

DUGOUT NEWS

THE PLAYERS LIGHTING UP SUSSEX NON-LEAGUE

26 in-form players from
the top of the pyramid
down to SCFL Division Two



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DUGOUT DIARIES

FROM THE EDITOR

Nobody was commissioned. Nobody was paid. Ten Sussex football people sent us their words this week anyway.

Four issues in, and the thing that keeps surprising me is not that DUGOUT NEWS exists. It is who turns up to fill it.

This week the inbox brought a manager writing honestly about being out of work and waiting for the phone to ring. A Step 6 boss laying out, line by line, exactly where his club's money goes and why his players pay £200 a year for the privilege of playing. A supporter who admits he did not know what a Step was eighteen months ago. A man who drove to Bexhill on a Friday night, watched four goals, took his own photographs and had a report with me before I had finished my tea.

Nobody was commissioned. Nobody was paid. That is the part I still cannot quite get over.

The cover this week is twenty-six of them — players lighting up the Sussex game right now, from the top of the pyramid down to SCFL Division Two. Two goalkeepers, four defenders, and no ranking, because a list that only counts goals describes about a third of what happens on a Sussex pitch on a Saturday

afternoon. The full ranked feature, THE HOT 50, is next Sunday.

You will disagree with some of it. Good — that is rather the point, and there is a page at the back telling you exactly how to tell us who we got wrong.

Tomorrow is Bank Holiday Monday, which in this county means an 11am kick-off, a bacon roll and a full card of football across three divisions. Every division now runs results, table and then the fixtures ahead, so Monday's card sits inside its own section — page 20 for the National Leagues through to page 61 for SCFL Division Two. The Dugout Picks are on page 91.

That last point matters more to me than it probably should. This magazine is free, which means the only thing we are actually selling is whether you can trust what is printed in it. Every score, table and fixture in these hundred pages has been checked against an official source before it went on the page.

Thanks for reading. Thanks for writing. See you in the dugout.



MIKE MCCAFFREY

EDITOR · FOUNDER, DUGOUT AI

**SEE YOU
IN THE DUGOUT**

CONTENTS

-
- 03** **FROM THE EDITOR**
Dugout Diaries
-
- 06** **MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS**
The people who filled this issue
-
- 08** **THE WEEKEND IN SUSSEX**
Everything that mattered
-
- 10** **NATIONAL LEAGUE & SOUTH**
Worthing, Horsham, Dorking Wanderers
-
- 11** **TAMWORTH 3-2 WORTHING**
Two away goals, no points
-
- 13** **WALTON & HERSHAM 1-4 DORKING**
Four scorers, one statement
-
- 15** **HORSHAM 1-2 FARNHAM TOWN**
A first defeat of the season
-
- 17** **NATIONAL LEAGUE · RESULTS, TABLE, FIXTURES**
Steps 1 and 2 in full
-
- 22** **ISTHMIAN PREMIER**
Burgess Hill, Lewes, Eastbourne Borough
-
- 23** **BURGESS HILL 2-1 DARTFORD**
Ben Pope decides a Friday night
-
- 25** **ISTHMIAN PREMIER · RESULTS, TABLE, FIXTURES**
The full round and Monday's card
-
- 29** **ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST & CENTRAL**
Hastings, Bognor, Littlehampton
-
- 30** **LITTLEHAMPTON 2-2 RAYNES PARK**
Out on penalties, 7-6
-
- 32** **FA TROPHY · SUSSEX TIES**
Results, both tables, Monday's card
-
- 37** **SCFL PREMIER DIVISION**
Four reports from one weekend
-

38 LANCING 1-3 EASTBOURNE UNITED

Brandon Wright at Culver Road

40 FOREST ROW 0-4 PAGHAM

Four away goals for the Lions

42 BEXHILL UNITED 2-2 ROFFEY

Geoff Martin, from The Oval

44 HAYWARDS HEATH 1-0 LINGFIELD

Nine minutes of injury time

46 SCFL PREMIER • RESULTS, TABLE, FIXTURES

The full round and Monday's card

51 SCFL DIVISION ONE

Worthing United's flying start

56 SCFL DIVISION TWO

Nineteen goals in three fixtures

57 T.D. SHIPLEY 3-1 RUDGWICK

Brad Curtis reports

63 THE CUPS

FA Cup Sussex round-up

67 THE VOICES

Seven contributors, seven arguments

68 RUSS COCHRAN

Promoting non-league football

75 STUART ROBINSON

Manager or coach?

81 DALE WYATT

A blessing and a curse

87 DUGOUT DIARIES

Football without the algorithm

91 DUGOUT PICKS

Eight games worth an alarm on Monday

93 THE WEEKEND IN NUMBERS

Counted from the verified results

94 THE SUSSEX CLUB LIST

Every club, every division

ISSUE 4 · THE TEAM

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Managers, directors, photographers, coaches and supporters. Not one of them is on the payroll.

**MIKE MCCAFFREY**

FOUNDER, DUGOUT AI · DUGOUT
DIARIES

**RUSS COCHRAN**

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

**STEVEN 'RHINO' CARLBERG**

MANAGER · WITH DEAN COX

**STUART ROBINSON**

COACHING & MANAGEMENT

**GLENN SOUTER**

SUSSEX GRASSROOTS



DALE WYATT

MANAGER, REIGATE PRIORITY FC



MICKY HUSH

SUPPORTER COLUMNIST



BRANDON WRIGHT

LANCING / MATCHDAY CONTRIBUTOR



GEOFF MARTIN

BEXHILL UNITED CORRESPONDENT



BRAD CURTIS

T.D. SHIPLEY FC

WANT TO WRITE FOR DUGOUT NEWS?

We publish every Sunday and we are always short of one thing: people who were actually there. Match reports, opinion, photography, club stories — all of it is welcome.

No word count. No house line to follow. Send it to the editor and we will find it a page.

**mikethesnlf
@gmail.com**

SEND US YOUR COPY

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

THE WEEKEND IN SUSSEX

Eight goals in Worthing, an 89th-minute winner in Burgess Hill, and nine minutes of injury time to survive at Hanbury Park.

EIGHT

Worthing United put eight past Ringmer AFC to make it four wins from four. Danny Kingston and Dean Sherwood are both on this week's cover, and United look like a side who have decided what this season is for.

89'

Ben Pope's second goal against Dartford arrived in the 89th minute and turned a Friday night point into three. Dartford had gone down to ten on 74 when Emmanuel Oke was sent off.

2-2

Bexhill United and Roffey shared four goals under Friday night lights at The Oval. Ryan Moir scored twice for the hosts. Geoff Martin was there — his report and his photographs start on page 42.

9

Nine minutes of injury time at Hanbury Park, and Haywards Heath Town saw all of them out to beat Lingfield 1-0. Newhaven away, 11am Monday. No rest anywhere.

FIRST

Horsham lost for the first time this season, 1-2 at home to Farnham Town, and slipped from fourth to sixth in National League South. Monday's trip to Ebbsfleet is postponed.

CONFIRMED RESULTS

SATURDAY'S KEY SCORES

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Tamworth 3–2 Worthing

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

Horsham 1–2 Farnham Town

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

Burgess Hill Town 2–1 Dartford

Walton & Hersham 1–4 Dorking Wanderers

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

Haywards Heath Town 1–0 Lingfield

Bexhill United 2–2 Roffey

SCFL DIVISION ONE

Worthing United 8–0 Ringmer AFC

Jarvis Brook 3–1 Infinity

Reigate Priory 5–0 Selsey

Hailsham Town 5–0 Shoreham

Arundel 3–1 Loxwood

SCFL DIVISION TWO

T.D. Shipley 3–1 Rudgwick

Every Sussex division is covered from page 10, top of the pyramid downward. The seven league tables sit inside their own sections.

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY

Three SCFL divisions, 11am kick-offs almost throughout, and a full card of Sussex football on a day most of the country has off.

Every division carries its own fixtures page, from page 20 to page 61.

STEP 1 & STEP 2 · THE TOP OF THE SUSSEX GAME

NATIONAL LEAGUE & SOUTH

Worthing in the National League; Horsham and Dorking Wanderers in National League South.

11 TAMWORTH 3-2 WORTHING

13 WALTON & HERSHAM 1-4 DORKING WANDERERS

15 HORSHAM 1-2 FARNHAM TOWN

17 NATIONAL LEAGUE RESULTS

18 NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH RESULTS

19 NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH TABLE

20 FIXTURES AHEAD

NATIONAL LEAGUE

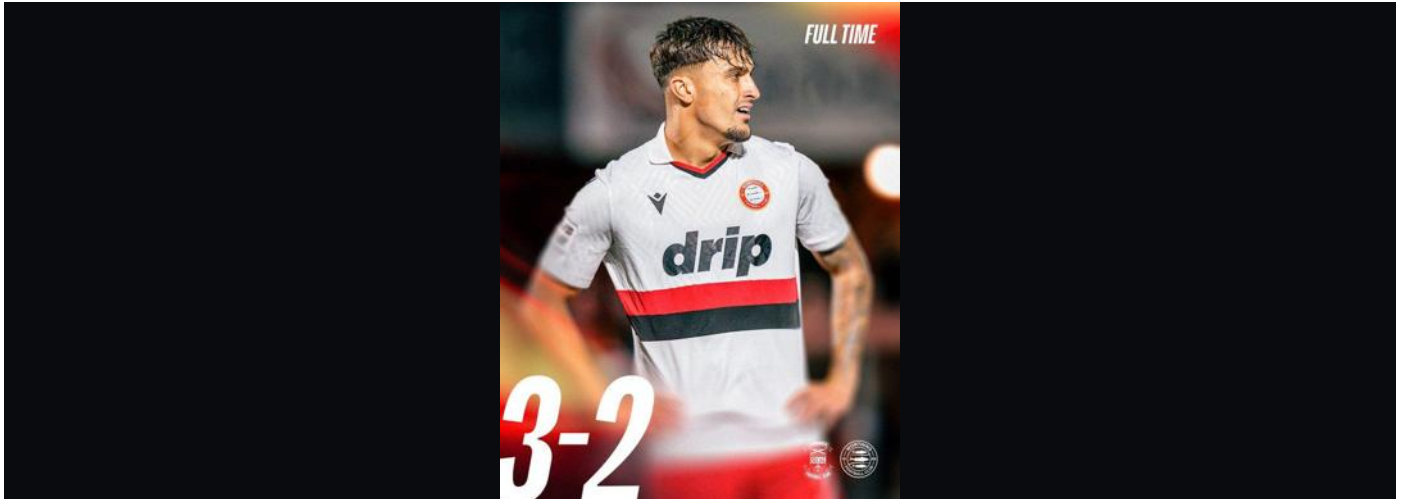
THE LAMB GROUND · FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026

TAMWORTH **3 - 2** WORTHING

Two goals on the road at the Lamb Ground, and still nothing to show for it.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



PHOTOGRAPH: WORTHING FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Worthing's first season in the National League continues to ask the hardest question in football: what do you do when you play well enough and still lose?

Friday night at the Lamb Ground produced two away goals against a Tamworth side who have started the season strongly, and a 3–2 defeat. In a division where the entire round was played on Friday, it meant Worthing

spent the rest of the weekend watching everybody else's results settle around them.

Scoring twice away from home at this level is not a small thing. Worthing came up as champions of National League South and the step from that division to this one is the sharpest in the non-league pyramid: the same ninety minutes, played by squads with considerably more of it in their legs.

The margins are what change. A team that would have been punished for one lapse in National League South gets punished for it faster and more often here. Three goals conceded on a Friday night is the whole story of the evening, and it is a story Worthing will have to get better at rewriting.

There is an immediate chance. Boreham Wood at home on Bank Holiday Monday, and a Worthing crowd who have taken to this season with

more patience than the results have strictly earned.

The travelling support at Tamworth on a Friday night in August deserves a mention of its own. Long trips on weeknights are the part of promotion that nobody puts on the poster, and there were plenty of them at the Lamb Ground.

Two goals away from home is something to build on. Monday afternoon is the place to build on it.

THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE CHANCE. BOREHAM WOOD AT HOME ON BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY, AND A WORTHING CROWD WHO HAVE TAKEN TO THIS SEASON WITH MORE PATIENCE THAN...

COMPETITION	NATIONAL LEAGUE
VENUE	THE LAMB GROUND

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

ELMBRIDGE XCEL · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

WALTON & HERSHAM 1 - 4 DORKING WANDERERS

Wanderers hit four on the road as Rutherford, Camp, Rogalski and Wood deliver a statement win.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



PHOTOGRAPH: DORKING WANDERERS FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Dorking Wanderers went to Walton & Hersham on Saturday afternoon, fell behind inside seven minutes, and then scored four goals through four different players. It is the sort of afternoon that reframes a season.

M. Skarna gave the hosts the lead on seven minutes, and for a side who had started the campaign with more inconsistency than they would have liked, an early goal against them at somebody else's ground was exactly the test nobody at Dorking wanted.

The answer arrived on 24 minutes. Bobby-Joe Camp restored parity and, more importantly, restored the shape of

the afternoon. From that point the game stopped being about damage limitation and started being about how many.

The timing of the second was the killer. Alfie Rutherford scored on 44 minutes, taking the lead into the interval and handing Walton & Hersham fifteen minutes in the dressing room to think about a game that had turned completely inside forty.

Six minutes after the restart it was three. Dan Rogalski made it 3–1 on 51 minutes, and at that point the only remaining question was the margin.

Jack Wood answered it on 71 minutes. Four goals, four scorers, and an away win in National League South that will be referenced for a while.

That last detail is worth pausing on. Four separate goalscorers is not a statistical curiosity; it is evidence about how a side is functioning. Teams that rely on one man having a good day are fragile. Teams where the goals arrive from four different places are considerably harder to plan against, and Wanderers looked like the second kind on Saturday.

National League South is congested enough that a single result rarely

settles anything. But going somewhere else, conceding first, and winning by three clear goals tells you more about a dressing room than a comfortable home victory ever would.

Walton & Hersham will want to move past it quickly. Conceding four at home is a difficult ninety minutes at any level, and this division offers very little room to dwell.

For Dorking, seven points from five and a goal difference that has moved firmly positive. More usefully than either: proof, on somebody else's pitch, of what this team looks like when it decides to play.

DORKING GOT PUNCHED EARLY. THEIR RESPONSE WAS TO SCORE FOUR.

SCORERS	WALTON & HERSHAM: M. SKARNA 7'. DORKING WANDERERS: BOBBY-JOE CAMP 24', ALFIE RUTHERFORD 44', DAN ROGALSKI 51', JACK WOOD 71'.
COMPETITION	NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
VENUE	ELMBRIDGE XCEL

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

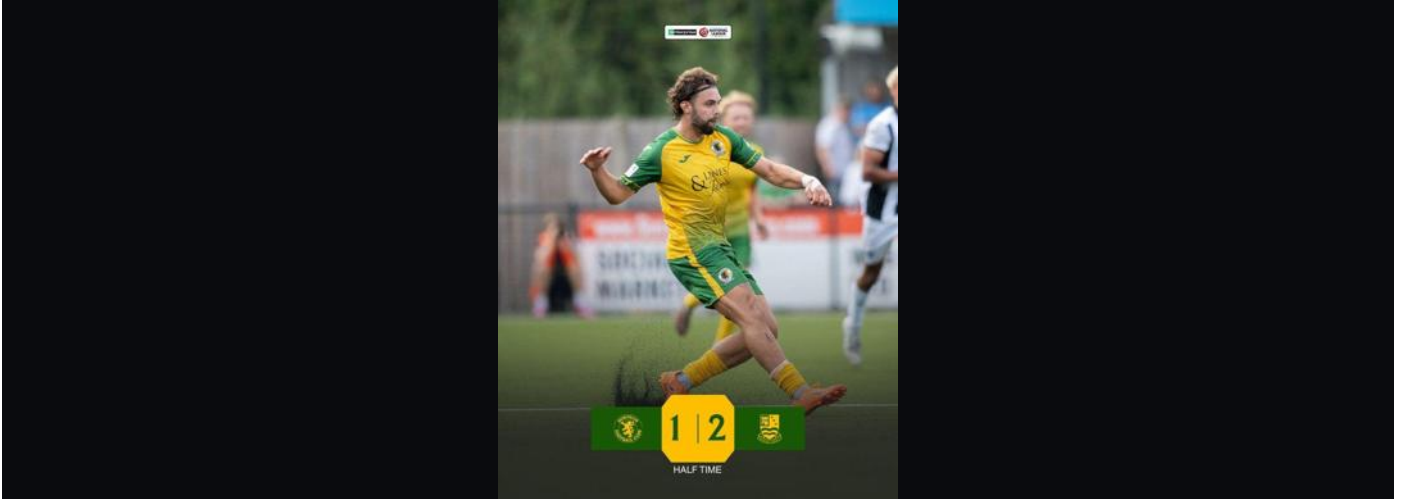
THE CAMPING WORLD COMMUNITY STADIUM · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

HORSHAM 1 - 2 FARNHAM TOWN

Hornets suffer first league defeat as Owen Dean double punishes missed chances.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



PHOTOGRAPH: HORSHAM FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Horsham began this game the better side and finished it with nothing, which is a sentence that will be familiar to anybody who has followed football for more than a fortnight.

