



# THE SPORTS REPORT

THE OFFICIAL MICKLEOVER FC  
MATCHDAY PROGRAMME



VS



**STAMFORD AFC**

SATURDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024  
KO 15:00 • THE DON AMOTT ARENA



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GAME TIME!

# TODAY'S LINEUPS

## MICKLEOVER

Yusuf Mersin  
Dan Bradley  
Ethan Mann  
Jake Bennett  
Joe Bateman  
Rhys Dolan  
Ryan Wilson (c)  
Andy Dales  
Ben Sault  
Oliver Greaves  
Will Atkinson  
Will Trueman  
Marcus Barnes  
Stuart Beavon  
Brandon Ferron  
Sam Tomlinson  
Matty Bowman  
Lewis Cunningham  
Toby Smith  
Oliver Bosworth  
Will Bapaga  
Tyrell Waite  
Will Tamen  
Kyle Rowley



## STAMFORD AFC

Dan Wallis  
Rhys Hilton  
Connor Bartle  
Rob Morgan  
James Blunden  
Ashton Offler  
Ollie Brown-Hill  
Harry Vince  
Lee Shaw  
Jack Duffy  
Will Glennon  
Tiago Nassunculo  
Billy Bennett  
Tom Siddons  
Florian Tsagium  
Tendai Chitiza



### Management

John McGrath (Manager)  
Ricky Ravenhill (Assistant Manager)  
Pablo Mills (Coach)  
Jonah Jones (GK Coach)  
Elle McGrath (Physio)  
Lucy Hadfield (Kit Manager)

### Management

Graham Drury (Manager)  
Kev Ward (Assistant Manager)  
Mike Hogg (GK Coach)  
Natalie Halliday (Physio)

**Referee:** Ashley Royston **Assistants:** Gary Hubbard, Dylan Hague

# PLAY-OFFS?



Welcome back to the Arena today for a game that has proved to be far more crucial than we anticipated a few weeks back.

You all know by now that the league has deducted us 12 points for a situation that I am unable, at this stage, to explain to you fully. But know this, we are forcefully appealing the Southern League decision. And as I write I don't know the outcome of that appeal, but it will be known by the time you read this on matchday.

And while we hope to win the appeal, we prepare for the worst case scenario, which will leave us needing a win today to reach the play-offs.

John, his players and the committee are going all out for that! And I know the fans are with us too! It all makes for a huge match day.

Today's visitors, Stamford also come into the match looking for a play off spot after an excellent season. We welcome them of course, but there will be very little welcome from either side on our pitch this afternoon.

Aside from our run in with the league, it's been a wonderful season for us. John McGrath and his coaching staff were magnificent. And I'd like to send a huge thank you to them, the player, the committee, employees, volunteers, and of course the amazing fans! The loud, proud support of the fans makes it all worthwhile. And of course the other people we couldn't do it without are the sponsors. I'd urge you all to support our sponsors whenever possible.

Now for the last time this home and away season, let's take a look at Don's old, old calendar. I note that in 1296 the English-Scottish peaked at the Battle of Dunbar, where the Scots were soundly defeated by Edward the 1st.

In 1646, with his army on the verge of defeat, King Charles the 1st fled Oxford. And in 1749, Green Park in London was the venue for the first ever performance of Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks",

Well that's it, should be plenty of fireworks on the pitch today, be extra loud and proud for the boys, and let's also hope Derby and Burton win their games today!

Regards,

*Don Amott*





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A WARM WELCOME TO STAMFORD AFC



# TODAY'S OPPONENTS



There is evidence to support the existence of a football club in Stamford as far back as 1870 & various clubs came & went in the next twenty years until 1894 when the town's two most prominent clubs Stamford Town & Rutland Ironworks agreed to amalgamate.

Initially the club adopted the name of the Rutland Ironworks who were viewed as the stronger of the two, but the current club's existence is generally accepted to date back to 1896 when the Stamford Town name was adopted to give the club a higher profile. It was to be some years before the club became known as "The Daniels" after Daniel Lambert, the heaviest British man ever, who died in 1809 in Stamford weighing 52 stone or thereabouts and is buried in St Martin's churchyard in the town.

The club's first ever match was played on Hanson's Field, at the location of Wothorpe Road and the club has enjoyed continuous use of the ground ever since. Evidence has come to light that the site staged football in the early 1870s making it a candidate for the world's oldest football ground. Stamford Town enjoyed



success from the off and won the Younger Cup in their first season. Several other trophies followed in the next decade and a half as Stamford established themselves as one of the area's most successful clubs. Most notable were back-to-back successes in the prestigious Hinchbrook Cup in 1907 and 1908, the trophy being won in front of four figure crowds in the finals at Huntingdon.

Encouraged by these successes Stamford turned professional in 1909. Stamford was quick to progress and in only their third season of Northants League football they won the championship. In 1913-1914 Stamford enjoyed their best ever FA Cup run reaching the 5th Qualifying Round before losing 2-0 at Chatham.

Financial troubles plagued the club towards the end of the thirties and in 1939 they decided to take a season's break to put the finances right. Within a few weeks war was declared, and it was 1945 before league football resumed.

After a season regrouping in the Peterborough League Stamford returned to the United Counties League, successor to the Northants League, in 1946. They soon earned a reputation as cup specialists, winning the Lincolnshire Junior Cup in 1949, UCL Knockout Cup in 1952 & Lincolnshire Senior Cup 'B' in 1952 and 1954. Football in the early post war years captured the public's imagination with a record crowd of 4,200 watching a 3-3 FA Cup draw with Kettering in 1953. In 1955 Stamford joined the Central Alliance before stepping up in class to join the Midland League in 1961. The sixties were years of struggle although 1961 saw Arsenal come to Wothorpe Road to beat the Daniels 9-0 in a match arranged to mark the town's quincentenary.

