

# The **Back** Page

## Thank you Gaffer

George is off – who replaces him?

**PLUS:** – The Steve Watt column: “It’s an attractive job. Players want to play in front of 2000 fans ...”

- Worthing preview by Tom Rogers
- MUFC women put five past Long Lane
- The Stones Quiz: A George Elokobi Special
- The Back Page: The runners and riders

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](mailto:info@back-page-media.co.uk)

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## Meet The Team



Image of the week **4**

The Gaffer's finest hour - with the squad at Portman Road.

Underwhelming **6**

We just can't back the rocks together at Horsham.

Staying alive **8**

MUFC women beat Long Lane to set up a title showdown.

The Steve Watt Column **14**

George can go with his head held high.

Worthing Preview **18**

Tom Rogers on a possible title-decider.

The Stones Quiz **22**

A George Elokobi special.



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What else was it going to be? It's unlikely we'll experience anything like this again. It's unlikely George will do anything that eclipses it.

For Ipswich and so much else besides, everyone at *The Back Page* says - thank you George.

**What next? - page 24.**



Jamie Yila, attempting to unleash hell.



Christie Pattisson's shot produces some facial contortions in the Horsham defence

## A little bit like being menaced with a loofah

**HORSHAM 0  
MAIDSTONE UNITED 0**  
**Attendance: 1,642**

If the Hornchurch game shredded the nerves of almost everyone who watched it, this was a sedative.

"Shower of shit" was the verdict of one fan and the result does significant damage to our play-off chances, leaving us with no margin of error ahead of Saturday's game with a Worthing side who will win the league if they beat us.

Horsham's highlights package for this game last two minutes 45 seconds and that felt like a stretch.

Maidstone haven't uploaded any highlights at all (yet - it's been a busy week in fairness).

Lenny Holden clawed a chance past the post after a deflected shot by Charlie Hester-Cook, who then headed over from the resulting corner. Hester-Cook had a piss-weak penalty shout turned down after contact with Lexus Beeden near the byline.

It was goalless at the break and we looked slightly more menacing, in the same way that Mark Goldbridge threatening you with a feather-duster might be more threatening than Jamie O'Hara coming at you with a loofah.

The ball opened for Sam Corne on the edge of the box, but his shot was wayward

TJ Bramble headed over from a corner and Lewis Carey made a one handed save from Fowler. Holden got into a mild flap coming for a cross, but it was cleared and that was about it.

"You've got to credit the opposition," George Elokobi said afterwards. "We came out of the blocks and tried to impact the game in the final third like we did on Monday, but the game went away from us.

"We weren't making the right passes or the right runs and sort of played into Horsham's hands. We didn't do enough to win the game."



JBA is carried off with what looks a season-ending injury, handing Mark Boruk a chance late in the game.



## Stones stay on course ahead of showdown

**LONG LANE 0  
MAIDSTONE UNITED 5**  
Madamombe 35, Waud 57,  
Wilkinson 60, Manktelow 61,  
Hinkley 68

By John Tully

The Stones kept their title hopes alive with four second half goals, having struggled to impose their game on a Long Lane team in the first half on a tight, restrictive pitch at Kidbrooke.

Enforced changes saw Tori Campbell replacing Georgia Perch and Neve Platt coming in for skipper Annie White, and with a cup final on Thursday evening (16th April), no chances could be taken with players carrying knocks.

The Stones showed their intentions as early as the first minute when Chi Madamombe hit the post with Kelsi Wilkinson following up and bringing a good save from the keeper.

A scrappy first half saw the Stones finally taking the lead when Madamombe finished well from a Kylie Manktelow assist on the 35th minute.

The Stones pushed for a second with Campbell hitting the bar from 35 yards and Madamombe and Manktelow both having chances before half time.

The 1-0 scoreline at half time reflected the Stones' lack of punch and was never going to be enough to guarantee the win. Long Lane could well have scored just after the restart but they failed to take a good chance.

