

# DINGS CRUSADERS RFC

A CLUB WITH ITS HEART IN BRISTOL



Cover Photograph by Harry Phillips Photography



**DINGS CRUSADERS V BLACKHEATH**  
**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2025**

NATIONAL LEAGUE ONE OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

[www.dingscrusaders.com](http://www.dingscrusaders.com)

# Welcome

Today we welcome Blackheath RFC or as they like to be addressed `The Club`, founder members of club rugby and I am sure that you will be able to give them a warm welcome as fits the not quite so old Dings' tradition. They arrive on the back of some really good wins and will prove another stern test, but nobody said it was going to be easy. Let's hope today's game is as good as we have seen and witnessed of late.



After the much needed win over a resolute Esher team where, in honesty, I cannot remember a thing that happened in the second half, I truly believe I was spiked!! Anyway, I'm told it was a great game and one that we deserved to win, and so it was then onto Manchester and the visit to Sale FC. A coach trip to remember for all the wrong reasons, meant a quick stop off to ensure the brake pads and discs were in good enough condition for the trip home. Dickie was none too pleased when we lowered him under the coach to carry out his inspection. But arrive we did, and were met by another well-known rugby club, whose past exploits are well recorded with numerous old England jerseys adorning the club house walls. And, funny enough an old England legend, Fran Cotton, had his name on most if not all of the early shirts?

A first half of almost perfect rugby saw the team go in at half time well placed to record their third away win of the season. How wrong we were, an interception after playing hide the ball in our own 22, followed quickly by a penalty try, meant the party started to turn a little sour. But I have to add that Sale certainly knew where to play on the pitch and looked a very useful side. It was certainly a case of who let the dogs out, with an end result not really worthy of how the boys had played. It meant only the single bonus point was achieved but that could be an important point come the end of the day.

No games last week for the club's other senior teams, but today both sides take important steps to achieve their season long aims, with the Knights playing away against North Bristol, kick off 2.30 and the Warriors playing away at Barton Hill, as long as they make the weigh in. The Knights need a good win to keep the pressure on their closest rivals.

Tomorrow (Sunday) brings the girls section into the public eye with both the Under 16's & Under 18's playing at home in their National Cup semi-finals, against good opposition. I'm not sure on the kick off times so just get down here around 10.00 and hang around! Coffee is always good, and it's a fantastic achievement having played most of their previous games away from home, encountering fervent fans and even more fervent match officials at times. Best of luck to both teams.

If you are reading this and there's a fair amount of screeching then it's not the brakes on the bus but it will be the Ladies Day, once again arranged by our very own maestro Mez Merriman. I hope all enjoy their day today, and they are collecting for a very worthy cause this year.

So back to today's game. I am sure the opposition will want to make an impression, so let's make sure we are up for the game and in what may be a scrap of a game. Let's get behind the boys as you always do.

C`mon you Dings Boys, UTD

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# Welcome to Blackheath

We extend a warm welcome this afternoon to our visitors Blackheath and hope that all players, officials and supporters enjoy their first visit to our Shaftesbury Park ground.

Blackheath is the oldest independent Rugby club, meaning that it was not attached to any institution such as a military establishment, hospital, school or college. Rugby was instituted at the Blackheath Proprietary School around 1856 and old boys from that school founded Blackheath Football Club in 1858, playing a "carrying" game of football made popular by Rugby School. When the old boys played against the current pupils, supporters would shout for either "Club" or "School" accordingly. This is why, to this day, supporters of BFC shout for "Club", not for "Blackheath".

In 1863 Blackheath was a founder member of The Football Association which was formed with the intention to frame a code of laws that would embrace the best and most acceptable points of all the various methods of play under the one heading of "football". A Blackheath member, Francis Campbell, was elected treasurer and at the fifth meeting he argued that hacking was an essential element of 'football' and that

to eliminate hacking would "do away with all the courage and pluck from the game, and I will be bound over to bring over a lot of Frenchmen who would beat you with a week's practice." At the sixth meeting withdrew Blackheath from the FA. In 1871 Blackheath joined the newly-formed RFU and are one of seven founder clubs surviving today of the original twenty-two.

When leagues were formed in 1987, Blackheath were placed in Courage National League Two and since then have been consistently in the National leagues. In 2003-04 the Club won National Division 3 (South) after they finished level on points with Launceston, but Blackheath became champions thanks to a better for and against record. In 2021 Blackheath were relegated from National League 1, but regained their third tier status when they gained promotion, as champions, the following season.