1972 saw the Daniels return to the United Counties League where they became a power under the guidance of former Peterborough manager Norman Rigby. Another FA Cup run to the 4th Qualifying Round in 1973-1974 was followed by an excellent FA Vase campaign a year later, Stamford reaching the semi-finals of the new tournament. After several near misses Stamford won the UCL league & cup double in 1976, also going one better in the Vase, losing 1-0 to Billericay in extra time at Wembley. Malcolm Hird – later voted Stamford's Player of the Century by supporters and goal ace Dick Smith, the club's highest postwar marksman, were stars of this side. Stamford continued to dominate the UCL under Rigby winning a further title in 1978, their first Lincs Senior Cup 'A' success the following season was the highlight of a disappointing campaign under Ray Medwell, but the appointment of ex-skipper Hird as boss in the summer of 1979 proved a masterstroke.

Three seasons under the management of the Casterton schoolmaster saw the Daniels complete a hat-trick of UCL championships, Knockout Cup successes in 1980 & 1982 & best of all a Wembley return in 1980, goals from Keith Alexander & Andy McGowan giving Stamford a 2-0 win over Guisborough.

Under Chris Corby's management Stamford enjoyed Lincs Senior Cup 'A' success in 1982-1983 and a third Wembley visit in 1984, losing 3-2 to Stansted in the



Vase final, while Paul Brackwell steered the Daniels to Knockout Cup success in 1986. By now the club's golden age was at an end although the club continued to produce good players with Keith Alexander & Andy Tillson (both Grimsby), Darren Edey (Peterborough) & Brett McNamara (Northampton) all graduating to the pro ranks.

The appointment of Steve Evans as manager in 1994 started Stamford's revival. His policy of signing high profile players brought ex-Posh favourites Trevor Quow, Steve Collins, Milton Graham and Micky Gynn to the club, along with Scottish international David Speedie and ex-Olympic decathlon champion Daley Thompson. The club's centenary season saw Stamford win the UCL for a seventh time after a spectacular late burst through the pack, while 1997-1998 was even better as Stamford retained the title, also carrying off the Lincs Senior Cup 'A' & Hinchingsbrooke Cup.

Promotion to the Southern League was the outcome and the club's debut campaign in the Midland Division proved hugely eventful. After steering Stamford to Benevolent Cup success and a place in the Lincolnshire Senior Cup final manager Evans moved to Boston United with Billy Jeffrey arriving from Rushden & Diamonds to take the reins. The new manager rebuilt with younger players and a final placing of 18th in the Midland Division. League reshuffling saw Stamford placed in the Eastern Division for 1999-2000 and an 11-match unbeaten start – the club's best ever – proved invaluable as Stamford accumulated a record 18 draws over the season, eventually finishing 17th in the table.

Seventh place in the 2003-2004 season was enough to earn the Daniels a Premier Division place for the first time in their history. Unfortunately, too many draws proved costly as Stamford were relegated. In July 2005, new manager Graham Drury arrived from Harrowby, and his new look side regained the club's Premier Division place at the first attempt. After finishing fourth in Division One East the Daniels defeated Wivenhoe to progress through the playoffs. Stamford fared much better on their return to the Premier Division & briefly topped the table in January.

In 2006-2007 the season ended with silverware on display as the Daniels claimed their fifth different county cup, beating Brigg to win the Senior Shield at Lincoln City's Sincil Bank Stadium.

In the summer of 2007, the club was transferred to the Northern League Premier Division after nine years playing in the Southern League but suffered instant relegation to Division One South after losing manager Graham Drury.

Graham Drury returned to take over as manager within a couple of weeks of the 2011-2012 season ending. Graham departed for Boston United in December 2012. He was replaced by Wayne Hatswell in January 2013, which culminated in the club gaining promotion via the play-offs defeating Chasetown in the final. We then had another managerial change with Hatswell leaving for a coaching role at league 2

Newport County. His deputy David Staff was promoted for his first managerial position for the 2013-2014 campaign. The season culminated in winning the Lincolnshire Senior Trophy in the final against Brigg Town.

The 2014-15 season was started at our Wothorpe Road ground, and we played out last game there on the 22nd November before moving to our new home at the Zeeco stadium.

On 13 December 2014 we started a new chapter of the club's life with our first game at the Zeeco Stadium. Unfortunately, it took us longer than expected to get that first home league win - it came down to the last game of the season against Witton Albion when the win was the only way to say in the Premier Division.

The 2015-2016 season was the first full season at the Borderville Sports Complex.

This was a turbulent season which saw David Staff replaced by Andrew Wilson whose tenure only lasted 10 games and saw him being replaced by Graham Drury for his third stint with the club. Despite an upturn in form, it was not enough to stop the Daniels being relegated.

In 2016, club history was made when Stamford made the first-round proper of the FA Cup by beating Wrexham in a replay at the Racecourse ground. They were drawn against Hartlepool United in the first round, eventually losing 3-0.

The 2017/18 season saw the Daniels finish sixth in the league and saw them reach the play-off final losing 2-1 in extra time to Bedworth United.

2018/19 season was disappointing for the Daniels, an early exit from the FA cup was offset with getting through three rounds of the FA trophy. In the league, the playoffs were never really threatened, and Stamford finished in mid table.

2019/20 season promised to be one of the best in recent years with the club only losing 3 games in the league before the season was abruptly stopped due to Covid-19.

The highlight of a very short 2020/21 season was reaching the last 32 of the FA Trophy, eventually bowing out to finalists Hereford.

In 2021/22 the Daniels finished runners up in the league but fell to Belper Town in the playoff semi-final. In the cup competitions we reached the 4th qualifying round of the FA cup going out to National league outfit Stockport Country in front of 3002 at Edgerley Park.

The 2022-23 claimed the NPL Midland division title by 9 points. This represented the first title win for the club in 25 years and will see the Daniels back at step 3 for the first time since 2016 as they compete in the Southern league premier division central.