Both sides pushed and it took until the 57th minute for Millie Waud to score a 30 yard drive and give the Stones a deserved breathing space at 2-0.

Three minutes later a move constructed by Tilly Roswell and substitute Ellie Hinkley (a 57th minute replacement for Madamombe), was converted by Kelsi Wilkinson.



*Madamombe celebrates the opener*

Shortly afterwards Manktelow converted for what is her 26th goal of the season to make it 4-0 on the day, finishing off a Georgia Culpitt cross.

Hinkley scored the fifth and last goal of the game in the 68th minute from a Manktelow assist. The Stones pushed for more goals but the game ended with a 5-0 scoreline and no doubt the players

had their eyes on Thursday's Cup Final at the Gallagher against Cray Wanderers Women.

Next Sunday (April 19th) sees what will almost certainly be the title deciding league fixture with Tonbridge Angels at Longmead.

\* MUFC won the final 3-0. Full details of Thursday's final will appear in Edition 35 next week.



*Millie Waud after giving the Stones a two-goal cushion*



*(Above left and top right) Tilly Roswell sets up the third for Wilkinson  
(Above right) Hinkley taps in the fifth*



*Manktelow drills home the fourth*

## Upcoming Commentaries

**Worthing (H) Sat 18 April 2026 @ 1500** – Joe Parkhouse & Nigel Seager

**Tonbridge (N) Wed 22 April @ 19.45** – Darren Styles and Sean Scurr

**Bath City (A) Sat 25 April 2026 @ 1230** – Chris Bechervaise & Fred Atkins

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.



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A word cloud of football clubs in the English Football League. The clubs are arranged in a circular pattern, with their names written in various colors and orientations. The background features a blurred image of a football player in a white kit, possibly a goalkeeper, with his arms raised. The word cloud includes the following clubs (clockwise from top):

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- Gateshead
- Nestlepool United
- Darlington
- Scarsborough
- York City
- Forest Green Rovers
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## The Back Page

As legends go George is up there with Jay Saunders and he'll get the farewell he deserves ... it's **STEVE WATT'S** latest column



## Watt's Occurring?

# George can leave with his head held high

I wouldn't say the news about George Elokobi leaving was a shock, but it was maybe unexpected. He possibly feels that he needs a fresh start and wants to do something new. He's obviously had a great time at the club and has done a fantastic job, but if he feels it's time to move on he can leave with his head held high.

The memories he's created for the fans and the club will mean he can always look back fondly on what he's managed to achieve here. I would say he's right up there with Jay Saunders as a club legend, although in my opinion I would always rank Jay higher because of what he achieved.

I'm possibly biased because I was a part of that team, but Jay took Maidstone from Step Four all the way to the National League and I think that to climb all those leagues puts him slightly above George, despite the FA Cup run.

George might have been considered a risky appointment at the time but the circumstances

were actually quite similar, as players who were at the end of their careers: both went straight into management.

The timing means they can end the speculation about his future, because his contract was up at the end of the season and this way he'll get a proper send off. He deserves the chance to say goodbye and I think it's been done the right way.

Every club will have a list of boxes that need to be ticked when they look for a new manager and not every manager will tick all of those boxes. You might want someone with experience at this level, but you might also want someone who's young and has drive.

Style of football is also a consideration as it's something that's been talked about under George, but in my opinion it doesn't matter what the style is if you're winning games. You would rather win playing beautiful football, but you need to do what's required. >

**"The timing means they can end the speculation about his future ... this way he'll get a proper send off. I think it's been done the right way."**



