





RAMPAGES WINTER (2)

Hope you are all well and getting through Lockdown 2. I know from your emails that the Rampages' articles have brought back many fond memories in these bleak times. Keep them coming.

Who has played the most games for Harlow? Those that come to mind are Fred (Freddie) Lloyd and Keith Clarke (Clarkie). Andy Ball must also be up with them and this is his XV.

Andy Ball XV

Here's my team of people I enjoyed playing with, with me in it! not necessarily the best!

- 15 Steve Barrett
- 14 Dyfrig Powell
- 13 Kenny Gladden
- 12 Graham Fisher
- 11 Steve Levy
- 10 Spike Saunders
- 9 Gary Phillips
- 1 Jem Poyser
- 2 Ian Gallantree
- 3 Peter Carter
- 4 Malcolm Leese
 - 5 Peter Bishop
 - 6 Cliff Bishop
 - 8 Alan Knightley
 - 7 Andy Ball

Replacements

- John Minchin
- Martin Polkinghorne
- Geoff Hargreaves

Of course, I could have picked an entirely different 15 and still have enjoyed the game so I hope no one is offended by their omission.

In the first Rampages we ended with a picture quiz featuring two great Harlow legends Keith Handscombe and Terry McNamara and I asked you for the best caption. It was won by Keith Baker.

In this issue we start with a photo sent in by Marcus Russell with the comment "The best scrum half ever to play for Harlow in my opinion".

We've had over the years many outstanding scrum halves and I'm sure all of you have your own personal favourite.

However, my question for this Issue Prize is what and when was the game and name as many of the faces in the photo.

Bottle of wine to the winner:



Snippets

Jon Locke is now a headmaster in Barcelona and sent me an email saying "I am happy to try to produce my best XV but know I will struggle not to name the 1st Eastern Counties winning team. We should never have gained the success we did, but through passion and desire we were irrepressible".

Ray Harris - I am more than happy to name David Hurley as the most talented player that ever played for Harlow. I could wax lyrical for ages how great he was. Ray Ball documented the beginning of the success that was going to come over the next decade. The rise of the Colts Team from a very good county team to one of the elite colt's team in the country who beat Rosslyn Park, Bedford and Bristol, probably at that time, the top 3 colts' sides in England.

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If you have a favourite memory that you would like to share or your favourite XV please forward to rossloveday@btinternet.com

A very happy Christmas to you all and looking forward to meeting up again at our wonderful new Clubhouse in 2021.

I thought that would be the end of the newsletter when out of the blue and within a day of each other two great reports from two of our outstanding players and both hookers.

How to select my Harlow RFC Dream Team?

Jon Locke, December 2020

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Over the past year or so, I have really enjoyed reading various old boys' stories, memories and dream team selections. After reading Gary Phillips' recent article, I felt compelled to share my HRFC dream team and a tribute to my Dad, Chris Locke.

I started playing rugby at Harlow Rugby club in 1975, aged 7. Dad had asked Dill Thomas to take me down to a mini's training session one evening, to show me the ropes. Dill introduced me to Ian Oastler, the mini's coach, and I never looked back.

I have many memories of tournaments at places like Fairburn House, the joys of the Billericay 'flooding' changing rooms, fights with Thurrock and loving every second in a red Harlow shirt. Our social life also revolved around the club. My brother David and I spent most Saturday's down at the club, watching Dad play on 'the Mead' for the 6th Team before listening to the singing in the bar afterwards. Then the whole morning on Sundays was spent travelling around Essex and playing mini, then junior rugby.

Reading the recollections of men like Gary Phillips, one of the great coaches we were fortunate enough to have known, provides an insight into how rewarding it must have been for those senior players to have helped to shape the future HRFC talent. From a players' perspective, it was such an exciting and motivating environment. Watching your heroes from the Senior teams play each Saturday, then to have them coach you on a Wednesday night. I had so many positive role models in those formative days; Ian Oastler, Ross Loveday, John Hurley, Steve Harrison, Paul Clague and of course, Ken Spooner. Also, older youth players like Silvester Campion, Keith Handscombe and Trevor Ray all helped at times and provided the best possible role models and incredibly high aspirations for us all. I always wanted to be as hard as Vester, as skillful as Scummy and as good at cheating as Trevor. At least I think I might have achieved the last one.

