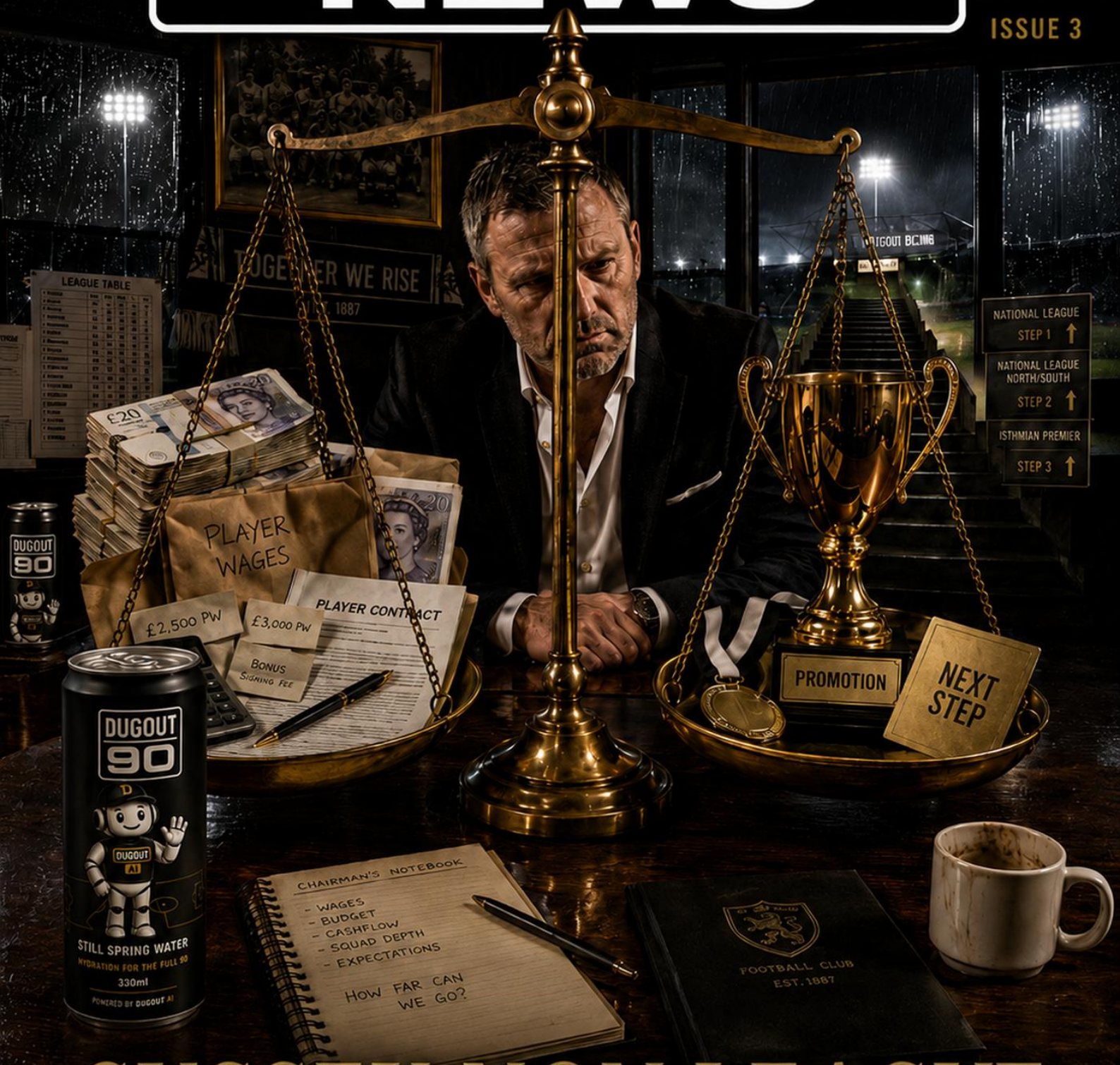


DUGOUT NEWS

ISSUE 3



SUSSEX NON LEAGUE

News. Stats. Articles. Opinions
Powered by Dugout AI

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THE UNDERTAKER
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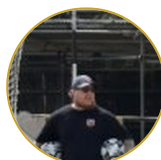
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FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

WELCOME TO ISSUE 3 OF DUGOUT NEWS



DUGOUT DIARIES

EDITOR • DUGOUT NEWS

News. Stats. Articles. Opinions.



Three issues in, and Sussex non-league football is already refusing to behave itself.

Saturday 22 August gave us a weekend that had a bit of everything. Worthing United went to Oakwood and scored seven. Hastings United powered to the top of the Isthmian South East. The Hornets flew into second in the National League South. Eastbourne United came from 2-1 down at Billingshurst to hit the summit of the SCFL Premier, and Lancing finally broke their duck. And in the FA Cup, Sussex learned once again that August football takes no prisoners.

All of it is in these pages — every round-up, every table, checked and rebuilt for clarity by the Dugout AI engine, alongside match reports from around the county.

But this issue is about more than results.

The Sussex Scout asks the question the town of Worthing needs to answer: where is the pathway beneath a club heading for the Football League? The Undertaker digs into what happens when the money dies and somebody has to bury the club.

The Gatecrasher warns us not to price the next generation out of non-league. Russ Cochran makes the case that politics in football isn't a dirty word. Chris Shutler settles the fan-versus-supporter debate, and The Wild Weatherman wants referees watching the pitch, not the dugout.

We're also delighted to welcome a brand-new series to Dugout News. Reece McQuade begins "New Beginnings: A Sussex Coaching Journey" — an honest, unfiltered look at building a coaching career from the ground up, for every coach who never had a pathway handed to them.

And there's big news off the pitch too, as Dugout 90 becomes Roffey FC's official hydration sponsor for the 2026/27 season. Together for the full 90.

As ever, this publication exists for you — the supporters who stand on the terraces, run the tea bars, wash the kits and keep Sussex football alive. If you have a story, a report or an opinion, the pages of Dugout News are open to you.

Enjoy the issue.

THE DUGOUT NEWS TEAM Powered by Dugout AI

REBELS MAKE HISTORY AS SOUTHEND AND SUTTON SET THE EARLY PACE

NATIONAL LEAGUE ROUND-UP — SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



THE REBELS CELEBRATE THEIR FIRST HOME WIN AT STEP ONE

PHOTO: WORTHING FC (X)

Three games into the new National League season and already there are stories developing everywhere you look.

For Sussex, the biggest one is happening at Worthing.

The Rebels recorded their first home victory at Step One on Saturday, beating Wealdstone 1-0 at the Sussex Transport Community Stadium to make it two wins from their opening three matches following promotion.

At the top, Southend United and Sutton United remain perfect. Both have nine points from nine, while Harrogate Town and Boreham Wood sit immediately behind them unbeaten on seven.

Boreham produced arguably the performance of the weekend by going to previously perfect Forest Green Rovers and winning 3-0, while Woking somehow turned a 2-1 deficit into a 3-2 victory over AFC Fylde with two goals from the 90th minute onwards.

Carlisle United finally announced themselves by putting four past Hornchurch, Halifax responded to consecutive defeats by hammering Tamworth and Yeovil secured their first victory with a convincing 3-0 win over Gateshead.

Twelve matches. Forty-one goals.

Not bad for a Saturday afternoon.

WORTHING ARE NOT HERE TO MAKE UP THE NUMBERS

WORTHING 1 WEALDSTONE 0

Perhaps there were still people wondering exactly how Worthing would handle the jump into the National League.

Three matches in, we are beginning to get an answer.

Quite nicely, thank you.

The Rebels' first-ever home victory at the fifth level of English football came courtesy of Ramell Carter, whose thumping strike on the stroke of half-time proved enough to defeat Wealdstone.

Carter struck in the 44th minute to send the hosts into the interval ahead.

The task became considerably easier six minutes after the restart when Wealdstone's Dylan Kadji received his second yellow card, leaving the visitors to play almost the entire second half with ten men.

Worthing managed the situation, protected their advantage and collected another enormous three points.

And just look at their opening three games.

Carlisle United 2-3 Worthing.

Worthing 1-2 Forest Green Rovers.

Worthing 1-0 Wealdstone.

Six points from nine.

Ninth in the National League.

Five goals scored.

Four conceded.

That is some start for Adam Hinshelwood's side.

There will undoubtedly be far more difficult afternoons ahead. Step One is relentless, the travelling becomes more demanding and there are clubs operating with resources Worthing simply cannot match.

But that has never really been the Worthing way anyway.

They have reached this level through identity, recruitment, attacking football and building something sustainable rather than attempting to become somebody else.

And Saturday felt significant.

Winning 3-2 away at Carlisle on opening day was spectacular.

Beating an established National League club 1-0 at home is different.

That's the sort of result that says: we belong here.

SOUTHEND MAKE IT THREE FROM THREE

SOLIHULL MOORS 1 SOUTHEND UNITED 3

If early-season momentum matters, Southend United have plenty of it.

Kieron Dyer's Shrimpers have now won all three of their National League matches and sit top of the division after coming from behind to win 3-1 at Solihull Moors.

Solihull actually struck first through Jake Wakeling after 14 minutes.

That lead lasted 14 minutes.

Oliver Coker equalised in the 28th minute before summer signing Josh Popoola put Southend ahead eleven minutes later.

It remained 2-1 until stoppage time when Charley Kendall struck in the 92nd minute to make absolutely certain.

Southend's start reads:

Three played.

Three won.

Seven scored.

Two conceded.

Nine points.

Their opening 3-1 victory at Altrincham was followed by a 1-0 success against Scunthorpe and now this.

After last season's play-off disappointment, Southend look like a club determined to remove as much uncertainty as possible this time around.

The table means very little after three games.

But nine from nine means exactly what it says.

Perfect.

SUTTON MATCH SOUTHEND STEP FOR STEP

SUTTON UNITED 2 HARTLEPOOL UNITED 1

Anything Southend can do, Sutton can currently match.

The U's also have nine points from nine following a 2-1 victory over previously perfect Hartlepool.

Temi Babalola opened the scoring after 20 minutes before Emmanuel Osadebe doubled Sutton's lead just seven minutes later.

Hartlepool responded through Corey McKeown after 34 minutes but could not find a second.

That leaves Sutton with six goals scored and just one conceded across three games.

Their results have been brutally efficient.

3-0 at Woking.

1-0 against Altrincham.

2-1 against Hartlepool.

Nine points.

The early table has Southend above Sutton only on goals scored, with both holding an identical plus-five goal difference.

Nobody at either club will be talking about title races in August.

Everybody else is already looking at them.

BOREHAM WOOD DESTROY FOREST GREEN'S PERFECT START

FOREST GREEN ROVERS 0 BOREHAM WOOD 3

This may have been the statement result of the weekend.

Forest Green arrived having won their opening two matches, including a 2-1 victory at Worthing last Saturday.

Boreham Wood were having none of it.

Zak Brunt scored after only two minutes before Lewis Richardson doubled the advantage in the 18th.

Forest Green were suddenly staring at a mountain.

Matt Rush made it 3-0 ten minutes into the second half, with Brunt providing the assist, and there was

no route back for Robbie Savage's side.

Forest Green's afternoon got even worse when Tom Pemberton was sent off in the 87th minute.

Boreham Wood remain unbeaten.

A 3-3 opening-day draw with Tamworth has been followed by a 3-1 victory at Halifax and now a 3-0 win at Forest Green.

Nine goals in three matches.

Seven points.

Fourth place.

And Matt Rush is already proving a serious problem for opposition defences.

Wood look very dangerous.

WOKING PRODUCE THE COMEBACK OF THE WEEKEND

WOKING 3 AFC FYLDE 2

For 89 minutes Woking were heading towards a third consecutive league defeat.

A few minutes later, they were celebrating one of the most dramatic victories we are likely to see all season.

Fylde led through Danny Ormerod's 37th-minute header before Matthew Ward capitalised on a defensive mistake to level for Woking midway through the second half.

The visitors immediately responded.

Harvey Broad restored Fylde's advantage after 73 minutes.

2-1.

Then came madness.

Roy Sylva smashed home the equaliser in the 90th minute.

Surely Woking would settle for the point?

Apparently not.

In the 93rd minute, Taylan Harris scored the winner.

From losing 2-1 entering the 90th minute to winning 3-2 at full-time.

That is the National League.

Woking climb to 18th with their first three points.

Sometimes a season needs one moment to get started.

That might have been theirs.

CARLISLE FINALLY CLICK

CARLISLE UNITED 4 HORNCHURCH 1

Carlisle's return to non-league football had begun with a surprise 3-2 home defeat against Worthing followed by a 1-1 draw at Yeovil.

Saturday was rather more convincing.

