

The Back Page



Still Massive

RANKING FA CUP UPSETS

PREVIEW: YET ANOTHER TRIP TO TORQUAY

THE STEVE WATT COLUMN: DON'T SLATE PALACE.

GIVE MACCLESFIELD CREDIT ...

MUFC WOMEN HELD BY MARGATE

THE STONES QUIZ: TRANSFER SPECIAL

BRENTWOOD FRIENDLY

ANORAK CORNER

The Back Page is a new, independent news resource covering Maidstone United.

The team is a mixture of professional journalists, experienced amateurs and aspiring newcomers. We aim to offer previews, reports, features, rumours and more.

If you'd like to contribute, please contact the editor on info@back-page-media.co.uk

Editor: Fred Atkins

Web Partner: Paul Furst

Video partner: Walnut Media

Contributors: Alex del Valle, Jurgen Dahmer, Nhan Thien Nguyen, Joe Parkhouse, Tom Rogers, Sean Scurr, Nigel Seager, Darren Styles, Alan Thatcher, John Tully

Proof readers: Jurgen Dahmer, Richard Fryer, Sean Scurr, Alan Thatcher

Pictures: Helen Cooper & Steve Terrell

Contact: info@back-page-media.co.uk

Meet The Team



Image of the week 4

What happened to the Brentwood player in the background?

Brentwood battered 6

A rare Saturday friendly in mid-season boosts morale.

Gate stays shut 8

MUFC women are held by visitors from Planet Thanet.

Still massive 10

Ranking FA Cup upsets.

Watt's Occurring 18

Macclesfield, respect and a crowdfunder for Jack Evans.

The Stones Quiz 26

The window is open - how well do you know our transfer history?



22nd edition:

Friday January 16th 2026

Published by Back Page Media

To advertise with us email:

info@back-page-media.co.uk

Next edition:

Friday January 23rd 2026



We are here for ALL mortgage enquires.

From standard purchases including, first-time-buyers, debt consolidation, self-employed, complicated income, remortgages and capital raising.

To buy-to-let, let-to-buy, semi-commercial, commercial, development, bridging and business lending.

We will look at each case, work with you to find the most cost effective solution for your situation and help you on your journey.

If you need your situation to gain some Momentum, please contact us via the channels below.

Phone: 01732 806 333 Email: get@momentum.mortgage

Your home or property may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.
Momentum Mortgages is a trading name of Momentum Financial Services Ltd.
Momentum Financial Services Ltd (FCA 1011740) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.
Our registered address is: Lime Tree Work Shop, 11, Lime Tree Walk, Sevenoaks, England, TN13 1YH.
Momentum Financial Services Ltd is registered in England Wales, company number 11806827

Official Web Partner



At first glance it's just an image of the Prodigal Mo, breaking into the Brentwood penalty area. On closer inspection, one of the home players appears to have been hit "amidships".



An A1 workout by the A12



Harness with an injured Fleetwood. Or maybe a sore Brydon.



1-0. Tanga curls in the opener.



4-1. Gilbert picks his spot.

BRENTWOOD 1
Unknown
MAIDSTONE UNITED 5
Tanga 55, Court 62, Foran 81,
Gilbert 88, 90+3

By Peter Ian Staker

This was almost the perfect work-out for a side that looks like it's becoming a proper unit. There were goals for key players, minutes for those who hadn't been getting many and no reported injuries, bar a knock for Nathan Harness that George says isn't serious.

Brentwood, who included keeper Aiden Prall, signed on a month-long loan from Ramsgate, were coming off the back of a 4-1 beating by Cray, but they're still second in a strong Ryman Premier Division, behind only Folkestone, whose qualities were obvious back in September when they dumped us out of the FA Cup.

Given that we also lost to both Cray and Chatham in pre-season, and that last year's champions Horsham are above us in the play-off zone, Brentwood weren't to be taken lightly.

After a goalless first half, Jephte Tanga broke the deadlock six minutes into the second period, taking a pass from Mo Faal just inside the area and carving a yard of space with his first touch. Faal was pleading for a return pass, but he picked his spot, curling a high-class finish into the far corner with his left.

The second was equally impressive, Riley Court flicking one over the wall and leaving the questionably-placed keeper scrambling.

Brentwood made things interesting when they pulled one back after David Agbontohoma seemed to lose his footing, but Taylor Foran restored the two-goal cushion with a side-footed finish after a cross by Antony Papadopoulos found him in a surprising amount of space.

John Gilbert then provided a flourish with two late goals, ghosting past a defender in the penultimate minute of normal time to make it 4-1, then adding a fifth with a tidy finish after he'd been played in by George Fowler.