SELECTED

# PEN PICS



## **DANIEL WALLIS GK**

First joined Stamford in the Summer of 2021 before moving on to Matlock Town and Macclesfield. Returned to the Daniels in the Summer of 2022. Started at Derby County as a youngster before moving on to Sheffield Wednesday. Had a short spell in Norway playing for Valdres FK. Upon returning to the UK played for Matlock Town & Gainsborough Trinity.

## **CONNOR BARTLE DEF**

Joined the Daniels in the Summer 2020 from Grantham Town. Connor was part of the Basford United squad that won the league title in 2018. He started his career at Notts County before moving to Basford. He then went onto play for Carlton Town & Grantham.

## **ASHTON OFFLER DEF**

Signed for Stamford in the Summer of 2023 from Grantham Town. Ashton began his career at Matlock Town before signing for Sheffield United. He had a loan spell at Guiseley before returning to Matlock following his release from the Blades. Has also played for Sheffield FC.

## **ROB MORGAN @ MID**

Former St Andrews player who joined the Daniels in 2017. Has previously won both the Supporters Player of the Year award and the award for most Man of the Matches. Left briefly in 2018 to play for Barwell before returning in January 2019. Made captain in 2023.

## **HARRY VINCE MID**

Midfielder joined the Daniels in summer 2019 having previously played for Wisbech, Grantham, Pinchbeck, Matlock and Boston United, where he came through the youth ranks. He made his first team debut for the Pilgrims aged 17 and has also represented the England C side. Now club vice-captain.

## **LEE SHAW MID**

Lee joined the club this summer from Grantham Town. Lee started at Corby Town before moving to Harrowby United. He then moved to Grantham Town where he scored over 50 goals in two seasons and earned a move to Chesterfield. He then spent time on loan at Guiseley. He then moved to Alfreton before a return to Grantham.

## **OLLIE BROWN-HILL FOR**

Re-joined the Daniels in October on loan from Ilkeston. Originally joined the club during the 2016-17 season where he scored 6 goals in 24 games. Came back to the club in January 2018. Left in 2020 to join Ilkeston. He has also played for Oadby, Corby, AFC Rushden & Diamonds and Barwell as well as representing England at under 18 and 19 level.

## **JACK DUFFY FOR**

Joined the Daniels in the Summer of 2020 from Quorn where he scored 14 goals in 16 games. He has also played for Long Eaton and Nottingham Trent University as well as the English National Universities side.



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**MATCH REPORT: NEEDHAM MARKET 0-2 MICKLEOVER**

# ***WE GOT A WIN... BUT THE FIGHT GOES ON***

**BY PETER SCHERER (IMAGES: STEVE INGERS)**



Mickleover came away from newly crowned Champions Needham Market with heads held high, after a 2-0 win. Regardless of the pending points penalty deduction, if Sports win at home on Saturday, they will be assured of a play-off place.

Starting line-up: 1-Yusuf Mersin 2-Jake Bennett 3-Ryan Wilson 4-Dan Bradley 5-Will Tamen 6-Ethan Mann 7-Ben Sault 8-Will Atkinson 9-Tyrell Waite 10-Will Trueman 11-Oli Greaves. Subs: Stuart Beavon, Ethan Fitzhugh, Rhys Dolan, Andy Dales.

After a fairly even start it was Mickleover that snatched the initiative, when Sault opened the scoring with a 13th minute chip over keeper Garnham, as he charged off his goal line to try and intercept, 1-0.

After Needham had penalty appeals waved away a minute later, Ingram went close from a McGrath cross for our hosts after 21 minutes.

Needham were pushing for an equaliser, but Bennett, Tamen, Mann and Wilson

were looking a solid back four, but after 29 minutes Mersin punched away a header by Mills, following corner.

There were more chances as McGrath had a shot blocked, before Mills fired the rebound over the bar, but it was still Mickleover ahead as the half time whistle blew.

Needham continued to push forward as the second half got underway, but a number of attempts on goal followed, but few on target.

Mickleover made their first change when Dales came on for Atkinson after 69 minutes, but two minutes later there was a penalty award in Sports favour and Greaves stepped up, sent the keeper the wrong way, and it was 2-0.

Beavon came on for Waite after 75 minutes, before Mersin made another save to keep his clean sheet.

Sault, Trueman and Greaves had run themselves ragged to earn the valuable three points, with Bradley the stability in defensive midfield, but the Champions were forced to surrender.

Dolan was a late sub for Bennett, but it was a well deserved 2-0 win and now we look forward to the visit of Stamford at the Don Amott Arena on Saturday.



