 James Bryson

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH
MATTY SHIPMAN



MATCH HIGHLIGHTS

2023/24 Player Stats (all competitions)

Player	Apps	Mins	Starts	Full 90	Sub On	Yellows	Second Yellows	Straight Reds	Goals	Assists	Goals Per 90	Assists Per 90	G+A Per 90
Adams, Jamal	4	133	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Bailey-Nicholls, Khaellem	6	96	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Brown, Leo	5	448	5	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	10	681	8	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	7	530	6	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Castellano, Alfonso	3	194	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cristofaro, Antonio	4	105	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Dainty, Gio	9	534	7	1	2	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Demulder, Ashton	2	142	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Downes, Jack	24	2000	22	16	2	10	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	24	1521	17	11	7	6	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Draper, Jamie	1	90	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Edjenguele, Will	17	1367	16	12	1	3	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Ellis, Sam	10	239	2	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fallows, Keelan	25	2250	25	25	0	4	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	25	2112	24	22	1	7	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Haddow, Tyler	2	180	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	15	774	9	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Hedge, Zach	3	270	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Jackson, Sam	1	28	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Johnson, Max	12	539	5	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Lock, Alex	15	926	10	7	5	3	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Martin, Callum	7	463	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Parker, Dylan	15	1125	12	7	3	3	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Peplinski, Dawid	4	168	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Phillips, Leigh	3	125	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Purseley, Joe	25	2145	24	22	1	5	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	18	1366	16	7	2	4	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	26	2340	26	26	0	6	0	0	10	3	0.111	0.033	0.144
Shorrock, Finlay	19	1517	18	13	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Whiteside, Callum	26	1861	21	17	5	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Wood, Leo	1	22	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Woodward, Callum	16	1276	16	8	0	6	0	1	1	3	0.011	0.033	0.044

2023/24 Player Stats (NPL Midlands only)

Player	Apps	Mins	Starts	Full 90	Sub On	Yellows	Second Yellows	Straight Reds	Goals	Assists	Goals Per 90	Assists Per 90	G+A Per 90
Adams, Jamal	4	133	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Bailey-Nicholls, Khaellem	6	96	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Brown, Leo	5	448	5	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.022	0.011	0.033
Bryson, James	10	681	8	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Carey, Kyle	5	404	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Castellano, Alfonso	2	174	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cristofaro, Antonio	3	91	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Dainty, Gio	8	464	6	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Demulder, Ashton	2	142	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Downes, Jack	21	1730	19	13	2	9	2	0	2	0	0.022	0.000	0.022
Downes, Luke	21	1279	14	9	7	5	1	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Draper, Jamie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Edjenguele, Will	16	1277	15	11	1	3	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Ellis, Sam	8	183	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fallows, Keelan	22	1980	22	22	0	3	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Guest, Louis	23	1932	22	20	1	6	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Haddow, Tyler	2	180	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Harkin, Ryan	1	46	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hayward, Jordan	13	648	8	4	5	1	0	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Hedge, Zach	3	270	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Jackson, Sam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Johnson, Max	10	449	4	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Lock, Alex	14	872	9	7	5	3	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Martin, Callum	6	427	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Parker, Dylan	12	891	9	5	3	2	0	0	2	3	0.022	0.033	0.056
Peplinski, Dawid	4	168	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Phillips, Leigh	2	63	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Purseley, Joe	23	1965	22	20	1	4	0	0	0	1	0.000	0.011	0.011
Redhead, Jac	17	1276	15	6	2	4	0	0	3	3	0.033	0.033	0.067
Shipman, Matty	23	2070	23	23	0	6	0	0	10	3	0.111	0.033	0.144
Shorrock, Finlay	18	1463	17	13	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.011	0.011	0.022
Whiteside, Callum	23	1605	18	15	5	5	0	0	1	0	0.011	0.000	0.011
Wood, Leo	1	22	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
Woodward, Callum	15	1214	15	8	0	6	0	1	1	3	0.011	0.033	0.044



COVENTRY CITY REDISCOVERED

The town where I grew up has a Premier League football team now. Their games are reasonably well attended and they seem to have finally grabbed the imagination of the local community.

When I lived there, the club played in the third and fourth divisions. I went to most home games for a while. I was at one of their most fondly remembered away matches. Before the next match, at home, I trained on the pitch as part of a soccer school run by a monolithic junior club down the road.

But I wasn't a supporter and there weren't all that many who were. Considering the size of the place, the absence of a genuine love for its football club was a shame.

The upshot of this, from a personal point of view, is that the only place I've ever lived where there was a well supported club really giving its people something to go loopy for was London. The thing about London – you might have heard this – is that London is massive. It's impossible to even imagine what would have to happen to infect it with football fever.

Coventry, though? Not as big. I no longer live there but I'm not far away, I'm there all the time and it has essentially become my home. The place has always been football mad in that very specific way only a one-club city can be.

Of course, nowhere in England is really a one-club city. Ours is a country that loves football deeply and to the depths; Coventry's population of nearly 350,000 sustains a large and vibrant Sunday league scene as well as a team in the eighth tier of the men's game and another in the division below. Below that, it sometimes seems as if Coventry has a football club around every corner.