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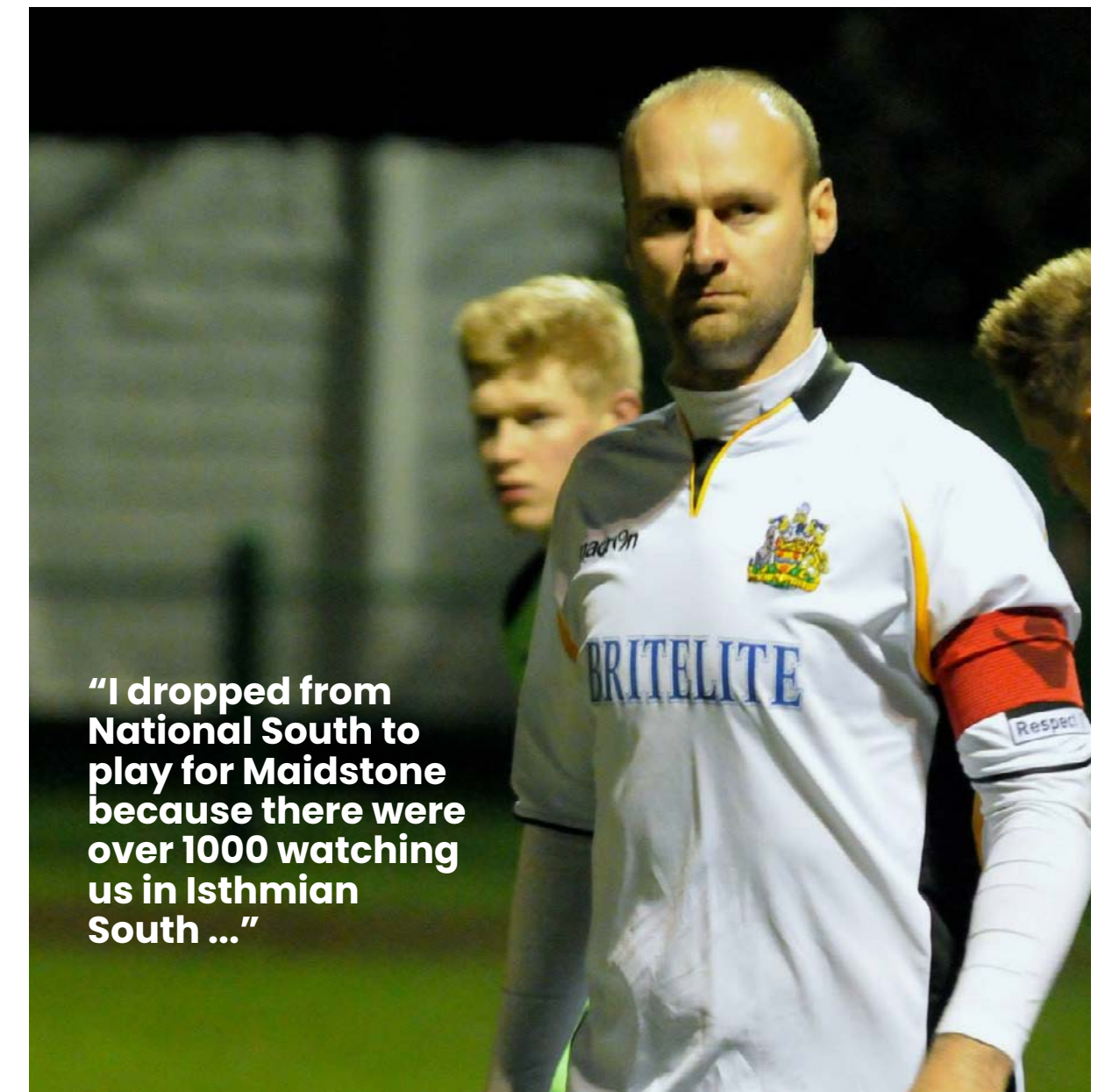
# There will be plenty of candidates ...

< It's an attractive job, regardless of the budget. Resources are important because it means you can attract a completely different kind of player, but I find it hard to believe Maidstone would have a lower end budget in the division.

The other attraction is the kind of club it is: you have the history, the ground and the fan base. Players want to play in front of 2,000 people every week. I speak from experience.

I dropped from National South to play in Step Four with Maidstone because when I came here there were over a thousand people watching us in the Isthmian South. It was a lot more what I was used when I played full-time and I thought: "I quite enjoy this."