The Hornets started brightly in front of 1,022 at the Camping World Community Stadium. Harvey Sparks struck the post early, the sort of opening that either settles a side or begins to worry it, and for twenty minutes Horsham looked like a team about to go in front.

Instead they went behind. Jack Spong's effort came back off the bar, Owen Dean reacted quickest to the rebound, and on fifteen minutes

Farnham Town led a game they had barely been in.

Horsham's response was excellent. James Hammond levelled on 27 minutes with a first-time volley of real quality — the kind of finish that has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with a player deciding in advance what he is going to do with the ball when it arrives.

At 1–1 the game was there to be taken. Horsham had the better of it and, on the balance of the first half-hour, deserved to be ahead rather than level.

Then Dean scored again. Just before the interval, on 42 minutes, and Farnham took a lead into the break that

That is the whole story of the afternoon and there is no need to dress it up. Farnham Town created two chances of genuine consequence and scored both of them. Horsham created considerably more and scored one.

The second half offered Horsham every opportunity to put it right. Farnham hit the post themselves shortly after the restart — a reminder that the visitors were not simply defending a lead — but the closing half-hour belonged almost entirely to the hosts.

There was a significant penalty appeal involving Jamie Yila that went unrewarded and will be discussed for some time by everybody who was behind that goal. Greg Luer was denied late. By stoppage time Sam Howes had come up from his own goal to join the attack, which is the universal signal that a side has stopped calculating and started throwing.

It did not come. Farnham Town held on for a 1–2 win, Horsham suffered their

first league defeat of the season, and the Hornets dropped from fourth to sixth in a division where two places is one result.

Perspective is available and worth taking. Five games, two wins, two draws, one defeat, and only four goals conceded. That is a good start by any measure, and the manner of Saturday's defeat — beaten by finishing rather than outplayed — is the more encouraging kind.

The frustration is that the immediate chance to answer it has gone. Monday's scheduled trip to Ebbsfleet United will not be played after the National League extended Ebbsfleet's suspension over unpaid debts, confirmed by Horsham on 26 August. No rearranged date has been set, so the Hornets get a fortnight to think about this rather than forty-eight hours.

Good sides lose football matches. The really good ones make sure one defeat does not become two.

TWO CHANCES OF REAL CONSEQUENCE. TWO GOALS FOR DEAN. THAT IS RUTHLESS.

SCORERS	HORSHAM: JAMES HAMMOND 27'. FARNHAM TOWN: OWEN DEAN 15', 42'. ATTENDANCE: 1,022.
---------	--

COMPETITION	NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
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VENUE	THE CAMPING WORLD COMMUNITY STADIUM
-------	-------------------------------------

NATIONAL LEAGUE

FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026 · FULL ROUND

AFC Fylde	2–0	Forest Green Rovers
Aldershot Town	3–1	Harrogate Town
Altrincham	2–1	FC Halifax Town
Barrow	1–2	Yeovil Town
Boreham Wood	2–1	Boston United
Gateshead	0–1	Sutton United
Hartlepool United	0–1	Eastleigh
Hornchurch	1–0	Woking
Scunthorpe United	3–1	Solihull Moors
Southend United	1–3	Kidderminster Harriers
Tamworth	3–2	Worthing
Wealdstone	1–1	Carlisle United

The entire National League round was played on Friday night. Worthing lost 3–2 at Tamworth.

Worthing are at home to Boreham Wood on Bank Holiday Monday.

Worthing are at home to Boreham Wood at 15:00 on Bank Holiday Monday – full card on page 20.

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

AFC Totton	0–4	Chesham United
Billericay Town	2–2	Tonbridge Angels
Chelmsford City	1–0	Maidenhead United
Dover Athletic	3–3	Braintree Town
Hemel Hempstead Town	1–3	Weston-super-Mare
Horsham	1–2	Farnham Town
Maidstone United	2–1	Salisbury
Slough Town	0–2	Folkestone Invicta
Torquay United	1–1	Hampton & Richmond Borough
Truro City	3–0	Dagenham & Redbridge
Walton & Hersham	1–4	Dorking Wanderers

Horsham's unbeaten start ended at home to Farnham Town, James Hammond scoring for the Hornets and Owen Dean twice for the visitors. Horsham drop from fourth to sixth.

Dorking Wanderers won 4–1 at Walton & Hersham. Truro City beat leaders Dagenham & Redbridge 3–0, and Farnborough's fixture against Ebbsfleet United was postponed.

Farnborough v Ebbsfleet United was postponed.

THE TABLES

AS THEY STAND

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Dagenham & Redbridge	5	4	0	1	7	4	+3	12
2	Weston-super-Mare	5	3	1	1	11	4	+7	10
3	Truro City	4	3	1	0	7	0	+7	10
4	Maidstone United	5	3	1	1	10	6	+4	10
5	Folkestone Invicta	4	2	2	0	9	3	+6	8
6	Horsham	5	2	2	1	6	4	+2	8
7	Dorking Wanderers	5	2	1	2	9	5	+4	7
8	Billericay Town	4	2	1	1	8	5	+3	7
9	Tonbridge Angels	5	2	1	2	8	6	+2	7
10	Dover Athletic	5	2	1	2	11	11	0	7
11	Hemel Hempstead Town	5	2	1	2	6	6	0	7
12	Farnborough	4	2	1	1	4	4	0	7
13	Chesham United	5	2	0	3	8	7	+1	6
14	Chelmsford City	4	1	3	0	3	2	+1	6
15	Torquay United	5	1	3	1	4	5	-1	6
16	Farnham Town	5	2	0	3	6	8	-2	6
17	AFC Totton	4	2	0	2	2	7	-5	6
18	Maidenhead United	5	1	2	2	2	4	-2	5
19	Salisbury	4	1	1	2	7	4	+3	4
20	Braintree Town	4	1	1	2	7	11	-4	4
21	Hampton & Richmond Borough	5	1	1	3	6	14	-8	4
22	Ebbsfleet United	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	Slough Town	4	0	0	4	6	13	-7	0
24	Walton & Hersham	5	0	0	5	2	16	-14	0

Horsham sixth, Dorking Wanderers seventh. Ebbsfleet United are shown with no games played following the National League's suspension of the club.

FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · STEP 1 AND STEP 2

NATIONAL LEAGUE · SUSSEX

15:00 **Worthing v Boreham Wood**

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH · SUSSEX

— **Ebbsfleet United v Horsham — POSTPONED**

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH · THE REST OF THE CARD

15:00 **Braintree Town v Farnborough**

15:00 **Chesham United v Dover Athletic**

15:00 **Dagenham & Redbridge v Slough Town**

15:00 **Dorking Wanderers v Truro City**

15:00 **Farnham Town v Torquay United**

15:00 **Folkestone Invicta v Hemel Hempstead Town**

15:00 **Hampton & Richmond Borough v Maidstone United**

15:00 **Maidenhead United v AFC Totton**

15:00 **Salisbury v Billericay Town**

15:00 **Tonbridge Angels v Walton & Hersham**

15:00 **Weston-super-Mare v Chelmsford City**

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

► Worthing's first home fixture of the Bank Holiday programme. Kick-off 15:00 at Woodside Road.

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STEP 3 · ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

ISTHMIAN PREMIER

Burgess Hill Town, Lewes, Three Bridges, Whitehawk and Eastbourne Borough.

23 BURGESS HILL TOWN 2-1 DARTFORD

25 ISTHMIAN PREMIER RESULTS

27 ISTHMIAN PREMIER TABLE

28 FIXTURES AHEAD

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

THE GREEN ELEPHANTS STADIUM · FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026

BURGESS HILL TOWN 2 - 1 DARTFORD

Ben Pope scores twice, the second in the 89th minute, and the Hillians take a Friday night from Dartford.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



PHOTOGRAPH: BURGESS HILL TOWN FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Some players decorate a football match and some decide it. On Friday night at the Green Elephants Stadium, Ben Pope decided one.

He put Burgess Hill Town in front on 31 minutes. Dartford levelled, and for a long stretch of the second half the Hillians were looking at a point rather than three — a respectable enough

Friday night against a side of Dartford's standing, but not the one they wanted.

Then Dartford lost Emmanuel Oke to a red card on 74 minutes, and the shape of the evening changed. Burgess Hill had fifteen minutes and a man's advantage, which is exactly the situation that separates sides who apply pressure from sides who convert it.

Pope converted it. The 89th minute, his second of the night, and a 2–1 win that had looked like slipping away twenty minutes earlier.

The match sponsor made him Man of the Match, which required no great deliberation. Two goals, one of them the winner, in a game his side had been

drifting out of. Chris Whelpdale's influence in midfield gave Burgess Hill the platform; Pope supplied the finish.

It is the kind of result that sets a tone. Beating Dartford is worth three points and a little more than three points, and it is why Pope is on the cover of this issue.

POPE CONVERTED IT. THE 89TH MINUTE, HIS SECOND OF THE NIGHT, AND A 2-1 WIN THAT HAD LOOKED LIKE SLIPPING AWAY TWENTY MINUTES...

COMPETITION	ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION
VENUE	THE GREEN ELEPHANTS STADIUM

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

FRIDAY 28 – SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

Burgess Hill Town	2–1	Dartford
AFC Whyteleafe	2–2	Cheshunt
Aveley	0–2	Lewes
Carshalton Athletic	2–0	Brentwood Town
Chatham Town	2–3	Wingate & Finchley
Dulwich Hamlet	2–2	Three Bridges

Burgess Hill Town beat Dartford 2–1 on Friday night, Ben Pope scoring on 31 minutes and again on 89 after Jeremiah Pinder had levelled in first-half stoppage time.

Lewes won 2–0 at Aveley and Three Bridges drew 2–2 at Dulwich Hamlet. Eastbourne Borough, relegated into this division over the summer, lost 1–0 at home to Leatherhead, and Whitehawk were beaten 5–1 at Enfield Town.

Carshalton Athletic remain the only side in the division with a perfect record — five games, five wins.

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

Eastbourne Borough	0–1	Leatherhead
Enfield Town	5–1	Whitehawk
St Albans City	4–1	Stanway Rovers
Welling United	1–0	Ramsgate

Sussex has five clubs in the Isthmian Premier Division this season: Burgess Hill Town, Lewes, Three Bridges and Whitehawk, joined by Eastbourne Borough after relegation from National League South.

Carshalton Athletic remain the only side in the division with a perfect record — five games, five wins.

Maldon & Tiptree v Cray Wanderers was not played.

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Carshalton Athletic	5	5	0	0	10	2	+8	15
2	Enfield Town	5	4	0	1	16	6	+10	12
3	Welling United	5	4	0	1	11	4	+7	12
4	Lewes	5	3	1	1	7	5	+2	10
5	Leatherhead	5	3	1	1	10	8	+2	10
6	Chatham Town	5	3	0	2	12	8	+4	9
7	St Albans City	5	3	0	2	9	9	0	9
8	Dartford	5	3	0	2	7	8	-1	9
9	Burgess Hill Town	5	2	2	1	8	6	+2	8
10	Wingate & Finchley	5	2	2	1	7	7	0	8
11	Dulwich Hamlet	5	2	1	2	11	6	+5	7
12	Aveley	5	2	1	2	10	8	+2	7
13	Eastbourne Borough	5	2	1	2	9	9	0	7
14	Ramsgate	5	2	0	3	10	7	+3	6
15	Maldon & Tiptree	4	2	0	2	6	9	-3	6
16	Cray Wanderers	4	1	2	1	4	4	0	5
17	Cheshunt	5	0	4	1	3	5	-2	4
18	Brentwood Town	5	1	0	4	5	9	-4	3
19	AFC Whyteleafe	5	0	2	3	5	12	-7	2
20	Three Bridges	5	0	1	4	8	16	-8	1
21	Stanway Rovers	5	0	1	4	3	13	-10	1
22	Whitehawk	5	0	1	4	3	13	-10	1

Five Sussex clubs: Burgess Hill Town, Lewes, Three Bridges, Whitehawk and Eastbourne Borough.

FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · THE FULL CARD

SUSSEX

15:00 **Lewes v Eastbourne Borough**

15:00 **Three Bridges v Carshalton Athletic**

15:00 **Whitehawk v Burgess Hill Town**

ELSEWHERE IN THE DIVISION

15:00 **Brentwood Town v Maldon & Tiptree**

15:00 **Cheshunt v St Albans City**

15:00 **Cray Wanderers v Welling United**

15:00 **Dartford v Chatham Town**

15:00 **Leatherhead v Dulwich Hamlet**

15:00 **Ramsgate v AFC Whyteleafe**

15:00 **Stanway Rovers v Aveley**

15:00 **Wingate & Finchley v Enfield Town**

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- ▶ Two all-Sussex derbies in one afternoon: Lewes against Eastbourne Borough at the Dripping Pan, and Whitehawk against Burgess Hill Town.
- ▶ Carshalton Athletic, the only side in the division with a perfect record, travel to Three Bridges.

**EVERY
RESULT.**

STEP 4 · ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

SOUTH EAST & SOUTH CENTRAL

Hastings United in South East; Bognor Regis Town and Littlehampton Town in South Central.

30 LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN 2-2 RAYNES PARK VALE

32 FA TROPHY · SUSSEX TIES

33 SOUTH EAST TABLE

34 SOUTH CENTRAL TABLE

35 FIXTURES AHEAD

FA TROPHY · FIRST QUALIFYING ROUND

THE SPORTSFIELD · FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026

LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN **2 - 2** RAYNES PARK VALE

Twenty-six penalties, thirteen each, and the Marigolds go out of the FA Trophy on a Friday night at the Sportsfield.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



GRAPHIC: LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

There are defeats and then there are the ones that take an hour to stop feeling unfair. Littlehampton Town's FA Trophy went on Friday night in a shootout that reached 7-6 — thirteen penalties each — before Raynes Park Vale came out the right side of it.

The ninety minutes finished 2-2. The Marigolds scored twice and were pulled back twice, and by the end of extra time the Sportsfield had the particular quiet of a ground where

everybody knows exactly what is coming next and nobody wants it.

Shootouts that go that deep stop being a test of penalty-taking and become a test of nerve. Both sides converted their first five. Both sides converted their next two. Somewhere past the tenth kick it becomes a question of who has run out of players who want to walk forward, and on Friday night that was not Raynes Park Vale.

It is a hard way to leave a competition that pays real money to the clubs who go deep in it, and Littlehampton had done more than enough over 120 minutes to still be in it.

Dion Jarvis and Teejan Sparks — both on this week's cover — are the two players Littlehampton's season runs through, Jarvis taking the ball in the areas most players avoid and Sparks leading from a defensive-wide role that asks for more running than any other

job on the pitch. Neither will have enjoyed Friday.

The Trophy is gone. The league is not, and Isthmian South Central resumes on Bank Holiday Monday.

There is one small consolation available on nights like this: nobody who was at the Sportsfield on Friday will forget it. That is not the same as a result. It is not nothing, either.

IT IS A HARD WAY TO LEAVE A COMPETITION THAT PAYS REAL MONEY TO THE CLUBS WHO GO DEEP IN IT, AND LITTLEHAMPTON HAD DONE MORE THAN ENOUGH OVER 120...