Now, after years of volatility and dread, and more than a little creeping apathy, it's obsessed with Coventry City again too. The supporters of the Sky Blues have always deserved better than what they've been subjected to in the last quarter of a century.

Some football clubs just drift. Others bounce between divisions. Others still seem to exist in a kind of perpetual entropy, both good days and bad shrouded in futility because theirs is a football in its purest form.

Coventry's chaos has been a threat to its existence more than once, and more than once the club has pushed the loyalty of its supporters to the limit by leaving the city entirely.

The details of the Sky Blues' ownership, their tumultuous tenancy at what is now the Coventry Building Society Arena, and their seasons played in Northampton and Birmingham are well documented. It's a story of a city loving football and football not loving

it back. After an inauspicious start to 2022/23, hampered on this occasion by the turf as much as the building around it, the Sky Blues came roaring back and secured a play-off place.

They shrugged Middlesbrough aside over the two legs of the semi-final before succumbing to the very cruellest of fates in the final at Wembley. Missing out on promotion to the Premier League in a penalty shoot-out is the kind of sickener that can set a club back a generation.

That was all just on the pitch. Coventry City has new ownership and so does the CBS. The Sky Blues appear to be as stable as they've been at any time in the last twenty years and comfortable in their own skin, not to mention in the stadium they call home. Their situation off the field is vastly improved, albeit neither perfect nor proven, and Coventry supporters are bouncing, rightly revelling in their fresh optimism.

Sixfields is only around 35 miles away but there's an enormous difference between playing in another county and being able to draw 22,000 for a second-tier fixture against Bristol City on a Tuesday night in late January or more than 24,000 for a Sunday noon kick-off that's on television.

Coventry is a place where football club leisure wear and training gear sells. Take a stroll through the city and its suburbs and you'll seldom be more than a few metres from a Sky Blues badge. That evergreen pride now comes laced with defiance and served with a twist of arrogance.

It's become the norm to support City with a mischievous smile and a twinkle in the eye, and little wonder. At the time of writing they've lost once in fourteen matches in all competitions, an uncharacteristically tame performance at Carrow Road costing them dear against Norwich City. Their previous defeat came at Ipswich Town at the start of December.

They're in a play-off position in the EFL Championship, having beaten leaders Leicester City and drawn with both Southampton and Leeds United. Over the last six matches, the Sky Blues are top of the form table. They're also in the Fifth Round of the FA Cup after demolishing Sheffield Wednesday in a replay in the Fourth. Maidstone United lie in wait.

If these appear meagre pleasures then consider Coventry's recent history as well as what came before. After missing out at Wembley in May, they lost two of their most potent players. Viktor Gyökeres, the Swedish striker, scored 38 times in the previous two Championship seasons and moved to Sporting CP in the summer of 2023. He's scoring for fun in Portugal too.

Gustavo Hamer's transfer was more protracted and dragged frustratingly into August. The Brazilian has enjoyed a couple of moments in a dismal Premier

League return for Sheffield United. There's no doubt his departure and its timing made for a stuttering start to 2023/24 for the Sky Blues.

City's form through the winter was a triumph of both talent and character. Gyökeres could never have been replaced like-for-like by a Championship club but manager Mark Robins is masterfully exploiting a combination of Haji Wright, Ellis Simms and Matt Godden. Between them, they've scored twenty league goals.

Josh Eccles, Ben Sheaf and new signing Tatsuhiro Sakamoto are in tremendous nick in midfield. Kasey Palmer, so often in the headlines of late, has been a thorn in the side of his opponents since the turn of the year in particular. Newcomer Victor Torp has made a promising start and already demonstrated an eye for goal.

But the talk of the town is Callum O'Hare. The former Aston Villa youth player is in sensational form and hit full speed after returning from a serious knee injury without missing a beat.

O'Hare has scored six goals and made two in the Championship, seeing off Birmingham City and Leicester in two of the season's most memorable days at the CBS Arena. He's playing entertaining, strutting, productive football and soaking up the admiration of the Sky Blues supporters. He's out of contract at the end of June.

None of this would have been possible – not the rehabilitation of the club, not the resurgence of the team, not the revitalisation of the support – without Robins, who's been at the club much longer and indeed on more separate occasions than owner and chairman Doug King.

What Robins has achieved at this most dysfunctional of football clubs is nothing short of astounding. His legend might be unrecognised nationally thus far but in a future Coventry the townsfolk will sing and dance around a statue of him naked on a horse.

There's a lot going in Coventry's favour at the moment. Stability off the pitch is a big part of that and navigating the choppy post-Gyökeres seas in the wake of Wembley probably wouldn't have been possible without it.

But Robins and his team have given the city its City back. That's about much more than just where they play.