Honours include: Middlesex Sevens (1932 & 1958), Gala Sevens (1957), Glengarth Sevens – main event (1982), Glengarth Sevens – Davenport Plate (1983), National Division 3 (South) 2003-04, and National League 2 (East) 2022-23. The Club has won the Kent Cup on 16 occasions between 1891 and 2013.

## NATIONAL ONE

	W	D	L	Pts
Richmond	18	2	2	91
Rotherham Titans	18	0	4	86
Rosslyn Park	16	0	6	81
Plymouth Albion	14	0	8	75
Rams	13	0	9	75
<b>Blackheath</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>73</b>
Sale FC	11	0	11	60
Birmingham Moseley	10	1	10	56
Bishops Stortford	8	0	13	49
Sedgley Park	8	1	13	48
<b>Dings Crusaders</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>48</b>
Esher	6	0	16	37
Leicester Lions	5	1	16	34
Darlington Mowden Park	1	1	20	15

## MATCH DAY SPONSORS



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# DINGS CRUSADERS

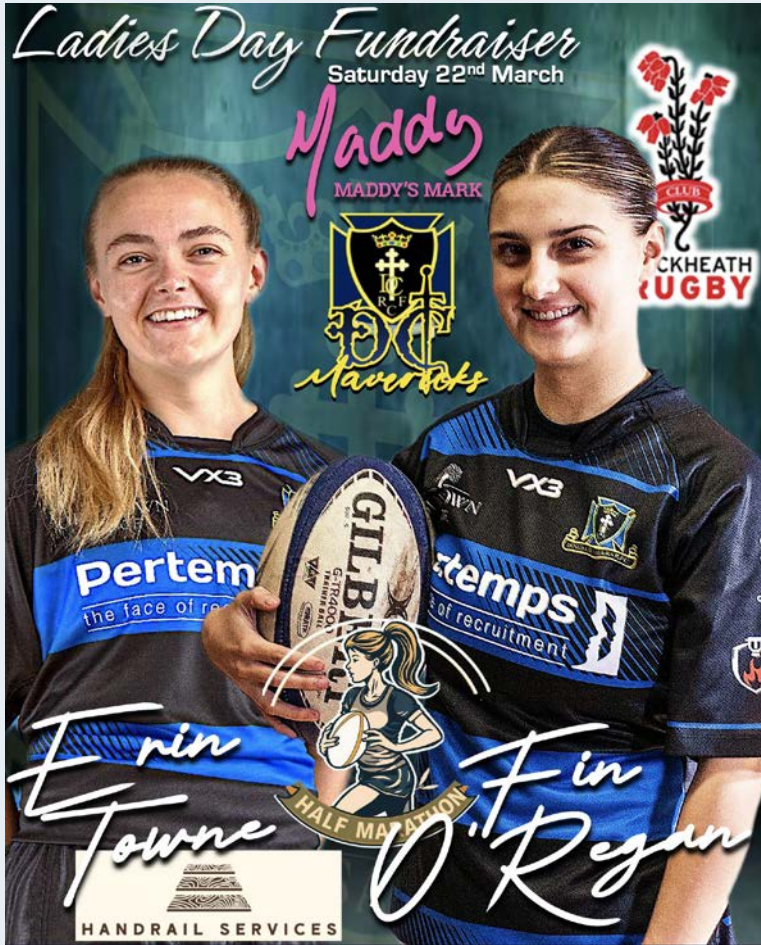
# BLACKHEATH

ROYAL BLUE & BLACK

RED AND BLACK

15 Tom Foot Waylon Projects	Full Back	JAKE HENNESSEY 15
14 Harry Rowson	Wing	DAFYDD LLOYD 14
13 Joe Jenkins	Centre	OSKAR HIRSKYJ-DOUGLAS 13
12 George Boulton (C) Release Pilates	Centre	MARKUS BURCHAM 12
11 Sol Taufa FBW	Wing	MATT ARMSTRONG 11
10 Jamie Elswood The Old Firm	Stand Off	AUGUSTIN SLOWIK 10
9 Matt Jones	Scrum Half	JORDAN BURNS 9
1 Brian Ncube Stealth Media	Prop	ARCHIE HOLLAND 1
2 Tomos Gwilliam	Hooker	BILLY HARDING 2
3 Jimmy Halliwell Dapper Suits	Prop	ANDREW BOYE 3
4 Will Thompson Buro Happold	Lock	TOM STRADWICK 4
5 Alex Ashton	Look	TEX CAVUBATI 5
6 Alex Bilton Bybrook Community Concierge	Flanker	MIKE HOYT 6
7 Kofi Cripps	Flanker	JOSH SMART 7
8 Paddy Pearce	No 8	TOM BALDWIN (C) 8
16 Tom Gollop Bostik	Replacement	ALEX WITCHELL 16
17 Louie Trevett	Replacement	RORY MARSH 17
18 Harry Hone Nigel Perry Waste Management	Replacement	OLLIE WALLIKER 18
19 Tom Knight FBW	Replacement	JACK DALY 19
20 Harry Tarling Ginger Construction	Replacement	FINDLAY GILMORE 20

# Maddy's Mark



Eleven players from Dings Crusaders Mavericks are running the Bristol 10k and Half Marathon on May 11th to raise money to help support Maddy's Mark, an amazing charity. And also to raise money for the Dings women's section for essential items such as match day kit.

A number of players within DC Mavericks had the honour of playing alongside Maddy whilst playing University level rugby and hold this charity close to their hearts.

Maddy's Mark is a charity founded in memory of Maddy Lawrence, which supports the mental well-being of girls and young women by building resilience, confidence, and camaraderie. By funding school programmes and partnering with clubs, they aim to make rugby accessible to all. Maddy was a brave and courageous woman, and whose love for rugby and zest for life continues to inspire us.

"Because not all battles are fought on the pitch"

# MORE THAN JUST A RUGBY CLUB

## SHAFTESBURY PARK, HOME OF DINGS CRUSADERS

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- HDTV screen or projector
