

DINGS CRUSADERS RFC

A CLUB WITH ITS HEART IN BRISTOL



Cover Photograph by Harry Phillips Photography

DINGS CRUSADERS V LEICESTER LIONS
Saturday 5th April 2025

NATIONAL LEAGUE ONE OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

www.dingscrusaders.com

Welcome

Into The Lions Mouth

Today we welcome Leicester Lions RFC back to Shaftesbury Park after a season long break when they deservedly won National 2 West and spent the following Season in National One. The Lions arrive on the back of some impressive performances and games that could have gone either way, but they have been picking points up when they seemed to be down and out, so today will be a game to remember I hope for all the right reasons. Leicester will be a tenacious team, as their head coach, Gareth Collins, has been found to a good astute young coach who gets the best out of his team in whatever shape and form it may take. Today will be a tough test for the Dings Boys, one I hope they are truly up for the scrap.



The earlier game between the two sides will be remembered for the wrong reasons, and as a result we will be presenting the Lions committee with the laundry bill for trying to get all that mud out of the kit!

The last home game was a sobering experience. Were Blackheath that good? or was it just an off day for us? Yes, in the scrum half they had a terrific player who ruled the game with some fantastic clearance kicks to get them out of trouble, mistakes were made in decisions made on the pitch in terms of where we had to play the game, but one would hope the last couple of weeks have made everyone aware on what is hanging on the game today.

Another big game looms on the back pitch: a win will take the Knights into the play off against a Smiths side we know nothing about apart they make fantastic crisps. Dursley will be a hard resolute team to beat, but I know that the lads are really looking forward to this game. Once again apart from a couple of blips they have continued from where they were last season outscoring most of the opposition heavily. If indeed we do make the elusive play-off, its planned for this to be played at the Prince of Wales Stadium, Cheltenham, home of Smiths Rugby on the 17th April. (Yes, a Thursday night)

The Warriors also play their last regulation game vs St Brendan`s, down on the white elephant called the Portway Centre. They have steadily turned their season around and with the proposed changes being made to the leagues it could be that they find themselves in a far more competitive and even league next season. Not a relegation, but another tinkering process. We`ll see how that pans out.

So back to today`s game, which will determine our season. At times we have played some fantastic rugby and been worthy winners, but what we now want is the consistency that all are striving for in the very competitive league. Let`s get behind the boys once again and become the 16th team member.

C`mon you Dings Boys,UTD
Steve Lloyd

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Welcome to Leicester Lions

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

Leicester Lions was formed in 1998 as a result of an amalgamation of two well-established local clubs, Westleigh RFC (founded in 1904) and Wigston RFC (founded in 1946) – both clubs with proud traditions. The two clubs were situated about two miles apart in the south of Leicester and decided that their future would be enhanced as a joint club, and also to provide Leicestershire with a second senior club playing in the national leagues, in addition to Leicester Tigers. Lions along with Loughborough University and Hinckley are the senior rugby clubs in the county after Premiership side Leicester Tigers. The new club began their league career in Midlands One (re-named National League 3 Midlands), taking Westleigh's place and finished fourth place in their first season, and runners-up the following season, and were soon among the honours, winning the County Cup in 2000, 2001 and 2004. The club also

won the Second XV Cup in 2002 and 2003 and the Colts County Cup in 2001 and 2004.

In 2005 Lions gained promotion to National 3 (North) when they became Midlands champions ahead of runners-up Kettering, and in 2009 moved up to National Two (North), finishing third in 2016 and 2017. In a re-organisation of the leagues, Lions spent two campaigns in National Two (South) before switching to National Two (West) for the 2022-23 season – which suited them well. They lost just one game and won the league by a margin of 18 points ahead of second placed Dings Crusaders.

Honours include: National League 2 (West) Champions 2022-23; Midlands Division 1 Champions 2004-05; Leicestershire County Cup winners 1999-2000, 2000-01, 2003-04.

