

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Lots of things that we take for granted today have names that originated by accidents of history. It could have all been very different. For example, if the Duke of Wellington had been a dedicated card player who did not want to interrupt his game for a meal, and had instructed his manservant to bring him some meat wrapped in bread, we would all happily eat ham Wellingtons.

And if the Earl of Sandwich had been a great soldier who wore long boots to protect his legs we would be walking through muddy fields in our rubber Sandwiches and think nothing of it.

So it is with the game that we enjoy. Mr. and Mrs. Webb Ellis could afford to send little William to Rugby School. But if they had been better off, he would probably have been educated at Eton. Go back to November 1823 and it may have been on the playing fields of Eton that William "with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it".

History does not record the name of his games master who saw the potential in William's act of rebellion. Thankfully, he did and the game developed and prospered. And became known as Rugby Union. It could so easily have been Eton Union and we would support Bath Eton and not give the name a second thought.

For 180 years the game of Rugby has evolved with numerous changes to the rules and regulations. Undoubtedly the biggest change occurred in August 1895 when some 22 clubs in the north of England united together to form the Northern Rugby League. Driven by the need to compensate players for loss of wages when representing their clubs, they actually paid the guys for playing!

The predecessors of Will Carling's friends who administered the Rugby Football Union went ballistic. Any Union player who succumbed to the lure of honest money and signed a contract with an insidious League club had committed heresy. For him there would be no redemption – he was condemned to eternal damnation and would never, ever be allowed to play the strictly amateur game of Rugby Union for as long as he should live.

So the two codes went their separate ways and did their own thing. Having made the break, the people running Rugby League set up new rules. They did not think much of the line-out, decided to keep scrums to a minimum and established their own points scoring system. As a result, the styles of play became very different between the two codes although the prime objective in both games was to score points by putting

down the ball over the opposition's try line.

Now, I must make an admission: I have never been to a Rugby League match. I have watched many on TV (when there was no Union game being shown) and still expect to hear Eddie Waring from the commentary box. Be that as it may, it seems to me that League does not have the finesse of Union but it does have the redeeming feature that the ball is in play for much more of the game. More about this later.

Let us fast forward a hundred years. There are two World Wars – stock markets rise and fall – and the economic rule book is rewritten. It becomes impossible for the top club and international players to combine a notional job and train to play Union at an ever more demanding level.

With a fine sense of timing, in August 1995 the Rugby Football Union announced that Union players could legitimately be paid for their services – exactly a century after the schism that split the game in two. One immediate result was games played in both codes between the leading clubs of each code. Bath lost heavily to Wigan at League and regained self respect by beating them at Union. League players Jason Robinson and Henry Paul take up short term contracts at Bath.

Top League players are recruited by Union clubs and make an impact at international level. Union coaches pay attention to aspects of the other game and suddenly all the top clubs decide to incorporate League style defensive tactics. The challenge now is to discover how Union style attacking tactics can overcome these defenses.

Currently we are seeing Union players rush headlong like Desperate Dan into their marker as though the guy were some sort of human magnet. This seems to work in League with its "play the ball" rule but in our game it causes a messy maul and the ball is effectively taken out of play. To be honest, if I wanted to watch mud wrestling, I would take out a subscription to Sky TV – there has to be a channel that specialises in this. I would much rather watch a game that is closer to William Webb Ellis's moment of genius where he "took the ball in his arms and ran with it."

So, it seems to me that the two codes are amalgamating. We are now seeing a fusion of League and Union and I will invent a new name for our sport: Rugby Legion.

As time moves on this new game of Rugby Legion will evolve and rules and playing styles will adjust to new demands. Players will want, very understandably, to make as much money as they can from what is a short (and potentially hazardous) playing career. Which brings us full

circle to what caused the rift in 1895 – money.

Rugby is now a business and with revenues from sponsorship and media rights it is potentially very big business. Like any business it needs to make a profit to survive. I am not an accountant and do not know all the figures, but I get the distinct impression that club Rugby – both Union and League – is a financial mess. How many clubs have made a profit since the Union game became professional?

Profits and financial stability are essential for the game to progress. The specter of relegation is ever present, and if the unthinkable happens and a club loses its place in the Premiership then investments in players and facilities are effectively thrown away. There must be a period of stability to enable clubs in both codes to recover from the traumas of the past seven years.

Union is strongest in the south of England, League in the north. These strengths may be combined by forming two divisions of professional rugby clubs from the current Zurich Premiership and League clubs to form a new Rugby Legion Premier and First Division. One team to be promoted / relegated at the end of each season and no team to be relegated from the First Division.