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	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Billing	Martin	Selley-Haywood
12 Aug	Quorn	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Hayward	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside 1	Parker	Woodward ©	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	L. Downes	Ellis	Phillips	Cristofaro	Martin		
15 Aug	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	A	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Parker	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Carey	J. Downes	Johnson	Peplinski	Ellis	Jackson	Cristofaro		
22 Aug	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Hayward	J. Downes	Shipman	Carey	Johnson	Parker	Ellis	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Jackson		
26 Aug	Spalding United	NPL M	A	4-0	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Hayward	Woodward ©	Parker	Ellis	Johnson	L. Downes	Peplinski	Cristofaro	Draper			
28 Aug	Bedworth United	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Hedge	Pursey	Martin	L. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Parker	Cristofaro	Johnson	Phillips	Peplinski	Ellis	Penton			
2 Sep	Sutton Coldfield Town	NPL M	A	4-1	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Martin	J. Downes	Guest	Peplinski	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Parker	L. Downes	Johnson	Ellis	Phillips	Cristofaro		
9 Sep	Quorn	FAT 1Q	A	4-0	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Phillips	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguete	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Parker	Johnson	Carey	Cristofaro	Peplinski	Ellis	Hedge	
16 Sep	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	H	2-1	W	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguete	Hayward	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	J. Downes	Parker 1	Johnson	Ellis	Peplinski	Bryson		
30 Sep	Rugby Town	NPL M	A	1-2	W	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Edjenguete	Whiteside	Woodward © 1	Shipman 1	Redhead	Parker	Pursey	Bailey-Nicholls	Castellano	Ellis	Phillips		
7 Oct	Corby Town	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	Whiteside	Guest	Edjenguete	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman	Ellis	Parker	Johnson	L. Downes	Phillips	Bailey-Nicholls	Redhead		
14 Oct	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	A	2-2	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Edjenguete	Bryson ©	Pursey	J. Downes	Shipman 1	Lock	Parker 1	Guest	Ellis	Johnson	Cristofaro			
21 Oct	Coleshill Town	NPL M	H	0-0	D	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguete	Parker	J. Downes	Shipman	Lock	Dainty	Whiteside	Bryson	Redhead	Ellis	Johnson		
4 Nov	Anstey Nomads	NPL M	H	2-2	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguete	Pursey	Lock	Shipman 1	Redhead	Brown 1	Parker	Johnson	Bryson	Reed	Hedge		
11 Nov	Walsall Wood	NPL M	A	1-1	D	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguete	Pursey	Lock	Shipman	Redhead	Brown 1	Dainty	J. Downes	Johnson	Parker	Hayward		
14 Nov	Nuneaton Borough	BSC 2R	H	2-3	L	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes ©	Whiteside	Draper	Parker 1	J. Downes	Shipman	Lock	Dainty 1	Martin	Hayward	Castellano	Guest	Redhead		
18 Nov	Hinckley LR	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	Brown	Lock	Shipman	Redhead 1	Dainty	Edjenguete	Hayward	Bailey-Nicholls	J. Downes	Draper		
21 Nov	Harborough Town	NPL M	A	6-1	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Edjenguete	Pursey	J. Downes	Shipman	Brown	Dainty	Redhead 1	Lock	Bailey-Nicholls	Hayward			
25 Nov	Boldmere St Michaels	NPL M	A	3-1	L	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest ©	Whiteside	J. Downes	Redhead	Shipman	Brown	Dainty 1	Woodward	Edjenguete	Lock	Bailey-Nicholls	Hayward		
9 Dec	Cambridge City	NPL M	A	0-1	W	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Edjenguete	Lock	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Hayward	L. Downes	Adams	Bailey-Nicholls	Whiteside			
16 Dec	Gresley Rovers	NPL M	H	1-1	D	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	J. Downes	Guest	Whiteside	Adams	Woodward ©	Shipman 1	Redhead	Hayward	L. Downes	Bailey-Nicholls	Lock	Bryson			
23 Dec	Quorn	NPL M	A	4-2	L	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	L. Downes ©	Edjenguete	Bryson	Pursey	J. Downes 1	Shipman	Redhead 1	Lock	Woodward	Hayward	Dainty	Adams	Bailey-Nicholls		
26 Dec	Lye Town	NPL M	H	2-0	W	Fallows	Whiteside	Shorrock	J. Downes 1	Edjenguete	Bryson	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Dainty	L. Downes	Adams	Hayward 1	Lock			
1 Jan	Bedworth United	NPL M	A	1-0	L	Fallows	Bryson	Shorrock	L. Downes	Guest	Edjenguete	Pursey	Woodward ©	Shipman	J. Downes	Dainty	Hayward	Adams	Lock	Martin	Cristofaro		
6 Jan	Spalding United	NPL M	H	0-1	L	Fallows	Bryson	Hayward	Lock	Guest	Edjenguete	J. Downes	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Carey	Pursey	Whiteside	L. Downes	Dainty	Shorrock		
13 Jan	Sporting Khalsa	NPL M	A	3-0	L	Fallows	Pursey	Hayward	L. Downes	Guest	Bryson	Lock	Woodward ©	Shipman	Redhead	Carey	Edjenguete	Whiteside	Harkin	Martin			
27 Jan	Coleshill Town	NPL M	A	2-3	W	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock 1	Castellano	Edjenguete	Guest	Demulder	Woodward ©	Shipman 2	Redhead	Haddow	L. Downes	Lock	Wood	Whiteside	Bryson		
3 Feb	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	NPL M	A	0-0	D	Fallows	Pursey	Shorrock	Castellano	Guest ©	Edjenguete	Demulder	J. Downes	Shipman	Redhead	Haddow	L. Downes	Lock	Whiteside	Wood			
17 Feb	Rugby Town	NPL M	H																				
24 Feb	Corby Town	NPL M	A																				
2 Mar	Shepshed Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
5 Mar	Loughborough Dynamo	NPL M	H																				
9 Mar	Harborough Town	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																				

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The
Daniel Wilkinson
Foundation

*Providing Screening and Defibrillators to
prevent Sudden Cardiac Death in the young*



The Daniel Wilkinson Foundation is a charity set up in memory of Daniel Wilkinson who died in 2016 aged 24, while playing the game he loved, from an underlying heart condition called Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Cardiomyopathy (ARVC).