THE SPORTS

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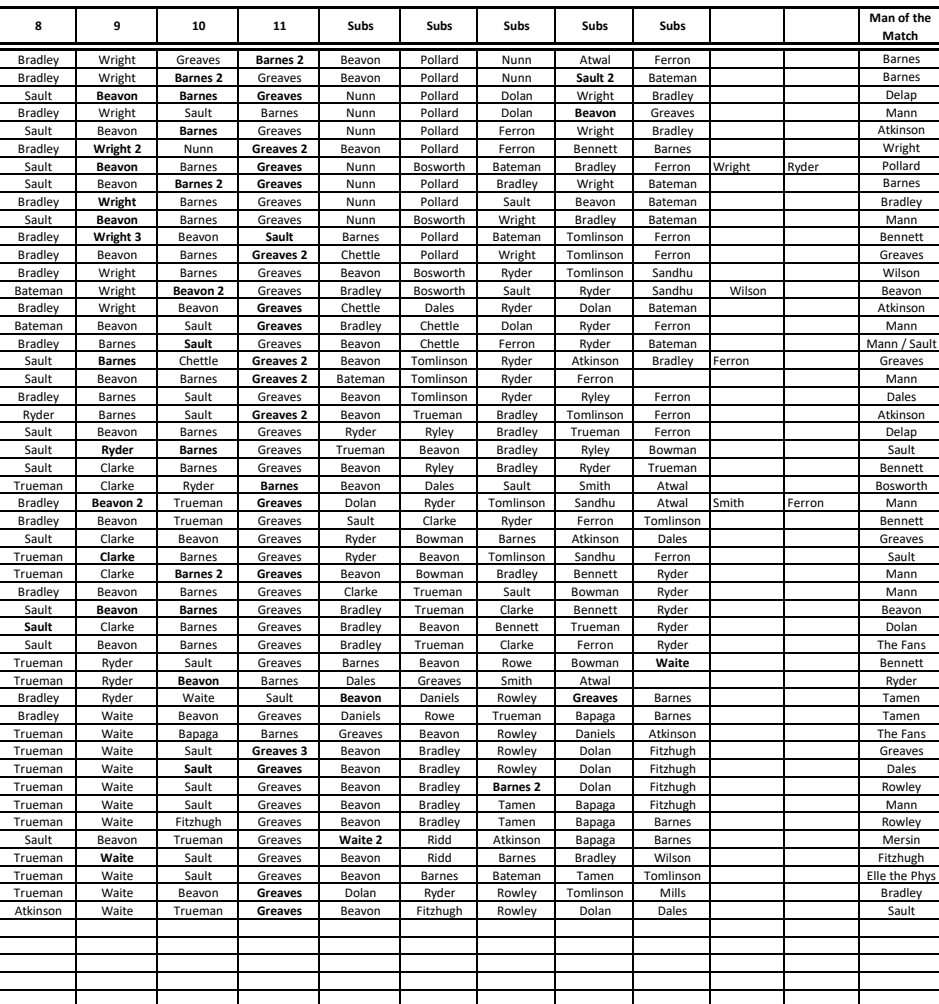
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**2023-24**

[illegible]

|           | League | Cups | Total |
|-----------|--------|------|-------|
| Greaves   | 20     | 3    | 23    |
| Barnes    | 14     | 3    | 17    |
| Beavon    | 4      | 7    | 11    |
| Dales     | 6      | 4    | 10    |
| Sault     | 7      | 0    | 7     |
| Wright    | 6      | 0    | 6     |
| Mann      | 6      | 0    | 6     |
| Waite     | 4      | 0    | 4     |
| Atkinson  | 2      | 0    | 2     |
| Bennett   | 2      | 0    | 2     |
| Wilson    | 1      | 0    | 1     |
| Ryder     | 1      | 0    | 1     |
| Clarke    | 1      | 0    | 1     |
| Fitzhugh  | 1      | 0    | 1     |
| Tomlinson | 0      | 1    | 1     |
| Delap     | 0      | 1    | 1     |
| Bowman    | 0      | 1    | 1     |
|           |        |      |       |



|    | Club                | P  | W  | D  | L  | F  | A   | GD  | -Pts | Pts |
|----|---------------------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| 1  | Needham Market      | 39 | 26 | 7  | 6  | 74 | 31  | 43  | -    | 85  |
| 2  | AFC Telford United  | 39 | 23 | 10 | 6  | 65 | 33  | 32  | -    | 79  |
| 3  | Mickleover          | 39 | 24 | 6  | 9  | 74 | 43  | 31  | -    | 78  |
| 4  | Leamington          | 39 | 18 | 14 | 7  | 59 | 32  | 27  | -    | 68  |
| 5  | Redditch United     | 39 | 20 | 7  | 12 | 62 | 52  | 10  | -    | 67  |
| 6  | Stamford            | 39 | 19 | 9  | 11 | 80 | 55  | 25  | -    | 66  |
| 7  | Stratford Town      | 39 | 20 | 6  | 13 | 66 | 55  | 11  | -    | 66  |
| 8  | Halesowen Town      | 39 | 17 | 8  | 14 | 53 | 50  | 3   | -    | 59  |
| 9  | Royston Town        | 39 | 17 | 6  | 16 | 61 | 58  | 3   | -    | 57  |
| 10 | St Ives Town        | 39 | 17 | 4  | 18 | 84 | 70  | 14  | -    | 55  |
| 11 | Coalville Town      | 39 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 67 | 53  | 14  | -    | 55  |
| 12 | Leiston             | 39 | 14 | 10 | 15 | 55 | 69  | -14 | -    | 52  |
| 13 | Stourbridge         | 39 | 14 | 9  | 16 | 52 | 50  | 2   | -    | 51  |
| 14 | Barwell             | 39 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 63 | 65  | -2  | -    | 48  |
| 15 | Kettering Town      | 40 | 13 | 9  | 18 | 49 | 74  | -25 | -    | 48  |
| 16 | Alvechurch          | 39 | 12 | 9  | 18 | 47 | 67  | -20 | -    | 45  |
| 17 | Bromsgrove Sporting | 39 | 12 | 8  | 19 | 44 | 50  | -6  | -    | 44  |
| 18 | AFC Sudbury         | 39 | 10 | 10 | 19 | 53 | 60  | -7  | -    | 40  |
| 19 | Hitchin Town        | 39 | 11 | 5  | 23 | 46 | 64  | -18 | -    | 38  |
| 20 | Berkhamsted         | 39 | 3  | 12 | 24 | 31 | 83  | -52 | -    | 21  |
| 21 | Long Eaton United   | 39 | 4  | 7  | 28 | 37 | 108 | -71 | -    | 19  |
| 22 | Nuneaton Borough    | 0  | -  | -  | -  | 0  | 0   | 0   | -    | 0   |



## Friday 29th March 2024

AFC Telford United 3 0 Redditch United  
Hitchin Town 0 2 Needham Market

## Saturday 30th March 2024

AFC Sudbury 2 4 St Ives Town  
**Alvechurch 1 2 Mickleover**  
Coalville Town 1 0 Bromsgrove Sporting  
Kettering Town 2 1 Barwell  
Leamington 1 0 Halesowen Town  
Leiston 3 1 Berkhamsted  
Stamford 1 2 Royston Town  
Stourbridge 0 1 Stratford Town