There's always a danger because bigger clubs are dropping down the pyramid and others are catching up, but the potential is great and I think a lot of managers would be really interested. >



**"I dropped from National South to play for Maidstone because there were over 1000 watching us in Isthmian South ..."**



The first of three promotions under Jay Saunders in 2013.

< Would I be? If I'm available I will always have a conversation with any club, no matter what the level.

I'm currently helping Fran out at Faversham and I'm really enjoying it. I'm pretty sure he and Matt Newman could have done it together till the end of the season, but they've brought me in because of what I can bring in this little push. If they didn't have a chance of making the play-offs they maybe wouldn't have asked, but it's a great group of players, which is making it really enjoyable.

If we win our next two games and Sittingbourne slip up we'll be in the play-offs. I'm enjoying it for as long as it lasts. If it's another week, brilliant and if we have a conversation at the end of the season, but I'm sure I'll love it, whatever happens.



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*"You do have some days when you just can't be arsed..."*

Who would have guessed the Ashes would be a farce?

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## No room for emotion in Elokobi's swansong

By Tom Rogers

George Elokobi's Gallagher swansong will come in a must-win game against Worthing this Saturday.

The Stones need to win to take the playoff push to the final day, after a costly slip up against Horsham has put us on the backfoot, while Worthing know a win will wrap up the title, due to an insurmountable goal difference advantage over Dorking.

The news of Elokobi's decision to stand down on Tuesday morning has changed the narrative in the buildup to this game.

Despite this being a critical fixture, George's final appearance on the touchline at Whatman Way will probably overshadow our attempt to elongate our faint promotion hopes.

**"The writing had been on the wall for a while. Having not extended his contract beyond this season it became increasingly likely he would move on..."**

The writing had been on the wall for a while though. Having not extended his contract beyond this season it became increasingly likely that he would move on one way or another. Although he has decided to leave, there are no clear links elsewhere.

Perhaps, despite all the fanfare that George will receive and no doubt relish, Worthing's pending promotion is a far bigger story heading into this game.

Adam Hinshelwood, now on his third spell in charge of the club, looks set to finally take them into the National League having come close for the last three seasons. A trio of playoff heartbreaks have knocked the Rebels back, but the collapse of an injury-riddled Dorking has opened the door for them to win the title.



*A dejected George Elokobi after the 3-3 thriller at Woodside Road earlier this season*

When Worthing reached the National South in 2022 it was the highest, they'd ever reached on the pyramid.

Owner George Dowell took over the club in 2015, having previously been named in a first team squad at age 17 before being tragically paralysed in a car

accident shortly after.

An investment into a 3G pitch followed and they'd steadily risen from Step 4 to the brink of non-league's top tier. Having only just averaged three figures in the years just before Dowell bought the club, they now have an average

following that is marginally bigger than our own.

Hinshelwood's side is characterised by fast, attacking football which builds out from the back. Their 96 goals are considerably better than any other team in the division, with three of those coming in our 3-3 draw back in August.

Having taken a two-goal lead, we were pegged back before Josh Redfearn scored what looked to be the winner. This was then sickeningly cancelled out by a Temi Babiola equaliser seconds later, deep into stoppage time. Previous meetings include a memorable 2-0 win in last year's playoff eliminator and the 2-1 loss in the previous season's semi-final.

Razzaq Coleman De-Graft is the sole former Stone in the Worthing squad. He turned out for us in the first half of the 23-24 season, netting twice, one of which was against Worthing in a 4-0 win.

De-Graft scored against us for Aveley later in that season when we fell to a 2-0 loss on a cold Monday night in Essex.

Ruben Carvalho, Dajon Golding and Mo Faal are all ex-Worthing, though none will feature in this game due to injury. Faal got the winner against us for Worthing last season when he was booed by the Maidstone crowd, something he has hopefully forgotten about since returning to the club.

Jacob Berkley-Agyepong is out, having injured his Achilles, prohibiting him from taking any further part this season. Chances are he'll re-emerge in the latter stages of next season, as has become customary. There shouldn't be any other injury concerns heading into the final home game of the season.