Although at the time, I didn't fully appreciate my Dad's contribution to the junior rugby at Harlow, I later came to understand his impact and legacy. In selecting my Dream Team, I was looking through some of my memorabilia from my playing days in the 1st Team. My first reflection is that so many of our teams were full of homegrown talent. Players who had been nurtured and developed through our junior then colts teams. I think Matt Howard was the only player from our Eastern Counties Cup winning team not to have played junior rugby at Harlow. I know that many of these players could easily have played at a Premiership level; Lee Harron, Dave Hurley, John and Alan Price, Pete Keeling, Mark Brueford, Reggie Crafton, Mark Coombs, the list goes on. It was probably down to the loyalty they had for Harlow, built up from years of junior and colts rugby shared experiences, that kept them at the club. It was those bonds, after a spell away at University then playing for Saracens, that pulled me back to Harlow, to play in the first team.

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Dad was never a good rugby player. He was blind as a bat without his glasses so just followed the mass of red shirts around the pitch. The pinnacle of his playing career was representing the 4th team, Captained by Martin Peake, another of my role models. He never really understood the laws even though many visiting referees were gifted with his advice and guidance from the touchline. He therefore couldn't really coach but he had a burning desire to contribute to HRFC. This led to Dad offering to 'manage' our U-16s team. He was a great foil to our coach, Sooty. Dad provided the organization and rigour, Sooty the expertise and inspiration.

My friends' recollections of Dad include; the inevitable match fees collection, 'Where's your pound?'; the phone calls and last minute Sunday morning pick-ups in the minibus; the refusal to accept 'No!' for an answer, when asking them to play; and the tours. Dad took Junior rugby at Harlow to amazing heights, organising tours to Germany, Czechoslovakia, South Africa and Canada. No other junior Essex club had achieved anything like this in those days. It broadened the horizons of many young Harlow lads, providing opportunities that they could never have dreamed of gaining. It gave focus to our season and built those unbreakable bonds. When losing on a wet Saturday afternoon, away at Staines, it was those bonds that inspired the deep commitment to put that little extra into a tackle, ruck or maul. That Harlow spirit saved us so many times. Dad never stopped fundraising for these tours so that every lad was able to go. I know he paid for a number of lads himself and 'tapped up' senior club members like Gallows or Ryland a number of times.

Throughout my time away from Harlow, Dad always kept me in touch with how the first team was progressing and, of course, by then all my best mates were playing in the first team. So it was a simple decision for me to return in 1994. Cliff Bishop, then Chairman and Ray Harris, First Team coach, encouraged my return and I can not thank them both enough. I spent the rest of my playing career surrounded by talented and committed Harlow players who were my best mates. It is something that we can all relate to and something that is irreplaceable. In 1995, I became captain of the first team and after the bitter defeat to Barking in the final of the Essex Cup, on the 23rd April, we played North Walsham in the final of the Eastern Counties Cup and we won! 23-12. With Dave Hurley orchestrating everything at fly-half we were never going to lose.

After I had finished playing, Dad became Chairman of the club and throughout his tenure he drove the process to relocate HRFC to its new ground. He committed so much to support this move; it became his single ambition. I was so pleased this dream eventually became a reality and know that he would have been so delighted with the facilities and the possibilities they offer. Dad would also have been really proud to have seen Jason Leonard there at our grand opening; Dad knew Jason from our younger representative days and he always asked Jason for a favour or two! Even Jason Leonard couldn't say no to Chris Locke! Dad later took on

the Presidency, moving to more of a figure-head role. It was in this role that many of you will remember his after-dinner speeches and jokes. It was definitely the way he told them.