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- Bottomless tea/coffee with breakfast roll on arrival
- Buffet lunch
- Mid morning and afternoon biscuits
- Water and juices
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- Dedicated contact prior to event

\*Subject to availability and additional cost

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# Match Previews by Baz

## Dings Crusaders v Blackheath

We welcome Blackheath to Shaftesbury Park after our long trip and solitary bonus point gained from Sale.

As we look toward the bottom of the table, Esher, immediately below us, failed to generate any points in round 22, so we head into round 23 needing to improve or maintain that gap.

Our last three meetings with the South East London side have resulted in defeat, most recently away at Rectory Field where we returned empty handed 16-7.

Sitting sixth in the table, and one loss in their last five games, the Crusaders will need to be on top form.

### Players to watch

Hooker Billy Harding is this season's highest point scorer. Coming from Rosslyn Park, a hooker always scores with a strong pack and a solid set piece. Expect the defence to be tested. Back, Jake Lloyd, has an impressive points tally this season. Blackheath will run fast round the fringes. Fly half Tom Fitch's laser sights will punish any team from the tee.

Last time out, it was Rams who felt the wrath of Blackheath, as they took a narrow victory with Rams now two points ahead of our visitors in 5th place.

## North Bristol RFC v Dings Knights

Simon Knight takes his team to Junction 16 of the M5 on Saturday for the penultimate game of the league season. Still top of the table, but with only a 3 point gap to second placed Frampton Cotterell, the Knights must focus on the two remaining games and not the chase.

With Dursley coming up on the 5th April, Saturday sees the short trip to Almondsbury where North Bristol await. Currently 9th in the table, North are not to be underestimated having taken the scalps of Lydney and Old Colstonians in recent weeks.

Simon is expected to be naming a strong team for the game and we will await the score with baited breath on Saturday. Dings are 3 from 3 in the last 3 meetings, and in the earlier encounter the game ended 60-19. With both teams well versed in artificial

surfaces, this should be a great game to watch as North will make the most of their home advantage.

## Barton Hill v Dings Warriors

In a change to the advertised venue, Warriors will be travelling to Barton Hill this Saturday, as the previous fixture was forfeited. The Warriors, still 9th in the table, will be hoping for another stellar performance off the back of their recent form and two wins on the bounce.

There is a fresh belief that has arrived with the team along with some fresh faces and extra coaching, so it will be interesting to see how they perform against an always heavy Barts.

