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THE OFFICIAL 2022/2023 MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

Respect 



**v Grays Athletic**



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FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE

**SATURDAY 11TH MARCH 2023, 3PM**  
PITCHING IN ISTHMIAN NORTH LEAGUE

# JOINT CHAIRMAN: **ANDY CLARKE**



## **Good afternoon and a warm welcome to all for today's clash with our play-off rivals Grays Athletic at the AGL Arena.**

We go into today's game for the first time this season on the back of two defeats, neither of which we should have come away empty handed.

The New Salamis game was what it was and we moved onto Tuesday's big six pointer clash with local rivals Lowestoft Town. Having been on the wrong side of a defeat at Crown Meadow earlier in the season, we were looking to put the record straight with a win.

The two games themselves were very similar with both sides being honest, hard working and looking to play the right way, however it turned out that both events would be over-shadowed by consistently poor officiating. Those who came to Lowestoft

earlier in the year will recall that day's events, and these were to be matched on Tuesday.

We started the game brightly and took the game to Lowestoft, creating a number of chances whilst looking comfortable in possession. This all changed on the half hour when for some reason the referee gave Joe Whight a straight red card. This for a coming together of two players making an honest attempt to get to the ball. Just to add insult to injury there was very little appeal for a foul, never mind a red from the Lowestoft players. 75 mins playing with ten men was always going to be difficult but the lads got to half time at 0-0.

***"The two games themselves were very similar with both sides being honest, hard working and looking to play the right way..."***

The second half saw the lads work their socks off but couldn't keep that clean sheet with us going a goal behind early on. Shortly after this they were awarded a penalty, fortunately this was missed and kept us in the game. We went on and created a couple of great opportunities but these went to waste.

It was then time for the referee to make his second dreadful decision of the night, sending off Lowestoft's Harry Knight for what was only ever a yellow at best.

Numbers now being equal we pushed and pressed but couldn't find the elusive equaliser. With just two minutes to go the ref completed his hattrick by showing a second yellow to Callum Bennett, for what I saw as nothing more than a normal challenge, but hey what do we know?.

A disappointment on a night when without doubt a draw would have been a fair

result and I don't think many would argue that there shouldn't have been a single red card let alone three.

With that now behind us and today a fresh play-off challenge against a side who on their day is a match for anyone. However that said on our day we have produced some of the best football I have seen from a Felixstowe side. If we can show this ability together with the work rate and tenacity shown on Tuesday, I'm sure today will be a cracking affair.

It's then on the road for the next three with away matches at Hashtag, Gorleston and Basildon before we are back at the AGL Arena for the start of the big run in and the visit of East Thurrock United. By this time we will have a much better idea of what will be required to get us a place in the play-offs.

Enjoy the game and stay safe.  
Andy



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# FROM THE DUGOUT: **STUART BOARDLEY**

**Good afternoon all and welcome to the AGL Arena where in terms of our playoff aspirations you could not get a bigger game.**

Grays Athletic are our visitors and it's a 4th vs 5th clash with our opponents in fine form of late registering 12 points in their last six games.

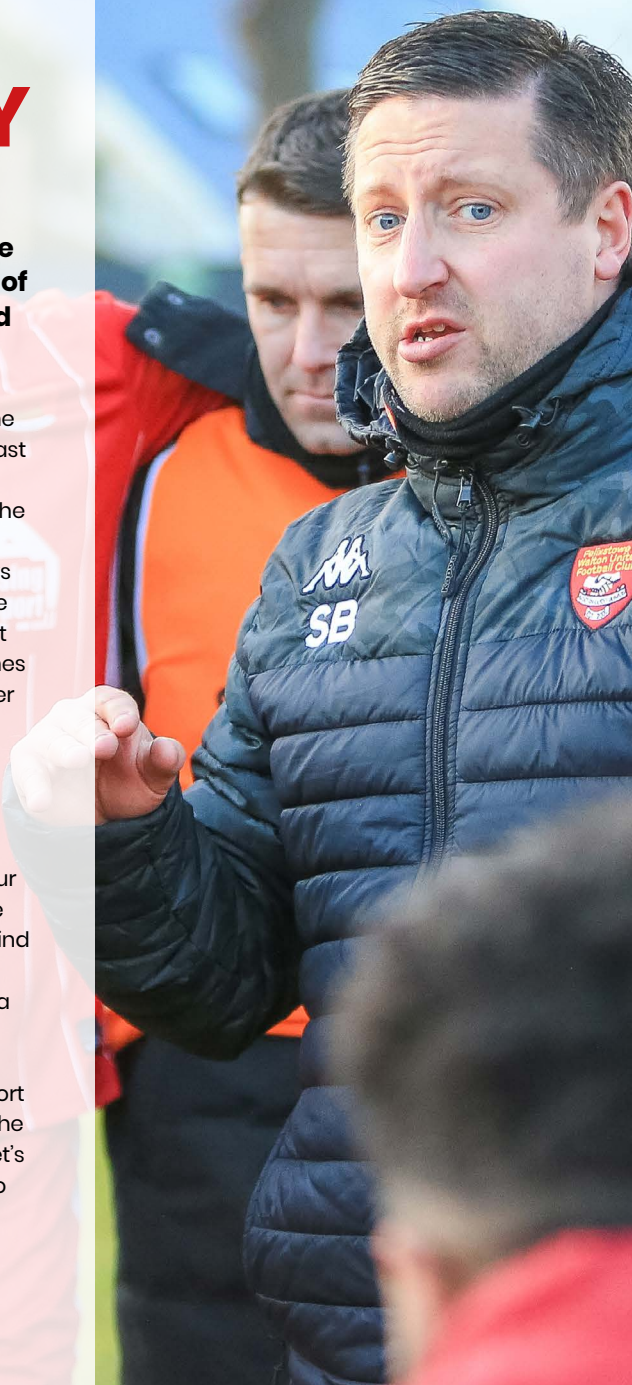
Two defeats on the bounce for us in the cruellest of circumstances have been a bitter pill to swallow these last seven days so we've spoken a lot over the last couple of days with the group about getting that enjoyment back. Of course, winning games is a huge part of that but I'm a firm believer that if you are enjoying your football and playing with a smile on your face, performances will follow and if you are good enough the points will take care of themselves.

We welcome Kirton Kestrels U11's as our mascots today, a great chance for some young lads to see what it's really like behind the scenes of a top non-league club at senior level - who knows, we could have a future Seasiders star amongst them!

So.... Just nine games to go.... four of those at home and five away. A huge effort from all has seen us reach this stage of the season in the position we hoped to be. Let's continue that together and ensure we go one better this year than last!

Enjoy the game,

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# SEASIDER PHIL GRIFFITHS



## Not many people know this ...

*The views I express here are not the views of the football club, but mine alone!*

People who follow my scribbings, and there are at least two, will know one of my pet hates is clubs without their own facilities being promoted up the Non-League ladder, using other peoples' facilities, without the overheads and costs involved in maintaining their own facilities.

You might say this afternoon's visitors fall into that category, but they don't. Yes, they are homeless, yes, they play at Aveley's ground, although I understand that arrangement will end this season. Their genuine reasons for not playing at their own ground will be in their club notes elsewhere in this edition, I'm sure.

They are where they are through no fault of their own... that doesn't fly with others though. In our division alone we have leaders Hashtag United playing at Bowers & Pitsea, New Salamis playing at Haringey Borough's ground & Gorleston, playing at Crown Meadow (Lowestoft Town).

Gorleston fall into the same category as our visitors with their Emerald Park ground



sold off by their landlords and while having a new ground, it's not yet up to the required standard for step 4, hence their temporary use of Crown Meadow.

I'm sure both Gorleston and Grays would be happy to plough the money spent on using other club's facilities into their own, given the opportunity, and I wish nothing but the best to our visitors in their quest to find a new home.

That leaves Hashtag and New Salamis... I don't know too much about the latter but I do know when our club got promoted we spent almost £50,000 on upgrades to our facilities while the other new club spent ... £0 on theirs.

Call me biased but I don't think that makes for an even playing field!