I will conclude with my HRFC Dream Team. As I have tried to explain, we have been blessed with many brilliant players and characters at Harlow, over the years. I also hold fantastic memories of mates I grew up with who I was always proud to walk out onto the pitch with. Props like Julian Heath, Pete Claridge were immense. Back rowers like Mark Kitchen and Darren Addicott were fearless and brilliant. Backs like Mark Guthrie and Alan Price were hard, skillful and could always make something out of nothing. However, my Dream Team has to be our first ever Eastern Counties Cup winning team. Any of the above could have seamlessly slipped into this team but this was the team on the day. We were proud, fearless and won. I will never forget that team of Harlow Legends":

- 1. Mark Coombs
- 2. Jon Locke (Capt)
- 3. Chris Ray

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- 4. Michael Nutt
- 5. Reggie Crafton
- 6. Mark Bruford
- 7. Richard May
- 8. Pete Keeling
- 9. Lee Harron
- 10. Dave Hurley
- 11. Lee Smith
- 12. Dave Oastler
- 13. Keith Handcomb
- 14. Matt Howard
- 15. John Price

Subs

- 16. Julian Heath (God help us if a back row went off)
- 17. Gavin Loveday
- 18. Mark Leppard

Props Appreciated by Ian Gallantree

After playing senior rugby for teams in Kent and London, I joined Harlow RUFC in 1970 and captained the 1st XV the following year, then played until I was 50 and captained all the Harlow teams down to the Vets (at the time Harlow put out 6 senior sides weekly).

Since I played all my rugby at hooker, and Ross Loveday was 1st XV scrum half when I joined the Club, Ross has asked me to write something about life in the front row and the props I played with.

A rugby team is made up of two parts, the set of backs and the pack of forwards.

You can recognise the backs, they're the guys who stand around for most of the game, looking sun-tanned, wearing tight shorts and checking if their wives and/or girlfriends are watching them; while the pack are charging all over the park trying to secure the ball for their backs who are only really interested in getting ball if it is handed to them on a plate with plenty of space to run with it.

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It is a common misconception that the front row, and especially the props, are considered to be the not so clever overweight fat guys who do nothing but push as hard as they can in the scrum for eighty minutes while contributing very little else.

The front row and the props in particular need to be the strongest men on the pitch, they are not just the fatties just leaning on each other. I wish to put the record straight when it comes to the props and their value. In the scrums when the weight comes on from our second and back rows, together with the full pressure from the whole opposition pack, this virtually all goes through our two props shoulders and backs. This huge pressure has to be directed by our front row's shoulders to give our scum the advantage, apart from this strain the props had me telling them exactly how I wanted to be positioned conformably while all this shoving is going on. At hooker when it was the opposition's put in, I would always try to get my right shoulder on the back of the opposition hooker's neck, driving down as the pressure comes on, if everything worked well my opposition hooker would have is head forced down which apart from being very painful for him, he could not lift his feet up to hook the ball leaving me or our tighthead prop to hook the ball as it came straight through the scrum. Hearing my hooker groaning or even screaming was very enjoyable.

These days hookers don't really hook the ball since the ball doesn't have to be put into the scrum straight anymore.

It used to be that hooking/winning your own put in was vital, if I lost a couple of balls on our own put in, which happened rarely, then my tactic was wait until after the next scrum then give their hooker a tap on the chin as we stood up. This always led to a minor punch up between the front rows, so I would always warn the props what was going to happen so they would be ready. Everything would settle down and the hooker would then be a little more careful and not so keen to take another put in off me, but even so, props are very important when using this tactic.

In the line out our props have to block players coming through our lineout while at the same time trying to get through the opposition lineout to give their scrumhalf a rough time.

The front row are always very fit since they are the last to get out from scrums etc. to run and catch up with the other forwards to get to the next breakdown. From the point of longevity in the game they must be the strongest and fittest as evidenced by the fact that in Vets XVs it is the front row who are always the oldest players.

Another misconception is that the props are not especially bright, again this is not true, in the majority of teams I have played in they seem to be the best qualified, I list below the props I played with in the 1st XV at Harlow and their careers/qualifications:

David Taylor : Senior Architect Harlow Council

Dennis Parry : Headmaster

John Pendleton : Computer Programmer

David Giess : Senior Accountant & Partner

Harry Gamble : Professor Solid State Physics, Queens University, Belfast
Mick Hunt : Senior Teacher fluent in 3 languages including Russian

Keith Clark : ?

Other props I played with in the other Harlow XVs down to the Vets XV, and who had all played in the 1st XV at

some stage: Don Smale

Peter Carter

· CtCr Carter

John Osbourne Kingsley Reece

Barry Stockley

All the above were excellent props, highly intelligent and great guys, they are my Heroes of the Front Row and I love and admire them all.

Ian Gallantree

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



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