Wigston (parent club): Leicestershire 1 Champions 1997-98; Leicestershire County Cup winners 1973-74. Westleigh (parent club): Leicestershire County Cup winners: 1974-75, 1975-76, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1995-96.

NATIONAL ONE

	W	D	L	Pts
Richmond	19	2	2	96
Rotherham Titans	18	0	5	86
Rosslyn Park	17	0	6	86
Rams	14	0	9	80
Blackheath	15	0	8	78
Plymouth Albion	14	0	9	76
Sale FC	12	0	11	65
Birmingham Moseley	11	1	11	63
Bishops Stortford	10	0	13	59
Sedgley Park	8	1	14	49
Dings Crusaders	8	1	14	49
Esher	6	0	17	38
Leicester Lions	5	1	18	35
Darlington Mowden Park	1	1	21	15

MATCH DAY SPONSORS



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DINGS CRUSADERS

LEICESTER LIONS

ROYAL BLUE & BLACK

PURPLE

15	Tom Foot <i>Waylon Projectcs</i>	Full Back	JOE BROCK 15
14	Deago Bailey	Wing	GEORGE PEARSON 14
13	Joe Jenkins	Centre	JAMEL HAMILTON 13
12	Harry Tarling <i>Ginger Construction</i>	Centre	CHARLIE DAVIES 12
11	Max Rivers	Wing	JAKE STERLAND 11
10	George Boulton <i>Release Pilates</i>	Stand Off	LUKE BOUCHIER 10
9	Matt Jones	Scrum Half	JAMES STUBBS (VC) 9
1	Tom Sims	Prop	ISAAC THOMPSON 1
2	Tomos Gwilliam	Hooker	ARTHUR ALLEN 2
3	Brian Ncube <i>Stealth Media</i>	Prop	AARON DAWSON 3
4	Will Thompson <i>Buro Happold</i>	Lock	HARRY PALMER 4
5	Alex Ashton	Look	BEN ALMOND 5
6	Matt Bennett <i>Discovery Campers</i>	Flanker	JORDAN TEBBATT 6
7	Kofi Cripps	Flanker	JOHNNY MURDOCH (C) 7
8	Aaron Tull	No 8	CHARLIE ULCOQ 8
16	Tom Gollop <i>Bostik</i>	Replacement	OLLY TAYLOR (VC) 16
17	Nick English	Replacement	ISAAC THOMPSON 17
18	Matt Lane <i>Dave Baker</i>	Replacement	CAM DE BEER 18
19	Tom Knight <i>FBW</i>	Replacement	MALI SATALA 19
20	Jamie Elswood <i>The Old Firm</i>	Replacement	CHARLIE BEMAND 20

A PICTURE FROM THE PAST



(Photo by Harry Phillips Photography)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom, the Rugby Football Union officially cancelled the 2019-2020 season on 20 March 2020, after an initial postponement of all rugby in England including training. After the cancellation was announced the RFU used a best playing record formula to decide the final table. This meant that Taunton Titans, who were 3 points clear when the league was suspended, were promoted as champions along with runners up Tonbridge Juddians. Sutton & Epsom, Old Redcliffians and Bournemouth were relegated.

Before the cessation of the league programme Dings Crusaders entertained Leicester Lions at Shaftesbury Park on 19 October with the visitors winning by 29 points to 27. The game started well for Dings, with debutante wing Tyrese Johnson-Fisher blasting off his wing to set up a first-minute try for centre Jordan Grattan. The conversion attempt from scrum-half Steve Plummer cannoned off the upright, which in the end proved crucial. Lock Edward Semper scored for Lions which Ben Young converted to give his side a 7-5 lead on eight minutes. Jake Holcombe barged over on 16 minutes for a try converted by Plummer to nudge Dings back in front, but it was the visitors who led 14-12 at the interval, after Cairns crossed and again Young added the extras.