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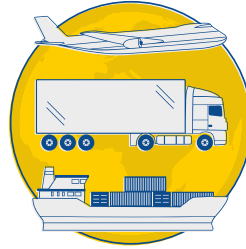
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# ISTHMIAN NORTH LAST SIX MATCHES FORM

Hashtag United	W 2-0 v LOWE..	W 2-1 v MALD..	W 2-1 v NEW..	W 2-1 v COGG..	W 3-2 v AFC..	W 8-1 v TILB..
Gorleston	D 2-2 v STOW..	L 2-1 v GRAY..	W 3-0 v HULL..	W 1-0 v BURY..	W 3-1 v HEYB..	W 4-1 v WITH..
Lowestoft Town	L 2-0 v HASH..	D 2-2 v WROX..	W 2-0 v TILB..	W 4-0 v WITH..	W 3-1 v COGG..	W 1-0 v FELI..
East Thurrock United	W 1-0 v WITH..	D 1-1 v BREN..	W 1-0 v BURY..	W 2-0 v GRE..	W 2-1 v HULL..	L 2-1 v STOW..
Grays Athletic	D 0-0 v STOW..	D 0-0 v NEW..	W 2-1 v GORL..	W 2-0 v TILB..	W 2-0 v WROX..	D 2-2 v BASI..
Basildon United	D 1-1 v GRE..	L 1-0 v MALD..	W 1-0 v STOW..	W 3-1 v TILB..	W 3-1 v BURY..	D 2-2 v GRAY..
Brentwood Town	D 0-0 v HEYB..	D 1-1 v EAST..	D 1-1 v NEW..	D 1-1 v COGG..	W 2-0 v BURY..	W 2-0 v MALD..
AFC Sudbury	W 2-1 v TILB..	W 2-1 v FELI..	D 2-2 v HEYB..	L 3-2 v HASH..	W 3-0 v HULL..	L 1-0 v STOW..
Felixstowe & Walton United	W 4-0 v GRE..	L 2-1 v AFC..	W 2-1 v MALD..	W 2-1 v WROX..	L 4-3 v NEW..	L 1-0 v LOWE..
Coggeshall Town	W 2-1 v EAST..	W 4-0 v GORL..	D 0-0 v BURY..	L 2-1 v HASH..	D 1-1 v BREN..	L 3-1 v LOWE..
Heybridge Swifts	L 1-0 v WROX..	D 0-0 v BREN..	W 2-1 v WITH..	D 2-2 v AFC..	W 3-0 v NEW..	L 3-1 v GORL..
Stowmarket Town	D 0-0 v GRAY..	D 2-2 v GORL..	L 2-1 v WITH..	L 1-0 v BASI..	W 2-1 v EAST..	W 1-0 v AFC..
Wroxham	D 0-0 v BURY..	W 1-0 v BASI..	D 2-2 v LOWE..	W 2-1 v HULL..	L 2-1 v FELI..	L 2-0 v GRAY..
Witham Town	W 2-1 v STOW..	W 2-0 v TILB..	L 4-0 v LOWE..	D 1-1 v NEW..	L 3-2 v GRE..	L 4-1 v GORL..
New Salamis	D 0-0 v GRAY..	L 2-1 v HASH..	D 1-1 v BREN..	L 3-0 v HEYB..	D 1-1 v WITH..	W 4-3 v FELI..
Maldon & Tiptree	D 0-0 v BURY..	L 2-1 v HASH..	L 2-1 v FELI..	W 1-0 v BASI..	D 0-0 v GRE..	L 2-0 v BREN..
Great Wakering Rovers	L 1-0 v BURY..	L 4-0 v FELI..	D 1-1 v BASI..	L 2-0 v EAST..	D 0-0 v MALD..	W 3-2 v WITH..
Hullbridge Sports	W 1-0 v STOW..	L 2-1 v NEW..	L 2-1 v WROX..	L 3-0 v GORL..	L 2-1 v EAST..	L 3-0 v AFC..
Bury Town	D 0-0 v MALD..	D 0-0 v COGG..	L 1-0 v EAST..	L 1-0 v GORL..	L 2-0 v BREN..	L 3-1 v BASI..
Tilbury	L 2-1 v AFC..	L 2-0 v LOWE..	L 2-0 v WITH..	L 2-0 v GRAY..	L 3-1 v BASI..	L 8-1 v HASH..

## LEAGUE GOALSCORERS

1	Nnamdi Nwachuku	AFC Sudbury	32
2	Derek Asamoah	New Salamis	17
3	Sam Bantick	Grays Athletic	16
4	Jake Reed	Lowestoft Town	16
5	Adam Hipperson	Lowestoft Town	15
6	Cemal Ramadan	Bury Town	15
7	<b>Joshua Hitter</b>	<b>Felixstowe &amp; Walton United</b>	<b>13</b>
8	Alex Teniola	Hashtag United	12
9	Brian Moses	East Thurrock United	11
10	Louie Remi	New Salamis	11
11	Adam Vyse	Witham Town	11
12	Max Cornhill	Hashtag United	10







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# ISTHMIAN NORTH DIVISION TABLE 2022/23

POS		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Hashtag United	30	26	1	3	82	29	+53	79
2	AFC Sudbury	30	23	3	4	69	29	+40	72
3	Lowestoft Town	29	20	4	5	65	28	+37	64
4	<b>Grays Athletic</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>+17</b>	<b>56</b>
5	<b>Felixstowe &amp; Walton United</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>+27</b>	<b>55</b>
6	Stowmarket Town	29	16	6	7	49	30	+19	54
7	Heybridge Swifts	30	15	8	7	50	30	+20	53
8	East Thurrock United	30	14	5	11	43	44	-1	47
9	New Salamis	30	12	9	9	52	53	-1	45
10	Brentwood Town	29	12	6	11	40	36	+4	42
11	Bury Town	30	10	9	11	26	26	0	39
12	Wroxham	30	9	10	11	38	46	-8	37
13	Basildon United	30	8	9	13	35	47	-12	33
14	Maldon & Tiptree	30	8	5	17	31	47	-16	29
15	Gorleston	29	8	3	18	40	64	-24	27
16	Witham Town	30	8	3	19	38	65	-27	27
17	Tilbury	29	5	4	20	27	63	-36	19
18	Hullbridge Sports	29	5	3	21	26	59	-33	18
19	Coggeshall Town	28	3	8	17	20	48	-28	17
20	Great Wakering Rovers	29	4	5	20	34	65	-31	17

LAST UPDATED: TUESDAY 7TH MARCH 2023 AT 21:44:04

## ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH DIVISION

**SATURDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH - 3PM KO**

Basildon United	v	Gorleston
Brentwood Town	v	Great Wakering Rovers
Bury Town	v	Tilbury
Coggeshall Town	v	Witham Town
East Thurrock United	v	Wroxham
Heybridge Swifts	v	Hashtag United
Lowestoft Town	v	Hullbridge Sports
New Salamis	v	AFC Sudbury
Stowmarket Town	v	Maldon & Tiptree





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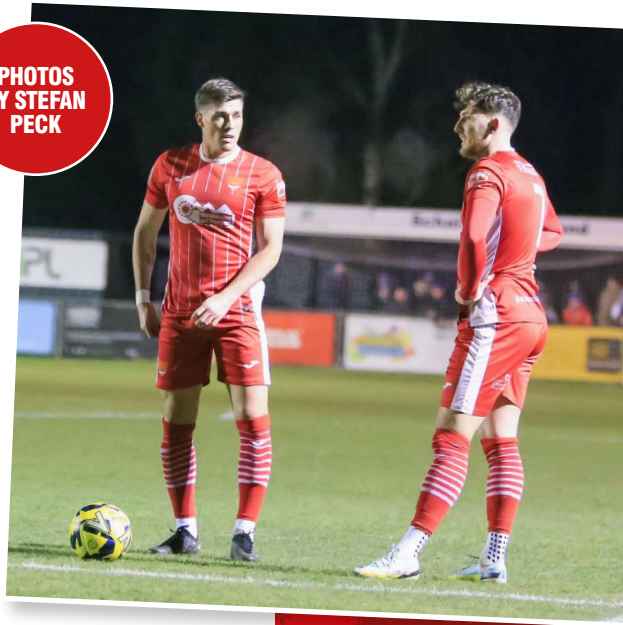
# MATCH PHOTOS

PHOTOS  
BY STEFAN  
PECK

TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH  
ISTHMIAN NORTH

**Felixstowe & Walton Utd 0  
Lowestoft Town 1**

Felixstowe & Walton United welcomed third place Lowestoft Town. We expected a close match, and we got one, but perhaps we didn't expect three red cards to go with it. The only goal went to the travelling Trawler Boys, Owen Murphy scoring it just before the hour, but the hosts were already a man down by then, Joe Whight seeing red ten minutes before the break. A red card for Harry Knights with eleven minutes remaining made it ten v ten, but right at the end the hosts went down to nine, Callum Bennett taking a very slightly early bath. The Seasiders slip to fifth.