Miguel Azeez opened the scoring with a spectacular long-range strike after 29 minutes.

Within a minute of the second-half restart, Harvey Bunker made it two.

Joe Kizzi reduced the deficit after 51 minutes, but Bunker struck again in the 66th minute before Regan Linney completed the 4-1 victory with 15 minutes remaining.

It was Hornchurch's first defeat after opening the season with two victories.

For Carlisle, it was a reminder of why many expect the former EFL club to eventually become a major force in this division.

Four points from three leaves them 12th.

The first win is on the board.

Now the challenge is building from it.

HALIFAX HIT FOUR

FC HALIFAX TOWN 4 TAMWORTH 1

Halifax needed a response.

They got one.

After losing their opening two matches, the Shaymen produced a devastating first-half

performance against Tamworth.

Conor Carty opened the scoring after 18 minutes before Zak Gilsenan struck twice before half-time, scoring in the 42nd and 45th minutes.

Three-nil at the break.

Ben Tollitt made it four just four minutes into the second half.

TJ Bramble grabbed a consolation for Tamworth after 76 minutes, but the damage had been done long before.

Four goals and three points suddenly transform Halifax's opening fortnight.

For Tamworth, the concern is at the other end.

They have now conceded nine goals in three matches and sit 22nd.

EASTLEIGH EDGE A FIVE-GOAL THRILLER

EASTLEIGH 3 SCUNTHORPE UNITED 2

Eastleigh and Scunthorpe exchanged blows at the Silverlake Stadium, but it was the Spitfires who eventually emerged with the points.

Harry Sidwell opened the scoring after 37 minutes before Alfie Beestin equalised six minutes after the restart.

Aaron Blair restored Eastleigh's advantage in the 55th minute.

Scunthorpe responded again through Joe Gale after 71 minutes.

Two-all.

Just two minutes later, Josh Lundstram struck the winner.

Eastleigh now have two wins from three and sit eighth.

Scunthorpe remain without a victory and have one point.

There is no crisis three games into a campaign.

But the Iron will want that first victory sooner rather than later.

YEOVIL CLAIM THEIR FIRST WIN

YEOVIL TOWN 3 GATESHEAD 0

Yeovil had drawn their opening two league matches.

On Saturday, they took the handbrake off.

Stephen Walker scored after only two minutes, giving the Glovers the perfect start at Huish Park.

The score remained 1-0 for most of the afternoon before captain Luke McCormick struck twice in the final ten minutes to turn a narrow lead into a convincing 3-0 victory.

McCormick found the bottom corner around the 80th minute before producing another composed finish late on.

Yeovil are one of only five clubs still unbeaten, sitting 11th with five points.

Perhaps more significantly, they have conceded only twice.

A solid foundation.

BARROW BREAK HARROGATE HEARTS

HARROGATE TOWN 2 BARROW 2

Harrogate were seconds away from joining Southend and Sutton on nine points.

Then Innes Cameron arrived.

Ethan Bristow gave Harrogate the lead after 15 minutes before an unfortunate Cathal Heffernan own goal made it 1-1.

Heffernan thought he had made amends when he scored at the correct end in the 85th minute.

Harrogate 2-1 Barrow.

Six minutes of stoppage time were announced.

With almost all of them played, substitute Cameron headed home in the 96th minute to steal Barrow's first point of the season.

Harrogate remain unbeaten and sit third with seven points.

Ten goals in three matches also makes them the league's highest scorers.

They will just be wondering how they aren't sitting on nine.

NINE-MAN ALDERSHOT SOMEHOW EARN A POINT

KIDDERMINSTER HARRIERS 1 ALDERSHOT TOWN 1

This might have been the strangest result of the afternoon.

Kidderminster led through Lewis Walker's 28th-minute header.

Aldershot then had Jacob Borgnis sent off after 39 minutes.

If playing more than half the match with ten men wasn't difficult enough, the Shots were reduced to nine when Hakeem Sandah was dismissed after 75 minutes.

Surely game over?

No.

In the 87th minute Tristan Abrahams equalised.

Nine-man Aldershot had somehow escaped Aggborough with a point.

Kidderminster will view that as two points dropped.

Aldershot may view it as one of the most valuable points they collect all season.

BOSTON EDGE OUT ALTRINCHAM

BOSTON UNITED 1 ALTRINCHAM 0

Boston United made it consecutive league wins after Ken Aboh's 57th-minute strike defeated Altrincham.

Aboh finished from Jamie Grimes' assist and the Pilgrims protected the advantage to collect another three points.

Boston have rebounded superbly from their opening-day defeat against Aldershot and now sit sixth.

Altrincham's situation is already rather more uncomfortable.

Three matches.

Three defeats.

One goal scored.

Zero points.

Only Solihull sit below them on goal difference.

Again, it is August.

But zero from nine gets people's attention.

SATURDAY'S NATIONAL LEAGUE RESULTS

Boston United 1-0 Altrincham

Carlisle United 4-1 Hornchurch

Eastleigh 3-2 Scunthorpe United

FC Halifax Town 4-1 Tamworth

Forest Green Rovers 0-3 Boreham Wood

Harrogate Town 2-2 Barrow

Kidderminster Harriers 1-1 Aldershot Town

Solihull Moors 1-3 Southend United

Sutton United 2-1 Hartlepool United

Woking 3-2 AFC Fylde

Worthing 1-0 Wealdstone

Yeovil Town 3-0 Gateshead

THE EARLY NATIONAL LEAGUE PICTURE

After three matches, the standings make interesting reading.

1. Southend United — 9 points

2. Sutton United — 9

3. Harrogate Town — 7

4. Boreham Wood — 7

Then comes a group on six points containing Hartlepool, Boston, Hornchurch, Eastleigh, Worthing and Forest Green.

Yeovil remain unbeaten on five.

At the bottom, Scunthorpe, Barrow, Wealdstone and Tamworth are all on one point.

Altrincham and Solihull Moors have none.

The table will look completely different in a month.

But some early patterns are already difficult to ignore.

Southend look strong.

Sutton look organised.

Harrogate are scoring goals for fun.

Boreham Wood are dangerous.

And Worthing?

Worthing are currently sitting alongside established National League clubs with six points from their first nine available at Step One.

DUGOUT NEWS VERDICT

This was another reminder that reputation means absolutely nothing once a National League game begins.

Forest Green were two from two.

Boreham Wood went there and beat them 3-0.

Hornchurch were two from two.

Carlisle put four past them.

Hartlepool were perfect.

Sutton beat them.

Woking were seconds away from losing their third straight match.

They somehow won.

Aldershot finished with nine men.

They somehow didn't lose.

And Worthing, playing their first season at this level, are already showing that promotion has not intimidated them in the slightest.

For Sussex football, that might be the biggest story of all.

The Rebels have gone from Step Three to Step Two and now Step One without changing what they are.

Three matches into the biggest league season in their history, they have beaten Carlisle away and Wealdstone at home.

Six points.

Ninth place.

And absolutely no sign that they have arrived in the National League merely to enjoy the scenery.

Southend and Sutton lead the way.

But behind them, this division already looks beautifully chaotic.

If this is what the first three weekends have given us, the next eight months could be ridiculous.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ENTERPRISE NATIONAL LEAGUE

D
DUGOUT AI

POS	TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Southend United	3	3	0	0	7	2	+5	9
2	Sutton United	3	3	0	0	6	1	+5	9
3	Harrogate Town	3	2	1	0	10	5	+5	7
4	Boreham Wood	3	2	1	0	9	4	+5	7
5	Hartlepool United	3	2	0	1	4	2	+2	6
6	Boston United	3	2	0	1	3	1	+2	6
7	Hornchurch	3	2	0	1	6	5	+1	6
8	Eastleigh	3	2	0	1	5	4	+1	6
9	Worthing	3	2	0	1	5	4	+1	6
10	Forest Green Rovers	3	2	0	1	5	6	-1	6
11	Yeovil Town	3	1	2	0	5	2	+3	5
12	Carlisle United	3	1	1	1	7	5	+2	4
13	AFC Fylde	3	1	1	1	6	6	0	4
14	Aldershot Town	3	1	1	1	2	2	0	4
15	Kidderminster Harriers	3	1	1	1	2	4	-2	4
16	FC Halifax Town	3	1	0	2	7	7	0	3
17	Gateshead	3	1	0	2	3	5	-2	3
18	Woking	3	1	0	2	3	7	-4	3
19	Scunthorpe United	3	0	1	2	3	5	-2	1
20	Barrow	3	0	1	2	3	6	-3	1
21	Wealdstone	3	0	1	2	3	6	-3	1
22	Tamworth	3	0	1	2	5	9	-4	1
23	Altrincham	3	0	0	3	1	5	-4	0
24	Solihull Moors	3	0	0	3	3	10	-7	0

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

- ✓ $P = W + D + L$
- ✓ $GD = F - A$
- ✓ $PTS = 3W + D$
- ✓ 24 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

OUT NEWS • ISSUE 3 • SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2

NATIONAL LEAGUE FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

MATCHDAY 4 — FRIDAY 28 AUGUST

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	AFC Fylde	VS	Forest Green Rovers
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Aldershot Town	VS	Harrogate Town
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Altrincham	VS	FC Halifax Town
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Barrow	VS	Yeovil Town
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Gateshead	VS	Sutton United
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Hartlepool United	VS	Eastleigh
------------------	-------------------	----	-----------

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Hornchurch	VS	Woking
------------------	------------	----	--------

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Scunthorpe United	VS	Solihull Moors
------------------	-------------------	----	----------------

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Southend United	VS	Kidderminster Harriers
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FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Tamworth	VS	Worthing
------------------	----------	----	----------

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Wealdstone	VS	Carlisle United
------------------	------------	----	-----------------

HORNETS FLY INTO SECOND AS DORKING FALL IN MEADOWBANK THRILLER

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH ROUND-UP – SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



DORKING WANDERERS IN THE THICK OF IT AT MEADOWBANK

PHOTO: DORKING WANDERERS FC (X)

Four games into the new National League South season and the table is already beginning to throw up some fascinating storylines.

Dagenham & Redbridge remain the division's early pace-setters with a perfect 12 points, but the big story from a Sussex perspective is Horsham, who continued their outstanding unbeaten start with a 2-1 victory at Braintree Town to climb into second place.

For Dorking Wanderers it was a very different afternoon. Marc White's side led Maidstone United at Meadowbank but eventually went down 3-2 in an entertaining contest that could easily have produced more goals.

Elsewhere, Dover Athletic grabbed a dramatic late victory at Weston-super-Mare, Billericay won a six-goal contest at Farnham and Hampton & Richmond finally exploded into life by putting five past Slough.

**HORSHAM KEEP FLYING BRAINTREE TOWN 1
HORSHAM 2**

What a start this is becoming for Dominic Di Paola and Horsham.

The Hornets travelled to Essex unbeaten after opening the campaign with a 1-1 draw at Torquay United, a goalless home draw with Salisbury and Tuesday night's 2-0 victory over Hampton & Richmond Borough.

Now they have added perhaps their most impressive result so far – an away victory over a Braintree side relegated from the National League last season.

And the man doing the damage was Greg Luer.

Luer struck twice for the visitors and was named star man as Horsham collected another three points. Braintree actually began brightly, with George Evans seeing an early header deflected over close to the line before Sam Howes was forced to punch away another dangerous delivery.

But Horsham absorbed that early pressure and punished the Iron when Luer found space and produced a composed low finish to put the visitors ahead. The forward would strike again during the

afternoon, with his brace ultimately proving the difference.

1 It is another huge contribution from Luer, who also scored Horsham's equaliser in their opening-day 1-1 draw at Torquay. Ashley Nadesan and Charlie Hester-Cook supplied the goals against Hampton on Tuesday, demonstrating that Di Paola is already getting contributions from different areas of his squad.

The statistics after four matches make particularly impressive reading.

Played four. Won two. Drawn two. Lost none. Five goals scored. Just two conceded. Eight points. Second in the National League South.

Only Dagenham & Redbridge sit above them.

For a club operating against some significantly bigger budgets at Step Two, Horsham continue to demonstrate just how far good recruitment, continuity and an experienced management team can take you.

Nobody at Hop Oast will be getting carried away after four matches, but this is no longer simply a promising start. Horsham look extremely comfortable at this level.

Next Saturday brings Farnham Town to the Fusion Aviation Community Stadium, and the Hornets suddenly have an opportunity to make an already excellent August even better.

DORKING PUNISHED AFTER TAKING THE LEAD
Dorking Wanderers 2 Maidstone United 3

If Horsham's afternoon was about control and resilience, Dorking's was about frustration.

Wanderers started positively at Meadowbank and were ahead midway through the opening half.

