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1877 - 2027

150TH ANNIVERSARY



Saturday
12th Sept 2026
2:30pm

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A Presidents Welcome



On behalf of myself and all involved at Barnstaple RFC I would like to extend a cordial welcome to Pottington Road, the home of Barnstaple RFC, for the 2026 2027 season. It is my honour to once again be President of the Club but more so as this is our 150th year.

Last season was without a doubt the most successful one ever on the playing front with our first team finishing seventh in National League 2 West, our seconds winning the Devon Intermediate Cup and finishing third in Counties 1 Western West our thirds making steady progress after the majority of the established players moved over to the Vets who in turn won their respective cup. The colts just lost out in the final of their cub under the guidance of 'Cooky' and his team. 'Cooky' has decided to step down from coaching this season but I am pleased to announce that Ed Day will be taking on the role of head coach.

The coaching setup for the rest of the teams remain as per last season so all bodes well for this season. I would add that we are very fortunate in having a very strong junior set up within the club, and the majority of our senior players have come through that set up.

This season we will not be welcoming any new sides to Pottington Road but we will again be locking horns with Bournville, who gained promotion back into our league, and Devonport Services who we previously played in South West Premier.

As always I would like to pass on my thanks to all those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to give you your 80 minutes of enjoyment on a Saturday, the players in all our teams, our coaches and the back room playing team, the band of volunteers who undertake works

throughout the week, Chris and his catering team and Emily and her bar team (and anyone else I might have forgotten) but most especially to you for your continued support, be you a regular supporter, sponsor, or just here on the off chance to see what it is all about.

I wish you all the very best for the season and look forward to seeing you in the clubhouse around the ground.

Trevor Edwards, President, Barnstaple RFC

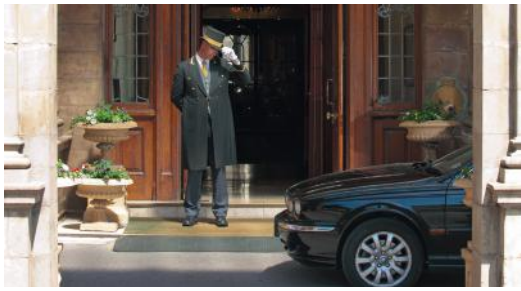
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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and a very warm welcome to Barnstaple Rugby Club!

What an absolute cracker we have in store for you here at Pottington Road this afternoon as the National 2 West season bursts into life. The Chiefs are preparing to lock horns with old adversaries Taunton Titans in what promises to be yet another extraordinary chapter in this long-standing rivalry. To the Taunton players, coaching staff, committee members, and to every single supporter who has made the journey up from Somerset this afternoon—welcome to North Devon! We hope you have a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon here with us… though perhaps not quite as enjoyable as your last visit!

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to today's match sponsors. First up, the ever-present Brewer, Harding and Rowe Solicitors—true stalwarts of this club, whose unwavering support over so many years continues to make a tremendous difference. Thank you for standing with us once again. We are also delighted to welcome Toyota, with the Barnstaple branch at Roundswell proudly displaying two of their latest vehicles here at the ground today. It's a dealership derby as much as a rugby one, and we are thrilled to have them showcasing their newest models while their Taunton counterparts look on!

We'd also like to give a warm welcome to our new ball sponsors, The Bridge Espresso & Wine Bar, who have kindly provided this season's match balls. If you're in Barnstaple, be sure to check them out at Bridge Chambers on the Strand — it's the place to go!



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Now, many of you will already be aware that this season marks a truly historic milestone for this great club. One hundred and fifty years ago, back in 1877, Barnstaple Rugby Club was founded right here in this town, and what a journey it has been. We have an incredible calendar of celebrations lined up over the coming months—end-of-month social matches with prizes galore, bottomless brunches, and of course, the launch of the 150 Lotto, Barnstaple's very own lottery. Not only will every entry help raise vital funds for club improvements, but one lucky winner will pocket £150 every single month. You'll find all the details in this program, and we encourage everyone to get involved and be part of this historic year. Do check out the club calendar as well to see everything we have coming up—there is so much to look forward to.