## Monday 1st April 2024

Barwell 3 0 Long Eaton United  
Berkhamsted 1 2 Hitchin Town  
Bromsgrove Sporting 1 2 AFC Telford United  
Halesowen Town 1 0 Alvechurch  
**Mickleover 1 0 Coalville Town**  
Needham Market 3 0 AFC Sudbury  
Redditch United 0 1 Stourbridge  
Royston Town 4 2 Leiston  
St Ives Town 1 4 Stamford  
Stratford Town 2 0 Kettering Town

## Saturday 6th April 2024

AFC Sudbury 2 1 Coalville Town  
AFC Telford United 1 0 Leamington  
Alvechurch 1 0 Bromsgrove Sporting  
Barwell 3 4 St Ives Town  
Kettering Town 1 1 Berkhamsted  
Leiston 2 0 Hitchin Town  
Needham Market 3 1 Royston Town  
Stamford 2 0 Long Eaton United  
**Stourbridge 3 1 Mickleover**  
Stratford Town 0 1 Redditch United

## Tuesday 9th April 2024

Kettering Town 2 2 Leiston  
Needham Market 0 3 Stamford  
Stourbridge 1 1 Leamington

## Saturday 13th April 2024

Berkhamsted 2 1 Barwell  
Bromsgrove Sporting 0 2 AFC Sudbury  
Coalville Town 2 1 Alvechurch  
Hitchin Town 0 1 Halesowen Town  
Leamington 3 0 Stamford  
Long Eaton United 0 3 AFC Telford United  
**Mickleover 1 1 Stratford Town**  
Redditch United 5 0 Leiston  
Royston Town 4 0 Kettering Town  
St Ives Town 4 1 Stourbridge

## Tuesday 16th April 2024

Coalville Town 0 0 Stourbridge  
Kettering Town 1 2 Stamford

## Saturday 20th April 2024

AFC Sudbury 7 1 Long Eaton United  
AFC Telford United 6 2 Berkhamsted  
Barwell 3 3 Redditch United  
Halesowen Town 4 3 St Ives Town  
Kettering Town 1 0 Coalville Town  
Leiston 1 1 Leamington  
**Needham Market 0 2 Mickleover**  
Stamford 2 0 Hitchin Town  
Stourbridge 1 0 Royston Town  
Stratford Town 1 2 Bromsgrove Sporting

## Saturday 27th April 2024

Berkhamsted v Halesowen Town  
Bromsgrove Sporting v Barwell  
Coalville Town v AFC Telford United  
Hitchin Town v Stourbridge  
Leamington v AFC Sudbury  
Long Eaton United v Leiston  
**Mickleover v Stamford**  
Redditch United v Needham Market  
Royston Town v Stratford Town  
St Ives Town v Alvechurch

THE SPORTS

# PLAYER PROFILES



## **OLIVER BOSWORTH GOALKEEPER** June 14th 2002

A former England Under 18 goalkeeper, Oliver had been playing for Leicester City Under 18 and 21's until his release in July 2021. More recently he was in Spain at the beginning of last season with CD Almunecar and was on trial with Mickleover, prior to making his first-team against Long Eaton Utd in the Derbyshire Senior Cup. His patience was rewarded in the latter part of last season, when he became a regular first choice after Jonathan Hedge was injured.

## **YUSUF MERSIN GOALKEEPER** September 23rd 1994

Starting his career at Millwall, Yusuf was signed by Liverpool for £1m in January 2011 as a 16 year old. He progressed to be part of the first team squad, but didn't manage to break into the starting line-up. After 3 1/2 years he was released and went to Turkey to play for Kasimpasa, before returning to the UK at the start of 2016/17 with League Two Crawley Town, where he spent the next three years. He then joined Dover Athletic in the National League, before moving to Maidstone Utd in May 2021, becoming first choice after the regular keeper was sent off. After a two-week emergency loan at Welling Utd he was released from Maidstone after a 2 1/2 year spell and began this season with Harland & Wolf Welders in Northern Ireland. He is a Turkish International at Under 16, 17 and 18 levels and debuted in a Mickleover shirt for the Reserves against Linby Colliery.

## **DAN BRADLEY DEFENDER** May 13th 1991

An experienced midfielder, Dan was initially a junior at Aston Villa, before joining Tamworth in 2012.

Kidderminster, Alfreton, Barnet, Fylde were his next stops, including return spells to a number of his former clubs. He started last year with Nuneaton, but soon moved on to join Ilkeston, spending almost a year with the Robins, before signing for Matlock for the second half of last season. He is a former England C International too and team mate to gaffer John McGrath.

**ETHAN MANN DEFENDER January 1st 2004**

Ethan joined the Derby County Academy at the age of seven and continued to play for the Rams for seven years up to the under 14's. Having started out as a striker, he gradually moved back to midfield and now centre back having joined the Mickleover Under 14's, following in his Father's footsteps. A product of our own Academy the talented teenager made his first team debut at the age of 18 playing a part in the last five games of the 2021/22 season. During last pre-season he started at centre and wing back and had looked equally at home in both positions, earning himself a regular place in the starting line-up. The 19-year-old centre back who has been equally effective playing at full-back or holding midfield, is an important signing for the club and an integral part of John McGrath's plans for the season. Last season's Supporter's Player of the Year and Manager's Academy Player of the Year, 'Manny' is looking forward to building on last seasons 35 starts helping the team go one further in their push for promotion, As vice captain too.