This may at first sight appear to be a cosy arrangement but I suggest that it is in the long term interest of the game as a whole. It will ensure that investments can be made safe in the knowledge that there is a realistic chance of a return on that investment.

If you feel this is unnecessary, take a trip to Welford Road. I would not suggest that you support Leicester but turn off the main road opposite the Leicester Tigers ground and drive to the new Leicester City football ground. Built last season at great expense, it looks tremendous from the outside. But Leicester were relegated from football's Premier Division at the end of last season, attendances at matches have declined substantially, senior players have moved to Premier clubs and the club is facing a horrendous financial problem.

If things like this can happen in football, where managements have years of experience in running a professional outfit, there is no reason why a similar fate could not befall a household name Rugby club.

So Rugby – be it Union, League or Legion – must be prepared to learn from the lessons of other sporting businesses. Forget old arguments and hostilities, unite together and set up a structure that will enable the game to prosper for the benefit of club owners and managers, players and supporters.

Bob Dolby

SHEP'S TESTIMONIAL

There's a lot happening in the coming months to mark John Mallett's Benefit Year. Below is an up to date calendar, with a few alterations due to changes in the rugby calendar.

- **19th March**
Curry Night
The Rec, Bath
- **28th March**
'Past v Present' Match, The Rec, Bath
- **7th May**
Supporters Race Night, The Rec, Bath
- **30th May**
End of Season Party, Bath
- **11th June**
Golf Day, The Kendleshire
- **September**
World Cup Send Off Dinner, Bath
- **December**
End of Year Party, Bath

Keep an eye out for other events which may be planned during the course of the year. We'll let you know about them!

Please contact Iona Sims at A Bit Of A Do for more information and tickets.

SUPPORTERS' CLUB TELEVISION/VIDEO SET

If you know a Bath Rugby supporter who is ill and in hospital, come and speak to a member of the committee; we have a TV/Video Combi set, plus a TV licence, specifically for fans who cannot come to the games because of illness.

For practical reasons, we anticipate lending it to Supporters' Club members whose stay will last at least a week, though we are happy to hear about anyone you think could benefit from it. The set is available to be lent out to any Supporters' Club Member in hospital or a nursing home.

See us at the desk before home games or call a committee member. Telephone numbers are listed on the website.



MEMBERSHIP FOR 2002/2003
Prices will remain the same as last year, with many of the benefits also continuing. Full details can be found on the website

For more information on any membership matters, contact Mrs Lesley Steeper (Membership Secretary), 15 Vyvyan Terrace, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3DG

DISCOUNTS & BENEFITS

The following discounts can be obtained on production of your Membership Card:

Caffe Uno The Empire, Grand Parade, Bath, Tel: 01225 461140
A massive 15% discount off meals and accompanying beverages for up to 8 people. Every day of the week, except after 7pm on Saturdays.

The Litten Tree 23 Milsom Street, Bath, Tel: 01225 310722
£1.50 per drink (excluding spirits) Monday-Saturday 11am to 11pm and Sunday 12 noon to 10.30 p.m. (members only, not guests)

Capettis Italian Restaurant 12 Argyle Street, Bath, Tel: 01225 442299

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, a massive 25% discount on all meals and drinks on presentation of your Membership Card and pre-booking on (01225) 442299.

Bath Rugby Shop 12 Argyle Street, Bath, Tel: 01225 311950
10% Discount on your purchases on production of your 2002/2003 Membership Card.

Zoe Kenway Prints www.zoekenwaypublica.co.uk
20% off Zoe's exceptional prints featuring Bath Rugby
Grill 42 www.grill42.co.uk
Telephone 01225 448184 or Fax 01225 789833 for further details.

10% off pre-match barbecues and boat trips.

Tuk-Tuk Tours of Bath www.tuktuktours/.co.uk
Telephone 01225 425866 for further details.

10% off the price of this unusual method of travelling round Bath.



THE COUNTDOWN

SARACENS - HOME • SAINTS - HOME • WASPS - AWAY
LONDON IRISH - HOME • BRISTOL - AWAY • NEWCASTLE - HOME

No joke, its for real - four home games and two away, The Countdown for Zurich Premiership Survival is on.....

It's a matter of 'Confidence.' The Team to have confidence in their ability and the Supporters to retain their confidence in the Team.

The Team does have ability and quality in abundance as proven by 90% of their performances in the last two games, against Leicester and Gloucester. It's just the final 10% where they seem to think that they should not be winning against these rivals and they then appear to let their concentration slip.

We supporters, especially those who viewed both those two games, do still believe in our Team and their basic quality, but we too can not reconcile the missing 10% factor.