What it all means remains to be seen, but with Barry Hearn's money behind them there's every chance Brentwood will be in National South next season and if that means that Dartford aren't, it's an added bonus.



Just how tall do you have to be to beat Hamzad in the air? Taller than this ...



Gilbert scores the fifth on the stroke of full-time



Pearch's effort is thwarted by the Margate keeper Urban

Thwarted Stones can't open up the Gate

By John Tully

The Stones' return to league action saw them held to a draw by a very resilient and competitive Margate side who battled their way to a well deserved point.

The fluency and goal threat shown by the Stones up until the end of 2025 seems to have temporarily deserted them, although they had a lot of the ball in the first half and had several corners but a combination of good defending and brave keeping kept the score level.

Margate looked dangerous on the break and scored in the 37th minute when a cross from the right beat Stones keeper Cara Davies at the top left of her goal. A strong cross, which may have been wind assisted, deceived Cara.

The goal was against the general run of play, with the Stones hitting the post from a Georgia Pearch header and the keeper saving well from another attack in the first half.

MAIDSTONE UNITED 1
Manktelow 51
MARGATE 1
George 36

The Stones kept pushing but failed to convert a number of half-chances, while Margate defended well throughout and took a one-goal lead into the break.

A couple of half-time personnel changes, as well as a move to three central defenders, saw the Stones in the ascendancy, with the equaliser coming in the 51st minute.

A good pass by Annie White from the halfway line was controlled by Kylie Manktelow, who hit a trademark shot from 20 yards past the keeper into the net.

At 1-1 it looked like the Stones would go on to win, but Margate regained their composure and remained dangerous on the break with Cara doing particularly well to keep out one

shot following a quick break.

The Stones kept pushing and looked the more likely winners, but the closest they came was when a Manktelow corner on the left flew straight into the Margate goal and the referee quickly blew to disallow it for a push by Ellie Hinkley on the keeper. Any contact looked minimal, but the goal was ruled out.

The Stones continued to push and made more substitutions but another goal was not forthcoming. Margate remained competitive to the end with their defence earning many of the plaudits for great work and their keeper Suzie Urban the pick out player.

All in all it was a frustrating afternoon for the Stones women, who quickly need to regain the goalscoring touch and creativity that has dominated their season so far.

Sunday 18th sees Bromley Development visit the Gallagher in the Kent FA Women's Plate, for the third of a six-game run at home.



(Left) Platt on the attack (Right) Manktelow goes for goal



(Left) Boorman shoots (Right) The keeper smothers at Culpitt's feet



(Left) Etheridge on the attack (Right) Chaos in the Margate box

It's official: we're still visible from space



Yes, we'll take absolutely any excuse to show this again.

By Fred Atkins

Ranking FA Cup upsets isn't straightforward. The pyramid was only formed in 1979 so you can only estimate the relative strength of the non-league sides who beat top-flight opposition before then: Yeovil, who knocked out Sunderland in 1949; Worcester City, who beat Liverpool a decade later; and Wimbledon, who won 1-0 at Burnley in 1975 (with a side featuring future Maidstone players Dickie Guy and Glenn Aitken).

You could argue Macclesfield's achievement in beating Crystal Palace on Saturday has been undersold.

They were 14th in National North on Saturday and widely quoted as being 117 places lower than Palace, but this doesn't take into account the fact there are two leagues at this level; ergo there are 130 clubs between Macclesfield and Palace.

Yet the previous record was quoted as 108 between Chasetown and Port Vale in 2007. At the end of *that* season Chasetown finished seventh in the eighth-tier and Vale were relegated from the third.

They were separated by 25 lower-ranked teams in the Football League;; 24 more in the Conference; 22 each in Conference North and South; 22 each in the Southern and Isthmian Premier

Divisions (including ourselves); and 21 more in The Northern Premier. This is already a gap of 158.

As there were six leagues at that level, another 36 teams finished higher than Chasetown, who were seventh, making the difference more like 192...

With all this in mind, it probably is sensible to just use the FA's current methodology.

"Our previous 'shock' victories had come against Exeter, twice, Cambridge United and Gillingham but let's be honest here, when was beating Gillingham ever a surprise?"

Ranking Maidstone's upsets is even more complicated. The highlight of our 2003-04 season was a 2-1 win over Redbridge in the FA Cup. We finished fourth in the Kent League, they came bottom of the newly-formed Conference South.