We are also serialising the history of Barnstaple Rugby Club in the Match Day Program starting with it's founding in 1877 in this edition. There will be stories and characters to delight you and a history full of adventure and excitement.

As for today we are trailing a new self pour drinks system for this match located by the can bar, our thanks goes to Troy from the Bridge for helping setting this up. Any questions of suggestions please talk to Amy who is manning the can bar.

Don't forget either that we have live music from the exceptional Messabouts following the game.

Before we turn our full attention to today's clash, an important notice for your diaries. For anyone planning to attend our home fixture against Lymm on Saturday the 26th of September, please note that kick-off has been brought forward to 2:00 PM. So set those alarm clocks, mark it in bold, and don't find yourself strolling in at half-past!

Right then—on to today's match. If you were here last season, you will remember a contest that had absolutely everything. Chiefs versus Titans at Pottington Road was a brutal, breathless, utterly magnificent spectacle of rugby.


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Taunton struck early and struck hard, racing to a 10-point lead midway through the first half before the Chiefs finally got on the board with a well-taken try. But then came the turning point—twenty-five minutes in, disaster. A Barnstaple player was shown a straight red, and suddenly the Chiefs were down to fourteen men with the best part of an hour still to play. Taunton capitalised, crossing again to stretch their lead, yet somehow, against all odds, Barnstaple dug deep and scored in the dying seconds of the half to close the gap to just Seven points at 10-17

What followed in the second forty minutes was nothing short of heroic. A man down, legs heavy, lungs burning, the fourteen-man Chiefs produced a performance of sheer guts and determination. Two converted tries saw them storm into the lead with twenty minutes remaining, and for a while, it looked as though one of the great Pottington Road comebacks was unfolding before our very eyes.

But rugby, as we all know, can be cruel. With just a couple of minutes left on the clock, Taunton snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, crossing for two tries in those frantic final three minutes to break Barnstaple hearts and take the points, 24-31.It was a game that had drama, passion, controversy, and courage in equal measure—a match that reminded us all why we love this sport. And that was just last season's encounter!

Both teams opened their campaigns last weekend with big wins, so we have fresh form, fresh energy, and fresh hope in the tank.

So, Barnstaple faithful, Are you ready for another white-knuckle ride? Another chapter in this fierce and fabulous rivalry? Then let's hear you! Strap yourselves in, get behind these lads from the first whistle to the last, and let's make Pottington Road roar!


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Match Officials

REF: James Walker

AR 1: Ewan Leadbeater

AR 2: Frederick Spong

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150 YEARS OF RUGBY IN BARNSTAPLE

UPCOMING EVENTS

26th Sept Match Day Carvery

17th Oct Bottomless Brunch

1st Nov Roundtable Fireworks

5th Dec Tables of 10 Christmas Lunch

19th Dec Members Christmas lunch

26th Dec Boxing Day Chrity Event

6th Mar Ladies Day

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PRE-SEASON
BARNSTAPLE COLTS VS TOPSHAM

SEPT 26TH 2PM
NATIONAL 2 WEST
BARNSTAPLE CHIEFS VS LYMM RFC

OCT 3RD - 2.30PM
DEVON MERIT TABLE 1
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OCTOBER 10TH - 2.30PM
NATIONAL 2 WEST
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OCTOBER 17TH - 2.30PM
COUNTIES 1 WESTERN WEST
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Welcome to the 2026/27 season at Barnstaple RFC. Director of Rugby Phil Gordon-Oke



After a strong and demanding pre-season, we are excited to begin another year together as one club and one squad. Throughout the summer, our players and coaches have worked hard to challenge themselves, raise standards, and prepare for the season ahead.

While our 1st XV will once again compete in National League 2, our focus extends far beyond any single team. At Barnstaple RFC, we operate as one playing group across all three senior sides. Every player is an important part of our programme, and our aim is simple: to help every individual improve and reach their potential, regardless of which team they represent.

Success for us is not measured solely by results on a Saturday. It is about creating an environment where players develop, enjoy their rugby, support one another, and contribute to the wider success of the club. We want every player to feel challenged, valued, and motivated to become the best version of themselves both on and off the field.