So let's work together to ensure our boys know that we believe in them and when the crisis of confidence in their play looks imminent in any forthcoming game let them know how we feel in strong vocal terms that they can do the business.

So starting March 1st against Sarries go for it loud and clear

BATH BATH BATH BATH BATH BATH

Doom And Gloom? On The Contrary!

So much fuss was made when Bath officially dropped to the bottom of the league for the first time in the club's history. Is it over simplifying things to say that the only way from there is up? The facts are clear; there are only six premiership games left this season; Bath are currently propping up the table; relegation is a real threat.

We could sit back and think of the games that we came so close to winning but went away without the four points, or we could remember that we did come that close, so the wins are not that far away. There are six games to change that around. The other teams who dare not mention the 'R' word are in the same position. Bath Rugby however face four of those games at home, and still have to play London Irish, Bristol, and of course Newcastle.

Bath's lineup is widely acclaimed throughout the league and has been outstanding recently. It is certainly not a First Division lineup.

So, a couple of fixtures have changed. So what? It may mean a few people will be inconvenienced but for the majority of supporters it won't make the slightest bit of difference, except that the next home game is sooner. For the team though, it could make the world of difference; they'll have more time to recover between games, and to prepare for the next one, when all points are going to be vital.

The changes will mean a degree of congestion before the Parker Pen Challenge Cup Semi-Final with Saracens, with the London Irish premiership game to be played on the Thursday before. But, there will surely be few people who would not class premiership survival as the absolute key. Winning the Parker Pen competition would be a great achievement though and remains a goal, of course.

It's going to come down to attitude; do we, and that covers the players, the coaches and the supporters, have the collective mindset to get through it? There really is no reason why not. At the Fans Forum recently, Michael Foley stressed again the commitment of all involved:

"We have the right players to get us through this, and we will embrace the challenge of the next six games. There's no doubting the character of these players."

Again, he reiterated the important role the fans play; "It's crucial that we have your support." And that's what we can do. There is no magic wand to wave (believe me, I'd have done that long ago if I could) but we can do our best from the stands and let the squad and the coaches know that we still believe, if they do.

For all the latest news, visit the Supporters club web site at
www.allez-bath.co.uk

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1000 AND STILL COUNTING! SIX NATIONS



We set out sights on achieving 1000 members this season and the numbers even before a ball was passed, kicked (or dropped) were promising. But as the results on the pitch saw Bath Rugby beginning to struggle, I was dubious as to whether we would attain our goal.

Bath Rugby Supporters are made of strong stuff however, and, disregarding the team's performance, our support continued to grow. The numbers kept cranking up slowly until finally on 18 January we reached the magic number! 8 year old Bernard Chalk from Lambourn in Berkshire became the 1000th member this year thanks to his Dad, Andrew signing up a family membership.

Bernard came along with his Dad, and sister Kathryn, to the Leicester game and was presented on the pitch with a bottle of champagne from Bath Rugby Supporters' Club which he proudly clung on to, despite attempts from his father to wrest it from his grasp! Andy Long was present to hand over a mini ball signed by Bernard's favourite player, Iain Balshaw, and there were Bath Rugby goodie bags from the club for both him and his sister. Andrew also got his £10 back and hopefully his hands on the fizzy stuff!!

At the time of writing the numbers are still rising. Oh me of little faith!

Lesley Steeper

COACH TRAVEL

With the end of the season looming fast and shaping up to be another nail-biting finish, support at away games is going to be vital. The Bath Rugby Supporters' Club runs coaches to every away game and seats are open to members and non-members alike. Contact Jan and Mike Warrington for information about tickets on 01305 779336 or at the desk before home games. Alternatively, have a look at our website. Seats must be booked through Jan and Mike.

AT THE REC

The 2003 RBS Six Nations Championship is well under way now. All games so far, and those to come, are being shown on the screen at the Clubhouse and Dean Quintin and his staff are keen to invite supporters to watch the game with like-minded people. Naturally, the bar will be open throughout.

Bath Rugby Clubhouse Recreation Ground, Bath, Tel: 01225 469230
The Clubhouse is available to hire for functions and events. As a member of the Bath Rugby Supporters' Club, you are entitled to a special offer of 5% discount on your booking for the hire of the Clubhouse. Call for further information.