There were 198 teams in the Isthmian, Northern and Southern Leagues between us at the end of the season and this doesn't even take into account the dozen or more other leagues at our level. Even if you remove the regionalisation, there was

TOP 10 AWAY FA CUP UPSETS

- 1) Ipswich Town 1 Maidstone United 2, 4th round, 2023-24. **98 places.**
- 2) Cheltenham Town 1 Alvechurch 2, 1st round, 2022-23. **96 places.**
- 3) Rochdale 2 FC United of Manchester 3, 1st round, 2010-11. **95 places.**
- 4) Colchester United 1 Marine 1 (Marine won 5-3 on penalties). 1st round, 2020-21. **89 places.**
- 5) Norwich City 0 Luton Town 1. 4th round, 2012-13. **85 places.**
- 6) Burnley 0 Lincoln City 1. 5th round, 2016-17. **81 places.**
- 7) Northampton Town 1 Kettering Town 2. 1st round, 2024-25. **79 places.**
- 8) Leyton Orient 1 Maldon & Tiptree 2. 1st round, 2019-20. **78 places.**
- 9) Birmingham City 1 Altrincham 2. **75 places.**
- 10) West Brom 2 Woking 4. 3rd round, 1990-91. **74 places.**

still a 90-team gap.

Full disclosure: At the time I wrote that in the *Kent Messenger* it was the biggest shock in the club's history. Statistically this may have been correct, but I'm happy to admit that in hindsight it looks like bollocks.

In mitigation, our previous "shock" victories had come against Exeter, twice, Cambridge United and Gillingham but these were all when we were in the top tier of non-league football and let's be honest here, when was beating Gillingham ever a surprise?

Another factor is home advantage: Ben Austen spent some of Sunday calculating the biggest upsets by away teams, with the help of the FA Cup Factfile account and his top 10 threw up some further complications.

These are estimates. I'd argue that Altrincham winning at Birmingham in 1985 and Woking beating West Brom in 1990 were far bigger upsets than the half-dozen lower league sides who were knocked out by non-league opposition, or Norwich getting beaten by Luton, two clubs of a similar size.

We both agreed with the top choice however. By any yardstick, we are and will remain #Massive.



WalkingSTONES

Walking Football – Stay Active, Stay Healthy!

Walking football is a fast-growing sport designed for people in later life. It's a fun, social way to keep fit while enjoying the beautiful game at a gentler pace. Regular participation can help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke, improve blood pressure and resting heart rate, and lower cholesterol – all key indicators of good health..

Our walking football programme is **open to all regardless of footballing ability**. Our programme is focussed on **using sport inclusively** to help **improve physical and mental wellbeing**. For the more competitive we have teams for +50's, +60's and +65s playing in the Kent league. If that floats your boat then dust off your boots and come along.



Scan the QR code opposite to register and then pop along to a session at the YMCA.

Fridays 18:45 - 20:30

Venue: YMCA Centre Melrose Close, Cripple Street, Maidstone ME15 6BD

stonesinthecommunity.org



CONFERENCE SOUTH TO LEAGUE TWO = PROGRESS

TRIPLE-A TO TOKYO = MADNESS

PACIFIC SWINGS
パシフィック・スイングス | 퍼시픽 스윙스

WATCH EPISODES

BASEBALL STORIES THAT CROSS OCEANS, CULTURES, AND SANITY CHECKS

Gulls' form is starting to look ominous

By Alan Thatcher

Happy New Year, everybody! After celebrating the end of 2025 with a last-gasp win away to former leaders **Hornchurch**, the Stones finally launch the second half of the season away to **Torquay United** tomorrow.

We have a great record against **Torquay** but this time we can expect a tougher challenge with the Gulls flying high at third in the table after recovering from two poor results in December, losing to **Totton** and **Tonbridge**.

They have scored seven goals in their last two home games, beating **Weston-super-Mare** 3-1 and **Hampton and Richmond** 4-1.

There's sure to be a great atmosphere at Plainmoor tomorrow with the Gulls the best supported team in the National League South. They pulled in a huge crowd of 5,142 for the 3-1 win on Boxing Day against their west country rivals and drew 3,036 against **Hampton**.

*

Weston-super-Mare return to league action at **Chelmsford** tomorrow after a heartbreaking 3-2 defeat at **Grimsby Town** in the third round of the FA Cup.

Weston took 600 fans to **Grimsby** and they were looking forward to extra time when home substitute Kieran Green scored an 86th minute winner. Luke Coulson and Louis Britton, Weston's two outstanding players this season, equalised twice for the visitors.

Weston are second in the NLS table, one point behind leaders **Worthing** with a game in hand.