The commitment shown throughout pre-season has been outstanding, and there is a real sense of energy and ambition across the club. We know there will be challenges ahead, but we are confident that by continuing to work together, support each other, and uphold the values of Barnstaple RFC, we can make this a successful season for all three teams.

And this is doubly important as we celebrate150 glorious years of rugby in Barnstaple. We currently find ourselves at a peak never before seen at this club – yet our ambition reaches even higher. Our vision extends beyond the scoreboard; we are committed to ensuring that every player fulfils their potential,

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and that Barnstaple Rugby Club continues to grow and thrive in every aspect, both on and off the field.

We are proud custodians of a fantastic legacy, and we recognise the responsibility that comes with it. Just as generations before us worked tirelessly to build and nurture this club, we now look to the future – determined to bestow an even stronger, more vibrant Barnstaple Rugby Club upon those who will follow. Our goal is simple: to make this club the very best version of itself, not just for today, but for the next 150 years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank our volunteers, sponsors, supporters, and members. Your continued backing is invaluable and helps make this club what it is.

We look forward to seeing you throughout the season and sharing the journey together.

Philip Gordon

Director of Rugby

Barnstaple RFC



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Chiefs Serve Notice of Intent With Nine-Try Masterclass at Topsham

Barnstaple Chiefs Launch Season in Style with Dominant 53-24 Victory Over Exeter University

The 2026/27 season kicked off in style for the Barnstaple Chiefs, who travelled to Topsham Sports Ground to face county rivals Exeter University — a fixture that has rarely been kind to visitors in years past. With the Buccs' campaign yet to begin, the Chiefs arrived short of competitive minutes under their belts, but any rustiness was left in the changing room. This was a side intent on making a statement, and boy, did they make one.

First-Half Fireworks Set the Tone

It took just seven minutes for Ryan Lee to open the try-fest. Spotting a gap ten yards out, he came screaming onto the ball, sold a beautiful dummy to the last defender, and slid in under the posts. Cam Johnson added the extras, and the visitors were up and running.

Exeter hit back quickly, as you would expect from a well-drilled student outfit, but the momentum swung decisively Barnstaple's way when foul play earned the hosts a yellow card. The Chiefs smelled blood and struck twice in quick succession. First, Bertie Stretch powered over from a trademark Barnstaple rolling maul — a set-piece weapon the forwards have clearly been sharpening all summer. Then came a moment of real quality: Johnson, collecting the ball inside his own half, sliced through the Exeter defence with a dazzling line, leaving defenders clutching at air, before drawing the final tackler and slipping the ball to Benjamin Saunders five yards out who had the simplest of jobs to touch down.

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Whatever It Takes

The half was rounded off in typical barnstorming fashion. With the forwards laying siege to the Exeter line, Brandon Moore picked and drove over from a yard out to send the Chiefs into the break 22-7 ahead — and, crucially, with the try bonus point already banked.

Second-Half Statement of Intent

Now, if we're honest, we've seen this movie before. A comfortable Chiefs lead at half-time, a slight easing off the gas, a nervy final quarter. Not this time. If anything, the second forty was more ruthless than the first — even though Exeter crossed within a minute of the restart to briefly suggest a comeback.

That suggestion lasted about as long as the restart itself. From the very next kick-off, young scrum-half Stan Kift — a real bright prospect — threaded a beautifully weighted angled grubber through the defensive line, timed to perfection for Johnson to chase, gather, and dot down for his first of the afternoon.

And Johnson wasn't done. Picking up possession deep inside the Chiefs 22, he produced a run that had the travelling supporters — and, frankly, the neutral observers — on their feet. Beating the first wave, he reached the halfway line, chipped delicately over the last defender, gathered his own kick, and cruised in under the posts. It was the kind of individual brilliance that belongs on a season highlight reel, and it put the game firmly beyond the students.

Exeter did grab a second try as the final quarter approached, but any thoughts of a consolation contest were swiftly extinguished. Stretch added his second of the day, and then came arguably the play of the match. Receiving the ball wide inside their own 22, the Chiefs moved it through hands with real intent: Saunders released Hayden Gosling just beyond halfway, and the winger turned on the afterburners, tearing down the touchline before

drawing the cover and passing inside to Callum Morgan. Morgan was tackled agonisingly short of the line, but Stretch was there in support — as he had been all afternoon — to complete his hat-trick from a couple of yards out.