## HOW WE LINED UP

1. Callum Robinson
2. Callum Bennett
3. Charlie Warren
4. Billy Holland
5. Milo Grimes
6. Joe Whight
7. Josh Hitter
8. Noel Aitkens
9. Andy Fennell
10. Zak Brown
11. Andre Hasanally

## SUBS

12. Harry Blackburn
14. Henry Barley
15. Lamell Howell
16. Callum Harrison
17. Sam Ford





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# OUR SQUAD

Introducing the Felixstowe & Walton United playing squad and management team of 2022/2023.



## STUART BOARDLEY MANAGER

Stuart started his footballing career at Ipswich Town leaving in 2004 after 10 years. He went on to play for Torquay United, Sudbury, Leiston and Felixstowe. In 2018 he was appointed as Manager of Leiston but left in 2019 to become Manager of Felixstowe & Walton United.

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## ANDY CRUMP ASSISTANT MANAGER

Andy returned to Felixstowe & Walton United as Assistant Manager following the appointment of Stuart Boardley in 2019. Having enjoyed success in previous spells at the club as both player and First Team Coach.

**SPONSORS:** Chris & Jayne Ryan



## KOTRYNA STOKNAITE SPORTS THERAPIST

Kotryna Stoknaite is a BSC Sports Therapy graduate from the University of Essex. During her undergraduate degree she had the opportunity to work as a Sports Therapist for the Colchester Rugby First team, as well as treating patients weekly at the university clinic.

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## STUART STEVENSON COACH

After hanging up his boots Stuart joined Felixstowe Utd as a fitness coach/physio, then on to Trimley to help coach his son's team from the U8s-U16s. Stuart rejoined the Seaside's to coach the U18s which lead him on to being part of the first team staff. Stuart is an FA level 2 coach and an FA level 1 mentor.

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## GARY HAMMOND GOALKEEPER COACH

Gary is in his fifth season with the club. He was part of the double winning team with Walton Utd before the merger with Felixstowe. He has a wealth of experience having previously played for Stowmarket, Woodbridge and Ipswich Wanderers. Gary is also Club Treasurer.

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## **CALLUM ROBINSON** **GOALKEEPER**

Callum joined the club in 2020 from Stowmarket Town. He started his career at Colchester United before playing for Wroxham, AFC Sudbury and spent time on loan at Brantham Athletic.

**SPONSOR:** Barry Caley



## **STUART AINSLEY** **LEFT BACK**

Stuart joined the club for his second spell in 2014 from Lowestoft Town. Previous clubs include Chelmsford City and AFC Sudbury. Stuart spent 10 years at Ipswich Town, winning the FA Youth Cup in 2005. Stuart has a sweet left foot and a great work ethic.

**SPONSORS:** Chris & Jayne Ryan



## **JOE WHIGHT** **DEFENDER**

Joe came through the ITFC Youth system before playing for the likes of Needham, Bury and most recently AFC Sudbury where he captained their side. A left sided defender, Joe offers composure, a wonderful left foot and a toughness and desire to defend to the back line.

**SPONSORS:** Richard & Jenny Bugg



## **CALLUM BENNETT** **RIGHT BACK**

Callum is in his second spell at the club having re-joined in late 2018. An attacking full back with one of the best ball deliveries in non-league football. Callum has plenty of experience from his time at Ipswich U18s, Stoke City U21s and Notts County.

**SPONSOR:** Dave Ablitt



## **CURTIS HAYNES-BROWN** **DEFENDER**

Curtis joined in 2020 from Stanway Rovers and has a fine Isthmian league pedigree. Previous clubs include AFC Sudbury, Lowestoft Town, Yeovil Town, Cambridge Utd, AFC Wimbledon, Macclesfield Town and Maldon & Tiptree.

**SPONSORS:** George & Shirley Ainsley



## **MILO GRIMES** **DEFENDER**

Milo joins the Seasiders from Coggeshall Town where he was ever present during the last campaign. A tough tackling centre half but with ability to play out from the back. A good leader and talker for a 22 year old, and sure to become a firm fan favourite.

**SPONSORS:** Stefan Peck, Stan Baston, Tom Bradford, Stevan Webb & Sons Roofing



## **HARRY KNOCK** **DEFENDER**

Harry joins the Seaside on a permanent deal following his hugely successful loan spell in 2021/22 season. Harry, a former Scholar at ITFC, quickly became a fan favourite and an integral part of the side finishing in the play offs.

**SPONSORS:** Chris Worrall



## **HARRY BLACKBURN** **RIGHT BACK/MIDFIELDER**

Like Charlie Warren, Harry graduated through the Needham Market academy and joins the Seaside predominantly as an attacking fullback. Harry plays with confidence in possession and supporters will enjoy seeing him create chances for our forward players.

**SPONSOR:** Chris Walne



## **BILLY HOLLAND** **MIDFIELDER**

Billy started life at Ipswich Wanderers and has had spells at Needham, Leiston and AFC Sudbury. He's established himself as a mainstay in the centre of midfield. Players player and Supporters player of the year last season has led to him being appointed captain for the forthcoming year.

**SPONSOR:** Andy Clarke



## **NOEL AITKENS** **MIDFIELDER**

Noel's signing for the club in 2020 caused a stir amongst the non-league world, joining from step 3 Leiston and being described by manager Boardley as "the best midfield player in this area". Noel is quick, strong, can tackle, is athletic and can really play football!

**SPONSORS:** Becky Wybrow, Richard & Jenny Bugg, Darren Walne



## **LEON OTTLEY-GOOCH** **MIDFIELDER**

Leon signed for the club in 2020 and is another vastly experienced player at step 3 and 4 level. Previous clubs include Leiston, Bury Town, Hadleigh Utd and Stowmarket Town. Leon is very versatile but is predominantly a dynamic midfield player.

**SPONSORS:** Phil & Jan Griffiths



## **JOSH HITTER** **MIDFIELDER**

Josh signed for us in 2021 having played his football at Step 3 side Leiston for the previous three seasons and gained a vast amount of experience at that level. Josh is a dynamic attack minded player who likes to arrive in the box late and score goals.

**SPONSOR:** Les Soall



## **CALLUM HARRISON** **MIDFIELDER**

Former Colchester United, Needham, Sudbury and more recently Chelmsford midfielder joins the Seaside for the 22/23 campaign. A highly sought after creative and technically gifted midfielder player that loves to get forward and provide the team with both goals and assists.

**SPONSOR:** Winnifred McClean



## **RORY PORTER** **MIDFIELDER**

Rory is one of the brightest players in recent years to progress through the youth system at Felixstowe & Walton. Having worked hard in the U23's during the 2021/22 season, Rory progresses permanently into the first team squad for the up and coming season.

**SPONSOR:** Paul Secker



## **HENRY BARLEY** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Henry signed for the club in 2019 following his contract expiring at Ipswich Town. Another popular young player who had also been on loan from the then EFL Championship club the previous season.

**SPONSOR:** Steve Foley Transport Ltd



## **LAMELL HOWELL** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Lamell signed from Brightlingsea Regent in 2020. He can play on both wings or in the number 10 position and brings pace and trickery to the side. He has previously played for Stowmarket Town, Debenham FC and Brantham Athletic.

**SPONSORS:** Steve & Kate Garnham



## **CHARLIE WARREN** **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Having initially joined on loan from Needham Market, Charlie made an instant impact on his debut in the FA Trophy win at Hastings. Following a number of impressive performances, manager Boardley moved quickly to secure the permanent services of one of Suffolk's brightest young players.

**SPONSORS:** Suffolk Carpet Weavers, SCW Racing, Danny Soall



## **ANDY FENNEL** **FORWARD**

A recent signing from rivals Heybridge Swifts, Andy brings lightning pace and a real direct style to the forward line. He has scored goals at Step 2, 3 & 4 and lists Leiston, Needham Market and Chelmsford amongst his former clubs. Comfortable anywhere across the front three, Andy joins hoping to fire us up to Step 3.

**SPONSOR:** AVAILABLE TO SPONSOR



## GEORGE CLARKE FORWARD

George joined the Seaside from Stowmarket Town in 2020 and has previously played for Ipswich Town, AFC Sudbury, Needham Market, Brightlingsea Regent and Brantham Athletic. George is a powerful and dynamic centre forward that is looking to make his mark following a lengthy spell on the sidelines through injury.

**SPONSOR:** Kedan Logistics Ltd



## OLLIE CANFER FORWARD

Ollie made a dramatic impact when he joined the club in November 2019, signing from Mildenhall Town. "Canfs" burst onto the scene scoring 9 goals in 13 games. The fans love his non-stop running and desire to cause defensive headaches for the opposition.