Worthing are way out in front as the division's highest scorers this season with 61 goals so far, 11 ahead of **Torquay** and almost double the Stones' goal tally of 31.

However, the Rebels' defence is causing some headaches for boss Adam Hinshelwood. After scraping a 2-2 draw at home to bottom club **Chippenham**, **Worthing** were stunned by an added time winner from Josh Hedges last week as they



Rows of empty seats behind David Sesay during our 2-0 FA Trophy win at Plainmoor earlier this season. Saturday's game should see a very different atmosphere.

lost 5-4 away to an improving **Salisbury** side.

It was odd to learn after the match that there were reports of disturbances from fans representing two of the most genteel towns and cities in the league – with due deference to **Bath** and **Eastbourne**, of course.

* **Ebbfleet United** limped out of the FA Trophy fourth round with hardly a whimper after a 2-0 home defeat against **Forest Green Rovers**, watched by a paltry crowd of 887.

Nearer to home, **Chatham Town** recorded an incredible 1-0 win against tournament favourites **Carlisle United**.

After recently attracting 3,000-plus crowds for the visits of **Bromley** and **Dartford**, it was disappointing to see just 1,703 at the Bauvill Stadium to see the Chats triumph with a brilliant free kick from Matty

MacArthur after 25 minutes.

Monday's draw rewarded Chatham with a fifth-round home tie against Southend United on January 31.

* Despite a recent dip in form, **Folkestone Invicta** extended their lead over **Brentwood** at the top of the Isthmian League Premier Division to 12 points following their 0-0 draw at **Carshalton Athletic**.

With strikers Joe Pigott and Ade Yusuff already out of action, Jay Saunders' build-up to the game was marred by an injury to defensive midfielder Dean Rance, who broke a tibia during training.

Aveley won 3-0 at **Cray Wanderers** last Friday to move within a point of third-placed **Chatham Town**.

Hashtag United announced a permanent groundshare with **Redbridge** next season after a 2-2 draw with fifth-placed **Dartford**.

Basingstoke suffering familiar ASBO pain

By Alan Thatcher

Owning or volunteering to run an ambitious non-league club is a formidable challenge.

Balancing the books is a tough act, and dealing with unruly fan behaviour can also be a costly business.

I know several people (including my wife) who are reluctant to visit the Gallagher because of the level of obscene language from the Genco end.

It damages the reputation of Maidstone United and it costs the club money.

Basingstoke chairman Jim Miller reached out to young fans in a bid to avoid unsavoury behaviour.

He wrote on the club's website: "If you're a teenager choosing to spend your weekends and evenings at non-league football instead of sitting at home or drifting about town; thank you. You bring noise. You bring life and energy. When you're in full voice, the players feel ten feet tall. You are the future.

"We don't want to shut you up. We want the exact opposite. But right now we have an issue with young people coming to our games, some who claim to be fans, and others who just turn up looking for trouble.

"It affects the whole club. Money that could go on players, facilities, and making matchdays better ends up going on fines, extra security, and admin.

"Because of this, we are likely going to have to introduce some new measures regarding entry for Under-18s. We don't want to have to do this, but we have to ensure that Basingstoke Town is a place where genuine fans are safe and welcomed, and the people wanting to cause trouble don't bother."



* Essex club Harlow Town have entered administration, just days after drawing 1-1 at home to Arlesey in the Spartan South Midlands League.

Harlow Town FC is a private limited company, but Harlow Town Council owns the freehold to the club's ground, the Harlow Arena (Barrows Farm).

SSMFL's chief executive Phil Pateman said it had received details of the club going into administration on Friday. "The SSMFL are awaiting confirmation of the immediate action required within FA Standard rules," he said.

* Aldershot's new owner Deane Wood had a miserable experience as his first match in sole charge of the club ended in a 5-1 home defeat by Solihull Moors, who climbed up to ninth place in the National League.

The Shots are in the relegation zone, level on points with Sutton United, whose 2-1 home defeat against York City propelled the Minstermen to the top of the table.

* Many a Stones fan who longs for the club to gain Football League status, and playing home games in the county

town instead of at Dartford, is casting envious glances at the progress made by our old rivals Bromley.

Bromley won 2-0 at Tranmere Rovers on Saturday thanks to two goals from Michael Cheek to extend their lead at the top of League Two to five points ahead of second-placed Swindon Town. Cheek, 34, is top scorer in League Two with 14 goals.

Bromley, who have won 11 of their last 12 league games, are at home to Swindon on Saturday week (January 24) hoping for a season's-best crowd.

* As we reported last week as we approached our production deadline, former Stones striker Levi Amantchi has signed for Gateshead, who are bottom of the National League.