George Nikaj created the breakthrough himself, attacking down the flank before seeing his initial attempt saved by Lenny Holden. Nikaj reacted quickest to the rebound and fired Dorking ahead after 24 minutes.

The problem for Wanderers was what happened next.

Maidstone grew stronger after conceding and Tom Leahy brought the Stones level in the 36th minute, his effort crashing down off the underside of the crossbar and crossing the line.

After the break, the visitors took control.

Leahy turned provider eight minutes into the second half, releasing Ken Charles, who finished emphatically beyond Glenn Morris to put Maidstone 2-1 ahead.

Dorking pushed for an equaliser, but instead they were caught again after 76 minutes.

2 Riley Court collected possession and produced the goal of the afternoon, carrying the ball forward on a long run before rounding Morris and rolling into an empty net for 3-1.

Dorking were not finished.

Josh Barrett produced a beautifully improvised finish in the 86th minute, floating the ball over Holden from the right side of the penalty area to reduce the deficit to 3-2.

And they came agonisingly close to snatching something in stoppage time when Nikaj's effort took a deflection and flashed inches wide in the 95th minute.

Maidstone survived.

For Dorking, it represents their second home defeat of the season. Their opening four matches have now produced a 1-0 defeat to Dagenham, a 0-0 draw at Maidenhead, that impressive 3-0 midweek victory at AFC Totton and Saturday's 3-2 defeat.

Four points from four matches leaves Wanderers in 16th position.

There is clearly plenty of attacking quality in this Dorking squad, but finding consistency now becomes the challenge. A trip to bottom club Walton & Hersham next Saturday represents an immediate opportunity to respond.

DAGGERS SETTING THE EARLY STANDARD At the top, Dagenham & Redbridge simply refuse to drop points.

A 2-0 victory over Torquay United made it four wins from four, with Rodari scoring in the 40th and 68th minutes. The Daggers have seven goals for and just one against and already hold a four-point advantage over second-placed Horsham.

One of the results of the afternoon came at Weston-super-Mare, where Dover Athletic produced a dramatic 3-2 away victory.

Dover led through Decarrey Sheriff before Louis Britton struck either side of half-time to turn it around for Weston. The visitors responded through Williams before Andrews grabbed the winner in the 91st minute, inflicting Weston's first league defeat of the campaign.

Truro City continued their impressive opening with a 2-0 victory at Tonbridge Angels and sit fourth with seven points from only three matches, while Hemel Hempstead also moved onto seven after winning 2-1 at Salisbury.

Billericay Town returned from Farnham with a 4-2 victory, while Chesham United collected their first win by beating struggling Walton & Hersham 2-0.

3 There were goals everywhere at the Beveree as Hampton & Richmond Borough beat Slough Town 5-3 to collect their first three points of the season.

Folkestone Invicta and Chelmsford City remained unbeaten after drawing 1-1. Leo Sery gave Chelmsford the lead just before half-time before Joe Pigott converted a second-half penalty for Folkestone. Maidenhead United and Farnborough also shared the points in a 1-1 draw.

The scheduled Ebbsfleet United versus AFC Totton fixture was postponed as Ebbsfleet's National League suspension continued. New ownership has now taken control and funds have been provided to settle HMRC and football creditors, but the League extended the suspension pending further financial information and another review.

SATURDAY'S NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH RESULTS
Braintree Town 1-2 Horsham | Chesham United 2-0 Walton & Hersham | Dagenham & Redbridge 2-0 Torquay United | Dorking Wanderers 2-3 Maidstone United | Ebbsfleet United P-P AFC Totton | Farnham Town 2-4 Billericay Town | Folkestone Invicta 1-1 Chelmsford City | Hampton & Richmond Borough 5-3 Slough Town | Maidenhead United 1-1 Farnborough | Salisbury 1-2 Hemel Hempstead Town | Tonbridge Angels 0-2 Truro City | Weston-super-Mare 2-3 Dover Athletic.

Four games might not tell us who will be celebrating next April, but they can certainly give us some clues.

Dagenham have laid down the first serious marker.

Horsham are quietly building something very interesting.

And Dorking have enough attacking firepower to know their current position should not define their season.

The National League South is already warming up nicely — and if the opening fortnight is anything to go by, there is going to be very little room for error.

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

✓ P = W + D + L

✓ GD = F - A

✓ PTS = 3W + D

✓ 24 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH FIXTURES THIS WEEK

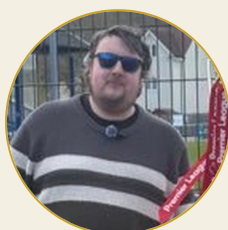
WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

SATURDAY 29 AUGUST — 3PM KICK-OFFS

SAT 29 AUG 15:00	AFC Totton	VS	Chesham United
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Billericay Town	VS	Tonbridge Angels
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Chelmsford City	VS	Maidenhead United
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Dover Athletic	VS	Braintree Town
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Farnborough	VS	Ebbsfleet United
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Hemel Hempstead Town	VS	Weston-super-Mare
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Horsham	VS	Farnham Town
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Maidstone United	VS	Salisbury
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Slough Town	VS	Folkestone Invicta
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Torquay United	VS	Hampton & Richmond Borough
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Truro City	VS	Dagenham & Redbridge
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Walton & Hersham	VS	Dorking Wanderers

HORSHAM FC — GENUINE PLAYOFF CONTENDERS, OR A FLASH IN THE PAN?

BY MATTHEW ROGERS



MATTHEW ROGERS

DUGOUT NEWS COLUMNIST • NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

Watching the Hornets' rise week by week

Horsham FC have had an incredibly respectable start to the season. Undefeated in their opening four fixtures, including a draw away against many people's favourites for the title, Torquay United. The Hornets have conceded just 2 goals across these opening 4 games, showing a resolution in defence which is almost unmatched across the rest of the league. At the time of writing, they are sitting in second position in the National League South, comfortably within the playoff places. However, I think it would be fair to say that, aside from Torquay, it's been a kind run of fixtures to start their campaign with. Braintree currently occupy 20th place, Hampton & Richmond 21st, and Salisbury are not far ahead in 15th. Three teams who have all struggled to start the season. So, the question is: are Horsham genuine playoff contenders, or is this just a flash in the pan based on kind opening fixtures? Let's discuss.

Firstly, it's important to note that there is no such thing as an easy game in the National League South. In my opinion, it is one of the most competitive leagues out there, and so Horsham getting a result against any team is something deserving of praise. Sure, some of their opponents may be out of form, but nothing is a given. The Hornets have to play a decent level of football to earn their results, their points are not just handed out to them freely. Up next for the Hornets is Farnham Town, who are down in 19th after a mixed

start to the season, another favourable fixture on paper, so when will the first real challenge present itself for Horsham?

Well, they don't have too long to wait for what will be the real eye opener, as they play current league leaders Dagenham & Redbridge at home on the 5th of September. That is most certainly a date for the diaries and should be a great watch. Even a draw in this match would really cement Horsham in my mind as genuine contenders for the playoffs (if not the title outright!). I certainly didn't have Horsham to finish that high. I expected them to be in and about the upper mid-table, following a pattern across their last several seasons of gradual growth, but they are far exceeding that.

A mention has to be made of Horsham's manager, Dominic Di Paola, who has been with the team for over 11 years. That sort of loyalty and longevity is not often seen at this level, or indeed any level of the game. He took over with the club facing relegation down to Step 5, and took them back to Step 4 at the first time of asking. And now here they are, after a comfortable first campaign after promotion, all the way up at Step 2 last season, they now find themselves hoping, daring to dream, of having a crack at promotion to the highest tier of non-league football. Dominic has overseen a revolution at the club, turning them into a real genuine power in the Sussex football scene. Whatever happens this season, there is no denying

the legacy he has already created for himself at the club. If he can take them all the way to Step 1, it will perhaps become one of the greatest stories of one man steering a club up the leagues that Sussex non-league football has seen.

There's a lot of football to be played before we have any real answers, but I'll be watching Horsham closely across the season. It won't always be easy, the first loss will (surely) come at some point, and then we will see how Horsham respond, how they bounce back from the lows, and that I think will

determine their season. So, to answer the question, are Horsham genuine contenders? I want to say ask me again after the Dagenham game, but as it stands right now, yes. I think they have enough about them to be up there, battling it out week after week for their chance to have a shot at promotion. Let me know your thoughts — are Horsham the team to watch, or are they overperforming thanks to a kind opening few fixtures? I'd love to hear your thoughts and get the conversation going, as this is a club that deserves to be talked about.

THE MISSING LINK IN WORTHING'S FOOTBALL PATHWAY

BY THE SUSSEX SCOUT



THE SUSSEX SCOUT

TALENT. CHARACTER. POTENTIAL.

Discovering Sussex. Developing futures.

Worthing FC are pulling away from the rest of the town's football pyramid, and the gap is now impossible to ignore. As the club pushes towards the Football League, the local game under it has been left without a clear bridge to follow.

Worthing FC are competing at Step 1 of the National League System, just one promotion below the Football League.

The standard at that level is quicker, stronger and increasingly professional, with some teams full time professionals. Players are expected to train regularly, understand complex tactical demands and perform consistently in front of significant crowds.

Within the surrounding area, however, there is currently no senior club operating at a level close enough to act as a natural stepping stone into the Worthing first team.

That is not intended as criticism of the excellent people running clubs such as Worthing United, Lancing, Shoreham, East Preston and other sides across the local football community. These clubs are built on the tireless work of volunteers and operate with completely different resources, facilities and budgets.

But the reality remains: a player performing well at Step 5 or Step 6 is being asked to make a huge jump if they are to become ready for Step 1 football.

It is not simply a question of talent. The difference can be seen in the speed of decision-making, physical conditioning, tactical discipline and the ability to execute under pressure. At Step 1, players are punished for mistakes that might go unchallenged further down the pyramid. Space disappears more quickly, opponents are physically stronger and every weakness is identified.

There will always be exceptional individuals capable of making that leap, but they are the exception rather than the foundation of a reliable pathway.

Worthing FC's continued progress has accelerated the issue. As the club has grown, the first team has understandably recruited players already proven at a high level or young professionals coming out of elite academies. That makes immediate sense for a club with ambitions to move even higher.

However, it also means that local players can find themselves caught in the middle. They may be too old for academy football but not yet ready for the National League South. Without an appropriate senior environment nearby, their options are limited.

They can remain in local football, where the gap may continue to grow, or travel elsewhere in search of a club competing at Step 3 or Step 4. Some will drift away from the game altogether.

This is the missing link in Worthing's football structure.

The town does not necessarily need another club attempting to compete directly with Worthing FC. What it needs is a genuine development partner capable of preparing players for the demands of higher-level football.

That relationship would have to involve more than occasionally sending out a young player for match minutes. It would require regular communication between coaching staffs, a shared player development framework, aligned sports science and conditioning standards, and a formalised loan system where progression targets are set, reviewed and acted upon. Players should not simply be "sent out" – they should be actively developed within a coordinated system.

A local partner club could provide competitive senior football for players who have outgrown youth football but are not yet ready for Worthing's first team. Worthing, in return, could support that club through coaching expertise, access to sports science support, structured player loans, and a clear commitment to supplying young talent with defined development objectives.

For this to work in practice, it must be formalised rather than informal. The next step should be the creation of a written partnership agreement between Worthing FC and a selected local club, setting out:

- * A defined player pathway from youth to senior football
- * A minimum number of dual-registered or loan players each season
- * Shared development plans for individual players
- * Regular joint coaching meetings and performance reviews
- * A commitment to improving coaching standards across both environments
- * A long-term objective of raising the partner club towards Step 4 football

Without these structures, the pathway will remain theoretical rather than functional.

Worthing United, in particular, could have an important part to play. The club already operates within the town, carries Worthing's name and

provides senior football to local players. With the right investment, infrastructure and formal alignment with Worthing FC, it could be positioned as the town's official development partner.

However, this must be approached as a strategic project rather than a symbolic gesture. It would require board-level commitment from both clubs, external support where possible, and a clear multi-year roadmap with measurable milestones.

The first practical step should be the formation of a joint working group between Worthing FC and the selected partner club within the next off-season. This group should be tasked with designing the pathway structure, identifying initial loan players, and agreeing the coaching and performance standards required for implementation at the start of the following season.

From there, the focus should shift to execution: placing players into the system, monitoring their development, and adjusting the model based on real outcomes rather than assumptions.

The wider benefit would extend beyond Worthing FC. Young players across the area would be able to see a visible, structured route from grassroots football into senior competition and potentially towards the professional game. Local coaches would gain greater knowledge, clubs would retain more talented players, and the overall standard of football in the area would rise.

Worthing should be proud to have a club competing so successfully at this step. But Worthing FC's rise has exposed how far the rest of the local football structure is currently behind.