**SPONSORS:** Steven Seeley, Andy & Kim Wilding



## ANDRE HASANALLY FORWARD

Andre joins the Seaside following a successful loan spell from Colchester United in the 2021/22 season. A versatile forward with the ability to create as many as he scores.

**SPONSORS:** AVAILABLE TO SPONSOR



## ZAK BROWN FORWARD

A sought after and highly rated young striker with blistering pace and a great goal scoring record. At just 17, Zak penned a two year pro contract with ITFC where he was a regular marksman in the U23's. Zak started life in the Seaside's Youth sections and has returned to lead the forward line as the club's No. 9.

**SPONSORS:** Chris & Kate Daynes



## SAM FORD FORWARD

Having spent a successful period with Arbroath last season that saw them just miss out on promotion to the Scottish Premiership, Sam spent the Summer with Hume City FC in Australia before returning to Felixstowe. Coming through ITFC and later West Ham's academy, Sam is a local talent who will provide real firepower in front of goal.

**SPONSOR:** Craig Studd

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

"The Isthmian Football League strongly supports the FA statement that there should be a zero-tolerance approach against racism and all forms of discrimination.

Accordingly, any form of discriminatory abuse whether it by reason of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex and sexual orientation or any other form of abuse will be reported to The Football Association for action by that Association." (The FA 0800 085 0508 / Kick it Out 020 7253 0162). The Isthmian League and all Member Clubs in the League are committed to promoting equality by treating people fairly and with respect, by recognising that inequalities may exist, by taking steps to address them and providing access and opportunities for all members of the community."



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# FIXTURES 2022/23

## AUGUST

SAT 13	BRENTWOOD TOWN <i>Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	Att 167
TUE 16	GORLESTON <i>Warren, Harrison, Canfer</i>	H	7.45PM	LEAGUE	W 3-2	Att 332
SAT 20	DEREHAM TOWN	A	3PM	FA CUP PRELIM RND	L 2-0	Att 229
SAT 27	BASILDON UNITED	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-0	Att 283
MON 29	COGGESHALL TOWN <i>Aitkens, Harrison, Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-1	Att 157

## SEPTEMBER

TUE 13	BURGESS HILL TOWN <i>Whight, Harrison - Burgess Hill Town win 3-2 on pens</i>	H	7.45PM	FA TROPHY 1 <sup>ST</sup>	D 2-2	Att 185
SAT 17	NEW SALAMIS <i>Harrison 2, Canfer 3</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	D 5-0	Att 317
TUE 27	WITHAM TOWN <i>Holland 2, Maycock</i>	H	7.45PM	VELOCITY CUP 1 <sup>ST</sup>	D 3-1	Att 239

## OCTOBER

SAT 01	WROXHAM <i>Brown, Harrison</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	Att 180
SAT 08	MALDON & TIPTREE <i>Hitter, Holland, Whight</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-1	Att 460
TUE 11	CHERTSEY TOWN <i>Brown, Holland</i>	A	7.45PM	VELOCITY CUP 2 <sup>ND</sup>	L 2-0	Att 203
SAT 15	GRAYS ATHLETIC <i>Hitter, Holland</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 3-2	Att 309
SAT 22	HASHTAG UNITED <i>Brown, Clarke, Warren, Hitter</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	L 4-0	Att 658
TUE 25	AFC SUDBURY	A	7.45PM	LEAGUE	W 1-0	Att 320
SAT 29	GREAT WAKERING ROVERS <i>Hitter, Clarke</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	Att 334

## NOVEMBER

TUE 08	ENFIELD TOWN <i>Ford</i>	H	7.45PM	VELOCITY CUP 3 <sup>RD</sup>	L 2-1	Att 209
SAT 12	TILBURY <i>Ford, Warren</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	Att 329
SAT 19	HULLBRIDGE SPORTS <i>Brown, Ford</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	Att 148
SAT 26	HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS <i>Whight</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 2-1	Att 343

## DECEMBER

<b>SAT 03</b>	<b>WITHAM TOWN</b> <i>Aitkens, Hitter, Whight 2</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 4-1</b>	<b>Att 364</b>
<b>TUE 27</b>	<b>COGGESHALL TOWN</b> <i>Warren</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>1PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>D 1-1</b>	<b>Att 464</b>

## JANUARY

<b>MON 02</b>	<b>STOWMARKET TOWN</b> <i>Warren, Canfer, Whight</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 3-2</b>	<b>Att 516</b>
<b>SAT 07</b>	<b>BRENTWOOD TOWN</b> <i>Clarke, Hitter</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 2-0</b>	<b>Att 310</b>
<b>SAT 28</b>	<b>TILBURY</b> <i>Brown, Clarke, Harrison</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 3-1</b>	<b>Att 170</b>
<b>TUE 31</b>	<b>BURY TOWN</b> <i>Holland</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L 2-1</b>	<b>Att 404</b>

## FEBRUARY

<b>SAT 04</b>	<b>HULLBRIDGE SPORTS</b> <i>Clarke, Whight</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 2-1</b>	<b>Att 411</b>
<b>TUE 07</b>	<b>EAST THURROCK UNITED</b> <i>Ottley-Gooch, Canfer</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>D 2-2</b>	<b>Att 198</b>
<b>SAT 11</b>	<b>GREAT WAKERING ROVERS</b> <i>Ottley-Gooch, Hitter (2), Canfer</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>2PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 4-0</b>	<b>Att 105</b>
<b>TUE 14</b>	<b>AFC SUDBURY</b> <i>Hitter</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L 2-1</b>	<b>Att 434</b>
<b>SAT 18</b>	<b>MALDON &amp; TIPTREE</b> <i>Hitter (2)</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 2-1</b>	<b>Att 229</b>
<b>TUE 21</b>	<b>NEEDHAM MARKET</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>SFAPCUP 2<sup>ND</sup> R</b>	<b>L 5-0</b>	<b>Att 166</b>
<b>SAT 25</b>	<b>WROXHAM</b> <i>Holland, Ford</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>W 2-1</b>	<b>Att 363</b>

## MARCH

<b>SAT 04</b>	<b>NEW SALAMIS</b> <i>Whight, Fennell, Ford</i>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L4-3</b>	<b>Att 127</b>
<b>TUE 07</b>	<b>LOWESTOFT TOWN</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>L1-0</b>	<b>Att 264</b>
<b>SAT 11</b>	<b>GRAYS ATHLETIC</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 18</b>	<b>HASHTAG UNITED</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>TUE 21</b>	<b>GORLESTON</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>7.45PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 25</b>	<b>BASILDON UNITED</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		

## APRIL

<b>SAT 01</b>	<b>EAST THURROCK UNITED</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 08</b>	<b>BURY TOWN</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>MON 10</b>	<b>STOWMARKET TOWN</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 15</b>	<b>WITHAM TOWN</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		
<b>SAT 22</b>	<b>HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3PM</b>	<b>LEAGUE</b>		

# THE OTHER SIDE: GRAYS ATHLETIC

The roots of the modern day Grays Athletic can be traced back as far as 1888, although 1890 has become the de facto established formation date. The reasons for this disparity are almost certainly lost in the mists of time. Grays Athletic therefore celebrated its centenary in 1990, played at The Recreation Ground, Bridge Road from 1906 to 2010, and became members of the Athenian League in 1912.

Grays became very strong after the Second World War, winning the Essex Senior Cup in 1945 and winning the Corinthian League and Cup in 1946. They rejoined the Athenian League in 1958 where they remained until 1983.

In 1981 the Club Patron Mr Ron Billings purchased the ground and the Club was reformed as a Limited Company in 1982 under the guidance of Jeff and Fred Saxton. In 1983 a fire destroyed the 400-seater stand that included the dressing and kit rooms. Ron Billings came to the rescue by building the Ball Court Complex that included dressing rooms, club room and bar. Grays went on to become Isthmian Division 2 Champions in 1985.

The 1987-88 season saw the Club promoted to the then Vauxhall Opel Premier League after amassing 100 points. They then won the Essex Senior Cup and the Essex Thameside Trophy. A great FA Cup run in 1988-89 ended in the First Round proper, losing 2-0 away at Bath City. Grays won the League Cup, defeating Enfield in 1991-92.