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.

Other than feeling light-headed on a few occasions in the month before he died, he had no symptoms!

SUDDEN CARDIAC DEATH IN THE YOUNG (SCD)

- SCD is the leading cause of death in young athletes during sport and the majority of deaths occur with NO SYMPTOMS or family history.
- ARVC can be found in one in every 1,000 to 5,000 young adults - IF IT IS LOOKED FOR.
- Warning signs may include light-headedness, fainting, palpitations, swollen legs, breathlessness.
- Every week in the UK, 12 apparently fit and healthy young people (aged 35 and under) die from previously undiagnosed heart conditions.
- In Italy, where screening is mandatory for all young people engaged in organised sport, they have reduced the incidence of young sudden cardiac death by 89%.

OUR MISSION

The Daniel Wilkinson Foundation has been set up to raise awareness of SCD and to provide funding towards heart screening, defibrillators and CPR/defibrillator training primarily for grass-roots sporting teams.

Tragedies can be prevented through cardiac screening. It is vital that young people are identified and treated.

Find out more

 [@dannywilks5](https://twitter.com/dannywilks5)

 [thedanielwilkinsonfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/thedanielwilkinsonfoundation)

 [dwfoundation5](https://www.instagram.com/dwfoundation5)

 contact@thedanielwilkinsonfoundation.org

 [thedanielwilkinsonfoundation.org](https://www.thedanielwilkinsonfoundation.org)

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AFC RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS 0 COVENTRY SPHINX 0

**Pitching In NPL
Division One Midlands**
Saturday 3rd February 2024

AFC Rushden & Diamonds made no bones about giving Coventry Sphinx reasons to be wary in their Pitching In Northern Premier League Midlands encounter at Hayden Road.

Sphinx's first win as a Step Four club came in the reverse fixture but Rushden's recent form – they'd won three on the spin prior to this game – has compressed the bottom end of the table and made it clear that the visitors would need to have their wits about them.

Joint managers John Woodward and Shaun Thomas were without captain Callum Woodward after his red card against Coleshill Town in the previous match. Jack Downes was drafted into an otherwise unchanged eleven.



Keelan Fallows continued in goal behind Louis Guest and Will Edjenguele, with Joe Pursey and Finlay Shorrock in the full back positions. Downes started in midfield with Alfonso Castellano and Jac Redhead.

After two goals at Coleshill, striker Matty Shipman was again flanked by Ashton Demulder and Tyler Haddow in their second starts for the club.

Fallowes had to hold the first shot of a match that had a blood and thunder start.

Sphinx weren't cowed by Rushden's winning form and settled into the game fastest, looking confident in possession and nearly taking an early lead when a defensive header went close to sneaking into the top corner.

Rushden started to get forward more after quarter of an hour, as Sphinx did going the other way, but the physical battle in midfield was just beginning.

The visitors got some attacking joy before the half hour mark. A nice move on the left led to Redhead driving determinedly into the box but his low shot was from too narrow an angle and was easily saved by Rushden goalkeeper George Rose.

A minute later, a terrific through ball from Shipman sent Haddow clear. He had to show good strength to hold off a defender but the ball ran away from him just enough to be gathered by Rose, whose starting position paid off. Redhead, stretching, clipped the rebound over.

Rushden were in confident mood and aggressive in wide areas, but Sphinx enjoyed most of the control of the first half. A late spell for the hosts failed to produce a chance and Sphinx were frustrated not to take a lead into half time.



Immediately after the restart Shipman forced Rose to make a good save with his feet and it was only a matter of minutes before Fallows had to do the same to deny Dylan Wilson at the other end.

Rose was quick off his line throughout and it snuffed out more than one Sphinx attack before a set piece gave the visitors another opportunity.

Castellano took a free kick from midfield and Guest got up well in the six-yard box to nod the ball back to Redhead. Under pressure, the

midfielder fired over. For the most part, the entertainment factor of this game was in the competitive contest in the middle of the park. As a spectacle it lacked shape but was enjoyable regardless. Sphinx edged it but there was precious little goalmouth action.



In the middle of the half there was a debut from the Sphinx bench. Striker Leo Wood joined the club from Solihull Moors in time for the recent Coleshill fixture and got his first minutes at Hayden Road as Woodward and Thomas went for the win.

With 20 minutes remaining, Sphinx produced a fine move from a throw-in. Redhead and Jack Downes exchanged passes to get the former in on goal. Redhead's improvised finish went over the top to leave Rose untroubled in the Diamonds goal.