The challenge now is not to hold Worthing FC back. It is to build the system beneath it.

Until that happens, Worthing FC will continue to sit at the top of the town's football pyramid – but with several steps missing immediately beneath them.

The Sussex Scout

ROOKS ROAR WHILE BRIDGES AND HAWKS SUFFER

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION — SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



DOUGIE

DUGOUT AI • ROUND-UP REPORTER

Every result and table checked and rebuilt by the Dugout AI engine



Sussex experienced just about every emotion possible on another dramatic Saturday in the Isthmian Premier Division.

Lewes were undoubtedly the county's biggest winners, coming from behind to defeat AFC Whyteleafe 3-1 at the Dripping Pan and continue an impressive response to their opening-day nightmare.

Burgess Hill Town came away from Cheshunt with a useful point, Eastbourne Borough suffered their first league defeat of the campaign at Cray Wanderers, while it was a difficult afternoon for both Whitehawk and Three Bridges.

Elsewhere, Carshalton Athletic maintained their perfect start, Welling United produced arguably the result of the day by dismantling previously perfect Dartford, and there were thumping away victories for Maldon & Tiptree and Aveley.

Saturday produced 11 Isthmian Premier matches, with goals everywhere and more evidence that this division could be absolutely wide open behind the early leaders.

LEWES RESPOND IN STYLE

LEWES 3 AFC WHYTELEAFE 1

There was plenty to like about Lewes at the Dripping Pan.

Craig Nelson's side actually found themselves behind after only six minutes when Ryan Gondoh struck for AFC Whyteleafe, but rather than allowing that early blow to unsettle them, the Rooks responded almost immediately.

Josh Spinks brought Lewes level in the 15th minute and from there the home side began to take control.

The timing of their second goal could hardly have been better.

Just two minutes after the restart, Tommy Bassett struck to put Lewes 2-1 ahead and change the entire complexion of the afternoon. Whyteleafe were now forced to chase the game while Lewes could pick their moments.

The points were finally secured two minutes from time when Fisher grabbed the third.

It completed a convincing turnaround and, perhaps more importantly, maintained the momentum Lewes have created since their brutal 4-0 opening-day defeat at home to Enfield Town.

Since then, the Rooks have drawn 0-0 away at Whitehawk, beaten St Albans City 2-0 away and now defeated Whyteleafe 3-1.

That is seven points from the last nine available, with five goals scored and only one conceded during that three-game stretch.

There is something particularly encouraging about the manner of Saturday's victory.

Going behind inside six minutes could easily have brought memories of that opening day flooding back. Instead, Lewes responded, stayed composed and eventually imposed themselves on the game.

Nelson described his players as “excellent” after falling behind, and you can understand why.

This was not simply a case of holding onto an early advantage. Lewes had to solve a problem, change the direction of the match and then finish the job.

Seven points from four games represents a very respectable start, especially considering where they were after that first Saturday.

The Rooks are beginning to look dangerous.

EASTBOURNE FINALLY BEATEN

CRAY WANDERERS 2 EASTBOURNE BOROUGH 1

Eastbourne Borough’s unbeaten opening to the season came to an end at Flamingo Park, although Steve King’s side came desperately close to producing another late escape.

The Sports travelled to Cray having collected seven points from their opening three fixtures.

A 2-2 draw at Aveley had been followed by consecutive 3-2 victories against Three Bridges and Brentwood Town, the latter featuring a Kai Corbett hat-trick.

That made Borough one of the early pace-setters.

Cray had other ideas.

Ade Yusuff gave the hosts the lead after 23 minutes and the 1-0 advantage survived all the way into the closing stages.

With Eastbourne pushing forward in search of an equaliser, Anthony Hernandez struck in the 86th minute to seemingly put the game beyond them.

2 But Borough kept going.

T. Wilson pulled one back deep into stoppage time, scoring in the 93rd minute to make it 2-1, but there was simply not enough time left to complete another comeback.

It leaves Eastbourne with seven points from four games — hardly a reason for alarm.

They have scored nine goals already, demonstrating that attacking output is unlikely to be their biggest concern this season.

The other end may be where Steve King looks for improvement.

Borough have conceded in every league match so far and their opening four fixtures have produced 17 goals in total.

Entertaining? Absolutely.

Relaxing for the management team? Probably not.

Next Saturday brings Leatherhead to the Connect Management Stadium before a Bank Holiday Sussex blockbuster against Lewes at the Dripping Pan two days later.

That Lewes-Eastbourne fixture already looks tasty.

HILLIANS TAKE A POINT ON THE ROAD

CHESHUNT 1 BURGESS HILL TOWN 1

Burgess Hill Town were denied all three points late on at Cheshunt but will still view another away point as useful progress.

The Hillians went ahead through Fenelon after 23 minutes and held that advantage deep into the second half.

For long periods it looked as though that single goal might prove enough.

But Cheshunt finally found a response when T. Wood equalised in the 78th minute, leaving the sides to share the points.

Burgess Hill now have five points from their opening four matches.

There have already been signs of what this Hillians side is capable of.

They lost 2-0 at Brentwood on opening day but bounced back impressively by hammering AFC Whyteleafe 3-0, then drew 2-2 with a strong Leatherhead side before Saturday’s point at Cheshunt.

3 Managerial teams always talk about making yourselves difficult to beat, and Burgess Hill have now lost only once in their last three.

The return of last season's leading scorer George Vorster, initially on loan, should also provide another attacking option, while Charlie Lambert has joined to increase competition further.

The Hillians host Dartford on Friday night.

Given what happened to Dartford on Saturday, Burgess Hill may feel the timing is not the worst in the world.

A TOUGH AFTERNOON FOR WHITEHAWK

WHITEHAWK 0 CHATHAM TOWN 3

Whitehawk's search for a first league victory continues after Chatham Town left the Enclosed Ground with an emphatic 3-0 win.

J. Wild opened the scoring after 19 minutes before a major moment arrived in the 34th minute when M. Jones was shown a red card.

Playing with ten men against a Chatham side that has started the season strongly was always going to make the task considerably harder.

Wild grabbed his second five minutes after the interval and an own goal in the 88th minute completed the scoring.

The scoreline leaves Whitehawk with only one point from four games.

Their opening-day 2-0 loss at Welling was followed by a goalless Sussex derby draw with Lewes before they were narrowly beaten 3-2 at Aveley.

Saturday was their first heavy defeat.

That distinction matters.

The Hawks have been competitive for much of the opening fortnight, but one point is still one point and they will want to get that first victory on the board quickly before an uncomfortable league position begins to develop into something more significant.

Their next league assignment takes them to Enfield Town next Saturday, before the Bank Holiday brings an all-Sussex clash with Burgess Hill.

4 BRIDGES HIT FOR FIVE

THREE BRIDGES 1 AVELEY 5

If there is one Sussex club desperate to draw a line under August so far, it is Three Bridges.

Bridges went into Saturday having lost their opening three fixtures, although the performances had been far more competitive than a zero in the points column might suggest.

They lost 3-2 to Dartford.

They lost 3-2 at Eastbourne Borough.

They lost 3-1 at Chatham Town.

Saturday, unfortunately, was different.

Aveley were ruthless.

T. Aromolaran converted a 22nd-minute penalty and added his second in the 38th minute to send the visitors into the interval with a commanding advantage.

Three Bridges briefly threatened a revival when Hayden Velvick struck seven minutes into the second half to make it 2-1.

At that stage, game on.

But Aveley responded with authority.

O. Peters converted another penalty in the 65th minute before C. Harris made it 4-1 after 77 minutes.

Z. Al Hussaini completed the scoring three minutes from time.

The numbers are difficult reading.

Four games.

Four defeats.

Six scored.

Fourteen conceded.

Zero points.

5 Yet Bridges have scored in every match.

That tells you this is not a side incapable of competing at Step Three. The bigger problem is obvious: they are conceding far too many goals.

Fourteen in four matches averages 3.5 per game.

You can possess all the attacking talent in the division, but winning games becomes incredibly difficult when you continually need to score three or four yourselves.

Their trip to Dulwich Hamlet next Saturday will now be about character as much as tactics.

They need something to change the mood.

CARSHALTON KEEP THEIR PERFECT RECORD Away from Sussex, Carshalton Athletic remain the early team to catch.

Stanway Rovers shocked the leaders by taking a third-minute lead through S. Toussaint, but J. Jebb's 30th-minute penalty drew Carshalton level before P. Kandolo struck nine minutes into the second half.

The 2-1 win means Carshalton have taken maximum points from their opening four fixtures.

That is a serious start.

WELLING DESTROY DARTFORD'S PERFECT RECORD One of the standout results anywhere in the division came at Princes Park.

Dartford entered Saturday with three wins from three.

They left having been beaten 3-0 at home by Welling United.

N. Cooper opened the scoring just before half-time, N. Melvin-Lambert doubled the advantage five minutes after the restart and F. Shomotun made it three after 60 minutes.

Welling move onto nine points and inflicted Dartford's first defeat in brutal fashion.

MALDON STUN LEATHERHEAD Leatherhead were another unbeaten side whose record disappeared.

Maldon & Tiptree arrived having taken only three points from their opening three matches but produced a superb 4-1 away victory.

6 I. Akanbi struck in first-half stoppage time, and although Leatherhead levelled shortly after the restart, Maldon ran away with it late on.

T. Addy and C. Fage-Burgin were among the scorers before an own goal rounded off an extraordinary afternoon.

RAMSGATE RUN RIOT Ramsgate produced another of Saturday's major statements, beating St Albans City 4-0 at Southwood.

That result takes Ramsgate onto six points and brings St Albans sharply back down to earth after collecting six from their opening three.

Meanwhile, Enfield Town continued their strong start with a 3-1 victory at Brentwood Town, moving themselves onto nine points.

Wingate & Finchley also celebrated their first league victory of the campaign by defeating Dulwich Hamlet 1-0.

The afternoon therefore produced several results that very few would have confidently predicted beforehand.

That is the Isthmian Premier for you.

SATURDAY'S ISTHMIAN PREMIER RESULTS Brentwood Town 1-3 Enfield Town | Cheshunt 1-1 Burgess Hill Town | Cray Wanderers 2-1 Eastbourne Borough | Dartford 0-3 Welling United | Leatherhead 1-4 Maldon & Tiptree | Lewes 3-1 AFC Whyteleafe | Ramsgate 4-0 St Albans City | Stanway Rovers 1-2 Carshalton Athletic | Three Bridges 1-5 Aveley | Whitehawk 0-3 Chatham Town | Wingate & Finchley 1-0 Dulwich Hamlet.

THE SUSSEX VERDICT Four games in is far too early to start writing anybody's season, but there are already some clear themes developing.

Lewes have recovered superbly from their opening-day disaster. Seven points from nine since then represents a proper response.

Eastbourne Borough remain one of the most dangerous attacking sides in the division and

seven points from four is a good return, even if tightening things defensively might be the next challenge.

Burgess Hill Town look competitive again and are quietly assembling points.

7 For Whitehawk, the priority is simply getting that first win and stopping the lower reaches of the table becoming home.

And Three Bridges need something quickly. They have goals in the team, but fourteen conceded in four is the number that has to change.

At the top, Carshalton have laid down the first marker.

Behind them?

Take your pick.

Four matches into this Isthmian Premier campaign, the only thing that looks certain is that absolutely nothing is certain.

And with Sussex derbies, Bank Holiday fixtures and an FA Cup weekend around the corner, it is only just getting started.

8

ISTHMIAN PREMIER DIVISION

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

D
DUGOUT AI

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

✓ P = W + D + L

✓ GD = F - A

✓ PTS = 3W + D

✓ 22 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

ISTHMIAN PREMIER FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

FRIDAY 28 & SATURDAY 29 AUGUST

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Burgess Hill Town	VS	Dartford
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	AFC Whyteleafe	VS	Cheshunt
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Aveley	VS	Lewes
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Carshalton Athletic	VS	Brentwood Town
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Chatham Town	VS	Wingate & Finchley
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Dulwich Hamlet	VS	Three Bridges
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Eastbourne Borough	VS	Leatherhead
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Enfield Town	VS	Whitehawk
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Maldon & Tiptree	VS	Cray Wanderers
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	St Albans City	VS	Stanway Rovers
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Welling United	VS	Ramsgate

HASTINGS HIT THE SUMMIT AS CROWS SOAR IN THE CUP

ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST ROUND-UP — SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



HASTINGS UNITED CELEBRATE WITH THE TRAVELLING SUPPORT

PHOTO: HASTINGS UNITED FC (X) / JESS CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY

Sussex football had plenty to shout about in the Isthmian South East on Saturday as Hastings United powered to the top of the table, Broadbridge Heath smashed four at home and Crowborough Athletic continued an increasingly interesting FA Cup adventure.