In 1993-94 and 1994-95 the Club won the Essex Senior Cup by defeating Billericay Town on both occasions. Relegated to Division One in 1997, they returned to the Premier Division in 1999-00. The FA Cup campaign in 2000-01 ended with defeat in the First Round proper for the third time, losing 4-0 away at Reading. This signalled the start of major changes with Mike Woodward installed as Director of Football, Craig Edwards as Manager and the departure of Jeff and Fred Saxton after 25 years of loyal service. Season 2002-03 started poorly and saw Edwards depart, being replaced by Mark Stimson as player manager who appointed Scott Barrett as his assistant. Ahead of the 2003-04 season, the Club made the bold decision to turn most of the players into full time professionals, with the majority of players in their early twenties.

Despite being knocked out of the FA Cup in the second qualifying round, 2004-05 became the most successful in the Club's history. Stimson and







his players won a number of manager and player of the month awards, with three players being called into the England National XI squad: Stuart Thurgood, Mitchell Cole and Dennis Oli. The ultimate success being crowned League Champions of the Nationwide Conference South and winning the FA Trophy; beating Hucknall Town on penalties at Villa Park. Additionally, the Recreation Ground had been upgraded sufficiently to allow for promotion into the Nationwide Conference for season 2005-06.

Mark Stimson's philosophy of entertaining the crowds proved to be very successful with a blend of youthful exuberance and the outstanding quality of the more experienced players. Having equalled the Conference record of Kettering Town and going unbeaten in the first 15 fixtures of the season, both manager and players alike won several monthly awards. A contentious 3-0 defeat at the hands of Mansfield Town in the FA Cup was put to one side as the team turned their attention to the FA Trophy and the league. The Club's first season in the top flight of non-league ended in disappointment as they finished 3rd in the league, and went on to lose 5-4 on aggregate to Halifax Town in the play-off semi-finals. The team put the loss behind them as they won a second successive FA Trophy, this time winning 2-0 against Woking at Upton Park in front of more than 8,000 of their own fans in an attendance of nearly 15,000.

Following Mark Stimson's resignation, the Club appointed former European Cup winner Frank Gray to manage the side in the summer of 2006. Despite the pre-season expectations, Gray only lasted 18 matches before both Jamie Stuart and Mick Woodward had short spells in charge of the first team. Andy King was appointed manager, but his spell was short-lived and he left shortly afterwards, taking control of just seven matches.

Justin Edinburgh was the club's 4th manager of the season, and under his leadership the Club reached the FA Trophy semi-finals where they lost to eventual winners Stevenage Borough. Survival in the League went to the last day of the season and despite losing 1-0 to Morecambe, the club stayed up courtesy of other results going their way. An extremely indifferent 2007-08 campaign ultimately led to the Edinburgh's departure, before once again Mick Woodward took the reins with Gary Phillips as his assistant. With only three defeats in the final 17 games, Grays only ended 11 points outside the playoffs. The management led the side into the following season, but Mick Woodward stepped down, and replaced himself with Wayne Burnett who stayed in the job for four months before leaving the Club. Gary Phillips was promoted from assistant manager for the remainder of the season and the club finished in 19th position.

2009-10 turned out to be the fifth and final in

the Conference Premier as both John Moncur (Chairman) and Andy Swallow (Chief Executive) joined the Club. Julian Dicks was brought in to replace Gary Phillips in September 2009, and Kenny Brown was soon appointed his assistant after resigning from his position as manager of CD Javea in Spain.

The team struggled throughout the season, winning just five league matches and losing in their opening rounds of both the FA Cup and FA Trophy. The Blues did however manage to end the season on a high, winning two of their final three fixtures – the first of those away at AFC Wimbledon. In doing so, they recorded their first away league win for 16 months.

The final day of the season was a sad affair for the Club, as we said farewell to the Recreation Ground after 114 years. Both the team and the fans did their part, as the team came back to beat Forest Green Rovers 2-1 with Allseny Cissoko scoring the last goal at the ground. Following relegation, the Club resigned from the Conference, deciding they would be unable to field a competitive team in the Conference South due to budget constraints. Following talks with both the FA and the Ryman League, the Club were eventually placed in the Ryman League Division One North.

The end of that season saw the expiry of the lease at the Recreation Ground, and without a home, the Club agreed a two-year deal to play at Rookery Hill, home of near neighbours East Thurrock United. The 2010-11 season was our first at this level for ten years, and despite having a solid start to the league campaign, a lack of consistency was evident throughout the remainder of the season which meant the team came up short in several matches, finally finishing in tenth position.

Following the disappointing campaign, Julian Dicks and Kenny Brown left the club by mutual consent and the one-time Football League player and ex-Thurrock manager Hakan Hayrettin, was appointed as manager with his assistant Hassan Oktay for the 2011-12 season. With Hakan appointed, the remit was to challenge for a playoff place. Despite a few below par performances, the Club secured their playoff place on the penultimate weekend, meeting Enfield Town in the semi-final. Trailing 2-0 with ten minutes left, the team managed to force extra time with two late penalties. Unfortunately, with the match still level after extra time it was decided on penalties, with Grays losing 3-1.

The 2012-13 season was a very successful one for the Club. It started with a move to another temporary home, in Rush Green, Romford in partnership with West Ham United. The ground and its facilities were improved, with the Premier League side responsible for the maintenance of the pitch.



With just 4 league defeats and a run of form in the second half of the season which brought with it 18 successive league wins, the Club won the league with three matches to spare, finishing with a club record of 102 points. Two days after the title was secured, the side had the chance to complete the double, however they fell just short in the Essex Senior Cup final, losing 2-1 to Conference South side, AFC Hornchurch.

The summer of 2013 saw two big changes for the Club in a few short weeks. The stay at Rush Green was brought to an abrupt end, with near-neighbours Aveley stepping in with an offer of a ground share at the last minute. Everyone at the club is grateful to the Aveley Board for this. A short time after it was announced that Hakan Hayrettin would be leaving to join Luton Town. Experienced central defender Ryan Kirby took on the role, assisted by his father Steve Kirby and club captain Lee Flynn.

Season 2013-14 started with a great run of four straight victories in the Isthmian Premier Division including two against highly fancied teams and we led the League at the end of August. A solid start, but we all knew that to stay in that position would be a tough ask and so it proved, with only four wins in the next nine games. Joao Carlos and Jack West were scoring freely, but the team was leaking goals and by the end of September we were lying in mid-table. A return to the team of fans' favourite Danny Bunce lifted the spirits of the supporters but the results still kept slipping away. A run of only five wins from October to the end of February saw Grays slip towards the relegation zone and a run of postponements due to heavy rain saw the mood within the camp at a low ebb. Even a run to the semi-finals of the League Cup couldn't lift the gloom. Everything changed when prolific scorer Leroy Griffiths returned to the Club almost ten years since leaving. His enthusiasm and character changed the Club's fortunes and with several other new signings the team found their confidence and fought their way back up the table with wins at regular intervals with Carlos, Dagenham & Redbridge loanee Joel Nouble and new signing Chris Benjamin scoring plenty of goals.

It took until the middle of April to catch up with the fixture backlog and the team had to play two or even three games a week, within which time they settled into a mid-table position - very commendable when you consider players have jobs outside football. The last game of the season saw the team lying in a safe position with a trip to high-flying Maidstone. Two coach loads of supporters and many more going by car meant that 150 fans travelled to Kent to cheer on the Blues. Although we lost a competitive game 2-1, everybody enjoyed the trip and gave the players



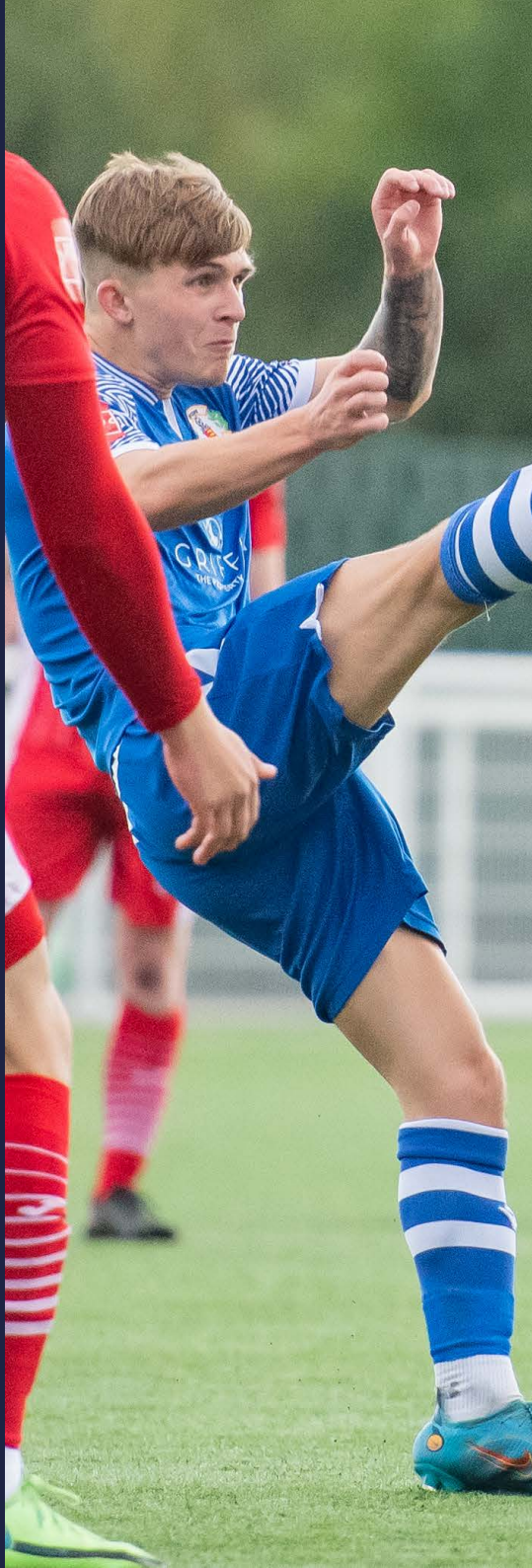
a standing ovation at the final whistle, a great tribute to the thirty-odd players who had pulled on the shirt for our first season back in the Ryman Premier League in 10 years.