By now, Sphinx were moving through the gears but found Rushden to be obstinate opposition. The home team fought back and had another threatening spell.

An excellent and vital tackle by Edjenguele on the edge of the box was all that stood between Rushden and the best shooting chance of the afternoon. Sphinx won a few late corners, one of which found Shipman only to be headed wide.

Rushden had most of the possession as the match fizzled out, leaving both teams to reflect on a hard-won point.

While they might feel their overall play warranted a win, Sphinx weren't able to carve out the volume of chances required to force a breakthrough.

But this was an important point secured in potentially awkward circumstances.

Rushden's resurgence has transformed them into very dangerous opposition irrespective of their starting the day at the bottom of the table.

Sphinx are yet to win three in a row, which goes to show how difficult that is in the NPL Midlands.

Stopping that run is not to be underestimated and sets Sphinx up nicely for a quick turnaround and the belated home fixture against Loughborough Dynamo.

Similar character will be essential.

TEAMSHEET

- 1 Keelan Fallows
- 2 Joe Pursey
- 3 Finlay Shorrock
- 4 Alfonso Castellano
- 5 Louis Guest
- 6 Will Edjenguele
- 7 Ashton Demulder ▼ Wood (68)
- 8 Jack Downes
- 9 Matty Shipman
- 10 Jac Redhead ▼ L. Downes (84)
- 11 Tyler Haddow
- 12 Luke Downes ▲ Redhead (84)
- 14 Alex Lock
- 15 Callum Whiteside
- 16 Leo Wood ▲ Demulder (68)

SPHINX MAN OF THE MATCH
WILL EDJENGUELE



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YOUTH TEAM FIXTURES

Thursday 17 August	1-4	L	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 31 August	2-1	W	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 7 September	5-2	W	Stourport Swifts	FA Youth Cup Preliminary Round
Thursday 14 September	1-1	D	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 21 September	0-6	L	AFC Wulfrunians	FA Youth Cup First Round Qualifying
Thursday 28 September	3-1	W	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 5 October	1-4	W	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 12 October	4-0	W	P S Olympic	Joel Richards Memorial Cup R1
Monday 23 October	1-0	L	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 9 November	3-4	L	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 16 November	3-0	W	Atherstone Town	Joel Richards Memorial Cup R2
Tuesday 5 December	*1-1	D	Rushall Olympic	Colin Lowe Memorial League Cup R3
Thursday 14 December	1-6	L	Stourbridge	Joel Richards Memorial Cup QF
Monday 8 January	5-3	L	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 11 January	5-1	L	Inkberrow	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 1 February	1-3	W	Stratford Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Friday 9 February	1-2	W	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 12th February	6-3	L	Solihull Moors	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 19th February	19.45	A	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Monday 26th February	19.45	A	Rugby Borough	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 29th February	19.45	H	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 7th March	19.45	H	Halesowen Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
Thursday 14th March	19.45	H	Bedworth United	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Alvechurch	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		A	Kidderminster Harriers	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Rugby Town	MFYL Southern Premier Division
TBC		H	Stourbridge	MFYL Southern Premier Division

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SUPPORTER LOYALTY AND THE COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVE

Aston Villa's ticketing regulations for the 2023/24 season were received with some hostility by the club's supporters.

There shouldn't be any controversy. Aston Villa Football Club is a business and is entitled to maximise its profitability and, more pertinently, to protect itself from the threat of lost revenue.

Villa's measures seek to reduce ticket touting and there's nothing shocking about them. But everything has its context, and the mood into which Villa planted the updated policy has become increasingly hostile.

It's hardly surprising that explicitly outlining the bans that will be handed out to supporters committing the heinous acts of "passing on a match ticket or a season ticket without re-assigning this to the correct named user" or "Passing on your Fan ID for the purpose of unauthorised home match ticket purchasing" should be

seen as somewhat draconian, logical though they are from a business perspective.

Most supporters understand the need for clubs to make money and adhere to regulations but Villa's new commercial regime has the misfortune of overseeing the club at the confluence of the team's return to European football and the crippling cost of living crisis affecting supporters.

Discord has been growing. Season ticket price increases yielded an icy response. Villa's choice to sneak one last gambling shirt sponsorship deal under the tape before it's banned – and with one of the most rancid organisations to boot – split supporters still further.

Perhaps worst of all, the introduction and construction of the Terrace View in the iconic Holte End gave the impression, rightly or wrongly, of allowing wealthy supporters to jump the queue in the season ticket

waiting list if they're willing to pay a premium for not very much in the way of matchday value. That it's a literal scar on the Holte End merely exacerbates the rancour.

Herein lies one of the great dividing lines of modern football supporter culture. In the red corner, supporters who value only victory. In the blue corner, supporters who think their relationship to their clubs should run deeper than that. Even the right balance, if it exists, pleases few.

The logical, rational choice is to advocate for a club to pursue its commercial imperative even to the financial detriment of the supporters. The only reason this position can survive contact with air is that supporters desire, expect, demand success – often to an unreasonable degree.

On the other hand, some supporters (often but not always those with an historical or current attendance record and an active interest in wider football supporter culture) want to be treated properly and fairly even to the reasonable detriment of their club's prospects on the field.