SHOOTOUT

RAYNES PARK VALE WON 7-6 ON PENALTIES

COMPETITION

FA TROPHY · FIRST QUALIFYING ROUND

VENUE

THE SPORTSFIELD

FA TROPHY · FIRST QUALIFYING ROUND

FRIDAY 28 – SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026 · SUSSEX TIES

Littlehampton Town	2–2	Raynes Park Vale
Steypning Town	1–1	Moneyfields
Bognor Regis Town	3–0	South Park (Reigate)
Crowborough Athletic	2–4	Ashford United
Eastbourne Town	1–0	Bedfont Sports
Hastings United	2–1	Hendon
Peacehaven & Telscombe	2–1	Merstham

Littlehampton Town's Trophy ended on Friday night in a 7–6 shootout defeat to Raynes Park Vale after a 2–2 draw. The full report is on page 28.

Hastings United beat Hendon 2–1, Bognor Regis Town won 3–0 against South Park, Eastbourne Town beat Bedfont Sports 1–0 and Peacehaven & Telscombe beat Merstham 2–1.

Steypning Town drew 1–1 with Moneyfields and Crowborough Athletic lost 4–2 at home to Ashford United.

Both Isthmian divisions were engaged in the FA Trophy on Saturday rather than league football, which is why the two tables that follow show fewer games played than every other table in this issue.

Bognor's move to South Central makes the derby win at Littlehampton — Ollie Lovell's goal — a league fixture again this season.

No league fixtures were played in either division on 29 August. League football resumes on Monday — page 35.

ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST DIVISION

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Hastings United	3	3	0	0	7	2	+5	9
2	Sittingbourne	3	2	1	0	5	3	+2	7
3	Margate	3	2	1	0	3	1	+2	7
4	Erith Town	2	2	0	0	6	0	+6	6
5	Broadbridge Heath	2	1	1	0	6	3	+3	4
6	Eastbourne Town	3	1	1	1	6	3	+3	4
7	Faversham Town	2	1	1	0	6	4	+2	4
8	Merstham	2	1	1	0	6	4	+2	4
9	South Park (Reigate)	2	1	1	0	4	2	+2	4
10	Peacehaven & Telscombe	3	1	1	1	7	8	-1	4
11	Herne Bay	1	1	0	0	3	0	+3	3
12	Sheppey United	3	1	0	2	4	4	0	3
13	Ashford United	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
14	Cray Valley PM	3	0	3	0	3	3	0	3
15	AFC Croydon Athletic	3	1	0	2	4	5	-1	3
16	Crowborough Athletic	3	1	0	2	2	4	-2	3
17	Whitstable Town	3	1	0	2	4	7	-3	3
18	Punjab United	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
19	Sevenoaks Town	3	0	1	2	3	8	-5	1
20	Deal Town	2	0	0	2	3	7	-4	0
21	Steyning Town	3	0	0	3	1	6	-5	0
22	Horley Town	3	0	0	3	1	10	-9	0

| This division played no league football on 29 August – it was engaged in the FA Trophy.

ISTHMIAN SOUTH CENTRAL DIVISION

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Winchester City	3	3	0	0	13	1	+12	9
2	Hendon	3	3	0	0	11	2	+9	9
3	Bognor Regis Town	3	2	1	0	5	2	+3	7
4	Raynes Park Vale	3	2	0	1	4	8	-4	6
5	Southall	3	1	2	0	7	5	+2	5
6	Ascot United	3	1	1	1	8	5	+3	4
7	Jersey Bulls	2	1	1	0	2	1	+1	4
8	Bedfont Sports	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
9	Westfield	3	1	1	1	4	6	-2	4
10	Ashford Town (Middx)	2	1	0	1	6	3	+3	3
11	Cobham	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
12	AFC Portchester	3	0	3	0	1	1	0	3
13	Windsor & Eton	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	3
14	Egham Town	2	1	0	1	2	5	-3	3
15	Kingstonian	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	2
16	Moneyfields	3	0	2	1	4	5	-1	2
17	Harrow Borough	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
18	Hayes & Yeading United	2	0	1	1	2	4	-2	1
19	Hartley Wintney	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
20	AFC Stoneham	1	0	0	1	1	4	-3	0
21	Littlehampton Town	3	0	0	3	2	7	-5	0
22	Binfield	3	0	0	3	2	11	-9	0

Bognor Regis Town and Littlehampton Town both play here in 2026/27.

FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · LEAGUE FOOTBALL RESUMES

SOUTH EAST · SUSSEX

15:00 **Hastings United v Crowborough Athletic**

15:00 **Broadbridge Heath v Peacehaven & Telscombe**

15:00 **Eastbourne Town v Steyning Town**

SOUTH CENTRAL · SUSSEX

15:00 **Bognor Regis Town v Moneyfields**

SOUTH EAST · THE REST OF THE CARD

15:00 **AFC Croydon Athletic v Cray Valley PM**

15:00 **Deal Town v Herne Bay**

15:00 **Erith Town v Punjab United**

15:00 **Faversham Town v Sheppey United**

15:00 **Sevenoaks Town v Merstham**

15:00 **Sittingbourne v Ashford United**

15:00 **South Park (Reigate) v Horley Town**

15:00 **Whitstable Town v Margate**



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STEP 5 · SOUTHERN COMBINATION

SCFL PREMIER

Twenty clubs, the heart of the Sussex game, and four reports from one weekend.

38 LANCING 1-3 EASTBOURNE UNITED

40 FOREST ROW 0-4 PAGHAM

42 BEXHILL UNITED 2-2 ROFFEY

44 HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN 1-0 LINGFIELD

46 RESULTS AND ROUND-UP

47 SCFL PREMIER TABLE

49 FIXTURES AHEAD

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

CULVER ROAD · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

LANCING 1 - 3 EASTBOURNE UNITED

LEAGUE LEADERS CLAIM THE POINTS

Hull at the double as United leave Culver Road with all three points.

LANCING

SCOTT PACKER 2' (PEN)

EASTBOURNE UNITED

JAMES HULL 7', 88' (PEN) · CALLUM BARLOW 39'



REPORT

BRANDON WRIGHT

@BRANDONWRIGHT5

CULVER ROAD
ATTENDANCE 174

GRAPHIC: LANCING FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Eastbourne United maintained their position at the top of the Southern Combination Football League Premier Division with a 3–1 victory over Lancing on a wet and windy Saturday afternoon.

Lancing made the perfect start by taking the lead inside the opening minute. Daniel Bull was penalised for handball inside the area, allowing captain Scott Packer to convert the resulting penalty and put the home side 1–0 ahead.

Eastbourne responded impressively and equalised in the seventh minute. Samuel Scott delivered a

dangerous cross into the box, and James Hull headed the ball in off the crossbar to bring the visitors level.

The match remained open as both teams searched for the next goal. Lancing were awarded a free-kick in a promising position after Dylan Hurst was fouled, but Eastbourne goalkeeper Alieu Secka produced a fine save to preserve the 1–1 scoreline.

Eastbourne then began to apply more pressure, although Lancing continued to defend well. At the other end, Antoine Sharpe tested Secka with an effort that the goalkeeper pushed away.

MATCHDAY

DUGOUT NEWS · ISSUE 04

After 65 minutes, Rhyle Ovenden came close to scoring directly from a corner when his delivery struck the crossbar. Charlie Ball then forced an excellent save from Monks as Eastbourne looked to extend their advantage.

Lancing continued to compete and created an opportunity on the break, but the resulting effort sailed over the crossbar. Eastbourne also threatened from a series of late corners without initially finding a decisive third goal.

The key moment arrived during the closing stages when Callum Barlow made an excellent run into the

penalty area and was brought down by Packer. The Lancing captain received his second yellow card and was sent off, leaving Lancing with 10 men.

James Hull converted the resulting penalty in the 88th minute, scoring his second goal of the afternoon to make it 3–1 and secure all three points for the league leaders.

Lancing defended several further corners during the closing stages, but there was no way back for the hosts. Eastbourne United left with a deserved victory and retained their place at the top of the SCFL Premier Division.

PACKER RECEIVED HIS SECOND YELLOW, AND JAMES HULL CONVERTED THE RESULTING PENALTY ON 88 FOR HIS SECOND OF THE AFTERNOON.

LANCING

Callum Monks, Isac Brown, Ryan Plummer, Scott Packer (goal 2, sent off 88), Alfie Knight, Matthew Simpson, Emmanuel N'Cho, Dylan Hurst (Dyan Walter 68), Antoine Sharpe (Rob Deda 84), Mo Khedidji (Alex Lang 68).

UNUSED SUBSTITUTES

Denzel Dube, Samuel-Elie N'Cho.

EASTBOURNE UNITED

Alieu Secka, Callum Barlow (goal 39; Baran Kartal 81), Charlie Ball (Charlie Purvis 90), Alfie Gander (Oliver Hull 67), Daniel Hull, James Hull (goals 7, 88; Teddy Loft 90), Jorge Nones, Rhyle Ovenden, Joseph Overy (James Stone 67), Brett Patton, Sam Scott.

HOW IT UNFOLDED

2'	Scott Packer converts a penalty after Daniel Bull is penalised for handball	LAN
7'	James Hull heads in off the crossbar from Samuel Scott's cross	EBU
39'	Callum Barlow cuts in from the byline and finishes past Callum Monks	EBU
65'	Rhyle Ovenden strikes the crossbar direct from a corner	EBU
88'	Packer brings down Barlow, receives a second yellow and is sent off	LAN
88'	James Hull converts the penalty for his second of the afternoon	EBU

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

FOREST ROW · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

FOREST ROW **0 - 4** PAGHAM

Four away goals for the Lions, and a fifth straight defeat for a Forest Row side still hunting a first win.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

MATCH REPORT



GRAPHIC: PAGHAM FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

Pagham went to Forest Row on Saturday afternoon and did the job with a completeness that the scoreline barely dresses up. Four goals, none conceded, and a Lions side whose scoring rate is the story of its season so far.

That is the number that ought to worry the rest of the Premier Division. Pagham have played fewer matches than most of the sides above them and

have already scored more than all but one of them. Whatever Saturday's team sheet looked like, the pattern of this season is holding: when Pagham get going, they do not stop at one.

Forest Row's afternoon needs no elaborate reading. Six games, one point, twenty conceded. A side in that position needs the first twenty minutes to go quietly and this one did not. Once the game got away, it kept going.

There is no shame in a young or rebuilding side taking a beating from an in-form one, and the more useful measure for Forest Row will be what the next fortnight looks like rather than what this ninety minutes did. East Grinstead Town away on Bank Holiday Monday, an 11am kick-off, and a chance to reset immediately.

For Pagham it is three points, a clean sheet and a goal difference that has moved to plus eight. Connor Kelly's

clean sheet is his side's foundation and Owen Sherriff's defending — the same Sherriff who has three FA Cup goals from the back this season and a place on this week's cover — is a large part of why they keep them.

Wick at home on Monday morning. Nyetimber Lane on a Bank Holiday, an in-form side and a local derby is about as good as a late-August morning gets in this county.

WICK AT HOME ON MONDAY MORNING. NYETIMBER LANE ON A BANK HOLIDAY, AN IN-FORM SIDE AND A LOCAL DERBY IS ABOUT AS GOOD AS A LATE-AUGUST MORNING GETS IN...

COMPETITION	SCFL PREMIER DIVISION
VENUE	FOREST ROW

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

THE OVAL, LITTLE COMMON · FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026

BEXHILL UNITED 2 - 2 ROFFEY

A Friday night under the lights on the coast, and four goals shared.

WORDS · GEOFF MARTIN

BEXHILL UNITED CORRESPONDENT



PHOTOGRAPHY: GEOFF MARTIN

PICS MINE. TOTTS

BEXHILL AND ROFFEY FIGHT OUT FRIDAY NIGHT DRAW

It was a rare treat for Bexhill fans to have both Friday night football under the lights, and at a venue close to home, to get the Bank Holiday weekend underway.

Having played "home" games at a range of far flung venues while the cricket season sees out its dog days, and we wait for the Polegrove to be returned to football use, it was lovely to be able to use the facilities at nearby Little Common for the league clash with Roffey.

It may be the last knockings of summer but there was a definite whiff of

autumn in the air as the wind picked up

across the recreation ground and the lights kicked into action. Pirates boss Jay Skinner-Swain shuffled his pack again, drafting Tom Vickers into central defence and shifting Dale Penn out to left back.

Roffey are no mugs and have had a decent start to the season, sitting in the top half of the table close to Bexhill, and they shaped up strongly in the opening exchanges to go toe to toe with their hosts. They weren't in town to play for a draw and that created space behind their back four and Jack Shonk and Ash Latuske came close to exploiting that on five minutes when they broke clear with Latuske seeing his shot dealt with by the keeper.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GEOFF MARTIN

Roffey came strong as the clock wound down to half time and on the edge of the break they levelled the score with a deep corner nodded back into the danger zone by the impressive Tresor Difika and Meeres snapped up the chance to head it home.

The game was well set up for the second half with two evenly matched teams but as the wind picked up it started to have an influence on the business on the pitch. The play switched from end to end but both defences held strong until the fifty fifth minute when great strength and pressing from Theo Coombs won the ball for Bexhill just inside the Roffey half and he drove on before setting up Moir with a great pass that allowed him to cut in and deliver a quality finish.

This was one of those games when you knew a one goal lead was unlikely to be enough. Roffey pressed Bexhill, shoving the Pirates back deeper and deeper. There was some last ditch defending as Bexhill fought to hold the three points and on 80 minutes Finn Holter got down sharply to pull off an important save.

It was a warning, and a couple of minutes later Roffey got their equaliser. Jordan Mase picked up on a through ball and smashed it first time past Holter into the roof of the net.

Bexhill went looking for the chance to take the lead for a third time and threw on subs to inject fresh legs and energy but at the final whistle it remained two all. Probably a fair reflection on the game and a great advert for Friday night football.

IT WAS A WARNING, AND A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER ROFFEY GOT THEIR EQUALISER. JORDAN MASE PICKED UP ON A THROUGH BALL AND SMASHED IT FIRST TIME PAST...

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

HANBURY PARK · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN 1 - 0 LINGFIELD

One goal, nine minutes of injury time, and a clean sheet that had to be earned.

WORDS · DUGOUT NEWS

FROM NOTES SUPPLIED BY 'DEANO'



PHOTOGRAPH: HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

There are afternoons when a football match refuses to become one, and for twenty minutes at Hanbury Park on Saturday this was one of them. Then Lingfield arrived, and Haywards Heath's goalkeeper was suddenly the busiest man on the pitch — two outstanding saves inside a short spell, and a reminder that a goalless game is not the same thing as a quiet one.

Heath took control after that. The football improved, the shape settled, and the game turned into something the home side were running rather than surviving.

The goal came on 54 minutes, and it came from Ousmane Dansoko — the new arrival from Horsham YMCA, a striker signed to do exactly this, taking his chance to settle an afternoon that had refused to settle itself.

One goal was always going to mean a nervous finish, and the fourth official's board confirmed it: nine minutes of added time. Heath saw them out. A clean sheet at the end of a game with that much stoppage time is not luck; it is a defence that stayed switched on

when the temptation was to start counting down.

Three points, and no time to enjoy them. Newhaven away on Bank Holiday Monday, an 11am kick-off, and a Premier Division that is not going to wait for anybody.

THREE POINTS, AND NO TIME TO ENJOY THEM. NEWHAVEN AWAY ON BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY, AN 11AM KICK-OFF, AND A PREMIER DIVISION THAT IS NOT GOING TO WAIT FOR...

SCORERS	HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN: OUSMANE DANSOKO 54'.
COMPETITION	SCFL PREMIER DIVISION
VENUE	HANBURY PARK

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

FRIDAY 28 – SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026 · FULL ROUND

Bexhill United	2–2	Roffey
Seaford Town	5–1	Wick
Billingshurst	2–0	Little Common
Crawley Down Gatwick	0–1	AFC Varndeanians
East Grinstead Town	4–4	Hassocks
Forest Row	0–4	Pagham
Guernsey	2–2	Midhurst & Easebourne
Haywards Heath Town	1–0	Lingfield
Lancing	1–3	Eastbourne United
Newhaven	1–0	Horsham YM

Eastbourne United go top after a 3–1 win at Lancing, eighteen goals scored in six games and the best attacking record in the division.

Haywards Heath Town are level on points having played a game fewer, seeing out nine minutes of injury time to beat Lingfield 1–0 at Hanbury Park. Pagham won 4–0 at Forest Row. Bexhill United and Roffey shared four goals under Friday night lights, and Seaford Town beat Wick 5–1 in the other Friday fixture.