It wasn't quite such a happy afternoon everywhere.

Peacehaven & Telscombe were dumped out of the FA Cup by divisional rivals Margate, Eastbourne Town suffered a heavy Cup defeat at Erith Town and newly-promoted Steyning Town remain without a point after losing at Merstham.

Unlike a normal league Saturday, the programme was split because the FA Cup Preliminary Round was scheduled for 22 August. That left only three South East league fixtures taking place, while many of the division's clubs attempted to progress towards First Round Qualifying.

For Dugout News, though, the headline is difficult to miss.

Hastings United are top of the Isthmian South East. Three games. Three wins. Nine points.

Not a bad way to announce your intentions.

HASTINGS MAKE IT THREE FROM THREE

ASHFORD UNITED 1 HASTINGS UNITED 3

Hastings United's relegation from the Isthmian Premier last season could have gone one of two ways.

There could have been a hangover, a loss of confidence and a period of adjustment to life back at Step Four.

Instead, Hastings have started like a club that intends its stay in the South East Division to be a short one.

Saturday's 3-1 victory at Ashford United made it three consecutive league wins and took Hastings clear at the summit with nine points from nine.

They had already defeated AFC Croydon Athletic 2-1 on the opening weekend before travelling along the Sussex coast and beating Eastbourne Town 2-0 on Tuesday evening.

At Ashford they were at it again.

1 Hastings established a 2-0 half-time lead before eventually completing a commanding 3-1 victory.

With three games played, they have scored seven goals and conceded only twice.

That is the sort of start every manager wants.

There was certainly pressure on new boss Ronnie Dolan when he took charge during the summer. Hastings are a club with a large support base for this level and expectations will understandably be high after dropping down from the Premier Division.

So far, the response has been emphatic.

Hastings opened with goals from Knory Scott Erskine and Jack Walsh in the 2-1 win against AFC Croydon. Then came Tuesday's Sussex derby at Eastbourne Town, where Kesna Clarke struck in the 39th minute before Dolan added the second in the 79th.

Saturday made it seven league goals already and, perhaps more importantly, another three points away from home.

It should also be remembered that Hastings suffered an early FA Cup disappointment when Kingstonian knocked them out 4-1 in the Extra Preliminary Round.

That could have disrupted their opening month.

Instead, league football has provided the perfect response.

Right now the table reads beautifully for the U's:

P3 W3 D0 L0 GF7 GA2 GD+5 PTS9.

Sittingbourne and Margate sit immediately behind them on seven points, but Hastings are the only South East side still boasting a 100 per cent league record after Saturday's matches.

Nobody wins a league in August.

But you can certainly tell the rest of the division that you mean business.

Hastings have done exactly that.

BEARS BITE BACK WITH FOUR

BROADBRIDGE HEATH 4 HORLEY TOWN 1

Another Sussex club with every reason to enjoy Saturday evening was Broadbridge Heath.

2 The Bears produced their best result of the young campaign by beating Horley Town 4-1 at the Air Engineering Stadium.

It was their first league victory of the season and extended their unbeaten start in South East league competition.

Broadbridge had opened their league programme on Tuesday with a lively 2-2 draw against South Park, with Mason Doughty and Ben Royall putting the Bears 2-0 ahead before the visitors fought back through Bradley Wilson and Jerry O'Sullivan.

This time there was no comeback.

Four goals, three points and an emphatic first win.

It takes Broadbridge Heath onto four points from their opening two league matches, with six scored and three conceded. That puts them right among the early group behind the leading sides.

There is an interesting story developing at Broadbridge.

Their FA Cup campaign was ended before the league season really got going, with AFC Greenwich Borough winning 1-0 at Broadbridge in the Extra Preliminary Round, and South Park then knocked them out of the FA Trophy.

Cup competitions have therefore been unkind.

The league has been different.

A draw followed by a four-goal victory is a very respectable beginning, particularly in a division containing several clubs with serious promotion ambitions.

Horley, meanwhile, are finding Step Four extremely difficult.

Saturday was their third successive league defeat and leaves them at the bottom end of the table. For Broadbridge Heath, it was exactly the sort of fixture you need to win if you want to establish yourself in the top half.

They didn't scrape it.

They won 4-1.

That will give Chris Simmons and his players real confidence.

3 CROWS KEEP FLYING IN THE FA CUP

EPSOM & EWELL 0 CROWBOROUGH ATHLETIC 3

If there was a Sussex performance to rival Hastings for result of the day, it came from Crowborough Athletic.

The Crows travelled to face Epsom & Ewell and returned with an excellent 3-0 victory, booking their place in the FA Cup First Qualifying Round.

It continues a superb start to their Cup campaign.

Crowborough had already travelled all the way to Guernsey in the Extra Preliminary Round and returned with a remarkable 5-0 victory. The Isthmian League highlighted that result as one of the standout wins from the opening round.

Now they have followed five away goals with another three away goals.

Eight scored.

None conceded.

Two FA Cup ties won on the road.

That is impressive.

The league campaign has been a little more mixed. Crowborough lost 2-1 at Margate on the opening weekend despite a goal from Samuel-Smikle, but they responded on Tuesday by beating fellow Sussex club Steyning 1-0 through a 21st-minute Duncan strike.

Saturday therefore makes it two competitive wins in succession.

For a club adjusting to Isthmian football, a Cup run can be incredibly valuable. It generates belief, interest and, importantly at this level, additional prize money and another potentially attractive fixture.

Crowborough are beginning to look very comfortable with the step up.

And anyone drawing the Crows in the next round might want to avoid assuming that newly-promoted means inexperienced.

They are proving otherwise.

4 PEACEHAVEN'S FAST START HITS A CUP WALL

PEACEHAVEN & TELSCOMBE 1 MARGATE 4

Peacehaven have been one of the most entertaining teams in the South East during the opening fortnight.

Saturday, however, belonged to Margate.

The Tye was hoping for another memorable Cup afternoon after Peacehaven had beaten Horsham YMCA 2-1 in the Extra Preliminary Round. Instead, divisional rivals Margate ran out 4-1 winners and ended the Sussex side's FA Cup campaign. Peacehaven's progression from the previous round had followed that 2-1 success at Horsham YMCA.

It is a disappointing result, but it should not overshadow how impressive Peacehaven's league return has been.

Their opening South East match was spectacular.

PEACEHAVEN 4 WHITSTABLE TOWN 0

Connor Tighe scored twice inside the opening 12 minutes, including one from the penalty spot, before Parker made it three on the half-hour and Edwards completed the scoring late on.

Then came one of the craziest matches of the season so far.

Peacehaven travelled to Merstham on Wednesday and raced into a 3-0 lead through Cal Edwards and another Tighe double.

Game over?

Not remotely.

Merstham scored in the 67th, 69th and 90th minutes to somehow rescue a 3-3 draw.

That means Peacehaven have four points from two league matches, scoring seven goals in the process.

Saturday's Cup defeat hurts, particularly at home, but there remains plenty to be optimistic about.

And Tuesday brings a very interesting fixture:

Eastbourne Town v Peacehaven & Telscombe.

Two Sussex clubs coming off disappointing FA Cup defeats.

That should have a bit of edge to it.

5 EASTBOURNE TOWN BOW OUT

ERITH TOWN 3 EASTBOURNE TOWN 0

Eastbourne Town also saw their FA Cup campaign ended on Saturday as fellow South East side Erith Town won 3-0.

It was Town's second successive defeat without scoring following Tuesday's 2-0 home loss against Hastings.

Their season had started more positively.

Eastbourne progressed through the Extra Preliminary Round by beating AFC Varndeanians 3-1, before earning a 1-1 league draw at Punjab United. Rogers put Eastbourne ahead in that match before Punjab equalised through Brian Edwards with ten minutes remaining.

Since then it has been tougher.

Hastings won at the Saffrons and now Erith have ended the Cup run.

One point from the opening two league fixtures leaves Eastbourne towards the lower end of an admittedly very early table.

That makes Tuesday's Sussex meeting with Peacehaven even more intriguing.

A win changes the entire mood.

August football can be like that.

STEYNING STILL SEARCHING FOR FIRST POINTS

MERSTHAM 3 STEYNING TOWN 1

The difficult start continues for newly-promoted Steyning Town.

Saturday's 3-1 defeat at Merstham makes it three league losses from three.

There was at least one positive: Steyning finally got themselves on the scoresheet in league competition.

Their opening match ended in a 2-0 home defeat against Ashford United, with Isiaka scoring both goals for the visitors.

Then came Tuesday's Sussex derby at Crowborough, where Duncan's 21st-minute strike was enough to condemn Steyning to a 1-0 defeat.

Saturday brought another loss.

6 Three matches, no points, one goal scored and six conceded leaves Steyning at the foot of the early table alongside another newly-promoted side in Horley.

But context matters.

Steyning earned their place at Step Four and are now adapting to a level where mistakes are punished much more ruthlessly.

There is a long way to go.

The priority is getting that first point — or preferably that first win — and allowing the confidence from last season to reappear.

ELSEWHERE — MARGATE, SITTINGBOURNE AND SHEPPEY ADVANCE Several of Hastings' potential promotion rivals enjoyed productive FA Cup afternoons.

Margate's 4-1 win at Peacehaven keeps their excellent start rolling. They already have seven league points from three matches and sit immediately behind Hastings among the early leaders.

Sittingbourne, who also have seven points, progressed with a 2-1 victory at Erith & Belvedere.

Sheppey United made light work of their trip to Rusthall, winning 3-0.

Whitstable Town also enjoyed a much-needed afternoon to celebrate by hammering Sussex side Newhaven 5-0.

Not everyone progressed.

Cray Valley Paper Mills were stunned 4-2 at home by FA Cup debutants AFC Greenwich Borough. Stefan Payne scored twice for Greenwich, who continued a remarkable maiden run in the competition. Cray Valley's Chris Dickson scored twice, including a penalty, but the visitors deservedly advanced.

Deal Town were beaten 2-1 by Southall, while Faversham Town's trip to Bedfont finished goalless and therefore required another meeting.

Punjab United and SE Dons also could not be separated, drawing 1-1.

AFC Croydon Athletic's Cup tie at Sussex club Midhurst & Easebourne was moved to Sunday, meaning they were not part of Saturday's programme.

SATURDAY'S SOUTH EAST DIVISION SCOREBOARD
LEAGUE: Ashford United 1-3 Hastings United | Broadbridge Heath 4-1 Horley Town | Merstham 3-1 Steyning Town.

7 FA CUP: Bedfont 0-0 Faversham Town | Cray Valley PM 2-4 AFC Greenwich Borough | Deal Town 1-2 Southall | Epsom & Ewell 0-3 Crowborough Athletic | Erith & Belvedere 1-2 Sittingbourne | Erith Town 3-0 Eastbourne Town | Peacehaven & Telscombe 1-4 Margate | Punjab United 1-1 SE Dons | Rusthall 0-3 Sheppey United | Whitstable Town 5-0 Newhaven.

The Preliminary Round was the scheduled FA Cup stage for Saturday 22 August, with league fixtures continuing for clubs already eliminated from the competition.

THE SUSSEX VERDICT When you look across Sussex, one club unquestionably owns the league

headline.

Hastings United.

Three matches. Three victories. Top of the table.

After relegation, that is precisely the response their supporters wanted to see.

Not far behind in terms of encouragement are Broadbridge Heath, unbeaten in their opening two league fixtures and now sitting on four points after putting four past Horley.

Crowborough Athletic might have the best Cup story of the lot. They have travelled to Guernsey and Epsom & Ewell, won both matches, scored eight goals and conceded none.

Peacehaven will be disappointed by Saturday but their league return remains hugely encouraging: four points and seven goals from two games.

For Eastbourne Town, Tuesday's meeting with Peacehaven offers a perfect opportunity to turn the momentum back in their favour.

And for Steyning, nobody needs to tell them the start has been difficult. Three defeats is three defeats. But this is a newly-promoted club adapting to Step Four, not a season being decided in August.

So after another fascinating weekend, Sussex has the team sitting top of the Isthmian South East, another unbeaten in the league, another still flying the county flag in the FA Cup — and two Sussex derbies already waiting just around the corner.

If the first couple of weeks are anything to go by, the Isthmian South East is going to give us plenty to write about this season.