Every football supporter is situated somewhere on the continuum between one and the other. That continuum exists purely because of one enormously complicated human construct that cannot be separated from football supporter culture.

Loyalty means that supporters will put up with a lot that "customers" would not. It also gives us an elevated sense of our place in the game. We are not consumers. We are participants. We matter.

The loyalty of football supporters is fascinating not only because it enables clubs to both reward us and take advantage of us, but because no two interpretations of it are alike. When it comes to clubs prioritising their commercial imperative, we each have a different tolerance level.

But if we broadly lump football supporters into two camps, the division is between one group that see clubs as financially exploiting the loyalty of their supporters and another that believes that spending money on football is a choice; a football club is a business that has the right to set prices as it sees fit.

One of the complaints among Villa supporters was about an increase in season ticket prices. Ticket pricing and other revenue sources such as replica shirts and merchandising are commercially useful for clubs but are overshadowed at the top level by television income. Match-going supporters understandably see price hikes as unnecessary tests of their loyalty.

Fan bases are divided here, too, and the basic arguments are the same. Season tickets are too expensive and match ticket prices are too high but a

football club is a business involved in competitive sport. Ultimately, individual supporters have no right to attend or buy a shirt if they can't afford whatever price tag is placed upon them.

My suspicion is that the latter view is motivated by personal economic politics as well as obsession with on-field success. Football's financial fair play farce exacerbates the issue, forcing even wealthy and well-meaning benefactors to squeeze every penny out of supporters and iffy sponsors in order to compete.

Wanting your football club to succeed isn't wrong. We all want that. What differentiates one supporter from another is the extent to which they're willing to swallow the cost of that success themselves financially or in terms of moral compromise. In a cost of living crisis, clubs mismanaging that balance – Villa have repeatedly done so of late – is a near criminal abuse of their supporters.

Football clubs are businesses, yet not. They're not typical or normal but absolutely unique in their cultural role and their place in our lives. Boiling it down to sheer numbers is wilfully stupid, an indicator of politics or a fixation on success or both.

What it misses is fundamental to the entire football experience: supporters are more than customers and they have power, rights and a connection with their clubs that outstrips any other brand loyalty on earth.

Pursuit of the commercial imperative at the expense of supporters breaks down that connection, gradually eroding it as football becomes too expensive or too morally questionable to tolerate.

Supporters do understand the reasons. While some feel an increasing distance from their clubs as a result, others are willing to watch it happen in order that some people they'll never know might win a trophy they'll never touch.

It's the clubs who can afford to lose supporters who behave in this way and it's noteworthy that Aston Villa have spent a great deal of the last decade practically begging supporters to buy tickets.

Now that demand is bigger than supply, prices have gone up, the Holte End has been vandalised and despicable sponsors are welcome as long as they pay. The disregard for supporters is brazen. They are expendable and it shows. It's no wonder people are annoyed.



RUGBY TOWN

Rugby Town returned to the Northern Premier League Midland Division in 2023 after a six season absence.

Valley Sports' first competitive game was on 8th September 1956 in Division Three of the Rugby & District League when Dunchurch Lodge were beaten 7-0 at Thornfield.

At the end of the following season the club was promoted to Division Two and two years later, as runners up, to Division One - finishing as runners up in Division One in 1962/63 before a move was then made to the Coventry & North Warwickshire League.

Four seasons were spent in Division Two before promotion came to Division one for the 1967/68 season. That season saw a 12th place finish but, following three previous cup final losses, Valley Sports won their first silverware beating Wolvey Amateurs 2-1 to lift the Rugby Hospital Cup on 1st May 1968.

It became clear at this time that a Rugby Borough Council decision to redevelop Thornfield for Rugby's new swimming pool and sports centre, made in July 1966, would not include a football pitch in the plans.

At the same time mass withdrawals from the Coventry & North Warwickshire League at the end of the 1968/69 season forced the club to make plans as to what league they were to play in and to continue their search for exclusive use of a new ground if they were to continue the progress achieved over the previous 13 seasons at Thornfield.

An application to join the United Counties League was rejected, at the AGM, by the clubs but UCL Secretary, Ken Bacon, managed to get the decision reversed and the club were admitted to Division Three for the 1969/70 season and with no other ground available the

club commenced its new era at council owned Hillmorton Recreation Ground with a 3-0 win against British Timken Duston on 3rd September 1969.

Partly derelict allotment land at Butlin Road was identified for a new ground and the persistence of the club officials persuaded the Rugby Borough Council to approve the granting of a 30 year lease at a meeting on 19 May 1970.

The first season in the United Counties League was a successful one with only five games lost, a fifth place finish and the Divisional Cup won as 16 games were played at Hillmorton that season.

The 1970/71 season saw the name changed to Valley Sports Rugby and entry into a groundshare agreement with the original Rugby Town football club who played in the Southern League at the time, for the use of Oakfield.

A third place finish in Division Three was followed in the 1971/72 season with a runners up place and promotion to Division 1 plus recognition by the Birmingham County FA of the club's senior status which meant entry into the FA Amateur Cup for 1973/74, it's very last season.