East Grinstead Town and Hassocks produced the afternoon's most entertaining scoreline, an eight-goal 4–4.

Eastbourne United lead on thirteen points from six games. Haywards Heath Town are level on thirteen from five, Guernsey third on eleven from five and Newhaven fourth on ten from four. Four clubs separated by three points with games in hand scattered between them.

At the other end, Forest Row have one point from six and Lancing three from five. Both are in action at 11am on Monday.

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Eastbourne United	6	4	1	1	18	8	+10	13
2	Haywards Heath Town	5	4	1	0	8	3	+5	13
3	Guernsey	5	3	2	0	9	4	+5	11
4	Newhaven	4	3	1	0	6	3	+3	10
5	AFC Varndeanians	5	3	1	1	7	5	+2	10
6	Pagham	4	3	0	1	15	7	+8	9
7	Crawley Down Gatwick	6	2	2	2	10	9	+1	8
8	Hassocks	4	2	1	1	13	8	+5	7
9	Roffey	5	2	1	2	13	8	+5	7
10	Midhurst & Easebourne	4	2	1	1	9	4	+5	7
11	Bexhill United	4	2	1	1	6	4	+2	7
12	Lingfield	5	2	1	2	11	12	-1	7
13	Seaford Town	4	2	0	2	7	6	+1	6
14	East Grinstead Town	5	1	2	2	7	7	0	5
15	Horsham YM	5	1	1	3	7	9	-2	4
16	Billingshurst	6	1	1	4	13	17	-4	4
17	Lancing	5	1	0	4	5	13	-8	3
18	Wick	4	1	0	3	5	14	-9	3
19	Forest Row	6	0	1	5	6	20	-14	1
20	Little Common	4	0	0	4	2	16	-14	0

Eastbourne United and Haywards Heath Town are level on thirteen points, Heath with a game in hand.

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FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · 11:00 KICK-OFFS

THE CARD

11:00	AFC Varndeanians v Hassocks
11:00	Billingshurst v Crawley Down Gatwick
11:00	East Grinstead Town v Forest Row
11:00	Eastbourne United v Bexhill United
11:00	Little Common v Seaford Town
11:00	Midhurst & Easebourne v Lancing
11:00	Newhaven v Haywards Heath Town
11:00	Pagham v Wick
11:00	Roffey v Horsham YM

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- ▶ Guernsey and Lingfield have no Premier Division fixture on Monday. The two meet at Lingfield on Wednesday 2 September.
- ▶ Kick-off times occasionally move at short notice on a Bank Holiday. A look at the home club's social media before you set off is never wasted.

**EVERY
RESULT.
EVERY
TABLE.**

The tables in this magazine are frozen at Sunday morning and these fixtures at Sunday lunchtime. The DUGOUT DATA HUB is frozen at nothing — results, tables and fixtures for every Sussex division, updated through the weekend rather than a week behind it. dugoutdatahub.com

THE QUOTE WALL

WHAT SUSSEX SAID THIS WEEK



PHOTOGRAPHY: GEOFF MARTIN · BEXHILL UNITED V ROFFEY

"Pics mine."

GEOFF MARTIN, FILING FROM THE OVAL ON A FRIDAY NIGHT

"£200 enables you to sign on, train, play matches, have the match kit washed and get basic equipment like balls, cones and bibs."

DALE WYATT, REIGATE PRIORY FC — PAGE 81

"There is no prize for being the team with the nicest principles. There are only points."

STUART ROBINSON — PAGE 75

"Thought step was something you walked up and down."

MICKY HUSH — PAGE 84

"The objective is to turn online attention into physical attendance."

RUSS COCHRAN — PAGE 68

STEP 6 · SOUTHERN COMBINATION

SCFL DIVISION ONE

Worthing United's flying start, AFC Walcountians' maximum points, and a division already pulling apart.

52 DIVISION ONE RESULTS

53 DIVISION ONE TABLE

54 FIXTURES AHEAD

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

Arundel	3–1	Loxwood
Dial Square	2–0	Clanfield
Dorking Wanderers Reserves	0–3	AFC Walcountians
Guildford City	4–0	Oakwood
Jarvis Brook	3–1	Infinity
Selsey	0–5	Reigate Priory
Shoreham	0–5	Hailsham Town
Westfield	3–1	Mile Oak
Worthing United	8–0	Ringmer

Worthing United made it three wins from three with an 8–0 defeat of Ringmer — eighteen goals scored, one conceded, and a goal difference of plus seventeen from three matches.

AFC Walcountians lead on a maximum twelve points after winning 3–0 at Dorking Wanderers Reserves. Guildford City beat Oakwood 4–0 and Arundel beat Loxwood 3–1.

Infinity's flying start met its first real check, a 3–1 defeat at Jarvis Brook. Reigate Priory won 5–0 at Selsey and Hailsham Town won 5–0 at Shoreham.

AFC Walcountians have won all four. Worthing United have won all three and have a goal difference of plus seventeen — eighteen scored, one conceded. Guildford City are unbeaten with a goal difference of plus thirteen from four. Three sides, three separate claims on the division, and none of them has met another yet.

Dale Wyatt's Reigate Priory, whose finances he writes about on page 81, won 5–0 at Selsey on the same afternoon he was explaining why his players pay £200 a year to be there.

SCFL DIVISION ONE

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	AFC Walcountians	4	4	0	0	13	2	+11	12
2	Guildford City	4	3	1	0	14	1	+13	10
3	Arundel	5	3	1	1	12	10	+2	10
4	Worthing United	3	3	0	0	18	1	+17	9
5	Infinity	4	3	0	1	9	5	+4	9
6	Westfield	4	2	1	1	7	4	+3	7
7	Hailsham Town	4	2	0	2	10	6	+4	6
8	Saltdean United	2	2	0	0	6	3	+3	6
9	Mile Oak	4	2	0	2	8	7	+1	6
10	Dial Square	4	2	0	2	5	6	-1	6
11	Selsey	4	2	0	2	5	9	-4	6
12	East Preston	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
13	Jarvis Brook	4	1	1	2	4	5	-1	4
14	Reigate Priory	4	1	0	3	8	8	0	3
15	Loxwood	3	1	0	2	5	6	-1	3
16	Shoreham	4	1	0	3	3	12	-9	3
17	Oakwood	4	1	0	3	2	16	-14	3
18	Dorking Wanderers B	5	0	2	3	5	16	-11	2
19	Ringmer AFC	4	0	1	3	2	13	-11	1
20	Clanfield	3	0	0	3	1	7	-6	0

Worthing United's plus-seventeen goal difference from three games is the best in Sussex non-league football.

FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · 11:00 KICK-OFFS

THE CARD

11:00 **AFC Walcountians v Dial Square**11:00 **Clanfield v Selsey**11:00 **East Preston v Shoreham**11:00 **Guildford City v Loxwood**11:00 **Hailsham Town v Saltdean United**11:00 **Infinity v Arundel**11:00 **Mile Oak v Worthing United**11:00 **Oakwood v Jarvis Brook**11:00 **Reigate Priory v Dorking Wanderers B**11:00 **Ringmer AFC v Westfield**

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- ▶ Ringmer AFC's own website lists their game against Westfield at 13:00 while Westfield's lists 11:00 — check with either club before you travel.
- ▶ Infinity v Arundel is the pick of the card: Arundel FC's official site confirms an 11:00 kick-off at the Lumacon Stadium.

**EVERY
RESULT.
EVERY
TABLE.**

The tables in this magazine are frozen at Sunday morning and these fixtures at Sunday lunchtime. The DUGOUT DATA HUB is frozen at nothing — results, tables and fixtures for every Sussex division, updated through the weekend rather than a week behind it. dugoutdatahub.com



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STEP 7 · SOUTHERN COMBINATION

SCFL DIVISION TWO

Fifteen clubs, nineteen goals in three fixtures, and a contributor report from Shipley.

57 T.D. SHIPLEY 3-1 RUDGWICK

59 DIVISION TWO RESULTS

60 DIVISION TWO TABLE

61 FIXTURES AHEAD

SCFL DIVISION TWO

SHIPLEY · SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

T.D. SHIPLEY 3 - 1 RUDGWICK

Controversy, a slice of fortune and three points for the Ship.

WORDS · BRAD CURTIS

T.D. SHIPLEY FC



PHOTOGRAPH: T.D. SHIPLEY FC · VIA THE CLUB'S X ACCOUNT

HI MIKE,

See below the match report for today.

T.D. SHIPLEY 3-1 RUDGWICK FC

T.D. Shipley secured a 3–1 victory over Rudgwick FC in an entertaining encounter that saw a bit of controversy, a slice of fortune and a deflected goal for the home side.

The home side were still without both strikers from last season due to injury

and there were two changes from the victory over Upper Beeding. Zac Robinson made his debut in goal and Conor Smith returned at right back.

A poor game for the neutral on a slippery surface and for the most part Rudgwick stifled most of the dragon's attacks in the first half sitting deep and trying to catch the home side out on the break.

However, Shipley took the lead in the first half from the penalty spot after Ash Rycroft was brought down inside the Rudgwick penalty area. Reece Nixon stepped up converting the spot-kick to give T.D. Shipley the advantage.

Rudgwick responded after the break with a penalty of their own, although the decision was far less clear-cut. A coming together between Zac Robinson and the Rudgwick forward inside the box resulted in the referee pointing to the spot, much to the frustration of the Shipley players. Despite the debate surrounding the decision, Rudgwick made no mistake from twelve yards to bring the scores level at 1–1.

Shipley regained the lead in unfortunate circumstances for Rudgwick. Dan Evans delivered a dangerous cross into the penalty area,

and under pressure, Rudgwick defender Simon Lockwood could only turn the ball into his own net, restoring Shipley's advantage.

With the game still in the balance, and numerous chances not taken, T.D. Shipley eventually put the result beyond doubt with another moment of fortune. Will Roberts unleashed an effort that took a deflection, sending the ball looping high into the air and over the stranded Rudgwick goalkeeper before dropping perfectly into the top corner.

The final whistle confirmed a 3–1 victory for T.D. Shipley.

A game with some talking points and some poor finishing, but ultimately Shipley did enough to come away with a deserved victory.

**A GAME WITH SOME TALKING POINTS AND SOME POOR FINISHING, BUT
ULTIMATELY SHIPLEY DID ENOUGH TO COME AWAY WITH A DESERVED...**

SCFL DIVISION TWO

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	Alfold	0–5	Rustington
	Bosham	0–1	Upper Beeding
	Chichester City Reserves	7–1	Copthorne
	Ferring	5–1	Worthing Town
	Southwater	4–4	ASC Brighton Rangers
	TD Shipley	3–1	Rudgwick

Chichester City Reserves put seven past Copthorne, Rustington won 5–0 at Alfold and Ferring beat Worthing Town 5–1 — nineteen goals across three fixtures.

T.D. Shipley beat Rudgwick 3–1: Brad Curtis's report is on page 55. Southwater and ASC Brighton Rangers drew 4–4, and Upper Beeding won 1–0 at Bosham.

Fifteen clubs in the division, so six fixtures make a full round. Brighton Electricity and Hurstpierpoint were idle.

SCFL DIVISION TWO

AFTER SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

	TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Chichester City B	3	3	0	0	26	1	+25	9
2	Rustington	3	3	0	0	12	0	+12	9
3	TD Shipley	3	3	0	0	9	2	+7	9
4	Ferring	3	2	1	0	8	1	+7	7
5	Hurstpierpoint	2	2	0	0	11	0	+11	6
6	Upper Beeding	3	2	0	1	6	3	+3	6
7	Southwater	3	1	1	1	7	6	+1	4
8	Bosham	3	1	0	2	5	4	+1	3
9	Alfold	3	1	0	2	2	8	-6	3
10	Brighton Electricity	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
11	ASC Brighton Rangers	3	0	1	2	4	13	-9	1
12	Rudgwick	2	0	0	2	1	6	-5	0
13	Storrington Community	2	0	0	2	1	8	-7	0
14	Copthorne	3	0	0	3	1	18	-17	0
15	Worthing Town	3	0	0	3	2	25	-23	0

Fifteen clubs in the division this season, so a full round is six fixtures with two sides idle.

FIXTURES AHEAD

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 · 11:00 KICK-OFFS

THE CARD

11:00 **Alfold v Rudgwick**

11:00 **ASC Brighton Rangers v Brighton Electricity**

11:00 **Bosham v Chichester City B**

11:00 **Copthorne v Southwater**

11:00 **Ferring v Rustington**

11:00 **T.D. Shipley v Storrington Community**

11:00 **Upper Beeding v Hurstpierpoint**

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

- ▶ Seven fixtures and fifteen clubs, so one side sits the round out.
- ▶ T.D. Shipley, whose win over Rudgwick is reported on page 57, are at home to Storrington Community.

**EVERY
RESULT.
EVERY
TABLE.**

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FA CUP · FA TROPHY · FA VASE

THE CUPS

Three Sussex FA Cup stories, and the round that produced them.

64 FA CUP · SUSSEX ROUND-UP

66 CUP RESULTS AND CONTEXT

DUGOUT DIARIES

THE
FA CUP

SUSSEX ROUND-UP – PRELIMINARY ROUND & REPLAYS

FA CUP PRELIMINARY ROUND REPLAY · TUESDAY 25 AUGUST 2026

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN **2** SUTTON COMMON ROVERS **1**

SUTTON COMMON ROVERS ISAAC KAMIN 71'

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN CHARLIE MEEHAN 90+3' · LUKAS FRANZEN-JONES 90+8'

SENT OFF JAMES ANDERSON 74'

With ninety minutes on the clock at Hanbury Park, Haywards Heath Town were out of the FA Cup.

Isaac Kamin had put Sutton Common Rovers ahead on 71 minutes. Three minutes later James Anderson was sent off. Heath had a numerical advantage and a deficit, which is the combination that produces either a comeback or a very long walk to the dressing room, and for the best part of twenty minutes it was looking like the second.

Then the fourth official's board went up and the evening lost its mind.

Charlie Meehan equalised in the 93rd minute. Not a scramble that fell kindly with two minutes left — a goal three minutes into stoppage time, at the point where most sides have stopped believing and started thinking about extra time.

And then, five minutes after that, Lukas Franzen-Jones scored again. 90+8. A Step 5 side, behind with ninety on the clock, knocking out Step 4 opposition with two goals in the last eight minutes of added time.

There is no sensible way to plan for that. There is no tactical explanation that does it justice either. Occasionally a football match simply decides it is going to be memorable, and everybody who was at Hanbury Park on Tuesday night gets to tell that story for the rest of the season.

It is also, in its way, the whole argument for the FA Cup. Two rounds of qualifying, a replay on a Tuesday night in August, a couple of hundred people in a ground in mid-Sussex, and a finish that nobody who saw it will forget.

Heath go through. Jack Barnes and Charlie Meehan are both on this week's cover, and results like this one are precisely why.

TWO STOPPAGE-TIME GOALS. ABSOLUTE FA CUP MADNESS.

THE LAST TWENTY MINUTES AT HANBURY PARK

71'

KAMIN PUTS SUTTON COMMON
AHEAD

74'

ANDERSON SENT OFF

90+3'

MEEHAN EQUALISES

90+8'

FRANZEN-JONES WINS IT

HASSOCKS 0 WESTFIELD 3

WESTFIELD

SAM FOLARIN 23' · ALEX CRUICKSHANK 49' · ADERI DEDE 80'

Hassocks had already done the hard part. Taking a Preliminary Round tie to a replay away at Westfield — a club operating a level above them — is an achievement that deserved better than the ninety minutes that followed.

Sam Folarin settled it early enough to matter, scoring on 23 minutes and giving Westfield the platform that every higher-level side wants in a cup replay: a lead, and an opponent who now has to come out.

Alex Cruickshank made it two four minutes into the second half, which is the worst possible time to concede when you have spent the interval planning a way back into a match. From 2–0 down with forty minutes left, Hassocks needed the tie to open up. It closed instead.

Aderi Dede added the third on 80 minutes to finish the job.

Three goals, three scorers, and a Westfield side who took the replay seriously from the first whistle. That is the compliment Hassocks earned by forcing it in the first place.

The cup run ends, but it ends against opposition from a higher step and only after the Robins had done enough in the original tie to bring them back for a second go. There are worse ways to leave the FA Cup.