YOUR CLUBHOUSE NEEDS YOU!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be standing on the other side of the bar at the Clubhouse? Well, now's your chance. Dean Quintin is currently recruiting part-time bar staff to work flexible shifts at the various functions hosted at the Rec. Enthusiasm is more important than experience as full training will be given, though applicants must be aged over 18. If this would suit you or someone you know, please contact Dean at the Clubhouse on 01225 469230 or email him at dean.quintin@bathrugby.com

ROB THIRLBY

AS YOU ARE NO DOUBT AWARE, ROB THIRLBY HAS JOINED NATIONAL LEAGUE ONE SIDE ROTHERHAM WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. COMMENTING ON THE MOVE, JACK ROWELL SAID, "ROB'S OPPORTUNITIES AT BATH HAVE BEEN LIMITED THIS SEASON AND HE HAS BEEN OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY WITH ROTHERHAM WHO ARE CURRENTLY RIDING HIGH IN NATIONAL LEAGUE ONE." ROB HAS SPENT NEARLY TWO YEARS WITH BATH RUGBY, JOINING FROM SARACENS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2000-2001 SEASON. HE SCORED NINE TRIES IN HIS 42 APPEARANCES, THOUGH HAS SEEN LIMITED ACTION DUE TO HIS SUCCESSFUL SEVENS CAREER WHICH HAS SEEN HIM LIFT THE HONG KONG AND BRISBANE SEVENS TITLES WITH ENGLAND. THE BATH RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB WOULD LIKE TO ECHO THE SENTIMENTS FROM BATH RUGBY IN WISHING ROB EVERY SUCCESS FOR HIS FUTURE.

SIX YEARS ON AND IT STILL SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY!

This year marks another anniversary of the Bath Rugby Supporters' Club - we're 6! And who would have thought all those years ago that we'd grow to be 1000 strong and still counting. It's a tribute to the partisan Rec crowd that we are still the largest independent rugby supporters' club in the country.

Your sixth birthday is not a time for posh frocks and polite conversation so the birthday party back in January took a less sophisticated



approach; we promised you cake and party games and that's what you got. The tactics of some participants in the games were a little dubious at times, but to their cost, they learned that cheats never prosper. Unless your shirt is hooped.

As captain, Danny had the responsibility of cutting the spectacular cake, seen here with Penny Dale who put in so much time and effort to make it. Thanks to Danny for doing the honours, and to Andy Long who also came along.

SLEET IN BATH, SNOW IN MONTAUBAN

It's not a good omen for a match to go ahead on the second weekend in January. Ever dauntless, Bath rugby supporters set off by all transport means available to them - by air, train, coach and car - to descend upon that previously unheard of venue just north of Toulouse. Cold did not even come into it - minus 7 and decreasing. The town of Montauban itself straddles the River Tarn, as we discover when visiting their website:

La ville de Montauban a ouvert une aire de camping-cars pour les touristes désirant séjourner en ville. Située sur la rive gauche, en bordure du Tarn, elle est accessible depuis la rue Gustave Jay ou la rue Caussat. Elle est dotée d'une station sanitaire payante permettant aux touristes de bénéficier pendant dix minutes d'un ravitaillement en eau potable de 80 litres, de l'approvisionnement en électricité et d'effectuer la vidange des eaux usées et le rinçage de leurs équipements. Cette station sanitaire automatique et écologique fonctionne avec des jetons que l'on peut acheter chez les commerçants du quartier et à l'Office de Tourisme. Cette aire de camping-cars, en bordure du Tarn, a une capacité de 10 véhicules.

Elle sera ouverte toute l'année. So now you know all about it!

It did not take long to spot the Bath supporters and it took even less time to discover about the only bar that was open all day in the town centre, which served 'giraffes' (two and a half litres of your favourite brew), which kept a table of people happy for at least half an hour. As the sales were on, some of the women opted for retail therapy, whilst most of the men opted for the 'giraffes.'

Montauban's council-owned stadium doubled as a velodrome and, although the Bath supporters chose the large and friendly clubhouse, the majority of locals weathered the cold at the outside bars. They were nonetheless hospitable if somewhat taken aback by the size of the Bath contingent.

Despite 'the boys' best efforts and the supporters' cacophony of sound, Bath went down by 24 points to 27. We like to think we were honourable in defeat, even though it was our first loss in France since the one against Brive way back in 1997 (and we all know what happened in the Final, that famous day in Bordeaux, January 1998!).

We were subsequently royally entertained by the Montauban Supporters' club - a four-course dinner including copious supplies of wine and coffee for a mere #16 a head.

We had a 'free' day on Sunday, before our return to the UK on Monday, so these two intrepid travellers made their annual pilgrimage to the 'Univers' bar in Brive. A warm welcome indeed from our good friend, Jean-Claude, his wife and a number of his regulars, all well-known faces to Bath supporters.

In fluent Francais we learnt that eight of those from Brive will be coming over to Bath in May for Bath's final home game of the season against Newcastle. Let us ensure they too have a suitably warm welcome!

Bath may be down but we are certainly not out - "Always look on the bright side of life."

Penny Brunton