**JAKE BENNETT DEFENDER February 22nd 1996**

Like so many others, Jake started playing for his hometown club Telford AFC as a 15 year old, making two first team starts before going out on loan to Market Drayton. He was initially spotted by Mickleover management during a friendly match against Market Drayton, and with Sports then pushing for promotion back to the Premier Division of the NPL. He was made an offer which he readily accepted to become a Sports player in December 2014. After being part of the squad for his first half season, he became a first choice defender over his two year stay and began to receive offers of trials from League Clubs. He joined Sheffield Utd in 2016 and making his first team debut in the EFL Cup in 2017, plus other first appearances in some friendly matches. He was then due to go on loan to Chesterfield, but played against them in a friendly and collected a cruciate ligament injury, putting him out of action for 10 months. A further thigh injury on his comeback meant he never got to play for Chesterfield, and following his release by Sheffield Utd in October 2019, he had a brief at Alfreton Town, before joining Coalville Town in December 2019 in the Southern League Premier Division Central. He opted to return to Mickleover during the summer, of 2020 as he was still looking to rebuild his career and looked back fondly at his previous two years with the club. "My lasting memory was winning the title here, the first medal I had ever won in football." Initially first choice right back, before another serious knee and then a thigh injury put him of out action for most of the last two seasons, but he came back strongly at the end of last season and is fighting fit to keep his place in the starting line-up.

**JOE BATEMAN DEFENDER December 6th 1998**

Now into his third season at the club, Joe continues to impress as a solid and dependable defensive midfielder, having moved from his familiar role of centre back. He also managed to score a couple of goals. A former Derby County player, he has come through the under 18 and under 23 ranks before being released at the end of last season. He made one start for the Rams first team in the FA Cup tie at Chorley. Injuries and suspension have restricted some of his participation again, but now fully fit again "Bomber" will be a kingpin of the side this season.

#### **RHYS DOLAN DEFENDER February 20th 1998**

A former Barnsley full back Dolan can play either attacking midfield or left back. He made his name as part of the successful Ilkeston Town Under 18 squad, that had a run in the FA Youth Cup. Barnsley spotted his talent and signed him in 2015, but since his release he has played at Long Eaton, Selston, Newark, Belper Town and Alfreton and Anstey Nomads. His first Mickleover appearance was as a second half sub in the home draw against Grantham in December 2021, before becoming a regular in the starting line-up. His pace and reliability have impressed, along with the five goals he scored last season.

#### **RYAN WILSON DEFENDER March 4th 1993**

Son of former Rams player Kevin, Ryan is a left back or midfielder who started at Ilkeston Town. Having moved onto Gateshead for a year, he then returned to the Midlands for a two-year spell at Alfreton Town. After moving onto Coalville for another season, he had a short spell at Matlock before joining Telford in September 2017. He then had a year out before signing for Basford, from where Mickleover brought him in for the start of last season. He scored six goals last season too and is one of the clubs free kick experts. Ryan will also be the club captain for 23/24.

#### **BRANDON FERRON DEFENDER**

Another product of the Mickleover Academy, Brandon is a pacy left back who had a couple of first team outings as a sub in last seasons pre-season build up. After some solid and dependable performances in the reserve and youth team games, scoring a number of goals too he was on the bench a couple times at the of the season, and again for our season opening win at St. Ives.

#### **LEWIS CUNNINGHAM DEFENDER September 13th 2002**

Lewis is a defender that started his career as a Manchester City youth player, before spending six years at Barnsley. He then had a scholarship at Doncaster Rovers, before moving to York City and finally Birmingham City in October 2022.

#### **WILL TAMEN DEFENDER May 12th 2006**

Will is a highly rated young centre back and has been captain of the Burton Albion Youth Development squad for the past season. He signed professional last September and made his league debut against Peterborough Utd. He also came on as a sub in the EFL Cup games against Everton Under 21's and Blackpool. He is on loan until the end of the season from the Brewers and this is his first spell away from the Pirelli Stadium.

#### **KYLE ROWLEY DEFENDER September 4th 1996**

Kyle is an experienced centre back, who has joined us from Barwell. He is a former Walsall Junior and went on loan to Sutton Coldfield, before joining Rugby Town on his release in 2016. He then moved on to Alvechurch for a year, before a short stay at Walsall Wood, preceded another year long stay at Hednesford. He was at Stourbridge for seven months before starting last season at Barwell.

#### **ANDY DALES MIDFIELDER November 13th 1994**

It was more of a return home for Andy since rejoining Mickleover just before the start of the 21/22. Derby born he spent 10 years at Derby County and was a first year pro in 2013. He was released in 2014 and was unable to take up offers of trials due to injury, which brought him to Mickleover for the first time. The pacey winger had four years at the Don Amott Arena and was part of the team that won promotion back to the NPL Premier Division, his first senior medal. In 2017/18 he scored 23 goals and was signed by Scunthorpe United after being spotted at the Jamie Vardy Academy. During his three years there he made 33 appearances and scored one goal, but also had long loan spells in the Scottish Premiership with Dundee and Hamilton Academicals. After a short spell at Altrincham, he was released and returned to Mickleover, hitting two goals on his home debut against Gainsborough. As well as being last seasons top scorer, he's a valuable member of the Academy coaching staff.

#### **BEN SAULT MIDFIELDER September 26th 2002**

A central midfielder, Ben arrived pre-season from Kettering Town. He started out as Lincoln City Junior, joining Oadby Town on his release in 2021. After six months he was snapped up by Boston Utd, but spent the whole of last season at Kettering.

#### **OLIVER GREAVES MIDFIELDER November 2nd 1999**

An skilful midfielder Oliver arrived a few months into last season from NPL side Liversedge. He started out at Sheffield Utd and after a loan at Barrow, moved to Dover Athletic in January 2021. He quickly moved on to Matlock and Gainsborough, before going to Spain in January 2022 with Almunecar. On his return to the UK he joined Buxton for the start of last season, but soon moved on to Liversedge. He made his debut in the win at Barwell last October and scored seven goals from his attacking midfield role.