FA CUP PRELIMINARY ROUND · SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

MIDHURST & EASEBOURNE 1 AFC CROYDON ATHLETIC 3

AFC CROYDON ATHLETIC

LUKE DREHER 16' · FINLEY MARJORAM 19' · JOSH WILLIAMS 90+7'

MIDHURST & EASEBOURNE

BRETT PITMAN 89'

SENT OFF

LUKE DREHER 39'

AFC Croydon Athletic did this the hard way, and they had nobody but themselves to blame for it.

Two goals in three minutes had the tie looking straightforward. Luke Dreher scored on 16 minutes and Finley Marjoram added a second on 19, and at 2–0 inside twenty minutes Croydon were in complete control.

Then Dreher was sent off on 39 minutes. The man who had opened the scoring left his side to play more than half the tie with ten, and a game that had been settled became a game again.

Midhurst & Easebourne could not find the goal that would have properly turned it for a long time, but they kept the pressure on, and on 89 minutes Brett Pitman got one. Suddenly a tie that had been over for an hour had a minute of real jeopardy in it.

Croydon survived. Josh Williams settled it in the seventh minute of stoppage time, which is a considerably more comfortable way to finish than the eighty-ninth minute had suggested.

For Midhurst, an exit — but one earned against ten men who defended for over fifty minutes, and a late goal that made the visitors work for every second of added time.

Three Sussex FA Cup stories. One convincing defeat. One battling exit. And one absolutely ridiculous stoppage-time comeback.

THAT'S THE FA CUP.

DUGOUT DIARIES

THE CUPS

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

Saturday was FA Trophy First Qualifying Round weekend for Isthmian South East and South Central clubs — all seven Sussex ties are on page 32.

Earlier rounds produced several of the performances behind this week's cover. Owen Sherriff scored three FA Cup goals for Pagham from defence, including a double against Balham. Max Walsh scored Hastings United's FA Trophy opener against Hendon. Charlie Meehan's late FA Cup equaliser at Sutton Common Rovers kept a Haywards Heath run alive that they went on to win.

Cup football counts for exactly this reason: some of the most decisive football of a Sussex season is played in competitions that do not award league points.

| The FA Vase first round proper follows in September.

SEVEN CONTRIBUTORS · SEVEN ARGUMENTS

THE VOICES

Managers, directors, coaches and supporters. Nobody was commissioned and nobody was paid.

68 RUSS COCHRAN · PROMOTING NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

73 STEVEN CARLBERG · PLAYING THE WAITING GAME

75 STUART ROBINSON · MANAGER OR COACH?

77 GLENN SOUTER · THE SLOW DEATH OF SATURDAY PARK FOOTBALL

81 DALE WYATT · A BLESSING AND A CURSE

84 MICKY HUSH · ONLY(FOOTBALL)FANS

87 DUGOUT DIARIES · FOOTBALL WITHOUT THE ALGORITHM

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

PROMOTING NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL IN THE COMMUNITY

Reach does not happen by accident. Someone has to do the graft – and most clubs have not worked out who.



RUSS COCHRAN

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

PROMOTING NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL IN THE COMMUNITY

We all know that it is not just playing budgets which are a major concern for non league football clubs. The pressure to compete, recruit the right players and remain competitive can place enormous strain on a club's finances, particularly when costs begin to mount later in the season generally come before many other concerns.

There is always a temptation to go too big, too soon. A club may commit a significant proportion of its available budget to players, only to discover that some do not provide the value expected of them, or simply underperform, leaving fans to wonder if they should even bother to attend on a cold Tuesday night in January. When that happens, the consequences can extend beyond the balance sheet. Managers can find themselves under pressure, jobs can be lost and, ultimately, the club can be left dealing with the financial consequences of decisions made months earlier and lower footfall.

this is just one aspect of financial pressure, as there are then inevitable rising costs for Energy, Staff, Suppliers, Maintenance and Upgrades to meet grading, which all fuel football inflation.

But that then leads to another question that clubs should perhaps be asking themselves but could also do without vastly increasing their overheads:

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR OVERALL BUDGET IS BEING RE-INVESTED IN MARKETING?

Marketing should not simply be funded outright by sponsorship, sponsorship has a key place towards the playing portion of any clubs budget and it is also not about not simply finding a sponsor to cover the wages or attire of a particular player, member of staff or even the kit man which seems to be happening more frequently of recent. Those sponsorships undoubtedly have their place, but what audience is that sponsorship actually reaching if you do not have a sustained level of attention? where does their product placement fit in around the club? and what is the club doing to help its sponsor gain value from the relationship? sponsorship is an Investment and it should go further than picking up the tab or it is not working hard.

For many non-League clubs, the turnstiles remain fundamental to sustainability. Gate income provides an important and relatively direct source of revenue, and therefore attracting people and therefore potential sponsors through those turnstiles should surely be treated as an essential part of the club's operation rather than something that happens automatically.

You want any potential sponsor to attend and take away the feeling they should be backing you, you achieve this by a greater impact of how you are set up, this visible success is mostly due to the marketing you have in place, they have to see you winning not just on the pitch.

MAKE YOUR SPONSORS WORK WITH YOU

As I mentioned, we increasingly see sponsorship attached to an individual player, a team, a piece of equipment or even a member of the backroom staff. That can be a positive development for instant income, but simply displaying a company name on, say for example, a social media post, does not necessarily go far enough for one individual or the sponsor.

If you want sponsors to remain with you, surely the best thing you can do is get their brand working in tandem with the club's own marketing? If not you are both missing a trick.

If a local business is supporting individual players or the wider club, you have an obligation to promote that business. If the sponsor has an offer, tell your supporters about it. If they have social media accounts, share them. If they have a shop, restaurant, pub, garage, office or other premises, see whether there is an opportunity to further promote them in the club and in response, the club their locations and premises too, any decent sponsor should reciprocate and do the same by ensuring that they are sharing your activities and output too.

Sponsorship should not be viewed as money changing hands in one direction. Ideally, it should become a relationship where both parties benefit from increased exposure.

The formula is simple:

A local butchers shares the club's post about number #11 A. Mandem who scored a hat trick last week, this player is sponsored by the butchers so he might sell a few extra steaks!

also if said butcher posts the club then shares their output, it's all about monitoring and communication to say it's been posted, a swift DM between admins with a link pointing at the post will do wonders.

The more useful you can make the sponsorship, the easier it becomes to demonstrate its value when renewal time comes around, so, why not reinvest a portion of it in marketing?

REACH DOES NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT

We hear the word *'reach'* constantly in relation to social media. Platforms provide clubs with an enormous amount of information about demographics, views, engagement and the people who are seeing their content, this applies in

real world too with other marketing vehicles but there are no metrics to measure it which can be seen as a risk.

Any statistical information is useful, but reach alone does not put people through the turnstiles, a post can achieve hundreds or thousands of views and still produce very little additional attendance if the message does not actually encourage somebody to do something. There is a common misconception that content can simply be posted and left to work organically. It does not.

Someone has to keep doing the graft in order for the club to see an effect.

Someone has to be sitting in front of a computer or phone, understanding when the audience is most likely to be paying attention, preparing the content, publishing it at the appropriate time, responding to questions, encouraging sharing and then reinforcing the message as matchday approaches.

The objective is not simply to generate likes, The objective is to turn **online attention into physical attendance**.

If somebody sees your post, becomes interested, decides to attend the match, pays at the gate, buys a programme, has something to eat or drink and enjoys themselves, the club has achieved a tangible return from that marketing effort.

That is the point where marketing begins to pay for itself.

STRONG POINTS TO CONSIDER AS AN EXTRA OFFER

There are numerous relatively straightforward ways clubs can make themselves more attractive to potential supporters.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

If you permit children under a certain age to enter free of charge, make that a major selling point.

I cannot highlight enough how **CHILDREN GO FREE** is a **HUGE** marketing message as Parents and grandparents need to know that attending a non-League match can provide an affordable family day out.

Likewise, consider various offers that encourage existing football supporters to try your club.

Could season-ticket holders from another local club receive discounted admission when their own team is playing away?

Could you target supporters whose clubs are not playing locally that particular weekend with a simple:

""YOUR TEAM IS AWAY – WE'RE HERE.""

There is no reason to restrict your potential audience solely to people who already follow your club.

The cost to the club can be relatively small, while the potential attention generated can be considerably greater whilst it also presents the club as something more than a football fixture.

It becomes part of the local community. Keep sending them your fixture information for all matches.

Tell them about special events, community initiatives and when there is something different happening at the ground.

The more information they receive, the greater the possibility that they will feature it — and today's local media coverage is not restricted to the printed newspaper. Stories can also appear digitally and subsequently be shared across social media.

MAKE YOUR GRAPHICS COUNT

Graphics should be created specifically for the club and should reflect its identity. They should be bold, recognisable and consistent.

Someone scrolling through social media should be able to identify your club's post almost immediately.

Technology, including AI, can certainly assist with content creation, but it should not automatically be assumed to be the best answer. A club needs its own identity and personality, and sometimes a simple graphic that consistently reflects the club can be far more effective than something over-complicated.

EVENT PAGES

Create event pages for fixtures well in advance. Give people time to see them, share them and invite others.

You can even reward that engagement. A simple competition, with a winner selected at random from people who have shared, liked or invited others to the event, can encourage supporters to become part of the marketing process themselves.

Your supporters can become your marketing team.

PRINTED FORMAT

Print has become somewhat underestimated in a modern digital world. That may be a mistake.

A monthly poster outlining all first-team fixtures can be an extremely useful tool, particularly when distributed throughout the immediate community.

Think about the places people visit every day:

- Pubs - Cafés - Barbers - Shops - Community centres - Local businesses - Public noticeboards where permitted

The objective is to build a network.

It is also worth keeping a simple record — even a map — of where your posters have been placed, particularly if somebody is walking or driving a regular distribution route.

If a particular business consistently supports you by displaying your material, why not recognise them as a *Club Business Partner*?

It costs very little to build that relationship, but it creates another connection between the football club and its community.

Yes, distributing posters may take several hours each month. But that time puts your product — and football is your product — directly into the community.

More importantly, it gives your marketing campaign longevity. A poster displayed month after month becomes a familiar reminder that the club is there.

FLYERS

Flyers can achieve something similar but can be distributed more widely.

They are easy to leave in appropriate locations and can carry specific offers or incentives. Printing them every month can become expensive, so clubs need to consider how and when they are used.

However, there is another opportunity here.

Imagine a child who has been selected as a mascot taking several flyers home and showing them to their school friends, particularly if those flyers contain a special family offer or invitation.

That is how a small piece of printed material can begin to create a buzz.

TARGETED TOWN-CENTRE FOOTFALL

Why not take the club to the people?

Hold several Saturday morning stalls or market-day promotions in the centre of your nearest town or village.

Hand out flyers, Talk to people, Tell them about the next home fixture, Offer a simple competition or free-entry draw to people who sign up to the club's email list.

With appropriate permissions, you could also build a WhatsApp community or other direct communication channel.

The important point is that you are not waiting for people to discover you.

YOU ARE PUTTING THE CLUB IN FRONT OF THEM.

TARGETED DOOR-TO-DOOR LEAFLETING

There is also considerable value in concentrating on the streets immediately surrounding your ground.

That information page could answer questions before they become barriers to attendance:

- Is there disabled access? - Where can I park? - What are the admission prices? - What time do the turnstiles open? - Is food available? - Is there a bar? - What facilities are available? - Who and how can I contact at the club physically if I need further information?

The easier you make attendance, the fewer reasons somebody has to decide not to come.

Add a Tangible Incentive by giving people a reason to keep the flyer such as a voucher which could offer a suitable incentive, The precise offer will depend on the club, but the principle is simple:

GIVE THE PIECE OF PAPER A VALUE BEYOND SIMPLY ADVERTISING THE FIXTURE.

BUILD LOCAL ENTHUSIASM

That is really what all of this is about.

A football club is not simply what happens for 90 minutes on the pitch. The club is what it becomes within its community. The football matters enormously, of course, but the kitchen, bar, clubhouse and other facilities can all contribute to the overall experience and the more reasons people have to visit, the greater the possibility that they will return.

Local youth teams can also be given the opportunity to become mascots.

That provides the youngsters with a memorable experience, gives parents and relatives another reason to attend and creates a small but valuable connection between the senior club and the next generation of local players and supporters.

SIGNAGE

Ask yourself a simple question: Can people actually see your club? ie Is your ground tucked away off the beaten track?

Is it positioned beside a busy road? Does it have natural pedestrian or vehicle footfall if so Your club sign is effectively your *24-hour, seven-day-a-week shopfront*.

If you already have prominent signage, make sure it looks good. If it is tired, dated or difficult to read, update or clean it so that it shines.

If your ground is reached via an access road or is away from the main football or roadway, speak to nearby establishments and see whether they would permit an appropriately authorised directional sign displaying the next match and date on a slider or wipeable surface, could be enough if well placed.

Again, it is about reminding people that you are there.

HOLD OPEN INVITATION MEETINGS TO WIDEN YOUR NETWORK

Why not hold a club marketing meeting and invite anyone who might be able to contribute?

Businesses, Supporters, Volunteers, Youth team Parents, Local media, Students studying something in relation to the game or business aspect,

Community groups, People with marketing experience, People with no marketing experience whatsoever but who might have one good idea, Do not assume that useful ideas will only come from the people already sitting around the committee table, Sometimes the best contribution comes from somebody you would never have thought to ask. If you help others or take an idea someone suggested there is also a good chance that they will help you in return.

It is a simple principle:

SCRATCH SOMEONE ELSE'S BACK AND THEY MAY WELL SCRATCH YOURS.

EMBRACE LOCAL INFLUENCERS

Whatever your personal opinion of social-media influencers might be, locally based influencers can have a significant impact, The important factor is not necessarily how many followers they have nationally, It is whether they have the ears of your immediate community.

A locally recognised person who regularly talks about food, sport, entertainment, local businesses or community events may have a surprisingly engaged audience. There may be a cost involved, or they may expect some form of reciprocal promotion, but that can become a mutually beneficial relationship.

Search online outlets such as YouTube, TikTok and Spotify for local sports creators, bloggers, podcasters and vloggers who cover grassroots and non-League football and invite them to the ground. Give them a good vantage point from which to work and Where appropriate, make them comfortable provide complimentary food or access to areas that make it easier for them to create content, The objective is not simply to give somebody a free afternoon, if they free load call them out on it, trust me they won't want the negativity!

allow them to be the ones to introduce your club directly to an audience that is already interested in football, or not!

BECOME YOUR OWN INFLUENCER

There is also a degree of self-influencing that clubs can undertake external Bloggers, independent reviews and supporter-generated content can all matter.

There are plenty of opportunities to create content without requiring a huge budget.

***Matchday Countdowns:** Post high-quality countdown graphics three days before the match, again the day before and then on the morning of the game. Include the kick-off time, location, ticket prices and opposition clearly.

***Player-Led Content:** Short videos of players inviting supporters to the game can be particularly effective. A player looking directly into the camera and asking supporters to come along can feel far more personal than a standard text announcement.

***Match Teasers & Form Guides:** Publish quick pre-match analysis, head-to-head information, league-table positions or recent form. These do not need to become lengthy statistical reports. The purpose is to create interest and a little competitive tension.

***Instagram Stories:** Keep supporters updated throughout the day. Even those who cannot attend can remain engaged with the club, which helps maintain the connection and may motivate them to attend the following week.

SOMEONE HAS TO DO THE WORK

Much of this ultimately comes down to one thing:

TIME.

IDEAS ARE EASY, IMPLEMENTATION IS HARDER AS SOMEONE HAS TO;

organise the posters, contact the newspaper, update the website, create graphics, schedule the social-media posts, has to approach the businesses, respond to enquiries.

a dedicated team has to give up their time to distribute the flyers and posters or stand in the town centre and the people involved have to be committed enough to keep the whole thing moving, they have to feel enthused and see rewards of greater gates eventually.

A good club committee should therefore consider establishing a small ***marketing and community sub-committee** whose specific responsibility is to develop these areas.

Take the time to ask around. offer training or to be part of the sub committee, You may discover that somebody within your existing network has marketing experience, graphic-design skills, media contacts or simply an

enthusiasm for getting things done and do not be afraid to look beyond the immediate confines of the club.

Schools, colleges and universities may have students looking for practical experience or opportunities to contribute to projects. A football club can provide a real-world environment in which somebody can gain experience while the club benefits from fresh ideas and additional energy.