8

ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

- ✓ $P = W + D + L$
- ✓ $GD = F - A$
- ✓ $PTS = 3W + D$
- ✓ 22 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026
DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

OUT NEWS • ISSUE 3 • SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2

SOUTH EAST FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

MIDWEEK — TUESDAY 25 AUGUST

TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Crowborough Athletic	VS	South Park (Reigate)
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Eastbourne Town	VS	Peacehaven & Telscombe
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Erith Town	VS	Sevenoaks Town
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Faversham Town	VS	Punjab United
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Sheppey United	VS	Herne Bay
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Whitstable Town	VS	Deal Town

BROADBRIDGE HEATH 4-1 HORLEY TOWN

BY CHRIS SIMMONS



BROADBRIDGE HEATH – THE BEARS SQUAD 2026/27

PHOTO: BROADBRIDGE HEATH FC (X)

First win of the season for The Bears.

Despite only being 14 miles apart this match at the Air Engineering Stadium was only the second ever League meeting between the sides, the last one being in January 2020 before COVID brought the season to an early conclusion.

The visitors playing their third league match of the season are still seeking their first point and it didn't get any easier for them with Matt Hay putting The Bears ahead on 3 minutes when he received the ball wide on the right, shrugged off a defender's challenge with his shoulder, cut inside the penalty area and finished with a low left foot shot from 16 yards past Horley Town goalkeeper Sam Saward.

The visitors belied their lowly position and went on to create the better goal scoring opportunities. Coby Acquaye blasted the ball high over the Heath crossbar from the angle but only 6 yards from goal, Henry Swann struck a right foot shot from the edge of the penalty area that was blocked by a Heath defender and Isaac Olaniyan tried his luck with a left foot shot from distance which went harmlessly through to The Bears goalkeeper Alfie Hadfield.

Despite those chances though it was Chris Simmons' Broadbridge Heath side who came close to doubling their lead midway through the half when Luke Bejashvili advanced down the left flank and played the ball into the 18 yard box for Mason Doughty to run on to and strike a goal-bound shot first time with his left foot which was well saved by Saward.

Heath doubled their lead a minute before the break with the old route one football. Hadfield received the ball from his fullback just outside his own 6 yard box and played a long ball straight down the middle of the park. Doughty and Horley's Adam Allen were in hot pursuit with the Horley Town skipper attempting to head the ball back to his goalkeeper, but Doughty nipped in between them, took the ball wide of Saward and finished with a left foot shot to give his team a somewhat fortunate 2-0 half-time lead.

It was not a good afternoon for the Horley skipper. With just 4 minutes of the half played he played a pass from the left back position across the back line to his team-mate Ashley Sheppard, but again Doughty was on it in a flash to intercept the pass, advance on goal, take it around Saward and score from close range.

Heath went on to see the second half out comfortably without being at their best. The visitors pulled a goal back on 87 minutes when Olaniyan crossed the ball from the left wing towards the far post where it was met by former Heath player Ben Dyson arriving late to bundle it across the line.

There was still time for Heath to add a fourth when debutant Jack Church was bundled over in the penalty area and Pemi Yakubu stepped up to convert from the spot kick for his first goal for his new club.

MOM: Charlie Connell.

Simmo said afterwards: "It was a really poor game, that was probably the worst we have played in a long time but luckily for us, Horley made too many mistakes and we punished them on this occasion. It's the first time as a manager of being 2-0 up at half time and still exploding in the changing room! The standards were nowhere near our levels but the lads accepted that, and 3 points at home and four points from 2 games is not a bad start."

Team: Hadfield, Cotton, Royall, Marino (Thiselton 84), Peters, Salaam (Terry 65), Yakubu, Connell, Hay (Bejashvili 74), Doughty, Evans.

SUSSEX PAIR DUMPED OUT AS SOUTH CENTRAL SIDES FACE FA CUP JOY AND PAIN

ISTHMIAN SOUTH CENTRAL / FA CUP ROUND-UP – SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN IN FA CUP ACTION AT NYEWOOD LANE

PHOTO: BOGNOR REGIS TOWN FC (X)

There was no Isthmian South Central league action on Saturday as the FA Cup Preliminary Round took centre stage — and for Sussex it proved to be an afternoon to forget.

The county has just two representatives in this season's South Central Division, Bognor Regis Town and Littlehampton Town, and both saw their FA Cup journeys brought to an end.

For Bognor, the manner of the defeat will hurt.

The Rocks led at Nyewood Lane against East Grinstead Town, only to be hit by two late goals and lose 2-1 to lower-league Sussex opposition.

Littlehampton also bowed out, beaten 3-1 at divisional rivals Cobham.

Around the rest of the South Central clubs there was just about everything: Hendon continued their remarkable goalscoring start, Hayes & Yeading won a nine-goal thriller, Jersey Bulls had a hat-trick hero, Windsor & Eton hit five, Raynes Park Vale were stunned by Step 5 opposition and several ties will require replays.

ROCKS STUNNED AT NYEWOOD LANE

BOGNOR REGIS TOWN 1 EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN 2

This is exactly the sort of afternoon which demonstrates why the FA Cup remains so addictive — although nobody connected with Bognor Regis Town will be particularly interested in hearing that this morning.

The Rocks went into the tie as favourites.

They had already beaten Abbey Rangers 3-0 in the Extra Preliminary Round and had begun their South Central league campaign unbeaten.

A 4-2 victory over Windsor & Eton was followed by Wednesday night's goalless draw away at AFC Portchester, leaving Bognor on four points from their opening two league matches.

Everything therefore appeared to be moving in the right direction.

And after a goalless opening 45 minutes against East Grinstead, the Rocks appeared to be taking

control when they finally broke the deadlock in the 54th minute.

1 At that stage, you would have expected Bognor to see the job through.

They did not.

East Grinstead stayed in the contest and, in the 76th minute, produced the equaliser which completely changed the mood around Nyewood Lane.

Suddenly Bognor were no longer protecting a lead. They were involved in a cup tie.

Then came the killer blow.

With the game reaching the 90th minute, East Grinstead struck again to complete the turnaround and send Bognor crashing out 2-1.

It is a significant result for both clubs.

For East Grinstead, this is exactly what the early rounds of the FA Cup are about: going away to higher-level opposition, staying alive when behind and taking the opportunity when it arrives.

For Bognor, it is a wasted opportunity.

The Rocks have begun their league campaign encouragingly and looked capable of putting together a useful cup run. Instead, their FA Cup adventure is over before the end of August.

The positive is that this does not alter what has been a decent opening in the league.

Bognor remain unbeaten in South Central competition, and Saturday represents their first real setback of the competitive campaign rather than evidence of any wider problem.

But cup defeats against lower-division opposition always sting.

There will be no time to dwell on it either.

Because next up?

Littlehampton Town away on Tuesday night.

A Sussex derby involving two sides who will both arrive wanting an immediate reaction.

That suddenly looks even more interesting.

2 GOLDEN BOYS ALSO BOW OUT

COBHAM 3 LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN 1

Littlehampton's return to Step Four continues to provide a brutal early examination.

The Golds were reprieved into the Isthmian South Central Division for 2026/27 and have already discovered just how unforgiving this level can be.

There was early encouragement in the FA Cup when Littlehampton defeated Eastbourne United 1-0 in the Extra Preliminary Round.

Since then, results have been difficult.

Their league campaign began with a 3-1 defeat away at Southall.

Tuesday night produced the same scoreline at home to Westfield, despite Littlehampton taking an early lead through Powell after only 11 minutes.

And now another 3-1 defeat has followed, this time in the FA Cup at Cobham.

That is three consecutive defeats and nine goals conceded across those matches.

Nobody needs to panic in August, particularly when a club has stepped into a tougher division, but Littlehampton will know results need to begin turning.

There are positives.

They have found the net in both league games and again on Saturday. The issue has been keeping the opposition out.

At Step Four, you simply do not get away with giving teams repeated opportunities.

Cobham certainly took theirs and now progress to First Round Qualifying.

For Littlehampton, attention turns completely back to the league — and Tuesday night's home Sussex derby against Bognor suddenly feels important for both sides.

The Golds need their first league points.

The Rocks need to respond to an FA Cup upset.

You suspect neither will require much motivation.

3 HENDON KEEP HAMMERING TEAMS

HENDON 4 HERTFORD TOWN 0

If anybody was wondering whether Hendon's 7-0 destruction of Raynes Park Vale in midweek was a freak result, Saturday provided a fairly convincing answer.

Hendon put another four past Hertford Town without reply.

That means they have scored 11 goals in their last two competitive matches.

Their league campaign has already started with two victories from two and ten goals scored, and their FA Cup progress simply adds to the sense that Hendon could become a serious force in this division.

There are plenty of clubs with promotion ambitions in South Central, but Hendon are making an enormous amount of noise very early.

JERSEY'S HAT-TRICK HERO

JERSEY BULLS 4 SHEERWATER 1

Jersey Bulls also advanced convincingly, beating Sheerwater 4-1 in Saturday's early kick-off.

The star was Sammy Henia-Kamau, who struck a hat-trick to send the Bulls comfortably into the next round.

Jersey have also started positively in the league, collecting four points from their first two matches, and the Bulls are rapidly looking like another club capable of being involved towards the upper end of the table.

A cup run would do the mood at Springfield no harm whatsoever.

HAYES WIN NINE-GOAL SHOOTOUT

HAYES & YEADING UNITED 6 WHITE ENSIGN 3

Defending apparently became optional at Hayes & Yeading.

Nine goals were shared as the South Central side eventually came through 6-3 against White Ensign.

Ben Purcell and Ross Derham both scored twice as Hayes booked their place in First Round Qualifying.

For anyone who paid admission, excellent value.

For either management team?

4 Possibly a slightly different opinion.

VALE SUFFER CUP NIGHTMARE

RAYNES PARK VALE 1 PETTS WOOD & HOLMESDALE 5

One of Saturday's biggest shocks came at Grand Drive.

Raynes Park Vale were demolished 5-1 at home by Petts Wood & Holmesdale, a side playing one level below them.

The visitors were already 3-0 ahead by half-time through two goals from Charlie Clover and another from Conor Evans.

Danal Hassan briefly reduced the deficit for Vale, but Joel Wakefield and Ryan Mahal added further goals to complete a remarkable away victory.

It completes a terrible week for Raynes Park.

They were beaten 7-0 by Hendon on Tuesday and have now conceded another five.

That is 12 conceded in two matches.

August can turn very quickly in non-league football.

Vale need to stop the slide.

WINDSOR HIT FIVE Windsor & Eton enjoyed one of the biggest South Central victories of the afternoon, thrashing North Leigh 5-0.

After losing 4-2 at Bognor on their league opener and then edging Cobham 1-0, this was a major

confidence boost and comfortably their best display of the competitive season so far.

KINGSTONIAN MARCH ON Kingstonian returned from Tunbridge Wells with an excellent 3-1 victory.

The K's have drawn both of their opening South Central league matches — 0-0 with AFC Portchester and 3-3 at Ascot United — so turning draws into victories will be the next objective in league competition.

Saturday at least proved they know how to get across the line.

5 SOUTHALL CONTINUE STRONG START Southall also remain in the competition after winning 2-1 away at Deal Town.

It continues a very solid August.

Southall are unbeaten in their opening three league games and currently sit among the early leaders with five points.

Add FA Cup progression and this is becoming a very respectable opening to the season.

EGHAM EASE THROUGH Egham Town defeated Bearsted 3-0, backing up Tuesday night's 2-0 league victory at Hartley Wintney.

After being thrashed 5-0 at Winchester on the opening day, Egham have responded impressively.

Two wins.

Two clean sheets.

Five goals scored.

That opening-day nightmare suddenly feels a long time ago.

ASCOT ADVANCE Ascot United edged through with a 2-1 victory over Penn & Tylers Green.

The Yellas have endured a mixed league opening but Cup progression gives them something to build upon heading back into South Central action.

LEAGUE LEADERS WINCHESTER ARE OUT Perhaps one of the more surprising results involving a South Central club came at Dorchester.

Winchester City, who have absolutely flown out of the blocks in league competition, were beaten 3-1.

Winchester currently lead the South Central Division after three straight league victories, scoring 13 and conceding just once in the process.

They remain the early team to catch in the league.

But there will be no FA Cup run.

6 MONEYFIELDS AND HARROW FALL Moneyfields were another side beaten by lower-level opposition, losing 2-0 at home to Portland United.

Harrow Borough also exited, going down 3-1 at home to Snodland Town.

Both can now concentrate on league and Trophy business.

THREE TIES NEED ANOTHER NIGHT AFC Portchester and Westbury United could not be separated, drawing 2-2.

Portchester knew beforehand that a draw would send the tie back to Westbury for a Tuesday-night replay, continuing what has been a remarkable run of stalemates for the Royals early in the campaign.

AFC Stoneham and Badshot Lea produced an even wilder 3-3 draw, with their replay scheduled for Tuesday.

Westfield and Sussex side Hassocks also finished 1-1, keeping that Cup tie alive.