Dings continued to give away needless penalties in the second half, allowing the visitors to enjoy plenty of territory and possession. Young's 46th-minute penalty for Leicester was cancelled out by Connor Swan's three-pointer for Dings, before Lions wing Constant scored twice, the second try converted, to take the Lions 29-15 clear on 70 minutes. To their credit Dings found another gear and finished the game in the ascendancy with tries from replacement Tom Anderson and, another debutante, Sam Graham. The picture shows Tom Anderson going over for Dings third try in the 72nd minute.

On 4 April, the RFU, following points adjustments for games not played, confirmed the final table for the 2019-20 season, with Dings finishing in 11th place with 65 points and Leicester Lions in seventh spot with 95.66 points.

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Match Previews by Baz

Dings Crusaders vs Leicester Lions

This Saturday the stage is set for an exciting clash in National Rugby League 1 as Dings Crusaders take on the Leicester Lions in what promises to be a thrilling encounter. Both teams are gearing up for a crucial match that could have significant implications for their standing at the end of the season, and fans can expect a fiery battle between two teams with plenty of pride on the line.

Our Crusaders come into this game on the back of some mixed performances. With a blend of youthful energy and seasoned experience, they've been a tough team to predict this season. The pack can deliver from 5 metres, and the backs have been capable of clinical finishes when given the chance. If they can maintain their discipline and control the tempo of the game, they'll be in a strong position to take the win.

On the other hand, the Lions are a side known for their resilient, no-nonsense approach. They have a reputation for making life difficult for any opposition, and this match will be no different. With a talented squad full of dynamic players, the Lions will look to bring their physicality and aggressive play to the pitch. Their halfbacks are key to unlocking the opposition defence, and they'll need to find ways to break through the Crusaders' solid defensive line.

By the numbers

Two seasons ago, Dings were the only team to defeat Lions in National 2 (West) all season.

So far this season it's Leicester who have the bragging rights.

Two teams to go down, Leicester are currently 13th with Darlington condemned to relegation.

Three games to go and 15 points available

Dings in 11th place 14 points ahead, it's all to play for.

Ones to watch

Jake Sterland, top try scorer for Lions came from Market Harborough for the 2024 season. Former Tigers academy and England U18, this former sprinter and powerful winger needs stopping before he gets up a head of steam

Dings Knights vs Dursley RFC – The Final Showdown

Here we are—it's the final game of the season, and Dings Knights have held the top spot throughout. Early on, the Knights were unstoppable, cruising through unbeaten, but all the while, Frampton Cotterell has been lurking just behind, keeping the pressure on at the top of the Gloucestershire Counties 2 (South) league.

This Saturday, we welcome Dursley RFC to The Park. Sitting mid-table, Dursley is more than capable of pulling off an upset if the Knights take their eye off the ball. With Old Elizabethan's in 5th place looking to claw back points from Frampton's green army. This game is truly a playoff decider. A bonus point win will seal the deal, but even a straight win will suffice. However, two LBPs (losing bonus points) would make things incredibly tight at the top.

Whatever happens, we'll take full advantage of our home crowd and the passionate support from the Dings faithful as we aim to finish the season on a high. The Knights have triumphed in the last three meetings with Dursley, but while there's not a lot of information on the visitors, we know they take their rugby seriously and will come prepared to challenge. Let's get behind the lads and make sure we end this season with a bang!

Dings Warriors vs St Brendan's Old Boys

This Saturday, our Dings Warriors head to St Brendan's Old Boys for what promises to be another exciting encounter. SBOB will be eager to improve on the narrow defeat they suffered the last time we met, when Dings edged them out by just 2 points and took home the full 5 points from the fixture.

After a slow start to the season, the Warriors have been building momentum and finishing strong, which is impressive given how the season looked to be written off early on. SBOB currently sit two places below Dings in the league, but with the upcoming league realignment, these two teams are set to be even more evenly matched in the new season—setting the stage for some competitive clashes ahead.