The demise of the original Rugby Town club in May 1973 meant that the barely ready Butlin Road ground had to be used the following season with the first competitive game there being on 6th October 1973 against Burton Park Wanderers which ended goal-less.

The clubhouse was opened on 19 September 1974 and the semi-final of the Birmingham Senior Amateur Cup was reached which prompted the West Midlands (Regional) League to invite the club into its Premier Division for the 1975/76 season.

The club name was changed to VS Rugby as the club progressed, but life in the

higher league proved tough for some seasons alleviated only with wins in the FA Cup against Southern League sides Dunstable Town and Bedworth United.

In 1980/81 the first seated stand was opened on 4 September 1980, but a dire opening to the season saw manager Len Willett sacked and Jimmy Knox appointed manager, taking charge from caretaker manager Les Smith at Bilston on 31 January 1981.

It was a decision that was to transform the fortunes of the club for just over 11 years. Jimmy had been a successful player and manager at Rugby Town, before a spell as top Non-League manager at AP Leamington.

His reputation enabled him to survive defeats in his first five matches and ten defeats in the first eleven.

The 1981/82 season was a much improved campaign finishing in a creditable 8th spot as Jimmy set about building a new team.

Then came 1982/83! On 30 April 1983 Jimmy Knox led VS Rugby to success at Wembley in the FA Vase Final beating fellow WM(R) League side Halesowen Town 1-0, amazingly just 27 months after then Chairman Mick Vousden had persuaded him to manage his home town club.

A Valley club which had itself reached such a pinnacle at the end of only its 27th season.

The opportunity to join the Southern Football League Midland Division 10 years after opening the Butlin Road ground was taken, however, it was dependant on the club being able to provide floodlights.

This was achieved in record time being used for the first time in an FA Cup 2nd Qualifying Round Replay against

Heybridge Swifts on 5 October 1983 with a 2-0 victory in front of 622 spectators. After a gap of 10 years, Rugby again had a representative team at this level.

Under manager Knox, the club moved into the Premier Division after winning the 1986/87 Midland Division Championship, won the Southern League Cup and Birmingham Senior Cup, and had memorable FA Cup encounters with Northampton Town, Leyton Orient, Bristol Rovers and Bristol City taking all but Bristol City to a replay.

Jimmy Knox left Butlin Road in the summer of 1992 with the team 3rd in the Premier Division and the Birmingham Senior Cup again behind the bar. His departure led to a rapid decline in the clubs fortunes.

VS were relegated for the first time in their history, and then put into receivership in 1993.

A group of supporters rescued the club, buying back the VS Rugby name and with the club obtaining the keys to the ground only four days before the first game of the 1993/94 season, manager Ron Bradbury somehow assembled a team.

The makeshift team lost only two of their first 24 games and went on to gain automatic promotion behind newly formed Rushden & Diamonds.

That season also saw another FA Cup 1st Round game against Football League opposition when Brentford attracted 3,006 fans to Butlin Road.

In 1999 the club was again in danger but the remaining directors were joined by former player and local business man Brian Melvin who secured the club's future and started developments around the ground with a new 500 seater cantilever stand housing dressing rooms underneath was opened in 2003, a refurbished club house bar and an improved playing surface.

The club was renamed Rugby United and had put the club in a position to compete in the Southern League Premier Division following the reorganisation of Non-League football.

After five seasons another name change was made, this time to Rugby Town FC for the 2005/06 season whilst a grant

from the Football Foundation was obtained to develop all-weather pitches at Butlin Road. The 3G rubber-crumb full sized pitch plus training pitch was opened in October 2006.

As the facilities continued to be improved a 1,300 capacity covered standing terrace along the whole Allotment End was opened in March 2007.

Further improvements include a new hospitality suite which was opened in November 2014 following the conversion of the original dressing rooms whilst a new public address system was completed in August 2015.

Winning the Midland Floodlit Cup, for the 3rd time, on the 12 May 1999 is the only one to have been won since the 1993/94 season, however, the last five seasons in the Southern League Central Division saw the club finish no lower than 6th and two consecutive runners up finishes in 2012/13 & 2013/14, when manager Dave Stringer, assembled a squad of talented players who were unlucky not to have secured a return back to the Southern League Premier Division.

They broke almost all the previous performance records when in 2012/13 they recorded the highest points tally of 96 and the highest goals for record of 103. Despite finishing 11 points ahead of fourth placed Biggleswade Town and leading 1-0 in the play-off final they missed promotion when the visitors were awarded a controversial penalty which turned the game.

In the 2013/14 play-off semi-final the team were no match for 5th placed Slough Town at Butlin Road after again finished as runners-up. It was another season when 100 league goals were scored. Individually, David Kolodynski became the club's all time leading goalscorer at senior level passing Danny Conway.

A sixth place Central Division finish in 2014/15 proved a disappointment and on 1st May 2015 it was announced that Dave Stringer had left his manager's position by mutual consent.

For the 2015/16 season, Rugby were switched to the Northern Premier League for the first time after 32 years in the Southern League.

A poor start under rookie new manager, Gary Mills, saw him replaced in September by former Valley goalkeeper, Dale Belford who steadied the team in his first four months in charge, followed by a surge towards the play-offs before finishing 9th in NPL Division One South.