By the time the players got together for their first training session for the 2014–15 season on 28 June, we already had another new manager in place. A few days earlier Ryan Kirby had announced his resignation with family and business reasons leading to his decision. It showed once again the time required to manage a Club at our level. The Club acted quickly to interview candidates for his replacement and selected 35 year-old Jody Brown, who had stepped into the breach at Heybridge Swifts in December 2013 when their management duo left to take over at Chelmsford City. Jody moved quickly to assess the strength of the squad at his disposal and introduce a number of new players to assist the club in its plans to improve on and off the field.

At the end of December 2014 Jody Brown departed to take over the manager's role at Conference National side Welling FC. Player Mark Bentley was installed as assistant manager to Andy Swallow, before taking over the role of caretaker manager in January 2015. In February 2015 the Club announced that Mark had been appointed permanent manager for the remainder of the 2014-15 season. The season culminated in a superb run of results for the Club, including an unbeaten run of thirteen matches, which saw the team miss out on the playoffs as a result of a 94th minute goal elsewhere on the final day of the season.

The 2015-16 season was a real see-saw affair. A great start saw us top of the League after 10 games and a good FA Cup run took the Blues to the final qualifying round, but we lost in a replay to National League side, Welling United. As we approached Christmas, there was unrest within the squad as a number of players were being encouraged by agents to look further afield in their careers. By the end of the season, 20 registered players had left the club, as owner, Andy Swallow, decided it was time to reduce his financial support for the Club. A run of ten straight defeats saw us finish in 15th place in the League, with many youngsters filling the gaps in the squad left by the departed players.

Andy Swallow stepped down and invited a group of supporters to create a new Supporter Owned Club. A successful community share offer was launched at the end of June 2016 to demonstrate the club's financial viability for the 2016-17 season. This gave the Club the confidence to apply to the Football Association and the Ryman League for permission to transfer its membership from the company that ran the Club to a new organisation – "Grays Athletic Community Football Club". In



November 2016 Grays Athletic Community Football Club received official confirmation from the FA and League that the transfer of ownership had been approved.

The 2016-17 season was always going to be one of transition with the club moving from private to supporter ownership. On the field, former playing legend, Jamie Stuart returned as player/manager, but he had to start from scratch with a new squad of players. 60 players attended pre-season trials and a squad was eventually chosen to represent the Club in the Ryman Premier Division. It proved to be a difficult season, with the team spending most of the season at the bottom of the table. Relegation was confirmed with a 1-0 away defeat at Wingate and Finchley on 1 April 2017.

2017-18 was very disappointing even though Jamie Stuart brought three experienced former Grays' players – midfielder, Barry Cogan and forwards, Dennis Oli and Jamie Slabber, into the fold in pre-season and later recruited former defenders, Richard Halle and Joe Bruce. We spent most of the season hovering around the top ten without really threatening the leading pack. By the end of March, we were on course to finish in the top half of the table, but a run of five consecutive defeats in April, saw us finish 16th out of 24.

2018-19 proved to be another "in and out" season, although we did flirt with a play-off position on a few occasions. Towards the end of March 2019, with the club in ninth position in the league and ten games remaining, the board agreed to part company with Jamie Stuart and appointed the experienced former Metropolitan Police FC manager, Jim Cooper, supported by Paul Joynes as his assistant and Chris Bourne as coach. The last ten games saw some changes in playing personnel and we took sixteen points to finish seventh. Jim has begun to rebuild the squad with a good mix of experience and youth. He is very committed to working with our burgeoning youth section, which now boasts 27 teams. With three girls' teams, veterans and even walking footballers, we can now provide all-inclusive, all-ability football for ages from 4 to 75! At the League AGM in June 2019, the Club was delighted to receive two awards – the Community Club of the Year and the best Programme in the North Division for the 2018-19 season.

2019-20 – That was the season that...wasn't. It started promisingly, fell away badly and finally ended sadly when the coronavirus caused our football to be called off in March 2020 and League records expunged. For the record, if not the record books, we were sitting in 14th place in the division with nine games left to play.

2020-21. The Covid-19 pandemic caused more cessations to competitive football and ultimately



the season was curtailed, apparently to allow the few games that were played – six league games and four cup games for us – to stand in the record books. Again, for the record, we were eighth in the division after our last game on 28 October 2020, a 1-0 home win over Great Wakering Rovers.

2021-22. Jim Cooper retired from football early in the season and his good friend and assistant, Paul Joynes, became manager. Despite the disappointment of losing FA Cup and Trophy games at the first attempt, our league season was the best since we became supporter owned. Finishing in 6th position whilst competing against clubs with much greater resources, was a great achievement. Paul Joynes retired from football management at the end of the season, but accepted an invitation to join the board to assist with club development. Club captain, Lewis Dark, supported by coach, Ashley Miller, as his assistant, was given his first managerial appointment for the 2022-23 season.

The Club's principal objective remains to develop a new community football facility in conjunction with the new Orsett Heath Academy and Treetops Special Needs School in the North Grays area of Thurrock. Long delays have been caused by the proposals for a new Lower Thames Crossing which would cut across huge swathes of land in the borough, including many acres of land which could provide for the facility we crave and the incidence of the coronavirus which has curtailed the progress of Thurrock Council's new Local Plan, which we hope will make provision for an educational and sporting centre of excellence in North Grays. The elected club board will continue to work with Thurrock Council, Orsett Heath Academy, Treetops School, the Football Association and developers to "Bring Grays Athletic back to Grays".

In the meantime, we continue to groundshare with Avelley FC at their superbly appointed Parkside Stadium.

# THE OTHER SIDE: PLAYER PROFILES

**MARLON AGYAKWA – WINGER.** Marlon joined us in February 2023, just in time to play against his former club, Stowmarket Town in our 0-0 draw with them. He was a youngster at Southend United and played one game on loan for us February 2014, but he was injured on his debut after 33 minutes of a League Cup tie at Chatham, which we went on to win on penalties after a 3-3 draw and he didn't play for us again. He has also represented Aveley, Canvey Island, Oxford City, Didcot Town, Bowers & Pitsea, Tilbury and Brentwood Town.

**SAM BANTICK – FORWARD.** Sam is a highly experienced, goalscoring forward who joined us from Hashtag United in the 2022 close season. He has played for a number of other Essex teams – Coggeshall Town, Brentwood Town, Canvey Island, Aveley, Heybridge Swifts and Romford. He has also represented Cambridge City, Enfield Town and Tonbridge Angels. Lewis Dark has appointed him as club vice-captain.

**ROMAN CAMPBELL – FORWARD.** Roman joined us in December 2022 from League rivals, Maldon & Tiptree, where he scored three goals in nine appearances since he signed for the Jammers in October 2022. He was previously at Tilbury from October 2021, where he soon became their captain and went on to score thirteen goals in thirty one appearances. He was a youth player at Gillingham and has also featured for Ramsgate, Sittingbourne, Folkestone Invicta, Margate and Faversham Town.

**LEWIS CLARK – DEFENDER.** Lewis joined us from Bowers & Pitsea, where he was instrumental in their march to the Isthmian League North title in 2019. He made a total of 117 appearances for them. He also captained the side when they beat us 3-1 in the Second Round of the Essex Thameside Trophy, on 11 September 2019 – the day before he signed for the Blues! Prior to this, he represented Thurrock FC. Manager, Lewis Dark appointed him as our club captain for the 2022-23 season – an appropriate reward for the leadership qualities Lewis has shown since he joined us.