There was still time for one more. Lovely interchange between Callum Morgan and Jordan Petherbridge carved the defence open one final time, and "JP" dotted down for his first of the season and Barnstaple's ninth of a remarkable afternoon. Saunder's conversion sealed a 24-53 victory — a try bonus point, a plus-fifty-point haul away from home, and the perfect start to the campaign.

Looking Ahead

All in all, this was a fantastic performance to get the season underway, and the pace on display was genuinely eye-catching. How good were the Chiefs, though? That's the question — and frankly, you'd have to ask those who were at Topsham. Were the students simply not at the races, or is this Barnstaple side the real deal? I'd like to believe the latter, and we're about to find out.

This afternoon the Chiefs welcome a rampant Taunton to Pottington Road — the visitors having also crossed the half-century mark in their opening win over Devonport, albeit on home soil. Two sides, two fifty-point plus performances, one fixture. It all makes for a mouth-watering encounter.

Kick-off is at 2.30pm – and if Saturday's opener is anything to go by, this one is not to be missed.

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The hospice is here for you, and because of you. As such we are thrilled to be the chosen charity of Barnstaple RFC for this season. Both Barum and North Devon Hospice are close to the hearts of many in our community, and as such it is very fitting that we are working in partnership.

From all the hospice team - here's to a fantastic season

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The Founding of Barnstaple RugbyFootball Club

By the annals of West Country sport, the year 1877 is solemnly inscribed as the official founding date of the Barnstaple Rugby Football Club, a datum dutifully recorded in club ledgers and celebrated in civic memory. Yet, as with so many venerable institutions, the formal birth certificate belies a longer, more obscure gestation. To confine the club's origins to a single year is to ignore the smouldering embers of athletic ambition that glowed in the taverns and fields of North Devon for nearly a triennium prior. Indeed, the true embryology of the Barumite code must be traced to the autumn of 1874, when the rugby spirit first stirred among the gentry of the town.

It was in that year, amid the mahogany and tobacco haze of the Royal and Fortescue Hotel, that a convocation of some thirty gentlemen of means and sporting inclination convened with a singular purpose. After considerable debate—likely punctuated by toasts and the thud of fists upon oak, the assembly resolved to form a club "based upon the Rugby Union rules." as the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette at the time reported on November 27th 1874.

> *"FOOTBALL.-Seasonable weather having now set in, the different sporting and athletic clubs in the neighbour- hood are entering into their diversions with no little zeal, and a few evenings since a meeting of several gentlemen of the town was held at the Fortescue Hotel for the pur pose of forming a football club. Mr. W. A. Bilney oc- cupied the*

chair, and stated that he had procured a very suitable field at Rumsam, belonging to Mr. C. E. North- cote, at a nominal rent. He had already the names of nearly 30 gentlemen who were willing to join. After some little discussion, the following gentlemen were elected officers for the ensuing season:-Captain-Mr. W. H. Toller; committee-Messrs. C. W. Drew, F. G. Marks, J. Smyth, W. H. Taplin, and J. Westacott; hon. treasurer, Mr. W. H. Brewer; hon. sec., Mr. W. A. Bilney. It was also decided that the club should play on the Rugby Union Rules, and that the ball should be kicked off punctually at half-past three on Wednesday for the first game."

It was a decision that marked the first conscious act of organised football in Barnstaple. Yet this resolution, for all its ardour, remained a promise rather than a performance; the initial matches, it was conceded, would of necessity be in-house affairs, pitting member against member until sufficient challenge could be found beyond the parish bounds.

The first tangible evidence of this nascent fraternity, however, does not appear in the sporting columns until two years later. That encounter occurred on the 12th of October 1876, a Thursday of crisp autumn weather, upon the cricket meadow at Rumsam—There, on that pastoral ground, fifteen stalwarts of the Westward Ho! club, drawn from the coastal resort of that name, faced an equal number of “Gentlemen of Barnstaple,” the match being played, as the Gazette meticulously notes, “on the Rugby principle.” The contest was a low-scoring affair, decided by a solitary goal and it was the Barumites who carried the day, victors by one goal to nil, watched with delight by a fulsome crowd who weathered the incessant rain to watch the game.