This is the fourth club Amantchi has joined after first being snapped up by Bromley after scoring 20 goals in the first half of the Stones' epic 2023-24 season when we reached the fifth round of the FA Cup.

A year ago Levi joined Walsall, who loaned him out to National League promotion hopefuls Rochdale this season. Amantchi's contract will see him remain at Gateshead next season.

twitter Follow @AlanThatcherCS

Upcoming Commentaries

Torquay United (A) Sat 17 January 2026 @ 1500 – Sean Scurr & Tom Rogers

Ebbsfleet United (H) Tue 20 January 2026 @ 1945 – Darren Styles & Jon Crowther

Hemel Hempstead (H) Sat 24 January 2026 @1500 – Alan Thatcher & Alex del Valle

Ebbsfleet United (H) Tue 27 January 2026 @ 1945 – Fred Atkins & Nigel Seager

Tonbridge Angels (A) Sat 31 January 2026 @ 1500 – Chris Bechervaise & Tom Rogers

Stones Live! has been providing radio commentaries of Maidstone United matches since the 2008 -09 season, way back when the club was a fraction of the size it is now, playing to crowds of 200 in Sittingbourne. Founded by Stones fan Chris Bechervaise, its audiences grew steadily at first and then rapidly when the club returned home after the end of its 24-year exile in 2012. The Back Page editor, Fred Atkins, is a regular commentator, as are a number of this publication's contributors.

It's run by volunteer supporters who have a background in professional broadcast radio and funded independently from the football club by volunteer donations or through sponsorship and advertising. Stones Live! is a not-for-profit service and any monies raised are put back into the radio station to pay for various broadcast licences and to renew worn or broken equipment. (Such as the laptop Charlie Seaman accidentally smashed last year).



The Back Page

Advertise with us!

Contributors go free

Write, edit, film, design or even proof-read for us and you'll get a free A5 advert

Full page

£40 per edition or £150 for five issues

Half page

£20 per edition or £75 for five issues

Contact

email: info@back-page-media.co.uk

All prices are VAT inclusive

[illegible]

How Non-League Football became massive - Paperback £9.99 Kindle: £2.99

The Back Page

National North's quality shouldn't have come as a surprise to Palace ... It's **Steve Watt's** latest column for The Back Page.



Watt's Occurring?

Don't slate Palace: give credit to Macclesfield

Crystal Palace were accused of disrespecting the FA Cup after they were knocked out on Saturday, but I'm not sure that's fair, either to them, or to Macclesfield.

The first thing you have to do is take your hat off to the home side. It's not as if they were hanging on for dear life for 90 minutes; they were very much in the game and gave as good as they got. They took their chances at the right times and punished Palace.

As a manager you'd have to be really disappointed, especially if you had players knocking on your door and demanding more minutes. If you give them opportunities and they don't take them, then it's on them for not performing.

There's also nothing wrong with giving young players an opportunity. Glasner's comment that tactics shouldn't matter when you're playing a team ranked that lowly could be considered disrespectful in some contexts, but what I think he was trying to say is that they should have had enough quality to win, regardless of how Macclesfield set up.

If a National League side played an Isthmian South team, their quality

would normally be enough to see them through and I think it's more likely he was having a go at his players for not performing on the day.

If anything I think the suggestion that Palace weren't taking it seriously is disrespectful to Macclesfield. They knocked out the holders and it'll go down as one of the competition's greatest ever stories.

What was disrespectful was Szoboszlai's backheel against Barnsley on Monday night. Their manager had a point when he said he wouldn't try that against Manchester City in the Premier League.

He was probably feeling a bit too pleased with himself after scoring and thinking that he could play a bit of five-a-side football because it was "only" Barnsley.

I'm sure he'll have apologised, but if he'd done that in one of my sides he'd have been properly told what my thoughts were on the matter.

After that you move on because you've won the game, but you might make a joke about it every now and again. Just to keep him in check.

"What was disrespectful was Szoboszlai's backheel against Barnsley on Monday night..."



Join our facebook group

They told us to turn the music down ... so we turned it up

Teams can use the feeling that they've been slighted to their advantage and I've done so in the past, putting up newspaper cuttings in dressing rooms and sharing stories on group chats to try and get under my team's skin.

I'm told Nicky Southall did this before our replay with Stevenage, when he posted on social media that Graham Westley hadn't even mentioned us in his programme notes.

I didn't actually read the programme so I don't actually remember that, but I do remember them asking us to turn the music down before the first game.

Naturally we turned it up and after the replay we opened the dressing room door and made sure it was audible down the corridor, where he was doing an interview.