#### **WILL ATKINSON MIDFIELDER October 14th 1988**

A former Hull City Junior, Atkinson has played in every division of the football league during his career, notably in the Premiership during his time with the Tigers. A central midfielder, he had numerous loans during his time at Hull, starting with Port Vale. Over the next five years he had spells at Mansfield, Rochdale, Rotherham, Plymouth Argyle and Bradford City, before a permanent to move to the latter for the 2012/13 season. A year later he moved to Southend, spending four years on the South Coast, before heading North again to Mansfield. His next stop was a return to Port Vale, before a short spell at Alfreton, preceded a return to Southend for one more season. He spent last season with Boston Utd and has made over 300 league appearances, 255 in League Two and scored 30 goals and can play at wing back too. He was part of the Bantams team that were League Cup runner-up and made the League Two play-offs with both Bradford City and Southend.

#### **WILL TRUEMAN MIDFIELDER October 14th 2002**

As a Sheffield Wednesday midfielder Will came to Mickleover initially on a months loan. The 20 year old scored on his first-team debut for the Owls against Leicester City Under 21's in the Papa John's Trophy and also found the net in a pre-season first-team friendly against Huddersfield Town. In 21/22 he was also awarded League Football Apprentice of the Year. He soon became a Mickleover favourite with his pace and 100% effort, seeing out the rest of the season at the Don Amott Arena, before making his stay permanent for this term.

#### **ZACH SANDHU MIDFIELDER**

A member of our youth team, Zac is learning his skills through the Mickleover Academy and is a regular in the reserve side. He has gained first team experience through this years pre-season friendlies and is looking forward to his first season in the squad. A midfielder or defender, Zac also played as striker in the Youth Cup last year, scoring a hattrick.

**MATTY BOWMAN MIDFIELDER November 26th 2000**

Matty's is either a right midfielder or right back. He was initially picked up by Middlesborough from Scalby Juniors, before moving onto Hull City. He then had a spell at Scarborough Athletic, before moving to Scotland with Dunfermline Athletic. After a brief loan spell at Pickering Town, he left Scotland in 2021, attending Loughborough University and continued to play there until his pre-season move to Basford. He has also played for the England Independent Schools team during his time at Repton School and made his Sports debut playing at right back in the visit to Kettering.

**WILL BAPAGA MIDFIELDER November 3rd 2002**

Will is a winger or attacking midfielder, that came through Coventry City's junior ranks, and made his first team debut in 2019 as a substitute against Bolton Wanderers. He went on to make two more first team appearances for the Sky Blues and was also loaned to Grimsby Town, making 10 appearances and scoring three goals, before being released last summer. He started this season on trial with Huddersfield and scored in a pre-season friendly. But in November he joined National League North Buxton and made five appearances, before coming to the Don Amott Arena.

**ANDRE WRIGHT FORWARD December 7th 1996**

A well-travelled and experienced striker, Andre was another pre-season signing from Stratford. Having started his career at West Bromwich Albion, he was loaned to Kidderminster, Torquay and Coventry, before returning to Kidderminster on his release. He quickly moved on to Nuneaton, Torquay again, Gloucester and Halesowen, before moving to Ireland, for a 18 month spells at Bohemians. As well experiencing the League of Ireland Premiership, he also played in the Europa League, before moving back across the Irish Sea to Ayr Utd. He was back in Ireland again in August 2021 with Sligo Rovers, but having returned to England in March last year, he was at Telford, Kettering and finally Stratford from October. He scored his first goal for the club in the pre-season game at Ilkeston.

**FINN RYDER FORWARD**

Another product of our own Academy, Fin is a promising striker and was captain of our Youth Cup team last season. He has gained valuable experience as part of the reserve side, again as captain on occasions and was on the bench for a number of late season games last term.

**MARCUS BARNES FORWARD December 1st 1996**

A 6ft striker, Marcus is a product of Southampton's youth scheme. He joined the Saints in 2013 and signed his first pro contract with them in 2013. He was loaned to Yeovil Town where he appeared nine times and scored one goal in League Two, but after a further loan at Eastleigh he was released in July 2020, having made one senior appearance in the FA Cup against Derby County at Pride Park. He was then signed by Oldham, where he spent five

months in League Two, making seven appearances, before a three month spell in the US at the end of last season, with North Colorado based Hailstorm FC in the USL League One. He scored two goals on his Mickleover debut in the pre-season friendly at Borrowash and is the younger brother of ex Rams midfielder Giles.

#### **STUART BEAVON FORWARD May 5th 1984**

Stuart Beavon is one of Mickleover's most experienced players, following in the footsteps of his Father Stuart and Grandfather Cyril. His career started for in the Hellenic League with Ardley United, before swiftly moving on to Combined Counties side Wallingford. He scored 13 goals in 36 games between those clubs, before being snapped up by Didcot Town. Despite stepping up to the Southern League South & West Division, he quickly found his goalscoring touch and had two seasons with the club. He played 139 games and scored an amazing 107 goals and was a winner in the 2004/5 FA Vase too. His next step was to the Conference with Weymouth, spending three seasons on the South Coast, and adding 27 more goals to his tally from 90 appearances. For 2008/09 he had his first spell in the Football League with League 2 Wycombe Wanderers. He scored on his debut and his initial loan became permanent. He was a prolific scorer again but the team were promoted and relegated twice during his stay. After 125 games and 34 goals he moved to Preston North End in League 1 again. There was debut goal again and having settled at Deepdale he stayed for two years, before an initial loan at Burton Albion became permanent for the 2014/15 season. He gained promotion again with the Brewers to League 1, but part way into his third season he left in January 2017 with 15 goals and 102 games under his belt, destined for Coventry City. A strange end of season saw the Sky Blues win the EFL Trophy, but were also relegated to League 2. Although he was a Coventry player for the next two seasons, his final one was spent on a years loan at Wrexham. Early into the 2019/20 season he joined Nuneaton, but it was when he began his current connection at Mickleover that he regained his scoring touch, with a goal scoring debut at Atherton Collieries in September and scoring 10 before the season was curtailed. He continues to be a regular scorer and hit the net on 10 occasions in 20/21, including a hatrick in the 4-1 home win against Radcliffe, and was on the scoresheet 12 times last season too.