**ARON GORDON – WINGER.** Aron re-joined us from Haringey Borough in September 2021, after he made 23 starts for The Blues in the 2018-19 season, scoring

six goals. He has also played for Waltham Abbey and Redbridge after representing Doncaster Rovers and Watford at youth level. His brother, Nathan played for us in the 2011-12 season when he also scored six goals, from 15 starts.

**SAM GRIEK – GOALKEEPER.** Sam is a product of our thriving youth section. He made his first-team debut as a sixteen-year-old at Coggeshall Town on 18 September 2021 when he came on for the injured Danny Sambridge. With Danny still recovering from his injury a week later, Sam played in a penalty shoot-out defeat in the FA Trophy at Corinthian FC. He continues to develop under the watchful eyes of Danny and goalkeeping coach, Allen Hales. Sam was chosen as our Club Person of the Year for the 2021-22 season.

**MITCH HAHN – MIDFIELDER.** The attacking midfielder started his career in the youth ranks at Bolton Wanderers before moves to Southend United and Wealdstone. He had spells at Redbridge, Aveley, Enfield Town, Bishop's Stortford and VCD. In the 2017-18 season he played for Waltham Abbey, scoring against The Blues at Parkside on 23 December 2017 and joined us for the 2018-19 season. He captained the Maccabi Great Britain football team in the European Games in Budapest in July/August 2019. They lifted the Cup when they triumphed 2-1 over France in the final. In July 2022, Mitch captained them again in the Maccabi World Union Games in Israel. The team won their three group games – 2-1, against France who they had beaten 2-1 in the European games final in 2019, 5-0 against Spain and 1-0 against Australia, to top their group again. Unfortunately, Mitch was injured for the game against Argentina in the quarter-finals and the team lost on penalties after a 1-1 draw after 120 minutes.

**COURTNEY HOMANS – DEFENDER.** Courtney joined us from Essex Senior League champions, Walthamstow FC, in the 2022 close season. He was named in the Essex Senior League "Team of the Year" for the 2021-22 season. He has also represented Hullbridge Sports, Redbridge, Stansted, Woodford Town, Hornchurch and Leatherhead. He was a youth player at West Ham United.

**DAMANI HUNTER – FORWARD.** Damani joined us on loan from Watford in February 2023. He was born in Leytonstone and was initially an Academy player at Watford, but is now a member of their Under 21s. He is a very pacy forward with a sweet left foot and has a bright future in the game.

**MACAULEY JOYNES – DEFENDER.** Macauley signed for the Blues in March 2019. He came through the youth section at Colchester United before completing

a scholarship at Cambridge United. He then moved to Waltham Abbey in 2015 and made 135 appearances. He initially signed for us before the start of the 2018-19 season, but left to join Hertford Town before he made a competitive appearance. He left Hertford and signed for Great Wakering Rovers, but he joined us shortly after his father, Paul, became our Assistant Manager, in February 2019. He has now completed over 100 appearances for the club.

**CALLUM LEAHY – DEFENDER/MIDFIELDER.** Callum re-joined us from Brentwood Town in December 2022. Callum was originally a product of our Under 18 team and made two first-team appearances in our final Conference season in 2019-20. He joined us again in February 2022 from Bowers & Pitsea. He has also represented Basildon United, Tilbury, Heybridge Swifts and Aveley. We were sorry to lose him to Brentwood in the 2022-23 pre-season, but delighted he has returned to us again.

**HENRY LYNCH – MIDFIELDER.** Henry joined the club as part of our youth development system when he was 12. This was a very successful period for the club at youth level winning multiple league titles, being EJA League Champions in 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, the Midweek Cup Champions in 2017-18 and 2018-19 and the London AFA Champions in 2019. He is a natural left footed central midfielder with versatility to play at left full back. He has developed quickly and shown great promise which has seen him rewarded with inclusion into our Under 23 side and this season he has been promoted into the first team squad at just seventeen years of age.

**JESSE OLUKOLU – FORWARD.** A pacy winger, Jesse signed in February 2023 from Premier Division, Brightlingsea Regent where he signed in November 2022, following two and half seasons at Romford FC. He has also had spells at Tilbury, Basildon United and Clapton. Another exciting addition to the squad, who looks to go past defenders and create chances.

**DANNY SAMBRIDGE – GOALKEEPER.** Danny joined us from Coggeshall Town in the 2019 close season. He is a local lad who went to William Edwards School in Grays and fondly remembers that the first time he ever played football was in the indoor ball court at our old Recreation ground in Bridge Road, Grays. His previous clubs include Dagenham & Redbridge, Witham Town, Heybridge Swifts and Maldon and Tiptree. Danny has played nearly 500 senior games, 200 of those whilst at Heybridge Swifts which included the first round of the FA Cup and 2nd round of the FA Trophy.

**MALAKI TOUSSAINT – MIDFIELDER.** Malaki joined in the 2022 close season from Phoenix Sports and has impressed in our pre-season friendlies. He had previously been a regular in the Romford side, whom he joined in November 2018 and played an instrumental part as they managed to avoid relegation that season. He played over 70 games for them before signing for Leatherhead in October 2021 and Phoenix Sports in December 2021. He has previously represented Barkingside, Redbridge, Woodford and Walthamstow.

**CALLUM WATTS – MIDFIELDER.** Callum was a key member of our Under 23 team and graduated to our first team squad in the 2021-22 season. He was selected for the England Colleges team in 2019 and was also a member of the Taunton FC Academy. He scored his debut goal for us in the 4-0 win over Romford in September 2021. He had a short spell at Whitstable Town, but returned to us towards the end of the 2021-22 season.

**GEORGE WINN – DEFENDER.** George signed in July 2022 after a spell at Maldon & Tiptree having played against us on the last day of the 2021-22 season in our 3-2 victory. He joined the Jammers from Isthmian Premier side Hornchurch, where he made 40 appearances spanning three seasons. He had originally signed for the Urchins from Waltham Abbey in 2018. He left Hornchurch in July 2020 and signed for Aveley, but returned to the Urchins in December 2021, from Waltham Abbey. Prior to his first spell at Waltham Abbey he was at Thurrock FC where he made 63 first team appearances. He has also represented Redbridge.

**RONNIE WINN – FORWARD.** Ronnie joined us from Hornchurch FC on the eve of the 2022-23 season to join his twin brother, George, who signed in July 2022. He was with Hornchurch from December 2018 and scored nine goals in 96 appearances, after a spell at Waltham Abbey, where he scored six goals in 14 appearances. Prior to this he made 120 appearances, scoring 31 goals for Thurrock FC. He also represented Redbridge FC. He can also play wide left.

**LEWIS DARK – MANAGER**

**ASHLEY MILLER – ASSISTANT MANAGER**

**DAVE ROSS – COACH**

**ALLEN HALES – GOALKEEPING COACH**

**SOPHIE PANONS – SPORTS THERAPIST**

**SIM MADGEWICK – MATCH DAY AND COACHING ASSISTANT**

**MATT WEST – UNDER 23s MANAGER**

# THE **NON-LEAGUE** PAPER



ESSENTIAL READING FOR FOLLOWERS OF THE NATIONAL GAME

## **LAST week, Paul Fairclough unveiled an England C squad with a difference for this month's clash with Wales C at Altrincham's Moss Lane.**

Mindful of the time of year and the pressures that come with the business end of the season at either end of the table, the wily Young Lions chief has opted to select one player from each of the 24 National League clubs, plus Worthing goalkeeper Harrison Male.

It's a strategy which tells you all you need to know about the 73-year-old who is now in his 21st year in charge of the Young Lions. Looking to avenge a humbling 4-0 defeat to the same opposition 12 months ago, Fairclough could have been well forgiven for raiding big guns Wrexham and Notts County for their finest English talent in a bid to settle the score.

This way, however, the former Barnet and Stevenage coach has shown equal respect to all quarters ahead of the final quarter of the season, but can integrate a new, dynamic squad for the future, while keeping the club bosses on side.

But try naming a National League team without an abundance of talented players these days. Fairclough's provisional 25-man squad – which will be reduced to 16 this week – is jam-packed full of the top performers at Step 1 this season and offers plenty of hope for redemption on Tuesday March 21.

Only one of the 25 have been capped by the Young Lions before, Solihull Moors midfielder Joe Sbarra, while the average age has dropped to 23, from 27 this time last year.