That could be a genuine ***win-win***. In order to achieve this, ask **Who Is Already on Your Side?**

Clubs can sometimes become so focused on their own budget that they overlook the resources already available within their community, For example, if printing costs are becoming an issue, speak to a local printer, Could they offer a discounted rate in return for sponsorship or recognition as a club partner?

Do you already have a volunteer network? Could youth players and parents help distribute posters and flyers? Do existing business sponsors have shopfronts where material could be displayed? Could they share your social media posts through their own business accounts?

Remember, your sponsors want you to succeed, They have already attached their name to your club, so there is an obvious mutual interest in making that relationship work. any business that helps the club promote itself may ultimately benefit from increased exposure for its own business, remember what I said above about just picking up the tab?

THE BIGGER PICTURE

None of this requires a massive budget, It requires organisation, consistency, imagination and people willing to put in the hours, a few posters will not transform a club overnight nor will a multitude of various social-media posts released a day or 2 before a match will not suddenly fill the ground. One competition lobbed out on X will not revolutionise your finances.

But collectively, repeated throughout a season, these small actions can begin to change the way a club is perceived within its community.

The aim is to make attending a non-League football match feel like a natural part of the local weekend as their local Football is the reason people come through the turnstiles.

Everything else you provide can be the reason they ***enjoy it, talk about it and return.***

MANAGER · WITH DEAN COX

PLAYING THE WAITING GAME

Waking up each morning, checking the socials, hoping a position came up overnight. Two men out of work and ready to go.

**STEVEN 'RHINO' CARLBERG**

MANAGER · WITH DEAN COX

P laying the waiting game:

Being out of football is tough, watching others get the jobs we have applied for, getting the players we wanted to bring in and earning the points we had earmarked for each game but don't get me wrong, we wish them every success but whilst they're in the role, we are not.

Waking up each morning and checking the socials in the hope that a position has become available

overnight becomes the daily routine, looking at the previous night's results earmarking a club in trouble and looking at where we can improve them should a position come up.

But we are highly ambitious, we know what we want and we aim to get it and that starts like anything new, going out and looking at prospective teams, getting to know the layout of the club, areas on the pitch that need improving and making provisions ready for that call to take over, allowing us to be a few steps ahead.

The devil is in the detail, so our player pull allows us to line up unattached players, players we would put 7days in for and the formation we will use as a job could come up as little as a day before a training session or match.

Coxy and I talk all the time and as a duo, we believe in our ability, that is proven in previous clubs, starting a squad from scratch or inheriting a squad and any club we go into will get our full work ethic with the club firmly in the forefront of our minds.

Keeping update to date with the leagues, new teams, new signings and being aware of what needs to be done is essential and being out of work allows you to be in good shape to take over at a new club and hitting the ground running.

People know what we are all about, how we work and how well connected we are so any club we take over will be for the right reasons for both us and the club.

Me personally, I am always learning and researching and trying to get a better understanding of the game, simplifying the methods to achieve those vital 3 points

on a Saturday, it is never rock up and play, a lot of work goes into 90 minute of football and a defeat is a kick in the teeth, especially when your bread and butter is a win, but your always learning, always trying to better yourself and never taking anything for granted.

Working alongside an ex-professional who happens to also be my best mate is a dream work force, bouncing ideas off each other, discussing future plans, sorting players / formations and working on bringing the good times to the club and achieving the targets that have been set.

We want club stability, playoffs / promotion and to keep building where possible.

I am lucky to have my Under 14's youth team to keep me busy but until that phone rings, it's going to watch as many games as possible in all the leagues and waiting to be told an opening has come up.

STEVEN 'RHINO' CARLBERG

DEAN COX

WE WANT CLUB STABILITY, PLAYOFFS / PROMOTION AND TO KEEP BUILDING WHERE POSSIBLE.

STEVEN 'RHINO' CARLBERG

COACHING & MANAGEMENT

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MANAGER AND A COACH

The biggest mistake in non-league football is confusing having a football philosophy with being a good manager.



STUART ROBINSON

COACHING & MANAGEMENT

The biggest mistake in non-league football is confusing having a football philosophy with being a good manager.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MANAGER AND A COACH

There is a phrase you hear constantly in football now: "We have a way we want to play."

It sounds impressive. It suggests identity, planning and principles. But at non-league level in particular, it can also become one of the biggest traps a manager falls into.

Because there is a fundamental difference between being a coach and being a manager.

A coach teaches players how to do things better. A coach develops technique, works on patterns of play, improves positioning and spends time on the training ground trying to create better footballers.

A manager has a much broader responsibility.

The manager has to select the right team, understand the strengths and weaknesses of his players, analyse the opposition, recognise what is happening during a match and, most importantly, find a way to win with the players available to him.

That last part is where I believe too many managers in non-league football fall down.

They are trying to coach the game they want to see rather than manage the game that is actually taking place.

YOU CANNOT PLAY FOOTBALL YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE PLAYERS TO PLAY

There is nothing wrong with wanting to play attractive football.

Most supporters would rather watch their team move the ball properly than spend 90 minutes launching it towards a centre-forward.

But wanting to play a certain way doesn't mean your squad is capable of doing it.

If you want your goalkeeper and centre-halves to continually play through an aggressive press, you need players technically and mentally capable of doing that.

If you want attacking full-backs, somebody has to protect the spaces they leave.

If you want to dominate possession, you need midfielders comfortable receiving the ball under pressure.

If you want to press high, you need players physically capable of repeating those runs.

And if you haven't got those players, repeatedly asking them to do it isn't bravery or philosophy.

It is bad management. The best managers adapt the system to their players. Too many others try to adapt their players to the system. There is an enormous difference.

MANAGING THE MATCH

Perhaps the biggest distinction between a coach and a manager comes on a Saturday afternoon.

You can spend Tuesday and Thursday rehearsing patterns, but football rarely follows the script.

Your opposition might change shape. Your right-back might be getting overloaded. Their number 10 might be finding space between your midfield and defence. Your centre-forward might be isolated. The opposition might have realised they can play over your press instead of through it. At that point, the manager has to see it.

That sounds obvious, but reading a football match is a skill.

Some managers appear so committed to what they planned before kick-off that they are reluctant to accept that the plan isn't working.

They wait until the 70th or 75th minute to make a change everybody else in the ground could see was required twenty minutes earlier.

Or they make a substitution without actually changing the problem.

Replacing one winger with another winger doesn't necessarily change anything if the real issue is that you're being outnumbered in midfield.

That is where tactical awareness matters. Sometimes the best tactical change isn't dramatic.

It might simply be moving ten yards deeper, changing which midfielder presses, putting somebody closer to the opposition's playmaker or asking your full-back to stop bombing forward.

Management isn't just about formations. It is about understanding why the game looks the way it does.

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL REQUIRES EVEN MORE FLEXIBILITY

This is particularly important lower down the pyramid.

Premier League managers can spend millions recruiting footballers specifically suited to their system.

Most non-league managers don't have that luxury. Players have jobs. Availability changes. Budgets matter. Squads change quickly. Training time is limited. Pitches vary enormously.

You might be playing on a perfect surface one week and something resembling a ploughed field seven days later.

That means pragmatism isn't a dirty word. If your squad contains two outstanding quick forwards, build something that releases them. If you have a dominant centre-forward, use him.

If you've got three excellent central midfielders but very little width, don't force yourself to play with two wingers simply because you like 4-3-3.

And if you're playing away against one of the best teams in the league, there is no shame in recognising that the game may require something different from the previous Saturday.

Identity should provide a foundation. It shouldn't become a prison.

COACHING BADGES DON'T AUTOMATICALLY MAKE MANAGERS

Modern football rightly places much greater emphasis on coaching qualifications. That has improved standards enormously.

But being able to deliver an excellent training session isn't the same thing as being able to manage a football team.

Some outstanding coaches are not outstanding managers. Likewise, some excellent managers aren't the most innovative coaches.

A manager has to deal with personalities, recruitment, motivation, selection, tactical decisions, substitutions, confidence, dressing-room dynamics and results.

Above all, he has to make decisions. Sometimes unpopular ones. Sometimes ones that contradict what he originally planned. And occasionally he has to admit, even if only to himself: "I got this wrong." That may be the most underrated quality of all. Philosophy or ego? There is a fine line between having principles and stubbornness.

If your team continually concede goals trying to play out from the back, eventually you have to ask whether you are developing a style or simply proving a point.

If the same tactical problem occurs every week, it is no longer bad luck.

If players continually look uncomfortable performing particular roles, perhaps the players aren't the problem.

The manager's job isn't to show everyone how he believes football should be played. His job is to maximise the footballers in his dressing room. Develop them. Improve them. Coach them. But then, on Saturday afternoon, manage them. The very best non-league managers understand that distinction.

They have an idea of how they want their teams to play, but they don't become slaves to it. They recognise opposition weaknesses. They change shape when required. They spot problems early. They understand what their players can and cannot do.

SUSSEX GRASSROOTS

THE SLOW DEATH OF SATURDAY PARK FOOTBALL

How a Sussex institution is disappearing – and why the next generation may not save it.



GLENN SOUTER

SUSSEX GRASSROOTS

THE SLOW DEATH OF SATURDAY PARK FOOTBALL

***H**ow a Sussex institution is disappearing – and why the next generation may not save it*

There was a time when Saturday afternoon park football was part of the fabric of life in Worthing, Brighton and the surrounding towns. Go back 20 years and recreation grounds across Sussex would be full of adult teams. Changing rooms would be packed, car parks overflowing and several games might be taking place within a few hundred yards of each other.

The names were familiar. Some represented pubs, some workplaces, some neighbourhoods and others were simply groups of mates who had formed a football club and somehow kept it going for decades.

For hundreds of players, Saturday meant football. Sadly, today, that landscape looks very different. This isn't simply nostalgia. The numbers and league structures tell the story.

In the mid-2000s, the Worthing & District League alone operated four divisions – Premier, Division One, Division Two and Division Three. Division Three disappeared after 2007/08. Brighton had its own substantial Saturday structure too. By 2014 the decline was significant enough that the Brighton, Hove & District

League and Worthing & District League began merging, with the process completed in 2015.

But even combining two historic leagues couldn't arrest the decline.

The merged Brighton, Worthing & District League initially operated four sections in 2015/16. Division Two West disappeared a year later. By 2018 it was down to two divisions and in 2020/21 it operated just one section.

That is an extraordinary contraction.

Two footballing areas that once supported separate multi-division Saturday competitions effectively became one increasingly small pool of teams. So, the question has to be asked:

Where have all the footballers gone?

It isn't because people stopped liking football. Perhaps the strangest aspect of the decline is that football itself has never been more visible. Children wear Premier League shirts. Academies are packed. Football dominates television and social media. Junior football remains enormous. Yet traditional adult 11-a-side football has struggled to convert that enthusiasm into men wanting to spend every Saturday afternoon playing competitive park football.

An Adur and Worthing playing-pitch assessment identified precisely that problem. It recorded 102 men's teams in 2014 but only 49 adult teams overall in its later assessment, while junior and mini-football numbers had increased. It concluded that adult 11v11 football locally was contracting, and at pace.

So there isn't necessarily a shortage of youngsters playing football, but, there is a shortage of them staying in traditional Saturday football as they become adults. And that distinction is what matters.

THE COMMITMENT PROBLEM

Twenty years ago, joining a Saturday team generally meant accepting that your Saturday belonged to football. You met at midday. You travelled. You played. You went back to the pub or clubhouse afterwards.

Missing games regularly wasn't particularly acceptable. Modern life is different.

People work Saturdays. Relationships and family commitments compete for weekends. Young adults travel more. Gym culture has exploded. Five-a-side and six-a-side football allow people to get their football fix in an hour without sacrificing an entire Saturday.

The Adur and Worthing strategy identified the time commitment and cost of participating, competing attractions for players' time and money, and younger men increasingly preferring small-sided football without the commitment of an 11-a-side club.

That last word is arguably at the centre of everything:

COMMITMENT.

Park football doesn't just need players. It needs people willing to commit. And even more importantly, it needs volunteers willing to run the clubs.

Someone has to collect subs, wash the kit, book pitches, register players, organise referees, attend league meetings, chase availability and send 25 messages on Thursday night trying to find out whether someone who said he was available on Tuesday is still available on Saturday.

Increasingly, fewer people want that responsibility. Where are your Laurie Claydons, Ron George, Dave Rowland or Dave Gurney of this genre? Maybe legends like this don't exist anymore?

When the old-school secretary, manager or chairman finally gives up, entire clubs can disappear with them and this is happening more and more often.

THE PREMIER LEAGUE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

There is another factor unique to this part of Sussex which cannot be ignored - Brighton & Hove Albion F.C...

Albion's rise has been one of English football's great success stories. But there has arguably been an unintended consequence for grassroots Saturday football. When Brighton reached the Premier League in 2017, suddenly tens of thousands of people locally had Premier League football on their doorstep.

And Saturday afternoon became valuable.

The local playing-pitch strategy explicitly identified Brighton & Hove Albion fixtures exerting a strong pull on Saturdays, affecting both players and officials.

That is significant because it confirms something grassroots managers have experienced for years. Twenty years ago a talented 22-year-old footballer around Worthing or Brighton might automatically have played on Saturday afternoon.

Today he may have a season ticket at the Amex - Or his friends do.

If Brighton are at home against Arsenal, Liverpool or Manchester United, asking him to play a park game at 2pm suddenly becomes a much harder sell. The same applies to referees, volunteers and potential spectators.

Brighton's success hasn't damaged local football deliberately - quite the opposite in many areas - but the Premier League has become a huge competitor for people's Saturday afternoons. Grassroots football simply cannot compete with that spectacle.

Then there is the one that all of the elder statesmen and ex-players call out time and time again....*The changing mentality of young players and has the appetite for competitive football changed?*

Previous generations often grew up with relatively simple ambitions. Get into the first team. Win the league. Win the cup. Beat the team down the road. Stay in the side next week. For many, playing was enough.

Modern young footballers inhabit a completely different environment. They have grown up watching elite football constantly. They follow professional players on Instagram and TikTok. They see training-ground clips, designer clothes, boots, highlight reels and carefully produced announcements. Football has become partly about presentation and grassroots football has inevitably absorbed that culture.

Players increasingly expect good pitches, matching tracksuits, professional-looking social-media graphics, photographers, highlights and clubs with an online presence. There is nothing inherently wrong with that. In fact, social media can be one of grassroots football's

The reality isn't glamorous. It's an away game in January. It's horizontal rain. It's changing in a freezing room with one working shower. It's playing when you've got a knock. It's travelling 40 minutes to sit on the bench. It's losing three games in a row and still turning up for training. It's being told you're substitute. It's competing for your shirt.

That is competitive adult football.

And increasingly clubs report finding players who love football when they're starting, winning and being photographed – but disappear surprisingly quickly when they're on the bench.

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS CHANGED STATUS WITHIN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

Twenty years ago, nobody knew who played Step 6, Step 7 or park football outside the people who actually watched it. Now everyone knows.

A player can announce a transfer. Clubs produce signing graphics. Goals are filmed. Statistics are published. Squads are announced online.

That has created huge positives, but also a strange hierarchy of status. Some young players would seemingly rather be the 18th man at a higher-level club than play 35 games lower down. Why?

Because being associated with the higher-level club carries greater social currency. The badge goes on Instagram. The tracksuit gets worn. The signing graphic gets shared. Yet development ultimately comes from playing football. A 19-year-old playing 30 competitive adult matches, learning how to deal with physical opponents and experiencing winning, losing and responsibility may develop far more than one spending a season sitting on a Step 6 bench. Grassroots football needs to convince young players that playing matters more than appearing to play at a higher level.

THE MISSING BRIDGE FROM YOUTH FOOTBALL

Perhaps this is the biggest failure of all. Sussex has thousands of children playing organised football. So where are they at 19, 20 and 21?

The Adur and Worthing strategy specifically highlighted a lack of youth players progressing into senior teams, saying the momentum of youth football was not being maintained.

At youth level everything is organised. Parents drive players to matches. Coaches organise training. Fixtures are structured. Kits are provided. Teams often have multiple volunteers. Then players reach adulthood and suddenly football asks something different of them.

Responsibility / Commitment / Competition!