A player to watch for Dings is Jacob Fuller, who's having a standout season. It seems like only yesterday he was a Dings Colt, and now, with several appearances for the Knights, he'll be in a great position to make an impact if he returns to the Warriors for this one. His presence could be key to helping the Warriors finish the season on a high note. On the flip side, Joseph Adams, the standout try-scorer for St Brendan's, will be looking to lead the charge for the home side. He was a key player in their last encounter, and Dings will need to keep a close eye on him.

Let's get behind the boys and make sure we finish this season strong! Come on you Dings!

Dings Crusaders Mavericks vs Reading Abbey Women

On Sunday, The Mavericks will face Reading Abbey Women in their final match of the season. With the Mavericks already set for relegation, they'll be eager to finish the season on a high note, showing their true potential against tough opposition.

Reading Abbey Women, currently sitting 4th in the table, have had a strong season and will be looking to maintain their position with a solid performance. For the Mavericks, it's all about pride and finishing the season strongly. They'll need to bring their best to this match, focusing on creating space and playing with intensity. It's set to be an exciting clash as both teams look to end the season on a high. With Reading Abbey looking to secure maintain 4th-place spot above Cullompton, the Mavericks will aim to give them a tough challenge and finish the season with some positive energy.

Nearly at the end of our first foray into League 1 and today we extend a warm welcome to our old friends from up the Fosse Way, Leicester Lions. This is their final away game of the season and I gather a large contingent of supporters will be here to urge them on. We have had some close encounters over recent years and they will be pushing hard for a win to help them overhaul Esher who lurk just above them in the league, so we will need to be at our best. Not only do I remember the close games at Leicester, I well remember the lamb faggots we enjoyed a couple of years ago, absolutely delicious!

Congratulations are in order to the Girls under 16's on their reaching the final of the National Cup, a truly magnificent achievement and well deserved. Dartfordians never gave up but on the day our girls proved superior in all aspects of the game. The final against Sandal from Wakefield, is to be played at Sixways Stadium on 'Star Wars Day' (for those not of that generation, May 4th). Commiserations to the Under 18 girls who went out at the semi-final stage despite a tremendous 29 all draw. In another outstanding game played in front of a big enthusiastic crowd both sides scored the same number of tries and conversions and so our girls lost out as the home side. Best of luck to Basildon in the final. Not to be outdone the Boys under 16's gave a sterling performance to win the Combination Plate, well done to all three sides. As I have said previously in this column the future of the club is in secure hands, and a huge thank and well done to all the coaches and everyone concerned for their development. It was good to see so many members cheering the girls on although one anonymous member had told his missus he was going to B & Q.

The Knights take on Dursley, a win will get them up, and well deserved it would be. They have had a good strong season. The Warriors

take on St. Brendan's, also hoping to end the season with a win and prepare for next season. Both sides have played some really good rugby this season, we wish them well.

Mr. Sweeney, the Chief Executive of the RFU survived the vote of 'No Confidence' safely, not a terribly good turnout for the vote. However, great promises were made to instigate a 'Governance Review and Reform'. It still seems to me that the emphasis is on the full time professional game. There will be no Premiership if the lower levels are left to struggle, it is from our clubs and many, many more that the budding Premiership players come. Another issue that concerns me is that where players are playing for both club and college, college have priority and decide when players are available, this can have damaging implications for clubs at either end of the table

Elsewhere, it's a 'Winner Take All' at the Mall this week with the Mall XV playing Camborne, with the winners being the likeliest candidates for promotion. They will be joined most probably by Leeds Tykes and Tonbridge Juddians. Tonbridge we know well from recent encounters in League 2, Leeds we well remember from our National Cup encounter some years ago in front of a big crowd at Stade Landseer. It will be good to renew old acquaintances.

Don't forget your tickets to the Summer Ball, on sale now, posh nosh, awards and a chance to strut yourself on the dance floor. You never know Craig Revel Horwood might be on the lookout for budding shoe shufflers.

Anyway, back to today, we will certainly need to be at our best.

So let's get behind the lads, c'mon you Dings, shove 'em up the M32.

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Junior Dinner - Friday 20th June
Seniors Ball - Saturday 21st June

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