What renders this 1876 fixture of particular significance is not

merely its result, but its revelation of continuity. The name “Barnstaple” already adorned, the field at Rumsam was already the appointed arena; and the rules were already those of the Rugby Union, These were no mere pick-up players, but an organised body with an identity, a captain, and a local following. Thus, for at least two seasons before the canonical date of 1877, a de facto Barnstaple Rugby Club was active, competitive, and victorious.

Why, then, does the official foundation rest upon 1877? The answer lies less in the playing of the game than in the governance of it. The year 1877 marks the transition from a coterie of gentlemen-athletes to a regulated institution; it is the date of bureaucratic baptism, not of sporting birth. The earlier years—1874 for the conception, 1876 for the first recorded victory, are the true, if unacknowledged, milestones of the club’s infancy.

In sum, while the club’s own chronicles may rightly claim 1877 as the year of official recognition, the historian must record a caveat: the Barumite lion was already roaring on the Rumsam meadows a full three years earlier. The club that would later be known, with proud finality, as the Barnstaple Rugby Football Club did not spring forth fully armoured from a single minute-book; it was forged in the debates of the Royal and Fortesque, tested in the mud of the cricket field, and christened in the columns of the West Country press. That the formal documentation is scarce is no indictment of the club’s antiquity, but rather a testament to the modesty of its origins—and a reminder that history is often played, not written, before it is recorded.



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TARKA CLINIC

	TEAM MANAGER/	PHYSIO/ FIRST AIDER
BUCC'S STAFF	ROBBIE WALKER	CARRIS GAMMON TARKA CLINIC
COLTS STAFF	LUCY SHADDICK	PAUL MARTIN

Athletic, Bucc's and Colts news



Saturday's Rugby – A Full Afternoon at the Club!

While the headline act takes centre stage later in the day, it's not the only rugby on offer this Saturday, our Colts are in action in their second warm-up fixture ahead of the new season, and they'd love your support.

The Colts got their pre-season off to a promising start last Friday night, travelling to Bideford to face Kingsley under the lights. Despite coming away on the wrong end of a 21–12 scoreline, it was an excellent first runout — a proper competitive workout that gave the coaches plenty to work with and the lads a valuable taste of match intensity before the serious business begins.

This week they return home to host Taunton Colts, with kick-off at 12.30pm. So if you're planning to be at the club anyway, why not make a full afternoon of it? Get yourselves down early, settle in with an extra pint or two, and enjoy some entertaining Colts rugby before the main event gets underway. There's no better way to build up to the big game than watching the next generation of club talent strut their stuff.

Athletic & the Buccaneers – Season Start Delayed

As many of you will already know, the start of the grassroots rugby season has been pushed back until the week beginning 21st September, a consequence of the extreme weather conditions that have made pitches unplayable across the region in recent weeks. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding — player welfare and pitch preservation have to come first.

Neither the Athletic nor the Buccaneers will see any match action until 26th September, when both sides are back in action. The Athletic will be at home to Cullompton, while the Buccaneers make the trip to South Molton to take on their 2nd XV. Both fixtures promise to be cracking contests, so get the date in your diaries now.

That's about it for now — one last reminder: Colts kick-off at 12.30pm this Saturday. Get down early, bring your appetite for rugby (and perhaps a pint), and let's make it a day to remember at the club. See you there!