Nobody is driving them there anymore. And somewhere between U16 football and adult football, an enormous number disappear from the traditional game. That should concern everyone involved in Sussex football.

A VICIOUS CIRCLE

The decline then becomes self-perpetuating. Fewer players means fewer teams. Fewer teams mean smaller divisions. Smaller divisions mean repetitive fixtures. Clubs fold and the remaining teams travel further. Standards become more uneven. Better players leave. Volunteers become frustrated. Another club folds.

The local authority assessment even identified a perceived reduction in the standard of local leagues as another contributor to declining participation.

Eventually you reach the point where the competition itself becomes less attractive because so much of what once made it compelling has disappeared.

Local rivalries. Reserve teams. Promotion battles. Relegation battles. Three or four divisions allowing teams to naturally find their competitive level. All become harder to sustain....

WHAT WOULD SUSSEX LOSE?

It would be easy to dismiss all this as simply football evolving. Perhaps Saturday park football has had its day. But something important would disappear with it.

These clubs have provided thousands of men with friendships, exercise, competition and belonging. They have brought together people from completely different backgrounds. A Saturday dressing room can contain a builder, accountant, student, electrician, teacher and unemployed 19-year-old – all temporarily equal because somebody has forgotten the kit and everyone wants three points.

That social function is difficult to quantify. For some players those friendships last decades. And football needs the bottom of its pyramid. Not everybody is going to play Step 5 or Step 6.

There has to be somewhere for the late developer, the 35-year-old veteran, the 18-year-old released by an academy, the player returning after five years away and the bloke who simply loves competing on Saturday afternoon.

CAN IT BE SAVED?

Probably – but not by pretending it is still 2005.

Grassroots football has to adapt.

Clubs need to embrace social media rather than complain about it. They need better links with U16 and U18 teams. Senior clubs could actively partner with park sides to give young players somewhere to play. The transition from youth to adult football needs to become a genuine pathway rather than a cliff edge.

Leagues may need greater flexibility around kick-off times and scheduling. Facilities matter. Costs matter. Clubs need help recruiting and retaining volunteers. And perhaps most importantly, young footballers need to be sold the thing grassroots football still does better than almost anything else:

REAL COMPETITION!

Not followers. Not announcement graphics. Not what badge appears in an Instagram bio.....Pure competition.

Winning a tackle when you're exhausted. Scoring a winner. Getting dropped and winning your place back. Celebrating a promotion with your mates. Walking into a pub after beating your local rivals. Winning something together. Those experiences cannot be replicated on a screen.

And then who else can help?

The Sussex County FA, local leagues and councils could support this with an annual "next step" programme: one registration event, a directory of local clubs, taster sessions and mixed training evenings for players aged 17 to 21. Clubs could also create development or reserve teams where numbers allow, giving younger players regular football rather than leaving them competing immediately for a first-team place.

Cost needs similar attention. Clubs should publish a simple seasonal fee before players commit, offer monthly payment plans and create hardship funds supported by local businesses. Councils could provide reduced pitch rates for clubs that run youth-to-senior pathways, while pubs, tradespeople and smaller employers could sponsor specific costs such as kit, referee fees or winter training.

Scheduling must reflect modern Saturdays. Leagues should publish fixtures earlier, avoid unnecessary clashes with Brighton & Hove Albion home matches where possible and consider occasional mid-week games where possible, especially early in the season. That would not replace Saturday football, but it could

stop one unavailable weekend from becoming a reason to leave altogether.

The volunteer problem also needs a more realistic solution. Clubs should divide administration into small roles rather than relying on one secretary to do everything. A league-wide volunteer pool could help with fixture administration, safeguarding, social media and referee coordination. Basic training and shared templates would make it easier for a parent, player or former committee member to take on one task without inheriting an entire club.

Finally, the leagues need to make the competition feel meaningful again. A stable structure with enough teams, localised divisions and properly promoted cup competitions would reduce repetitive fixtures and restore the sense that every season has a story. Clubs should use social media not merely to announce signings, but to show the ordinary reality of adult football: local rivalries, returning players, volunteers, matchday routines and the people who keep the game alive.

None of this will recreate the old Saturday afternoon exactly. It does not need to. The aim should be a version of grassroots football that is affordable, flexible and welcoming without losing its competitive edge.

SATURDAY USED TO MEAN FOOTBALL

The decline around Worthing and Brighton has taken roughly two decades: divisions have disappeared, leagues have merged and clubs have folded. The evidence is difficult to ignore.

But the future will be decided locally, one club and one player at a time. A youth team needs somewhere to go. A volunteer needs a manageable job. A player needs to know that turning up matters, even when there is no camera, signing graphic or crowd waiting.

The pitches are still there. So are the friendships, the rivalries and the possibility of a game that means something. What is at risk is not football itself, but the habit of making room for it. And if Saturday football disappears, Sussex will lose more than matches. It will lose one of the places where ordinary people learned to belong.

THE SUSSEX SCOUT

MANAGER, REIGATE PRIORY FC

A BLESSING AND A CURSE

Where does the money come from? At Reigate Priory, it comes from the players – £200 a year, and no tracksuit.

**DALE WYATT**

MANAGER, REIGATE PRIORY FC

A BLESSING AND A CURSE – REIGATE PRIORY FC

Something that is (to my knowledge) quite unique to Reigate Priory FC playing at Step 6, is the financial side. It's something I've never got my head around at this level and even 2 years before our promotion to step 6, I was trying to ask around. Where does the money come from?

We're about 4 years on from when I started contacting chairmen, managers etc and whilst I'm still quite naïve and out of the loop, I was even more so back then, whilst also being quite gullible. I remember one manager in SCFL Div 1 telling me at the time, that their lads pay £100 sign on fee and get their tracksuit paid for within that figure. Later down the line, I then hear that there were of course players getting paid off the books, but it's just such a taboo subject. Others will say they don't pay players either, as if they operate on the same resources as us, only to find out that they pay travel expenses and/or pay some sort of team win bonus. All of which, are absolutely fine by the way. I

have an idea in my mind of how I'd go about doing things should I have a playing budget to work with and like some quite rightly say, if spectators are paying good money to come through the gate, why shouldn't the players they're coming to watch be compensated?

So, here's how it works (or doesn't work) at Reigate Priory FC. First team players pay a £200 annual membership to the club. No tracksuit, not travel expenses, no win bonus, no free drink at the bar, no yellow/red cards paid for by the club. £200 enables you to sign on, train, play matches, have the match kit washed and get basic equipment like balls, cones and bibs. The only exception, is if a player is able to source a sponsor willing to cover that membership fee for them. In return, the sponsor gets their logo in the programme, which gets sent digitally to over 1000 families locally (our mailing list across senior and youth sections of the club). Player sponsors will also get a social media welcome post and mentioned in any social media posts their player is involved in.

Why do we still have players paying to play? The expenses the club faces year on year, like many other clubs, is going through the roof. Our 'spiritual home' in Reigate, where we've been for 156 years, is leased to us for about £15k per year. We make some of that money back through bar takings, but can only play up to Step 7 on that pitch given the restrictions in place with ground grading. To smash through that glass ceiling, we have to ground-share until we can develop somewhere of our own, which is an entirely different conversation with its own challenges. Playing a single competitive fixture at Horley Town costs us around £600 per game when you include hospitality, match officials etc. So we're looking at approximately £12-£13k there in addition to the £15k at Park Lane (Reigate). This is before factoring in training facilities, utility bills, maintenance of our other ground in Coulsdon, pitch hire for 2 of our other teams, match officials, veo etc. Ultimately, until the club is able to generate significant enough sponsorship (again, another conversation entirely), the only way it can survive playing at this level, is through membership fees and bar takings at Park Lane. On average we take around £100-£130 per game on the gate at Horley, so gate alone barely touches it and Horley rightly take the bar revenue. You might also be wondering about our vast youth setup? They're run as a separate entity with completely separate accounts. We collaborate with them with facilities and providing a pathway to players from youth to senior football, but all of their income stays within the youth setup.

So, the curse element is obvious. Recruiting experienced players at our level is challenging. Over

the course of this pre-season alone, I had the opportunity to bring in 2 SCFL Div 1 winners along with a young lad who has been with Carshalton Athletic in pre-season, but needing game time. None of which came to fruition as a result of not being able to at least cover their travel expenses. The lads are all responsible for sourcing their own tracksuits as well, so that doesn't look particularly professional either when you've got some in tracksuit, others not. Some in this seasons white warm up tops and some in last seasons red warm up tops. It's not a great look, especially when you have teams much lower down the pyramid who get this bit nailed on quite easily. There's also a really difficult balance to be had, when essentially these lads are paying for a 'service'. Players paying to play then raises conflict when all of a sudden there are players not being selected for the squad. By contrast as well, it becomes more difficult to police lack of availability, because rightly so in this economic climate, work sometimes has to take priority if you're only going to be down financially by choosing to travel to Westfield away. I've had player simply stop playing entirely mid-season, because they can't afford the cost of fuel getting to training/games that month. It does also make it difficult to retain players, with a couple of players this season deciding that the travel is too much so made the decision to drop down a level. That's both cost and time away from the family. Whether paying travel expenses would've fixed that remains to be seen, but it would've been nice to be able to continue building on what we finished with last season and finances most likely would've helped with that.

However, there is always opportunity somewhere in adversity. As a result of where we are in the food chain, I'm often shopping in a different supermarket to everyone else. Don't get me wrong, this season we've signed experienced goalkeeper Andy Greaves, notorious goalscorer Tommy McKenna and a few others who have side-stepped from other Step 6 sides including Paul Johnston (Oakwood) and Layo Adebajo and Jack Appleby (Spelthorne). There's always a reason why us though over others. Greavesy has known various people within our club for a number of years and naturally, when we did as well as we did last season, that peaked interest from him and Paul. Layo & Jack followed Matty Bowers (my new assistant) from Spelthorne over to us and Tommy had excelled with us for a few months at the end of the 24/25 season, so when it didn't work out with Horsham YM, he wanted to reset and get some consistency where he knows he can succeed. Where others might only be open to players with Step 6+ experience, we know we can be that platform for young players who genuinely just want to be able to showcase themselves at this level. Dylan Page was one of those and travels from Hastings to play for us week in, week out. He's proven his ability at this level and has arguably been our best player so far this season, but has stuck around having become really close with a lot of the lads within the group. The newest examples of this are George Dawson (Ripley Village) and Ryan Wilcox (Trenham/Lingfield U23) who have both come from what would be Step 8, if such a step existed. I guess the more 'accurate' terminology would be tier 12 where Step 6 is tier 10 of the pyramid before anyone starts grumbling. Matt King, Sam Steele, Sam Luard and Brad Hazelden have all come through our youth setup as well, so huge credit to the guys producing the talent and feeding them through the pathway.

Where these players come from is a real mixture, but when they're all coming to us, knowing that they'll have to pay to play, there is one common thing that attracts them. The desire to win games, playing an attractive brand of football in a thriving culture. It's not a case of turning up, picking up an envelope win, lose or draw and then going home, like it is at some clubs having spoken with a player of another side at the back end of last season, who says he takes his £150 on matchday and heads home. Doesn't have to worry about coming to training or staying for a drink after games. I've said it before and I'll say it again, different people use football for different things which is absolutely fine. Some use it for a second income, some use it for the social

element, some for mental health, some for physical health and everything in-between.

For us, it's a blessing because these lads will (when it clicks), fight for each other, because of the social element or because they know it's what they need to do to enhance their own opportunity for progression. The motivation is almost exclusively intrinsic, which is something we have to look at considerably when it comes to player recruitment. As good as someone might be technically, they need to have the right character to fit with the group, which often then polices itself as they hold each other accountable. I don't always get it right with everyone, but my gut instinct for getting the balance right between personality and playing ability is usually pretty good. Some are a bit harder than others to mould them into a 'Priory player', but you can really tell the difference once they've fully embraced the ethos.

No money, no ambition? I don't agree with that. Sure, it can make things a bit more difficult and it'll be more challenging higher up the leagues, but it can also really simplify things. With no money, it can really separate quite quickly and easily, the characters who want to be there and want to fight for you. It can tell you who is truly up for the challenge and whether they buy into the ethos and that's half the battle. That's not to say the club with never pay players, it simply needs to find a sustainable way of doing so. The primary ambition for this historic club is simply to survive and keep engaging as much of the local community as possible. Sustainability is fundamental to that objective. To thrive, it just needs to keep sight of the ethos and as my former captain Joe Elbishlawi used to say, stick with the unwritten "no dickheads" policy.

I'll shamelessly finish with a plug/plea for more sponsors. Having had a business whom I won't name (for now) commit to being our major first team sponsor this season and kept stringing us along promising they'll make payment, we now can't get hold of them. All of our kits are in desperate need of replenishment, so if anyone reading this has interest in supporting a team with community at the heart of everything it does and currently registering to become a CASC, please do get in touch info@reigateprioryfc.co.uk

Huge thanks to Mr Dugout Diaries who continues to support and promote us and many other clubs around SCFL.

DALE WYATT

REIGATE PRIORY FC
THE VOICES

SUPPORTER COLUMNIST

ONLY(FOOTBALL)FANS

"I didn't know anything about non league football, still don't. Thought step was something you walked up and down."

**MICKY HUSH**

SUPPORTER COLUMNIST

I didn't know anything about non league football, still don't. Thought step was something you walked up and down. Not even making a bad joke, that's how little my knowledge was until Master-at-Arms McCaffrey started lighting up the scene.

We've known each other for over 30yrs, still not sure who's done worse out of that, but the point is when your best pal starts taking an interest and becomes annoyingly successful, you start taking interest too.

My self proclaimed encyclopaedic knowledge of football, like most, begins and ends with the team they support with marginal peppering around the Premier League. It's the best league in the world after all, why would you take an interest outside of that. Or so my ignorant self thought.

What I found is something long forgotten in the seemingly soulless world of top flight football, and that's people doing it literally just for the love of the game.

Realise I'm preaching to the choir on this, but going to random games over the past year outside of the great British summer, you meet people giving up their Saturdays in cold, dark sometimes dingy environments, just so I can get a cup of tea with a double vodka, and all the volunteers helping clubs tick is genuinely enriching for the soul. And you do question if giving your money to these corporate bastards in the Prem is money well spent.

Was out with a mate last night who told me (admittedly in the 1901 prawn sandwich seats) if you want to play darts with a meal and a drink, it's £70 extra, each, on top of your ticket.

Putting aside the merits of having darts at football, which I can only envisage ending well, unless Trump has now started sanctioning Brighton, who's making up these prices?

It's not just that though, when I went to watch Worthing in the cup last year (the one where Robbie Savage was hurled with so much abuse TNT threatened to not televise another game) which if nothing else made me want to go back, no one cared if it was my first game

with zero Rebel knowledge, we all sat together happily discussing the club and players. And depending on your opinion about embellishment or flat out lies, think I held a pretty good account of myself.

There's almost an air of superiority in the Premier League where if you don't exactly know what you're talking about or you're a 'plastic' fan you best keep quiet sunshine.

But in non league everyone's happy to talk, everyone's happy you're there (well mostly), you get to talk with players, players parents, lino's, ref, etc etc, there's no pretensions, just wholesome interactions (well mostly).

And whilst I may not repeat the step joke anytime soon, I'll be back at some random ground near you, pretending to know what I'm talking about, asking the score or who's who again.

It may be a million miles from the Premier League but that's missing the point. It's just gloriously all about the football and I could get used to that. May have to update the encyclopaedia though.

WHAT I FOUND IS SOMETHING LONG FORGOTTEN IN THE SEEMINGLY SOULLESS WORLD OF TOP FLIGHT FOOTBALL, AND THAT'S PEOPLE DOING IT LITERALLY JUST FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME.

MICKY HUSH

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FOUNDER, DUGOUT AI · DUGOUT DIARIES

PAGHAM FC: FOOTBALL WITHOUT THE ALGORITHM

Somewhere along the line, football became a spreadsheet. Nyetimber Lane never got the memo.



MIKE MCCAFFREY

FOUNDER, DUGOUT AI · DUGOUT DIARIES

DUGOUT DIARIES

Somewhere along the line, football became a spreadsheet. xG. PPDA. Progressive carries. Expected assists. Heat maps. Rest defence. High turnovers.

APPARENTLY, YOU CAN NO LONGER JUST SAY: "HE HAD A BLOODY GOOD GAME."