Pack dominant, Barts have always been a physical team, but Warriors new spring may pose some interesting dynamics around the park.

Jonathan Armstrong and Lewis Dickenson are their players to watch. For the backs, Armstrong, returned to Barts this season after a four-year hiatus. The 31 year old holds the points scoring record for the home side this season. In the front row, 37 year old Dickenson is a Barts man through and through. Second in their try scoring record, another dominant player to watch this week. We wish the Warriors well, and hope that they can continue their impressive run to the end of the season.

## Dings Mavericks v Cullompton

Resigned to a last place finish this season, once again, Tom Lindsay's Women's team will look to make gains in specifics as 5th placed Cullompton arrive for the last home game of the Mavericks season.

Last time out, this was the game where the girls opened their try tally, scoring their first 5 points on the road. Beset with injury and player availability, it's no secret that it's been a struggle this year, but they will end the season in a good place.

### Players to watch

Exeter Chief Sam Harris holds the try scoring record for Cullompton this season and is a solid Number 8. Young fly half Jess Phillips has seen great success on the field and from the tee this season.

# Oracle for Blackheath

Unfortunately our final trip 'up north' away to Sale ended in defeat despite it being another high scoring encounter. The next four games present an opportunity to get some much needed wins, starting today with the visit of our old friends Blackheath, England's oldest Rugby Union club. Let's replicate the form we showed against Esher. Some of the best tries we have seen this season.

What a great success the 'Old Farts' reunion lunch proved to be, a huge thank you to Flash for his hard work, well done. It was great to see so many former players gathered enjoying a lot of banter and reliving our fantastic exploits from the past. It is remarkable how much better we were the older we get! The drinking and sharing of anecdotes filled the evening. When I got home Mrs. Oracle asked how the day had gone, I told her what a wonderful time we had had, she said what on earth did you find to talk about? Well, I said, it was mostly about the medication we all take now! Here's to the next one.

I mentioned in the last Oracle how well the girls and boys age group teams are doing and this has been reflected in two of our girls being called into the England squad, congratulations to all concerned. If you get the chance come along tomorrow afternoon and give your support to our under 16 and under 18 girls in their National Cup semi-finals against Dartfordians and Basildon respectively, followed by the Mavericks against Cullompton.

So Worcester have confirmed that they have submitted an application for direct entry to the Championship. If successful, how will this affect the set up for the coming season? Although it seems relegation will only apply to two sides from our league, I have yet to see that in writing. When doing research for the Oracle, I came across the ground capacity register for all the clubs in our league, it ranges from 20,000 down to 2,000. How many are filled to capacity each week, none I would wager. Talking of capacities, I found it rather disappointing to watch the England under 20 game from Bath recently sadly, played to a less than full stadium.

I note that a trial is to be run for away fans to 'be allocated an end' a la Soccer. I find this very disappointing. One of the things we hold dear in our great game is that we mingle with the supporters of our opponents. There may be banter, but there is always fun and a pint after, please don't drag us into antics of that other game.

Another gripe I have is whilst watching the Internationals and other high profile games is the replacements rushing from the 'in goal' area to engulf the try scorer, very unseemly! Also the sponsors advertising sprawled across the middle of the pitch, half of it ends up on the players I don't know how easy it is to wash off? I remember well our days at Stade Landseer when the only thing we had to wash off had been distributed by our canine friends!

On a brighter note it was good to see that soloists were not required at the recent Wales v England game and the anthems filled the enclosed stadium, although it has to be said Sosban Fach dwindled somewhat towards the end.

Some well dones are due. Firstly to the referee of the Knights match, who having completed his duties in that match then came and ran the line in the Esher match due to the appointed flag wielding official being unable to continue his duties following an injury sustained dashing up and down the line. Secondly to our under 18 Girls called into the England squad. To Amber Reed, following the announcement of her retirement after a stellar career with Bears Women and England. And last but not least to our own Ciaran Donoghue knocking over 6 conversions for Bath in the Premiership Final.

Elsewhere, it's getting tight in League 2 West. Just a few points separate Camborne and The Mall XV (aka Dings Old Boys) with a handful of games left, there may yet be a local derby next season.

And so back to today, let's hope for a good game with a favourable result.

Come on you Dings, shove 'em up the M32.

# Save The Date

Junior Dinner - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June  
Seniors Ball - Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June

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