That team never needed motivating and to be fair to Westley, I believe he said afterwards that he thought we were a proper team. I think deep down he felt we were a non-league version of what his teams were: athletic, big, physical and hard-working. He would have liked that.



Help Jack on his road to recovery



Jack Evans' brilliant free-kick for Maidstone against Forest Green Rovers back in September 2016.

Jack Evans played for Maidstone for a year under Jay Saunders and after he left I was his manager at Margate.

He has been a terrific servant for a number of clubs in the area, but on New Year's Eve he was the victim of an unprovoked attack which left him with serious facial injuries.

These injuries have also left him unable to work and his current club, Billericay Town, have set up a crowd-funder, which you can donate to by clicking this [link](#) or on the logo below.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish him a full and speedy recovery.



Could be a cold one

By Tom Rogers

After a two-and-a-half-week layoff from competitive football, we make our longest trek of the season down to Devon to face Torquay.

The weather will almost certainly be awful, the wind will cut through the ground and make you lose feeling in your fingers, however our good form and impressive record against Torquay means it is a trip worth feeling optimistic about.

The Gulls are no pushovers, coming into this one fresh from demolishing Hampton & Richmond 4-1 last weekend.

This is reflected in their position in the table, third, and that they boast the best home record in the division, joint with Weston and Dorking, having taken 31 points from a possible 39 so far this campaign.

Despite this, we are one of three sides to have beaten Torquay at their home this season.

Hornchurch and Tonbridge have both recorded a league victory, while we won here 2-0 in the FA Trophy back in November, Dajon Golding fired in a brace, and we won our sixth match in eight at Torquay in the Gallagher era.

"Paul Wooton is in charge, supported by Neil Warnock, aka Colin Wanker, as 'Advisor of Management'..."

Our previous league encounter was a 1-1 draw back in August, when a John Gilbert opener was squandered in stoppage time and we conceded a late penalty in a game we should have won.

Unsurprisingly, due to the difference in region, neither of the clubs' current crop have played for both sides.

Jake Robinson, who was one of the small army brought in by Harry Wheeler back in 2018, has played for both clubs, though you'd be forgiven for having forgotten his 11 games and two goals in black and amber.

Much more memorably Lucas Covolan has also spent time on the Devon coast. His heroics at Ipswich make him a bonafide Stones legend, while his goal in the play-off final against Hartlepool back in



Mo Faal bamboozles the Torquay keeper Mark Halstead during our 3-2 win in 2023-24

2021 for the Gulls will have earned him similar cult status.

The eccentric Covolan has recently resurfaced in Brazil, joining Operario MS in the Brazilian Serie D ahead of their 2026 season, which begins this Sunday.

Campo Grande, where his new side is based, has temperatures in the low thirties and persistent sunshine currently. I doubt he'll be missing the English winter.

Paul Wooton is in charge at Torquay, having previously won promotion with Truro back in 2023. He's now on his second season in charge and will no doubt be expected to get promotion this season as this is a club simply too big for the National South.

He is supported by Neil Warnock, with the infamous "Colin Wanker" occupying the Bill Williams role.

His formal title is "Advisor of Management" and he joins Agatha Christie and Ollie Watkins on the illustrious list of Torquay residents.

They're potent in attack, with only Worthing having scored more so far. Louis Dennis, formerly of Bromley, and Jordan Young have both notched 13 each, putting our goalscoring record to shame.

Their defence is respectable too, with Guernsey native James Hamon an ever present in goal.

The Stones are close to full fitness. Ruben Carvalho and Jamie Yila will be the only absentees for the trip. With a plethora of options to lead the line, it's unclear whether Faal will start on his competitive return.

Gilbert will also push for a return to the side, possibly at Bramble or Corne's expense, though the rest of the side is settled.

The back four has taken shape since Foran's return and has conceded once in the last five. This, combined with our strange ability to seemingly always beat Torquay, gives encouragement that we can extend the unbeaten run.

Though we have fallen out of the play-offs on our long lay-off, we hold three games in hand on seventh place Horsham and are just ten points off the top, a figure that could be chased down if we were to continue to build on this recent upturn in form.

* Warnock and Williams would have been in the respective dug-outs when Maidstone met Scarborough in the Conference, way back in 1986-87.

The Stones won 2-1 at London Road in September before the sides drew 0-0 at Seamer Road in February.

Scarborough won the title and became the first side to win automatic promotion to the Football League.



(Left) Yemi Odubade in a 3-2 league win in 2016-17 (Right) 4-0 in the FA Trophy the same year.