You now need a graph, three analysts and a bloke on YouTube explaining why the left-back standing in central midfield is apparently tactical genius.

Then Pagham beat Billingshurst *5-4*. Five-four. Nine goals. No algorithm required. And suddenly football made sense again.

Because sometimes football doesn't need analysing. Sometimes it needs two teams, a few hundred people, a referee, a clubhouse and absolutely nobody remembering how to defend.

Pagham's opening weeks have been beautifully unpredictable. Lose 3-0 at Guernsey. Beat Lancing 5-0. Beat Billingshurst 5-4. Then follow that madness with a much more sensible 2-0 cup win over Selsey. What does the data tell us? Pagham are terrible. Pagham are brilliant. Pagham can defend. Pagham definitely can't defend.

Possibly all within the same week. Welcome to non-league football. And that's exactly why we love it.

THE BEAUTIFUL IMPERFECTION

At the top level, football is becoming an exercise in optimisation. Players are monitored, tracked and measured. Recruitment departments have enormous databases. Managers have analysts. Analysts have analysts.

Someone somewhere is probably being paid £70,000 a year to calculate the optimal angle for a throw-in.

Then you arrive at Step 5. A player is stuck on the A27. Someone can't find the dressing-room key. The physio is taping three people at once. The team sheet has changed twice.

A supporter is telling the manager exactly where he's going wrong despite being on his fourth pint.

Then at 3pm everybody somehow walks onto the same patch of grass and plays football. Glorious. It isn't worse because it isn't perfect.

THE IMPERFECTION IS PART OF THE ATTRACTION.

YOU CAN STILL HEAR FOOTBALL

That's another thing I love about places like Pagham. You can actually **hear football**. The crack of a tackle. A centre-half screaming "AWAY!"

A goalkeeper delivering a performance review to his back four that would probably cause problems with HR.

The manager barking instructions. A supporter 60 yards away telling the assistant referee he has missed an obvious offside. And remarkably, the assistant referee doesn't immediately change his mind. This is football without the filter. Nobody has been media trained. Nobody is describing a 4-0 defeat as "part of the journey".

Sometimes you were just rubbish. Sometimes the referee had a nightmare. Sometimes your striker couldn't hit the English Channel from Bognor seafront.

And sometimes you win 5-4 and everybody goes home wondering what on earth they've just watched.

Perfect.

STOP TRYING TO MAKE FOOTBALL PERFECT

We have become obsessed with removing mistakes from football. Technology removes mistakes. VAR removes mistakes. Data reduces mistakes. Analysis improves decision-making. But mistakes are part of what makes the game exciting. A bad pass creates a counterattack. A goalkeeper spills one. A defender slips. A striker misses a sitter.

A referee makes a decision that half the ground thinks should result in his immediate arrest. Remove every error and eventually football becomes chess played by robots. Technically brilliant. Emotionally sterile. Give me Pagham 5 Billingshurst 4 every time.

THE PEOPLE ARE THE REAL DATA

And perhaps the biggest thing no algorithm will ever properly measure is whether people actually cared.

YOU NOW NEED A GRAPH, THREE ANALYSTS AND A BLOKE ON YOUTUBE EXPLAINING WHY THE LEFT-BACK STANDING IN CENTRAL MIDFIELD IS APPARENTLY TACTICAL GENIUS.

Did somebody bring their kid? Did a new supporter come through the gate? Did people stay for a beer afterwards? Were people still talking about the match the next morning? Did someone laugh? Did someone swear?

DID SOMEBODY GO HOME THINKING, *"I'M COMING BACK NEXT WEEK"?

That is what non-league football is built on. There is no statistic for belonging. No xG model for community. No heat map showing where friendships were formed in the clubhouse.

And no dashboard measuring the value of the volunteer who has been at the ground since breakfast making sure everyone else can enjoy Saturday afternoon.

At this level, the football club isn't simply the badge. It's the person putting the corner flags out. The person washing the kit. The coach staying late. The player rushing from work. The supporter travelling away. The person selling raffle tickets. The person making tea. The people who keep turning up. That's the real data.

MAY CONTAIN ACTUAL FOOTBALL

Maybe Pagham should put a warning above the turnstiles.

WARNING: THIS PRODUCT MAY CONTAIN ACTUAL FOOTBALL.

Results may vary. Defending cannot be guaranteed. Heart rates may increase without warning. Opinions shouted from behind the dugout have not been independently verified. And that's why I love it. Football shouldn't always make sense. It shouldn't be completely predictable.

Sometimes the whole attraction is walking through the gate having absolutely no idea what you're about to see.

Pagham might score five. They might concede four. They might follow it three days later with a disciplined 2-0 cup win. And somewhere, someone will produce a graph explaining why. I'll probably read it.

Then I'll close the laptop, head to a non-league ground and remember the statistic that matters most.

DID I ENJOY MYSELF?

You won't find that on Opta. See you in the dugout.

DON'T FORGET: Catch *The IBB10 Show LIVE on YouTube every Sunday at 8pm* and *The SNLF Show LIVE on YouTube every Wednesday* for all the latest Sussex non-league football talk, debate, news and absolute chaos.

DUGOUT DIARIES

**THEN I'LL CLOSE THE LAPTOP, HEAD TO A NON-LEAGUE GROUND AND
REMEMBER THE STATISTIC THAT MATTERS MOST.**

MIKE MCCAFFREY

ISSUE 4

THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THIS ISSUE

Ten Sussex football people sent us words or pictures this week. None of them was paid.
All of them are the reason this magazine exists.

**MIKE MCCAFFREY****RUSS COCHRAN****STEVEN 'RHINO'
CARLBERG****STUART ROBINSON****GLENN SOUTER****DALE WYATT****MICKY HUSH****BRANDON WRIGHT****GEOFF MARTIN****BRAD CURTIS**

THANK YOU

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026

DUGOUT PICKS

Eight games worth setting an alarm for.

EASTBOURNE UNITED V BEXHILL UNITED

SCFL PREMIER · 11:00

United's attack has been one of the highest-output in the division; Bexhill arrive off a Friday night draw with Roffey in which they twice had to come from level. Two sides who score, one of whom has to defend.

NEWHAVEN V HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN

SCFL PREMIER · 11:00

Heath ground out a 1-0 over Lingfield on Saturday with nine minutes of stoppage time to survive. Jack Barnes and a side that knows how to win ugly, away from home, less than 48 hours later.

PAGHAM V WICK

SCFL PREMIER · 11:00

Owen Sherriff has three FA Cup goals from defence and Connor Kelly has kept Pagham in ties they might have lost. A Bank Holiday derby at Nyetimber Lane is the right stage for both of them.

INFINITY V ARUNDEL

SCFL DIVISION ONE · 11:00

The pick of the Division One card. Infinity lost 3-1 at Jarvis Brook on Saturday, their first real setback; Arundel beat Loxwood 3-1 with Liam Brady involved. Two of Sussex's form attacks, one afternoon.

MILE OAK V WORTHING UNITED

SCFL DIVISION ONE · 11:00

United won 8-0 on Saturday and have taken maximum points from three. Danny Kingston and Dean Sherwood both feature on this week's cover. Mile Oak get the hardest possible Bank Holiday draw.

HAILSHAM TOWN V SALTDEAN UNITED

SCFL DIVISION ONE · 11:00

Hailsham put five past Shoreham on Saturday. Saltdean have Alfie Mitchell scoring from midfield during a strong start. Form against form.

T.D. SHIPLEY V STORRINGTON COMMUNITY

SCFL DIVISION TWO · 11:00

The Ship beat Rudgwick 3-1 on Saturday — read Brad Curtis's report on page 55 — and go again at home on Monday morning.

RINGMER AFC V WESTFIELD

SCFL DIVISION ONE · 13:00

Note the kick-off: 13:00 per the club, not the 11:00 listed elsewhere. Ringmer conceded eight at Worthing United on Saturday and will want this one to look very different.

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FRIDAY 28 – SATURDAY 29 AUGUST 2026

THE WEEKEND IN NUMBERS

Every figure on this page is counted from the verified results printed in this issue.
Nothing is estimated.

GOALS SCORED

231

Across every Sussex-relevant fixture

MATCHES PLAYED

65

Friday and Saturday combined

GOALS PER GAME

3.55

Weekend average

DRAWN MATCHES

12

Points shared

CLEAN SHEETS

27

At least one side kept one

BIGGEST WIN

8-0

Worthing United v Ringmer

GOALS BY COMPETITION

NATIONAL LEAGUE	12 games	33	2.8 avg
NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH	11 games	37	3.4 avg
ISTHMIAN PREMIER	10 games	33	3.3 avg
FA TROPHY (SUSSEX)	7 games	22	3.1 avg
SCFL PREMIER	10 games	35	3.5 avg
SCFL DIVISION ONE	9 games	39	4.3 avg
SCFL DIVISION TWO	6 games	32	5.3 avg

HIGHEST-SCORING GAME EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN 4-4 HASSOCKS

THE SUSSEX CLUB LIST

Every Sussex club in the divisions covered by this issue, top of the pyramid down.

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

HORSHAM

DORKING WANDERERS

ISTHMIAN PREMIER

LEWES

BURGESS HILL TOWN

EASTBOURNE BOROUGH

THREE BRIDGES

WHITEHAWK

ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST

HASTINGS UNITED

BROADBRIDGE HEATH

EASTBOURNE TOWN

PEACEHAVEN & TELSCOMBE

CROWBOROUGH ATHLETIC

STEYNING TOWN

ISTHMIAN SOUTH CENTRAL

BOGNOR REGIS TOWN

LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

EASTBOURNE UNITED

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN

NEWHAVEN

AFC VARDEANIAN

PAGHAM

CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK

HASSOCKS

ROFFEY

MIDHURST & EASEBOURNE

BEXHILL UNITED

LINGFIELD

SEAFORD TOWN

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN

HORSHAM YM

BILLINGSHURST

LANCING

WICK

FOREST ROW

LITTLE COMMON

SCFL DIVISION ONE

ARUNDEL

WORTHING UNITED

INFINITY

HAILSHAM TOWN

SALTDEAN UNITED

MILE OAK

SELSEY

EAST PRESTON

JARVIS BROOK

LOXWOOD

SHOREHAM

DORKING WANDERERS B

RINGMER AFC

SCFL DIVISION TWO

CHICHESTER CITY B

RUSTINGTON

TD SHIPLEY

FERRING

HURSTPIERPOINT

UPPER BEEDING

SOUTHWATER

BOSHAM

ALFOLD

RUDGWICK

STORRINGTON COMMUNITY

COPTHORNE

WORTHING TOWN

NEXT SUNDAY · ISSUE 05

THE HOT 50

The bumper issue. Fifty players from across the Sussex game, ranked, profiled and argued over — every division, every level.

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LEAGUE TABLE

	P	GD	PTS
1	38	+45	82
2	38	+28	75
3	38	+20	68
4	38	+15	64
5	38	+10	59



TEAMS



PLAYERS



STATS



FIXTURES



RESULTS



RANKINGS

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THE WHOLE DUGOUT

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DUGOUT NEWS	The free weekly magazine	thesnlf.co.uk
THE SNLF	The Sussex non-league newsroom	thesnlf.co.uk
DUGOUT DATA HUB	Results, tables and data	dugoutdatahub.com
IN THE DUGOUT	The app	thesnlf.co.uk
THE SNLF SHOW	Live Sussex football	thesnlf.co.uk
THE IBB10 SHOW	The football talk show	thesnlf.co.uk
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A MIDWEEK SPECIAL

ISSUE 4.5 THIS TUESDAY

Covering the Bank Holiday football — every result from Monday's 11am cards, right across Sussex.

01 EVERY BANK HOLIDAY RESULT

Three Southern Combination divisions, 11am kick-offs, every score and scorer we can confirm.

02 REPORTS FROM MONDAY

From the grounds our contributors got to — and from the ones you send us.

03 THE TABLES, MOVED ON

Seven divisions, updated after the Monday card.

04 DUGOUT PICKS, MARKED

We named eight games worth your morning on page 91. We will tell you how we did.

05 YOUR MATCH REPORTS

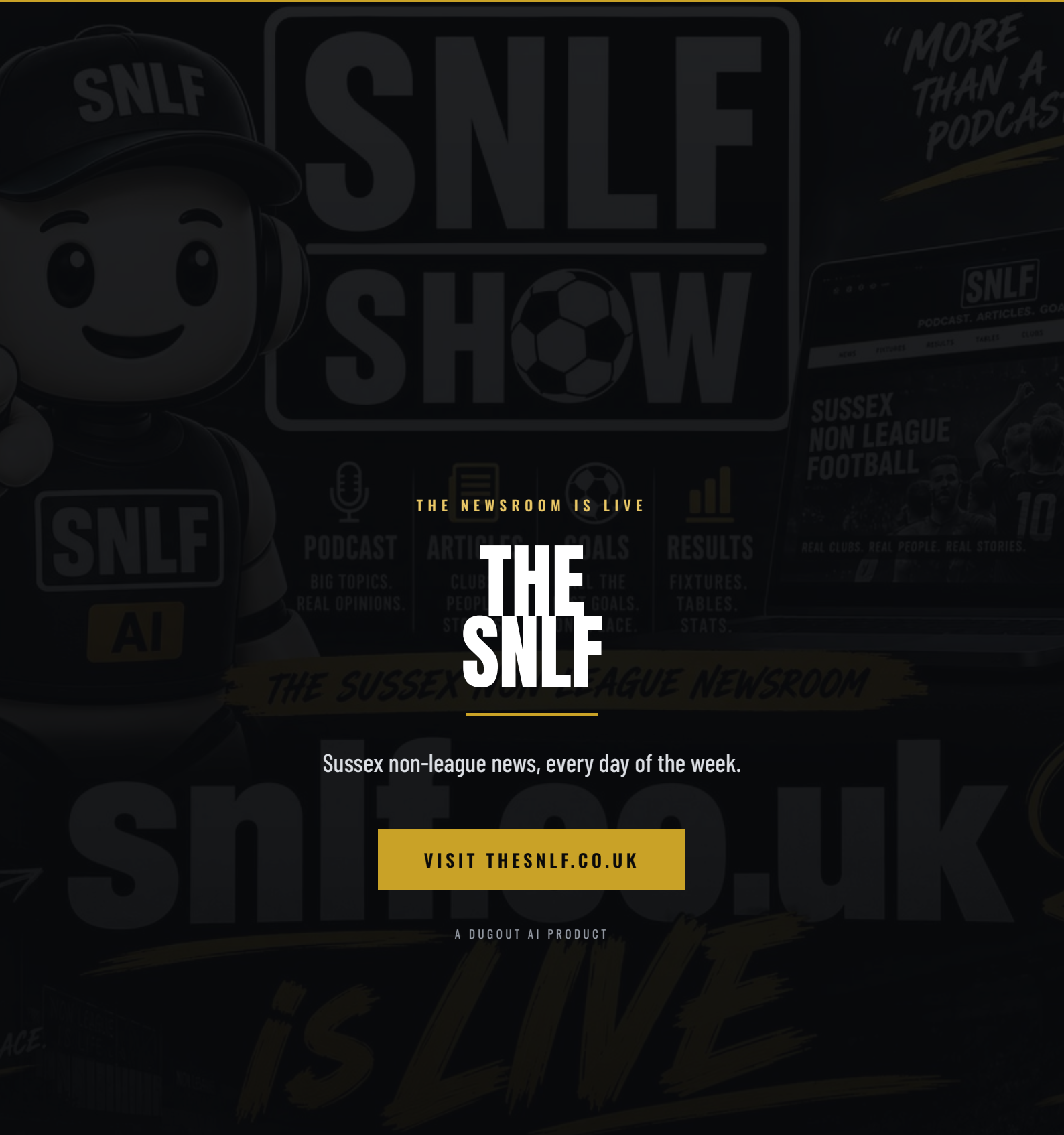
Whoever files, gets in. That has been the rule for four issues and it is not changing.

WERE YOU THERE ON MONDAY?

Send us your report, your photographs or just the score. Whatever you file, we will find it a page.

**mikethesnlf
@gmail.com**

SEND IT IN

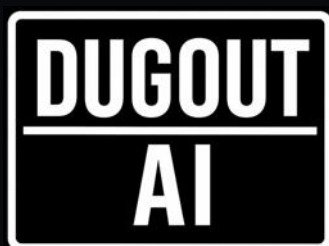


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