Anything short of a win and it'll be curtains. Ebbsfleet will be expecting to dispatch Hampton at home and it's hard to see Dover doing us a favour away to Maidenhead.

However, if we were to keep within striking distance going into the final day we'd have a chance. Due to our superior goal difference we would be able to leapfrog Ebbsfleet if they lost down at Worthing who may still need to win to secure the title - but we would need Hornchurch to beat Maidenhead, who do have a better goal difference than us.

## Evolution of a rivalry



**Isthmian South, 2012-13:** We lost 2-0 at Worthing in front of a crowd of just 264 on the August Bank Holiday. There were 1,765 at JWW for the return in December, on a day when almost every other game in the county was rained off. Maidstone were 2-0 down, before Stuart King pulled one back and Ade Olorunda equalised in the 86th minute.



**National South 2024-25:** Worthing 0 Maidstone 2. 2,983, including 600 from Maidstone watch as two Ben Brookes penalties win the quarter-final. 2,080 saw us win 2-0 at Woodside Road in October. 2,603 watched Worthing win 2-1 at JWW in January.



# MAIDSTONE UNITED

2025/26 SQUAD



**George ELOKOBI**  
Manager



**Nathan HARNESS**  
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



**John GILBERT**  
Midfielder



**Jamie YILA**  
Midfielder



**Dajon GOLDING**  
Forward



**David AGBONTOHOMA**  
Defender



**Riley COURT**  
Midfielder



**Ruben CARVALHO**  
Midfielder



**Christie PATTISSON**  
Midfielder



**Malachi MBOGBA**  
Midfielder



**Muhammadu FAAL**  
Forward



**Hamzad KARGBO**  
Forward



**Taylor FORAN**  
Defender



**Jacob BERKELEY-AGYEONG**  
Midfielder



**Christopher SWIFT**  
Goalkeeper

Designed by **MAIDSTONE UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB IN VIETNAM**

## George Elokobi special

This week, we mark The Gaffer's departure after three and a half years as our manager, with a special edition of the Stones' quiz, dedicated to the man from Cameroon who took us to the fifth round of the FA Cup.

1) Where did George make his final appearance for Aldershot in 2019, alongside future Stones Jake Cole, Jake Gallagher, Scott Rendell, Matt McClure and Regan Booty?

2) At which away venue did George wade into the crowd to deal with a heckler, while yelling "This is MY town!" in full kit?

3) Which of his former managers joked that George was his "body double" only to be played by Steve Coogan in a historically fatuous film released this year?



4) Against whom did George score his first Maidstone United goal?

5) And which side agreed to form a guard of honour for him when he was subbed during his final game as a player?

6) Who were the opposition when he launched a clearance that went viral on social media?

7) Who were the opponents and what was the score in George's first game as caretaker manager?

8) Why did he say: "I want to take my babies home" during the FA Cup run?



9) Which performance prompted George to say that fans who booed were not true Maidstone United supporters?

10) And what was his one-word catchphrase?



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## Answers to Edition 33: Celebrity Namesakes

1) Manchester United winger under Matt Busby, who went to Colombia before keeping goal for The Stones. **Charlie Mitten.**

2) Hollyoaks actress who played on the wing for Maidstone during two separate spells. **George Porter.**

3) Rugby Union international - Wales' most capped scrum half- who adopted two guises for The Stones, featuring in two spells for both. **Michael Phillips.**

4) American film director, who - having directed Star Wars: The Last Jedi, and episodes of Breaking Bad - turned out in defence for The Stones in 2019-20. **Ryan Johnson.**

5) Hollywood hall of famer from 'The Adventure of Kit Carson' who married Barbara Hale in 1946. He debuted for Maidstone United in the 1970s and - to this day - has performed pretty much every role for the club since. **Bill Williams.**

6) Marvel son of Captain America, who also played a key role in Stones promotions of 2015 and 2016.