Sam Bone celebrates the winner in a 1-0 league win in 2023-24



Exactly a week after Bone's winner, Levi Amantchi helps us to a 2-0 win in the FA Cup



(Left) Charlie Seaman is mobbed after scoring a free kick in a 1-1 draw last year. (Right) Dajon Golding after opening the scoring in our 2-0 win at Plainmoor earlier this season.



Next week in The Back Page ...



Joan Luque in exclusive interview with Alex Del-Valle

Steve Watt Q&A

[Email](#) us with your questions for our star columnist



Launching in March 2026

A new media outlet dedicated to independent coverage of Kent Cricket is coming in 2026.

The Spitfire will be run by Fred Atkins, who has followed Kent since the early 90s and has covered them for the ECB and Wisden since 2021.

Expect expert storytelling, colourful matchday writing, insightful analysis and in-depth interviews, as The Spitfire takes coverage of the club to new heights.

Everyone who signs up to the site's mailing list prior to launch will get a special discount on membership.

The site, which offers a modern reader experience and a commitment to zero intrusive advertising, will be up and running in March.

The Spitfire is the eighth county cricket outlet to be

confirmed on CounterPress ahead of the 2026 season, as part of a wide-reaching project designed to revitalise written digital coverage of our domestic summer sport.

Other outlets announced so far include The Hawk (Hampshire), The Rey (Surrey), Lanky Lanky (Lancashire), Up The Middle (Middlesex), From The Sea End (Sussex), Cider Press (Somerset) and The Chester (Durham). Further sites are still to be released.

CounterPress co-founder Sam Morshead said: "The Spitfire promises to be the go-to place for proper cricket writing on events at Canterbury and Beckenham."

To register your interest visit our [website](#).

MAIDSTONE UNITED

2025/26 SQUAD



George ELOKOB
Manager



Nathan HARNES
Goalkeeper



Lenny HOLDEN
Goalkeeper



David SESAY
Defender



Leo HAMBLIN
Defender



Lexus BEEDEN
Defender



George FOWLER
Defender



Thomas-James BRAMBLE
Midfielder



Jephte TANGA
Midfielder



Sam CORNE
Midfielder



Deon MOORE
Forward



John GILBERT
Midfielder



Jamie YILA
Midfielder



Dajon GOLDING
Forward



David AGBONTOHOMA
Defender



Riley COURT
Midfielder



Ruben CARVALHO
Midfielder



Antony PAPADOPOULOS
Midfielder



Malachi MBOGBA
Midfielder



Hamzad KARGBO
Forward



Taylor FORAN
Defender



Christopher SWIFT
Goalkeeper

Designed by MAIDSTONE UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB IN VIETNAM

24

25

Deal or no deal?

The window's open and there are deals to be done, good and bad. How much do YOU know about Maidstone United's dealings in the transfer market down the years?

1) Kent cricketer and Maidstone centre-forward Wally Hardinge joined which top-flight side from the Stones in 1905?

2) How much did Manchester United pay us for David Sadler in 1963?

3) Ken Charlery joined Maidstone United from Fisher Athletic just before the deadline in 1989. Which former Gillingham midfielder also signed from Fisher on the same day?

4) Rumoured to be joining Tottenham for half a million, he instead went to AFC Bournemouth for nothing because his unsigned contract was sitting in a drawer at London Road. Who is he?

5) Which Kent League club did we sign Mark Gall from?



Follow Fred Atkins on Instagram



6) In the summer of 1990, Maidstone received what remains to this day the highest fee they've ever received, £300,000 from Wimbledon, for which future England international?

7) Mark Beene joined Brighton from Maidstone for £30,000 in 1991. How much did Leeds United pay the Seagulls for him in 1993 (keeping Brighton in business)?

8) Which striker signed for an eyebrow-raising £2,000 from Chatham Town before we began our first season back in the Kent League in 2001?

9) Which striker did we sign from Folkestone Invicta for £6,000 in 2012-13?

10) How much did Bromley pay us for Levi Amantchi when they activated his release clause?



Answers to Edition 21: When friendlies mattered

1) Who said this to a Maidstone steward, after he brought a tea urn into the away dressing room at JWW after a friendly defeat in 2012? "This lot have just been beaten by a part-time team. So do you know what I want you to do with this? I want you to stick it up your arse."
John Still, then of Dagenham.

2) What was the score when Maidstone played Calais in a pre-season friendly in 2014?
4-4. Maidstone were 4-0 up early in the second half.

3) Which local businessman scored for Manchester City in a 4-2 win over Maidstone at London Road in 1983, after buying his place in their side for Kenny Hill's testimonial with a £500 charity donation?
David Folb of Lashings.