The squad also includes Notts County's 33-goal striker Macaulay Langstaff who, aged

26, is the oldest member of the party.

"It's the first time I've selected a squad on this basis," Fairclough told The NLP. "I've been doing this for 21 years and I know the pressures on clubs at this time of year, no matter how high in the pyramid they are.

"I'm mindful that this is a tremendously important time of the season so I've decided to select just the one player from each National League team so no manager is affected more than any other.

"It will make team bonding more necessary within the squad, but that is what England C is all about. It helps form friends for life. I know players still close friends 20 years later, that bond stays with you."

The shelving of the International Challenge Trophy in 2017 has led to many questioning the future of the England C team, especially in these post-Covid times where finances at the Football Association threw the team's mere existence into doubt.

***"It will make team bonding more necessary within the squad, but that is what England C is all about. It helps form friends for life."***

But you try telling any of the 16 players who take to the field at the J Davidson Stadium next Tuesday that earning an England C international cap means nothing.

In the 21 years Fairclough and his backroom team have taken over the reins, no fewer than 200 players have gone to play in the Football League or higher. One of them, Ethan Pinnock, scored for Brentford against Fulham in the



Premier League on Monday night.

And I wouldn't mind waging you that every single one of the 200+ will point to their England C experience as pivotal to their success.

"It was a highlight of my career and an indication to me that I was doing the right things and to stick with it," Aaron McLean, the former Grays Athletic and Aldershot Town striker who won five England C caps before going on to play for Hull City in the Premier League, told The NLP last year.

"There were periods after I'd dropped out of the League [with Leyton Orient] and I questioned whether or not football would be what I would do or did I need to consider a different path.

"There's no better stage to really show people what you can do with the best players at that level.

"I couldn't believe how good the set-up was. You go back to your club and you feel 10ft tall. It massively helped me.

***"There's no better stage to really show people what you can do with the best players at that level."***

"My school - Robert Clack in Dagenham - have my Premier League shirt up alongside my England C shirt. It shows where I was, playing Non-League and representing my country, and the springboard to move up the Pyramid and end up playing in the Premier League. England C is such an important team."

And then there's Fairclough himself. At 73, he's as motivated as ever to give these players that springboard for success - and then there's his personal pride as well.

"I woke up today and that result last March still hurts deeply," Fairclough added. "This is an important game for us. There is no such things as a friendly, we are playing or pride and for a trophy against a Wales team with a tremendous manager, experienced backroom team and quality players.

"It's going to be tough, but we believe we have a squad to overcome those challenges."

**By Jon Couch**



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# THE FIRST ORIUNDO

BY MARTYN GREEN, THE UNTOLD GAME

Find more at [TheUntoldGame.co.uk](http://TheUntoldGame.co.uk) or on social media @TheUntoldGame



Commissioner Marone, as the new Torino President liked to style himself, was not a natural leader of the sport he had invested in. He was heir to a colossal alcoholic fortune, and would later become the Count Cinzano, but in the mid-1920s he took charge of his hometown club and decided that he would play a part in Mussolini's pursuit of nationalistic pride.

Nobody thought much of it when he visited Buenos Aires on a business trip, he was just absent from the boardroom for a few months. But when he disembarked from a steamer, back on home soil, he brought with him two footballers. One became ill and soon went back home, but the other was Julio Libonatti, who would dominate Italian football, before becoming it's first oriundo, and a national hero.

Libonatti had already been making a name for himself in South America. Born to a poor immigrant family, he had a natural talent for goalscoring. When he was old enough, he went along to what is now one of Argentina's great clubs – Newell's Old Boys – who had been founded two years after he had been born, and showed what he could do. The coaches were impressed, and signed him up there and then. He was just fifteen years old, and within a couple of years he was in the first team, continuing to do what he did best.

Football was booming in Argentina in the early 1920s, as a fierce rivalry with Uruguay drove both sides on to greatness; by the end of the decade, Uruguay were two times World Champions, beating Argentina in both finals. So Libonatti's undoubted talent was difficult



to miss. Over seven years to 1925, he played 141 games and scored 78 goals, delighting supporters with his flair and trickery, along with his unerring accuracy. Nobody quite knows how Marone involved himself with Libonatti, but one can imagine that he took notice when he arrived in Argentina. Contracts were signed, and both made their way back to Italy.

In Turin, he was as much of a sensation as he had been in Buenos Aires. His agility and trickery earned him the nickname Matador, and it was well deserved. Not only did he improve his scoring rate, scoring 106 goals in his first 109 games, he also developed a reputation for laying on goals for his strike partners. The full package, unsurprisingly Torino's tactics in this period could be described as 'give it to Julio'. And his didn't disappoint, leading his



side to two national titles (one of which was revoked) and a final which was lost.

As fascism really embedded itself into Italian lives, Benito Mussolini understood the value of sport in unifying a country. It is a tactic that has been used ever since, by historical heroes and villains, but in the 1920s, the rapid professionalisation and nationalisation of the game required an added element; Italianness. Foreign players were banned from the league, with the exception of the oriundi, those who were able to trace their heritage back to an Italian ancestry. Fortunately for Libonatti, he could do just that.

Despite having made 15 appearances for Argentina before leaving the country (scoring at his customary rate of one in two), FIFA rules allowed players to change nationality as required; because moving around the world was a difficult thing to do, and because two world wars made borders and nationalities both fluid and dangerous. The great Alfredo di Stefano, for example, played for three different teams. So when Libonatti got his Italian passport, he also made himself available for the Italian national side. Augusto Rangone was the man in charge of the national side and called him up. And so he became the first oriundo.

Rangone may have been in charge when Libonatti first got the call, but before long it

was the legendary Vittorio Pozzo who had been charged by Mussolini personally to bring the national team success on the world stage which he did, in both 1934 and 1938. Libonatti's career wouldn't last to that zenith, but he did lay the groundwork, scoring 15 goals in 18 games for Italy. Sadly, they refused to travel for the first iteration of the World Cup, so he didn't get to show his skills at the inaugural competition, and by the 1934 edition in his adopted homeland, he had dropped into the Second Division with Genoa, where age had slightly slowed his scoring.

The idea of oriundi is a tradition that continued throughout the twentieth century, and in the twenty first, with modern travel a much expanded international game, player for the country of one's ancestors has become commonplace. But in Italy at least, Julio Libonatti was the first oriundo.

Enjoy the game.

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# MATCHDAY SQUADS

PITCHING IN Isthmian North League  
Saturday 11th March, 3pm



## Felixstowe & Walton United FC

**Manager:** Stuart Boardley

**Assistant Manager:** Andy Crump

red/yellow	Stuart <b>Ainsley</b>
yellow	Noel <b>Aitkens</b>
yellow	Henry <b>Barley</b>
yellow	Callum <b>Bennett</b>
yellow	Harry <b>Blackburn</b>
yellow	Zak <b>Brown</b>
yellow	George <b>Clarke</b>
yellow	Ollie <b>Canfer</b>
yellow	Andy <b>Fennell</b>
yellow	Sam <b>Ford</b>
yellow	Milo <b>Grimes</b>
yellow	Callum <b>Harrison</b>
yellow	Andre <b>Hasanally</b>
yellow	Josh <b>Hitter</b>
yellow	Billy <b>Holland (C)</b>
yellow	Lamel <b>Howell</b>
yellow	Harry <b>Knock</b>
yellow	Leon <b>Ottley-Gooch</b>
yellow	Rory <b>Porter</b>
yellow	Callum <b>Robinson (GK)</b>
yellow	Charlie <b>Warren</b>
yellow	Joe <b>Whight</b>

red/yellow - goals - played

## Grays Athletic FC

**Manager:** Lewis Dark

**Assistant Manager:** Ashley Miller

red/yellow	Marlon <b>Agyakwa</b>
yellow	Sam <b>Bantick</b>
yellow	Roman <b>Campbell</b>
yellow	Lewis <b>Clark</b>
yellow	Aron <b>Gordon</b>
yellow	Sam <b>Griek</b>
yellow	Mitch <b>Hahn</b>
yellow	Courtney <b>Homans</b>
yellow	Damani <b>Hunter</b>
yellow	Macauley <b>Joynes</b>
yellow	Callum <b>Leahy</b>
yellow	Henry <b>Lynch</b>
yellow	Jesse <b>Olukolu</b>
yellow	Danny <b>Sambridge</b>
yellow	Malaki <b>Toussaint</b>
yellow	Callum <b>Watts</b>
yellow	George <b>Winn</b>
yellow	Ronnie <b>Winn</b>

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