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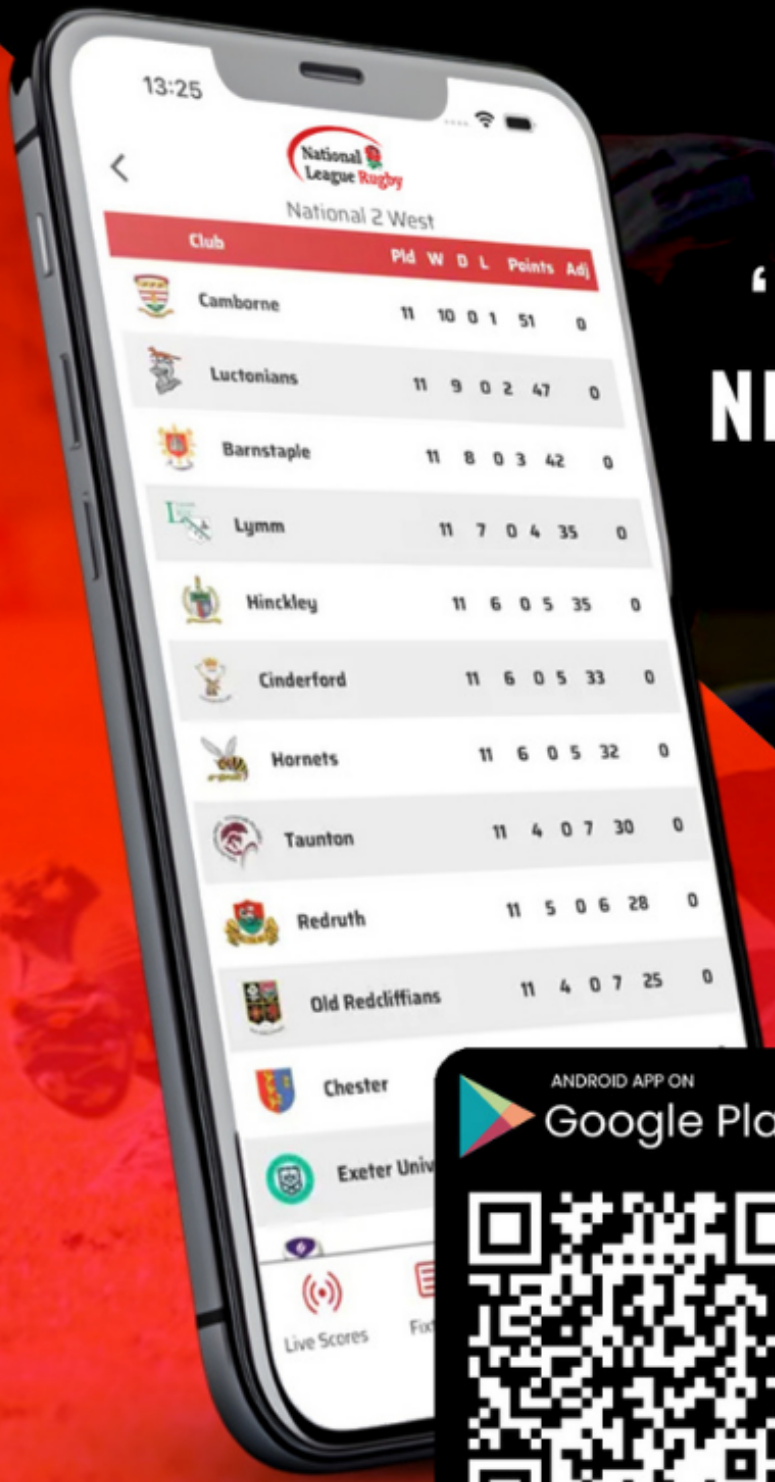
Wishing you the best of luck for the
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Stats definitions

#	TEAM	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	Redruth	1	1	0	0	61	10	51	1	0	5
2	Taunton Titans	1	1	0	0	53	17	36	1	0	5
3	Barnstaple	1	1	0	0	53	24	29	1	0	5
4	Lymm	1	1	0	0	50	27	23	1	0	5
5	Clifton	1	1	0	0	48	31	17	1	0	5
6	Old Redcliffians	1	1	0	0	27	24	3	1	0	5
7	Luctonians	1	1	0	0	27	19	8	0	0	4
8	Hornets	1	0	0	1	24	27	-3	1	1	2
9	Cinderford	1	0	0	1	31	48	-17	1	0	1
10	Loughborough Students	1	0	0	1	27	50	-23	1	0	1
11	Exeter University	1	0	0	1	24	53	-29	1	0	1
12	Hinckley	1	0	0	1	19	27	-8	0	0	0
13	Devonport Services	1	0	0	1	17	53	-36	0	0	0
14	Bournville	1	0	0	1	10	61	-51	0	0	0

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