4) Who scored the first goal for Brighton when they beat us 5-0 in the first game at the new stadium?
Craig Mackail-Smith.

5) In 1985 Tottenham sent a strong* side to London Road for which Maidstone defender's testimonial?
*Editor's note. It was Tottenham, so the term "strong" is relative here.
Brian Thompson.

6) Crystal Palace are the only Premier League team to

have sent any kind of side to JWW for a friendly. Who was their manager at the time?

Frank de Boer. Sacked after 77 days.

7) Palace initially agreed to send a first team squad but then backed out. Which of their fringe players went on to play for us?

Apologies for the ambivalent wording. Andre Coker played and Deon Curtis-Henry was on the bench. Michael Phillips didn't actually appear.

8) Which controversial top-flight chairman said Maidstone could share their ground in London after a friendly, also in 1985?

Ken Bates of Chelsea.

9) Four members of the Arsenal side that won the league at Anfield in 1989 were part of a Gunners XI that lost 5-3 to Maidstone at The Athletic Ground, once again in October 1985. Can you name them? (Image via The Arsenal Collection).

Michael Thomas, David Rocastle, Martin Hayes and Paul Merson.

10) Which future FA Cup opponent did we play in a friendly at the Gay Dawn Farm, home of Corinthian FC, before the start of the 1990-91 season, losing 1-0?

Ipswich Town.



The independent source for Maidstone United news: Edition 22 (January 16th 2026)

It all comes flooding back

Macclesfield’s success brings back memories of two great away days

By Fred Atkins

I turned on the BBC coverage of Macclesfield vs Crystal Palace with around 20 minutes left on Saturday.

The siege I was expecting never happened, but the memories flooded back, not just of Portman Road, but of our trip to Macclesfield in September 2017, when we beat them 4-1 and Ben Austen and I had to commentate, very quietly, from the back of the main stand at Moss Rose.

We were sat right next to some disgruntled home fans and they were even less grunted when our players started blowing them kisses after the game.

Lee Worgan and Seth Twumasi seemed to be enjoying themselves enormously, but we were accused of “lacking enthusiasm” during the commentary.

To which my answer was: ‘you try sounding enthusiastic when one false word could lead to you shitting your own teeth’.

** Stones Live!* had no such issues at Portman Road. Nigel Seager and I were sat way up in the Bobby Robson Stand, just behind Matt Holland and Terry Butcher, and a couple of rows up from Martin Keown and Guy Mowbray.

Palace were accused of disrespecting the FA Cup, but then again so were Ipswich and no one could have accused their players of failing to take it seriously; particularly during that relentless opening spell, or the Alamo-like conclusion.

Their fans were another matter. An Ipswich supporting friend told me he wasn’t that bothered and half-expected them to lose because he thought they’d be prioritising the league. The media guy next to us was less pessimistic: he told us he thought 6-0 would be about par. I thought he was probably right.



Zavon Hines at Macclesfield in 2017 – an absolutely formidable player, when he was in the mood ... #Euphemism

We were close enough to the home fans to gauge their mood, without having to worry about how they’d react to us. When Lamar scored they seemed surprised and slightly embarrassed, but not unduly alarmed.

For me (Clive) the atmosphere shifted for good after Sam Corne’s goal. For the first time I could sense anxiety among the home fans, that multiplied as every minute ticked by, evolving into a full-blown panic.

When the final whistle did blow, after those eight minutes of stoppage time, we had no qualms at all about “going mental” and the aforementioned-friend was the first to congratulate me.

** The team that beat Macclesfield 4-1 was one of the strongest we’ve had since reforming;*

Maidstone: Worgan, Anderson Finney, Okuonghae, Wynter, Twumasi, Hines, Prestedge, Lewis,

Reason (Paxman), Ter Horst (Richards), Piggott.
Attendance: 1,347.
Goals: Hines 11, 65, Wynter 24, Pigott 74. Arthur 80.

Macclesfield went on to win the National League that year. OK, so they did so by spending money they didn’t have and ended up going bust, but that doesn’t diminish our achievement.

Macclesfield’s revival has been rapid, mainly because the phoenix club has been able to use Moss Rose. If they hadn’t gone bust, beating Palace wouldn’t have been *that* much of a shock, but the entire badger community is now trying to work out the seismology.

This inevitably means Ipswich gets mentioned. It wasn’t even two years ago, but I suspect we’ll be reminded of Ipswich for the rest of our lives. I certainly hope so.

*** The problem with rankings – page 10**