**James Rogers.**

7) English actor who had the unenviable tasks of playing Jennifer Aniston's boyfriend in Love Happens, and replacing Tom Mills as Maidstone's left back. **Joe Anderson.**

8) Goalkeeper who won the FA Vase with Deal before a spell as the Stones number one. Transforming into a respected journalist covering the club for the Kent Messenger, all whilst featuring in South Park. **Craig Tucker.**

9) Widely considered the greatest triple jumper in history prior to becoming a journeyman striker who scored once in 16 appearances for Maidstone during a forgettable spell in the first half of the 2019-20 season. **Jonathan Edwards.**

10) Assistant manager to brother Jim at The Stones before turning out in goal for Liverpool and Wales. Currently at Hollywood FC. **Danny Ward.**



The independent source for Maidstone United news: Edition 34 (April 17th 2026)

# Who's next? Anyone but Wheeler 2.0

By Fred Atkins

George Elokobi's departure after almost seven interrupted years as first a player then a manager leaves a void at the club, one that's deepened with the ownership situation still unresolved.

The last time we lost a manager of this stature was in 2018 and the lessons (you'd hope) have been learned. Oliver Ash has spoken about "succession planning" so we should at least be spared Harry Wheeler 2.0, but the appointment will inevitably be affected by the resources available to the new man.

This assumes it is a man. You can imagine the reaction if we appointed a suitable female candidate. It'd probably finish off some of our less evolved fans and there's no obvious downside to that scenario.

Nature abhors a vacuum and in the absence of any hard facts, we're left to fill that vacuum with speculation. So let's come up with some plausible scenarios.

## IF THE CLUB IS SOLD

... absolutely anything can happen. When Alan Manchett was close to buying the club, there was talk of any number of exotic candidates and it looked like we were about to go on a joyride. The Cowley brothers were top of the list and Neil Smith was second.

The fact is that a supercharged Maidstone United, armed with a war chest, would be an attractive proposition for any manager, young or old.

It's not out of the question we sneak into the play-offs and on its day this side can beat any of the teams in the top seven. Under those circumstances, George might even be persuaded to stay.



*Sam Corne - the only current player over 30 - a candidate if the club goes down the Dalglish route*

## IF THE CLUB ISN'T SOLD

The chances are we'll look for a local candidate ...

**Jay Saunders:** Has shown interest in returning in the past, but circumstances change. He'll be in the same division next year in charge of a side he just got promoted, one who are rumoured to have a significantly better budget than ours. Only plausible if there's a take-over and a budget increase.

**Alan Dunne:** tactically gubbed us twice this year with Tonbridge. Has done a good job on limited resources, which is very much up Terry and Oliver's respective alleys. And it would really piss them off.

**Andy Hessenthaler:** Another astute, manager who was interested in taking over from Jay in 2018 before he went to Dover instead. Kept them up, but subsequent events there, as featured on the *Dover and Out* documentary, might have drained his enthusiasm.

**Scott Lindsey:** Recently sacked by Crawley, lives in Upchurch and played for us during the 2006-07 season under Alan Walker and Lloyd Hume.

**Neil Smith:** Lindsey's assistant at Crawley and another ex-pro who had a brief spell with us at the end of his playing career. Helped transform Bromley, his home town club, into a major force in the south-east.

**Craig Fagan:** The continuity candidate. Surprisingly unmentioned by the car-park glitterati, but his tactical acumen was obvious during halftime at Ipswich.

**Sam Corne:** If the club goes down the Jay Saunders route and appoints an existing player, Corne is the obvious (and probably only) choice.

**Steve Watt:** The "former legend" option. We're biased, but as a motivator and a tactician who else would you call? Could be part of a dream ticket with, say, Alex Flisher.

**Sol Campbell:** Mentioned when Jay Saunders were sacked and this, again, would trigger a certain kind of supporter, although his links to the area go no further than what the tabloids would call a "tryst" with a leading Watlington-based fashion designer. Absolutely no substance to this at all - we just mention it in the hope a few lunatics get their piss boiled.