Hartley Wintney's scheduled tie with Baffins Milton Rovers did not take place on Saturday and is now listed for Tuesday 25 August.

SOUTH CENTRAL CLUBS — SATURDAY'S FA CUP RESULTS AFC Portchester 2-2 Westbury United | AFC Stoneham 3-3 Badshot Lea | Ascot United 2-1 Penn & Tylers Green | Bognor Regis Town 1-2 East Grinstead Town | Cobham 3-1 Littlehampton Town | Egham Town 3-0 Bearsted | Harrow Borough 1-3 Snodland Town | Hayes & Yeading United 6-3 White Ensign | Hendon 4-0 Hertford Town | Jersey Bulls 4-1 Sheerwater | Tunbridge Wells 1-3 Kingstonian | Moneyfields 0-2 Portland United | Raynes Park Vale 1-5 Petts Wood & Holmesdale | Deal Town 1-2 Southall | Westfield 1-1 Hassocks | Dorchester Town

3-1 Winchester City | Windsor & Eton 5-0 North Leigh.

Baffins Milton Rovers v Hartley Wintney did not take place and has been rearranged.

THE SUSSEX VERDICT For Sussex, there is no way of dressing it up.

It was a poor afternoon.

Bognor Regis will be particularly frustrated because they were ahead at home against a lower-level East Grinstead side and appeared to have one foot in First Round Qualifying before conceding twice in the final 15 minutes.

7 Littlehampton's defeat at Cobham means the Golds have now lost three in succession and their

priority has to be getting league points on the board.

And that makes Tuesday night fascinating.

Littlehampton Town v Bognor Regis Town.

The two Sussex representatives in the Isthmian South Central.

Both knocked out of the FA Cup on the same afternoon.

One searching for its first league points.

The other trying to prove Saturday was simply an FA Cup slip-up.

For Sussex, the Cup may be finished at this level.

But the South Central story is only just beginning.

8

ISTHMIAN SOUTH CENTRAL

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

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DUGOUT AI

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

- ✓ $P = W + D + L$
- ✓ $GD = F - A$
- ✓ $PTS = 3W + D$
- ✓ 22 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

DUGOUT NEWS • ISSUE 3 • SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026

SOUTH CENTRAL FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

MIDWEEK — TUESDAY 25 & WEDNESDAY 26 AUGUST

TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Ascot United	VS	Binfield
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Ashford Town (Middx)	VS	Cobham
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Hayes & Yeading United	VS	Raynes Park Vale
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Hendon	VS	Bedfont Sports
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Littlehampton Town	VS	Bognor Regis Town
TUE 25 AUG 19:45	Windsor & Eton	VS	AFC Stoneham
WED 26 AUG 19:45	Kingstonian	VS	Hartley Wintney

UNITED HIT THE SUMMIT AS LANCING BREAK THEIR DUCK

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION ROUND-UP — SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



DOUGIE

DUGOUT AI • ROUND-UP REPORTER

Every result and table checked and rebuilt by the Dugout AI engine



The FA Cup may have ripped the Southern Combination Premier Division fixture list apart on Saturday, but the four league matches that survived certainly did not disappoint.

There were 18 goals across just four games, two remarkable comebacks, a first league victory of the season for Lancing and another huge result for a Guernsey side beginning to look increasingly serious.

The biggest winners, though, were Eastbourne United.

United had to do it the hard way at Billingshurst, falling 2-1 behind early in the second half before responding with three unanswered goals to win 4-2. The result took them onto 10 points and, on the latest available table, to the top of the Premier Division on goal difference.

Guernsey joined them on 10 points after Charlton Gauvain's early strike delivered a superb 1-0 victory at Roffey, while Haywards Heath Town — not in league action because of their FA Cup commitments — also sit on 10.

Crawley Down Gatwick produced perhaps the comeback of the afternoon, somehow turning a 2-0 deficit against Forest Row into a 4-2 victory.

And at Gorings Mead, Lancing finally got their season moving by beating Horsham YM 3-1.

Only four games.

Plenty to talk about.

EASTBOURNE UNITED TURN IT AROUND

BILLINGSHURST 2 EASTBOURNE UNITED 4

If Eastbourne United end up being involved at the sharp end of the table next spring, Saturday afternoon at Jubilee Fields might be one of those results people eventually look back upon.

Winning comfortably when everything is going your way is one thing.

Winning when you have fallen behind away from home and suddenly find yourself in a proper fight is something different.

1 Eastbourne took the lead after 37 minutes, appearing to have put themselves in control of a potentially tricky away fixture.

Billingshurst had other ideas.

The home side levelled just before the break in the 44th minute and then completed the turnaround only three minutes into the second half.

Suddenly it was Billingshurst 2-1 Eastbourne United.

This was the point where United were tested.

They could have panicked. They could have begun forcing things. Instead, they responded.

The equaliser arrived from the penalty spot after 62 minutes before Eastbourne struck again in the 73rd minute to reclaim the advantage.

Two minutes later came another.

From 2-1 down to 4-2 ahead in the space of 13 second-half minutes.

Job done.

That sort of burst says plenty about the attacking threat Eastbourne possess.

United now have 15 goals from five league matches, and their record stands at three victories, one draw and one defeat. Saturday's win moved them onto 10 points with a goal difference of plus eight.

There are still questions, of course.

Eastbourne have conceded seven times and Billingshurst demonstrated that they can be got at. The top sides later in the campaign will undoubtedly punish lapses.

But there is also a great deal to like.

Fifteen goals in five games is three per match. At Step Five, if you possess that level of attacking threat, you are going to win a lot of football matches.

And when a side can go away from home, surrender a lead, fall behind and still produce three goals in 13 minutes, there is character to go alongside the quality.

2 BILLINGSHURST — ENTERTAINING, BUT EDDIE WILL WANT THE DOOR SHUT For Billingshurst, the frustration will be enormous because once again there was plenty of attacking evidence that they can hurt sides at this level.

The problem is what is happening at the other end.

Their recent matches have become ridiculous entertainment for neutrals.

They were beaten 5-3 at Lingfield, then lost an extraordinary 5-4 game at Pagham on Tuesday night before Saturday's 4-2 defeat against Eastbourne United.

That is three matches producing 23 goals.

Nobody watching Billingshurst recently can complain about being bored.

Manager Eddie French was already lamenting his side's defensive problems after the Pagham game, where Billingshurst scored four away from home and somehow still came away empty-handed.

Saturday must have felt painfully familiar.

Having fought back from 1-0 down to lead one of the division's strongest-looking sides 2-1, there was a real opportunity available.

But the game escaped them again.

There is an important distinction here: Billingshurst do not look toothless.

Far from it.

They are creating chances. They are scoring goals. They are capable of causing good teams problems.

That is far easier to fix than a side which creates absolutely nothing.

But conceding four and five on a regular basis will make collecting points almost impossible, regardless of how dangerous you are going forward.

The formula for French therefore looks fairly obvious.

Don't remove the bravery.

Don't remove the attacking intent.

Just find a way of making Billingshurst a little more horrible to play through.

3 If they can do that, there is enough going forward to climb the table.

CRAWLEY DOWN PRODUCE A STUNNING TURNAROUND

CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK 4 FOREST ROW 2

At 57 minutes, Forest Row must have thought their afternoon was going beautifully.

At 83 minutes, they were probably wondering what on earth had just happened.

Forest Row took the lead after only seven minutes at the Haven and reached half-time 1-0 ahead.

Twelve minutes after the restart they struck again.

CRAWLEY DOWN 0 FOREST ROW 2

Twenty-four minutes later?

CRAWLEY DOWN 4 FOREST ROW 2

That is not a typo.

The comeback began almost immediately after Forest Row's second goal, with Crawley Down reducing the deficit in the 59th minute.

Six minutes later it was 2-2.

The hosts completed the turnaround after 75 minutes and Forest Row were then reduced to ten men three minutes later.

Crawley Down added the fourth in the 83rd minute to complete an extraordinary second-half transformation.

Four goals between the 59th and 83rd minutes.

That is some response.

Crawley Down's start to the campaign has been intriguing. There has been the odd setback, but they have also demonstrated repeatedly that they can compete with the stronger sides in this division.

Saturday's victory moved them onto eight points from five matches, placing them fourth in the latest table behind the three clubs sitting on 10.

The character displayed is perhaps more important than the position.

4 At 2-0 down, plenty of sides mentally start thinking about the next fixture.

Crawley Down did the opposite.

They scored within two minutes of conceding the second.

That goal changed everything.

Suddenly Forest Row were protecting something rather than chasing something, the home crowd had reason to believe and momentum shifted completely.

By the time the third went in, the game had effectively been turned on its head.

Crawley Down will know they cannot continually give teams two-goal starts, but there is something impressive developing at the Haven.

Eight points from five represents a very healthy opening.

FOREST ROW LET A HUGE OPPORTUNITY ESCAPE The other dressing room will have been considerably quieter.

Forest Row were minutes away from putting themselves into a brilliant position.

Two goals ahead away from home with little more than half an hour remaining should produce points.

Instead, they left with nothing.

The worrying part was the speed with which everything collapsed.

Once Crawley Down scored their first, Forest Row were unable to slow the contest down.

Six minutes later the advantage had disappeared.

Ten minutes after that they were losing.

The red card after 78 minutes obviously made recovering even more difficult, but crucially Crawley Down had already completed their comeback before Forest Row were reduced to ten men.

That distinction matters.

The dismissal contributed to the fourth goal and killed any realistic chance of another twist, but it was not the reason Forest Row surrendered the lead.

They now find themselves down in 19th in the current standings.

5 Nobody should be talking about relegation battles in August, but early points matter precisely because they remove that conversation.

Forest Row have shown enough attacking ability to suggest they can hurt opponents.

The next stage is learning how to manage matches when they get themselves in front.

Saturday represented a massive missed opportunity.

GAUVAIN STRIKES AGAIN AS GUERNSEY WIN AT ROFFEY

ROFFEY 0 GUERNSEY 1

Forget the travel.

Forget the logistics.

Forget any suggestion that Guernsey might need time to reacclimatise to Southern Combination football.

The Green Lions are here to compete.

Their latest statement came at Roffey, where Charlton Gauvain struck after only seven minutes and Guernsey defended that advantage for the remaining 83 plus stoppage time to secure another impressive away victory.

It was Gauvain doing the damage again after also scoring the winner in Guernsey's FA Vase victory at Newhaven a week earlier.

This time there was no second goal required.

One was enough.

Roffey certainly had opportunities.

Charlie Gibson tested Guernsey goalkeeper Josh Addison towards the end of the opening half, while Jordan Mase went close after the break when a deflected effort looped narrowly over.

Mase also headed just wide around the hour mark as the Boars increased the pressure.

Guernsey had chances to make the afternoon considerably more comfortable themselves. Gauvain headed wide after good work from Dylan Graham, while substitute George Goubert was denied by Roffey goalkeeper Charlie Burton in stoppage time.

But the most remarkable moment may have involved Addison.

6 The Guernsey goalkeeper dislocated a finger while making a save. With the referee reportedly a trained paramedic, the finger was put back into place and Addison somehow continued to complete the match and the clean sheet.

Non-league football, ladies and gentlemen.

Guernsey's numbers now deserve attention.

Four league matches. Three wins. One draw. Seven goals scored. Two conceded. Ten points. Unbeaten.

They sit second in the latest table, level on points with Eastbourne United and Haywards Heath Town.

Perhaps the most impressive number is the two goals conceded.

Everyone notices sides scoring four and five every week.

Championship contenders often distinguish themselves at the other end.

Guernsey are becoming difficult to score against, difficult to beat and clearly comfortable travelling.

That combination makes them dangerous.

ROFFEY'S FLYING START HITS ANOTHER TEST
Roffey themselves should not suddenly be written off.

They announced their intentions rather loudly on opening day by demolishing Little Common 8-0, then followed it by winning 3-2 at Crawley Down Gatwick.

Eleven goals across the opening two league matches made everybody take notice.

Saturday was a different sort of test.

Guernsey got ahead, closed spaces and forced Roffey to find a way through.

They couldn't.

That will frustrate the Boars, but it may ultimately be a useful lesson.

You are not going to score eight every week.

Promotion-chasing sides occasionally have to win 1-0 on an ugly afternoon, and Roffey have now

experienced exactly what that looks like from the other side.

7 There is still plenty of quality in this side and plenty of football ahead.

The explosive opening has simply encountered some resistance.

LANCING ARE OFF AND RUNNING

HORSHAM YM 1 LANCING 3

This might be the result that matters most psychologically.

Lancing went to Gorings Mead looking for their first league victory of the season.

They came away with it – and did so emphatically.