The team won three Fair Play Awards for their exemplary disciplinary record during the season including an FA Respect Award.

The 2016/17 season saw new manager James Jepson also leave the club shortly into his tenure with another former player, Gary Moran, taking charge in September.

His first managerial appointment ended with the team finishing 21st in the league and relegation to Step Five for the first time after 34 seasons.

The club were relegated into the Midland Football League Premier Division for the 2017/18 season but also saw the return of Stringer as manager, following two seasons in charge of Chasetown.

After a disappointing mid-table finish, Stringer was replaced by former Stratford Town manager Carl Adams and saw his side fall short of the top two as the club were moved into the United Counties League for the first time since 1975.

Two Covid-19 interrupted seasons followed between 2019-2021 as the club netted a third place season again before the same bronze-place finish came in the 2021/22 campaign as Valley reached the Fifth Round of the FA Vase before bowing out away to North Shields.

The club finally achieved promotion back to the Northern Premier League at the conclusion of the 2022/23 season after finishing runners-up to Coventry Sphinx in the UCL Premier Division South.

Thanks to having a superior points-per-game ratio than their equivalent competitors across the country at Step 5, Rugby earned an automatic promotion instead of facing an inter-step play-off.



COVENTRY SPHINX LADIES FC

Sunday 3 September	0-4	L	Solihull Sporting Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 10 September	3-0	L	Shifnal Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 September	1-8	W	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 September	1-6	L	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 1 October	0-5	W	AFC Telford United	Women's FA Cup 2QR
Sunday 8 October	5-5	D	Solihull Sporting Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 15 October	0-5	L	Stourbridge 1st	BCFA Women's County Cup
Sunday 22 October	7-5	L	Northampton Town	Women's FA Cup 3QR
Sunday 29 October	3-4	W	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 26 November	3-3	D	Burton Albion Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 3 December	3-2	L	Worcester City Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 December	5-1	W	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Premier Cup 1R
Sunday 7 January	4-0	L	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 January	4-3	W	Crusaders Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 January	2-1	W	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Premier Cup QF
Sunday 28 January	4-0	L	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 4 February	2-3	L	Burton Albion 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
Sunday 10 March	14.00	H	Coundon Court Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 17 March	14.00	H	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 24 March	14.00	H	Lye Town Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 14 April	14.00	H	Shrewsbury Town Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 21 April	14.00	H	Knowle Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
Sunday 28 April	14.00	A	Lichfield City Ladies	West Mids Regional Premier Division
TBC		H	Kidderminster Harriers Women	West Mids Regional Premier Division



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PITCHING IN NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE

DIVISION ONE MIDLANDS FIXTURES

Saturday 17th February

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

Saturday 24th February

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

Tuesday 27th February

Shepshed Dynamo	v	Walsall Wood
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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	Harborough Town	25	19	2	4	64	17	47	59
2	Spalding United	26	18	4	4	56	25	31	58
3	Anstey Nomads	26	16	8	2	62	30	32	56
4	Loughborough Dynamo	26	16	5	5	50	33	17	53
5	Hinckley LR	26	14	7	5	43	31	12	49
6	Lye Town	25	13	5	7	37	30	7	44
7	Quorn	26	12	7	7	49	34	15	43
8	Sporting Khalsa	27	12	4	11	40	44	-4	40
9	Corby Town	27	10	7	10	55	39	16	37
10	Walsall Wood	24	11	4	9	40	39	1	37
11	Sutton Coldfield Town	26	10	6	10	40	37	3	36
12	Boldmere St Michaels	27	10	4	13	46	39	7	34
13	Bedworth United	28	8	7	13	30	36	-6	31
14	Coleshill Town	27	8	4	15	43	58	-15	28
15	Shepshed Dynamo	25	7	5	13	26	44	-18	26
16	Cambridge City	27	7	5	15	33	52	-19	26
17	Coventry Sphinx	25	5	9	11	24	42	-18	24
18	Rugby Town	27	6	2	19	30	60	-30	20
19	Gresley Rovers	28	4	6	18	28	75	-47	18
20	AFC Rushden & Diamonds	26	4	3	19	21	52	-31	15

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MATCH SQUADS



James Bryson	Edwin Ahenkorah
Kyle Carey	Thomas Bukowski
Alfonso Castellano	Justice Campbell
Antonio Cristofaro	Chris Clements
Ashton Demulder	Ben Fitzharris
Jack Downes	Liam Francis
Luke Downes	David Kolodynski
Jamie Draper	Roger Lee
Will Edjenguele	James Mace
Keelan Fallows	Silvano Obeng
Louis Guest	Devonn O'Sullivan
Tyler Haddow	Loyiso Recci
Jordan Hayward	Ryan Sahota
Zach Hedge	Madundo Semahimbo
Alex Lock	Dan Summerfield
Callum Martin	Michael Taylor
Joe Pursey	Josh Thomas
Jac Redhead	Jordan Wilson
Matthew Shipman	
Finlay Shorrock	
Duncan Van Den Top	
Callum Whiteside	
Leo Wood	
Callum Woodward	

Referee: Richard Walker

Assistant Referees: Thomas Johnson and Scott Postin