#### **SAM TOMLINSON FORWARD**

A new arrival at the Mickleover Academy this season, Sam was previously at Burton Albion. A talented striker, and one for the future, he has hit hatricks in both the Reserves and Youth Cup teams, which earned him his place in the first team squad. He has made a few second half substitute appearances, but is yet to make his first start.



# ***WEAKENED RESERVES LOSE OUT IN SECOND HALF***



Despite a fairly strong start, Mickleover Reserves went down 0-3 to Derby Singh Brothers last night, having seen out the game with 10 men.

Starting line-up: 1-Seth Bass 2-Mason Hoult 3-Brandon Ferron 4-Toby Smith 5-Jared Cholerton 6-Zak Sandhu 7-Sam Tomlinson 8-Harry Atwal 9-Fin Ryder 10-Josh Powell 11-Mason Tudgay. Subs: Dean Ironmonger.

Mickleover could have taken an early lead, when after two minutes Tomlinson sent Powell down the right, before Ryder latched onto the cross and hit the post.

But as the ball was cleared, a Singh Brothers striker picked up a quick break, but his shot was saved by debutant keeper Bass's feet.

Only three minutes later the hosts fired in another shot, well saved by Bass, before the rebound effort sailed high over the bar.

For a while it was end to end, as Tudgay cut in from the left after seven minutes, shooting just wide. Powell then picked up a poor clearance from the home defence, but his shot went wide after being deflected for a corner.

But Singh's had a shot cleared off the line 10 minutes in, earning them a corner which came to nought. Atwal then tried a distance shot, which was saved, before Cholerton cut off another break by the home side.

Both Cholerton and Sandhu were in control at the back for Mickleover, as Hoult

attacked down the right, and both Powell and Tudgay worked hard attacking from midfield, with Smith and Atwal supporting well.

Smith went into attack mode after 37 minutes, but his final effort was just over and then another Hoult run down the right three minutes later, saw him ride a couple of tackles, before finding Tomlinson in the middle, but the shot was just over again.

Half time was beckoning and it was still level pegging, but with a minute left Tomlinson set up Smith on the right, the keeper fumbled the following shot and Ryder moved in for the loose ball, only to be thwarted by the recovering keeper.

Then with the whistle poised Singh Bros made a break, caught the defence napping and fired the ball into the far corner, well out of Bass's reach, 0-1.

Three minutes into the second half Ryder had a shot tipped around the post, before Tomlinson broke but fired over 55 minutes in.

There could have been another break for Ryder just past the hour mark, but he was hauled by a defender as he crossed the half-way line.

But Tudgay was limping and had to be replaced by Ironmonger after 65 minutes.

Sports were still pushing forward and a great run by Hoult again on the right, sent in a telling cross, but just too close to the keeper, who collected with ease.

Tomlinson led another surge after 72 minutes, he managed to shoot just past the left-hand post, but went down injured, clutching his hamstring.

For the rest of the game we were down to 10 men, with no other subs on the bench. The strong defence suddenly looked vulnerable and the pace from midfield was floundering too.

74 minutes and Singh Bros hit their second from outside the box, 0-2. Bass was suddenly busier too and had to make a couple of saves.

Smith continued to work hard and his right wing cross, just missed connecting with Ryder. Atwal then had a 78th minute free kick tipped away by the keeper.

After an 80th minute header the hosts had another header just wide, before scoring number three four minutes later. Smith then had a 90th minute half chance, but a bobble just as he was about to hit a first-time effort ended any hope of a consolation goal.

The Mickleover youngsters looked jaded in the second half and the lack of a second sub sealed the 0-3 defeat, but the score itself probably flattered our hosts.

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THERE'S nothing quite like the FA Cup to spark debate among football fans.

Whether it's kick-off time on FA Cup final day – incidentally this year's is 3pm – or clamours for a return to semi-finals away from Wembley, the world's oldest competition always stirs debate.

You will have no doubt seen the furore around the news replays will be scrapped from the first round proper onwards next season.

A big trigger, apparently, is the expanding UEFA schedule going forward and there are promises of more funding for the grass-roots game.

A post on BBC Sport's X account suggested it would divide opinion – the reality was a large part of it fell on one side.

There probably isn't enough space in this programme column to go through all the 'he saids, she saids', and much more. But it has ignited passionate views from all corners of the game, to say the least.

What's your view? Are replays outdated or the very fabric of the great FA Cup?

For many in the lower leagues and Non-League, replays not only represent a chance to make extra money on top of a current cup run through gates and potential broadcast fees, they are also an opportunity to create memories.

Many clubs have come out and said exactly that over this past week.

Steve McKimm's Cray Valley PM held Charlton Athletic to a draw earlier this season and earned the right to welcome the League One club to their intimate Artic Stadium home in front of the live TV cameras.

"The money they're saying will be passed down is great – but money doesn't make memories," McKimm told us.

"We've had memories this season that will never be taken away from our staff, players and fans. And I only speak for our club – Horsham did the same.

"We both had away games to start with so we had the experience of playing at their grounds. Then we had the opportunity to bring good players, good teams, back to our home ground on live TV. That's gone now.

"But it's the memories that matter more than the money. For clubs that make money off it, such as us, it's great. It helps a club be sustainable and it helps it move on. But it also gives the club memories.

"Cray Valley have never had a League One side come and play a competitive game at our stadium. We've done that now."

As the Millers boss says, Horsham did the same in this year's competition – earning a replay after a thrilling 3-3 draw with Barnsley before a memorable home tie with the Tykes.

There are many other examples. Think back down the years to Burton Albion, then in the Conference, taking the mighty Manchester United to a second game. The tangible legacy is seen at the club today, but for fans and players the memories burn bright too.

Football, as a whole, should be sure it's happy giving moments like those up.



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