HORSHAM YM 1 LANCING 3

The result is confirmed in Guernsey's official round-up of Saturday's Premier Division games and represents a much-needed breakthrough for the Lancers.

Their opening weeks had been difficult.

Lancing started the league season with a 1-0 home defeat against Seaford Town before suffering a brutal 6-0 FA Cup loss against SE Dons.

When results go against you that early, the danger is not the league table itself.

Nobody is relegated in August.

The danger is confidence.

Players start snatching at chances. Every mistake feels bigger. Going a goal behind becomes a crisis instead of simply part of a football match.

That is why an away victory like this can change the atmosphere completely.

Three goals.

Three points.

A win on the road.

Suddenly the season looks different.

And it came against a Horsham YM side who had themselves enjoyed a morale-boosting victory against Forest Row in midweek.

8 Lancing should take enormous belief from this.

One result does not solve everything, but sometimes one result is exactly what starts solving everything.

A SETBACK FOR HORSHAM YM For Horsham YM, meanwhile, this was a disappointing way to follow Tuesday's victory.

YM have shown enough already to suggest they will be competitive, but consistency remains the obvious requirement.

Losing 3-1 at home against a side searching for its first win will sting.

The good news?

The fixture list offers plenty of opportunities to respond, although none of them look particularly comfortable.

YM travel to Newhaven next Saturday before a Bank Holiday meeting with neighbours Roffey on Monday 31 August. Their official schedule then brings Lingfield to Gorings Mead on 5 September.

That little sequence could tell us plenty about where YM sit within this increasingly competitive Premier Division.

WHY WERE THERE ONLY FOUR LEAGUE MATCHES? Saturday's Premier Division schedule was unusually small because much of the division was occupied elsewhere, most notably in the FA Cup Preliminary Round.

There were some significant results involving SCFL Premier clubs.

Pagham continued their cup adventure by beating Balham 2-0 at Nyetimber Lane.



PAGHAM ON THE BALL DURING THEIR FA CUP RUN PHOTO: TOMMY MACMILLAN

East Grinstead Town produced one of the eye-catching results by winning 2-1 away at Bognor Regis Town, while Haywards Heath Town drew 1-1 at Sutton Common Rovers and Hassocks also finished 1-1 away at Westfield. Newhaven's afternoon was considerably tougher, ending in a 5-0 defeat at Whitstable Town.

That explains why a 20-team division delivered only four league fixtures.

Normal chaos will resume soon enough.

SATURDAY'S SCFL PREMIER RESULTS
Billingshurst 2-4 Eastbourne United

9 Crawley Down Gatwick 4-2 Forest Row

Horsham YM 1-3 Lancing

Roffey 0-1 Guernsey

THE EARLY PICTURE — THIS LEAGUE LOOKS WIDE OPEN We are nowhere near the stage where a league table should be treated as gospel.

Clubs have played different numbers of matches because of FA Cup and FA Vase commitments, and August schedules at this level can become messy very quickly.

But there are already clues.

Eastbourne United are scoring for fun.

Fifteen goals in five league games and 10 points is a proper start.

Guernsey look extremely difficult to beat.

Three wins, a draw and just two goals conceded deserves serious respect.

Haywards Heath Town remain right there.

They have 10 points from four games and remain unbeaten, meaning three clubs currently sit together on 10 points.

Then comes Crawley Down Gatwick on eight, having just demonstrated the sort of mentality required to turn 2-0 into 4-2.

And behind them there are plenty of teams who have not yet played enough league football for us to know precisely what they are.

Newhaven have seven points from three.

Hassocks have shown flashes.

Midhurst & Easebourne continue to develop.

Pagham have started positively while juggling cup football.

Roffey have already demonstrated devastating attacking potential.

Bexhill United have points on the board.

10 East Grinstead have just produced a massive FA Cup result.

And Lancing finally have their first win.

That is why predicting this league in August is a dangerous business.

There does not appear to be one side ready to disappear over the horizon.

There are instead a collection of teams capable of hurting each other.

DUGOUT NEWS VERDICT If there was one lesson from Saturday, it was never assume a game is finished in the SCFL Premier.

Billingshurst led Eastbourne United 2-1.

They lost 4-2.

Forest Row led Crawley Down Gatwick 2-0 after 57 minutes.

They lost 4-2.

Roffey had been one of the early attacking sensations.

Guernsey went there and shut them out.

Lancing arrived at Horsham YM without a league win.

They left having scored three.

That unpredictability is exactly why the Southern Combination Premier remains one of the most entertaining divisions around.

Eastbourne United currently have the goals.

Guernsey currently have the resilience.

Haywards Heath have quietly accumulated 10 points.

Crawley Down have the momentum.

Roffey have already shown they can destroy teams.

And several of the expected challengers still have games in hand because of their cup runs.

11 So who is actually the best side in this division?

Ask us again in October.

Because four weeks into this season, the SCFL Premier is doing what it does best.

Making fools out of anybody brave enough to predict it.

12

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

✓ P = W + D + L

✓ GD = F - A

✓ PTS = 3W + D

✓ 20 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

EMIRATES FA CUP

SUN 23 AUG 15:00

Midhurst & Easebourne



VS



AFC Croydon Athletic

THE ROTHERFIELD

PETER BENTLEY CHALLENGE CUP

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Horsham YM



VS



Roffey

HORSHAM YM FOOTBALL CLUB

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Jarvis Brook



VS



East Grinstead Town

LIME KILN PLAYING FIELD

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Little Common



VS



Hailsham Town

LITTLE COMMON RECREATION
GROUND

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Pagham



VS



Selsey

PAGHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Saltdean United



VS



Lancing

HILL PARK STADIUM

TUE 25 AUG 19:30

Wick



VS



Arundel

BOGNOR REGIS TOWN FC

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Billingshurst



VS



Infinity

BILLINGSHURST JUBILEE FIELDS

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Dorking Wanderers B



VS



Forest Row

MEADOWBANK FOOTBALL GROUND

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Hassocks



VS



Shoreham

THE HASSOCKS HOTEL BEACON
GROUND

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Midhurst & Easebourne



VS



Loxwood

THE ROTHERFIELD

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Newhaven



VS



AFC Varndeanians

NEWHAVEN FOOTBALL CLUB

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Ringmer AFC



VS



Eastbourne United

KINGS ACADEMY RINGMER

TUE 25 AUG 19:45

Worthing United



VS



Haywards Heath Town

ROBERT ALBON MEMORIAL GROUND

WED 26 AUG 19:30

Guildford City



VS



Crawley Down Gatwick

GUILDFORD SPECTRUM

WED 26 AUG 20:00

Lingfield



VS



AFC Walcountians

WHYTELEAFE FOOTBALL GROUND

SCFL PREMIER DIVISION

FRI 28 AUG 19:30

Bexhill United



VS



Roffey

LITTLE COMMON RECREATION
GROUND

FRI 28 AUG 19:45	Seaford Town		VS		Wick	NEWHAVEN FOOTBALL CLUB
SAT 29 AUG 13:30	Guernsey		VS		Midhurst & Easebourne	VICTORIA AVENUE
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Billingshurst		VS		Little Common	BILLINGSHURST JUBILEE FIELDS
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Crawley Down Gatwick		VS		AFC Varndeanians	HAVEN SPORTSFIELD
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	East Grinstead Town		VS		Hassocks	VISTAVIS COMMUNITY STADIUM
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Forest Row		VS		Pagham	THREE BRIDGES FOOTBALL CLUB
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Haywards Heath Town		VS		Lingfield	HANBURY PARK STADIUM
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Lancing		VS		Eastbourne United	SUSSEX COUNTY FA
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Newhaven		VS		Horsham YM	NEWHAVEN FOOTBALL CLUB

BEXHILL BACK TO WINNING WAYS

BY BORNATOTTER



BORNATOTTER

GEOFF MARTIN • BEXHILL UNITED CORRESPONDENT

Following the Pirates home and away

Seafood 2 Bexhill United 3 — Peter Bentley Cup

There was little time for Bexhill United to rue the midweek "smash and grab" defeat to Varndeanians as they were back on the road along the coast again on Saturday afternoon to take on Seaford in the Peter Bentley Cup at their temporary home — Newhaven's Fort Road.

Recent signings Josh Tuck and Luke Donaldson had both picked up knocks in the Varndeanians game and were missing from the squad. Dale Penn dropped back into central defence and Theo Coombs and Ryan Moir both returned to the starting line-up. New boy Sean Agun was added to the bench.

Bexhill showed their intent on just five minutes, when they broke through at pace with Ass Latuske and Ryan Moir linking up well to set up Max Hollobone for a shot which was well saved by Toby Whiteside in the Seaford goal.

The Pirates didn't need to wait much longer for the breakthrough as from the resulting Hollobone corner it was Callum Brand who rose above the defensive pack to head the ball back across the goal and into the top corner.

On eight minutes Bexhill snatched a second. Great persistence from Theo Coombs saw him win the ball, drive forward and release Jack Shonk who teed it up on a plate for Moir to sweep the ball home. Bexhill kept coming in a push to kill off the game and on twelve minutes good work by Harry

Marchant down the left set up Latuske who saw his shot just clear the bar.

At two nil, Seaford weren't out of the picture and on eighteen minutes it was Finn Holter who was called upon to protect the Bexhill lead with a fine save at the other end of Fort Road. Holter pulled off another good save just before the break as the score remained with the Pirates two up as the ref blew for half time. But Seaford had sent them a warning.

Fans had barely had a chance to get back from the tea bar before the balance of the contest shifted. At two nil the next goal is always crucial and it came for Seaford within minutes of the restart with Bexhill failing to clear their lines leaving Callum Connor with space to ram the ball home from close range. It gave the home side the confidence and the momentum to chase an equaliser.

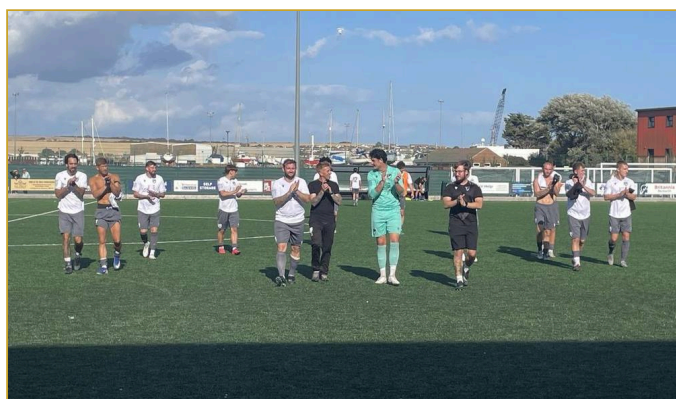
When it came it was from a penalty with the striker making the most of a trailing leg and Connor again stepping up to strike the ball home from the spot to bring Seaford back onto level terms.

Bexhill may have thought they had the game won at two nil but now they would have to regroup and set themselves up to win the game all over again. Charlie Playford, Tom Vickers and the returning Jack Samways were all drafted in from the bench and the changes injected some new energy into the Pirates' play. There was also a warm welcome for Sean Agun, making his Pirates debut.

The killer punch came on 83 minutes. Sheer persistence from Moir saw him chase down a long ball over the top, shrug off a fifty-fifty with the defender and clip the ball over Whiteside and into the net. It was a classy way for Bexhill to take themselves forwards into the next round of the

Cup and there was little further drama as the clock wound down to the final whistle.

Bexhill are back in action with a rare Friday night "home" game against Roffey in the league which will be played at Little Common.



MATCHDAY AT FORT ROAD – PHOTOS: BORNATOTTER

ARCHIE CRAMER ON HIS SPELL IN CHARGE OF HORSHAM YM

BY ARCHIE CRAMER



ARCHIE CRAMER DURING HIS CARETAKER SPELL AT HORSHAM YM

I've really enjoyed the opportunity and the challenge of taking charge of Horsham YM over these two games. It's been difficult trying to put together a strong group of players in such a short space of time, but Tuesday night against Forest Row showed exactly what this group can produce. The lads worked incredibly hard, competed for everything and deserved the result.

Saturday against Lancing was the complete opposite. Credit to Dale and his team, but from our point of view we were miles off the levels we showed on Tuesday. We didn't win enough second balls and lacked that quality and end product in the final third. We're a young group, but that can't be used as an excuse — the standards have to be higher.

A massive thank you has to go to the different managers and clubs who have helped me bring players in, whether through loans, dual registrations or simply helping me out at short notice. That support has been massively appreciated.

I've loved the experience and we'll see what comes next. Me and Truss might be taking the team again on Tuesday and, if that's what's needed, we'll embrace the challenge and give it everything again.

If not then it's been a massive achievement from myself and my team and I wish the new manager the very best.



DUGOUT 90

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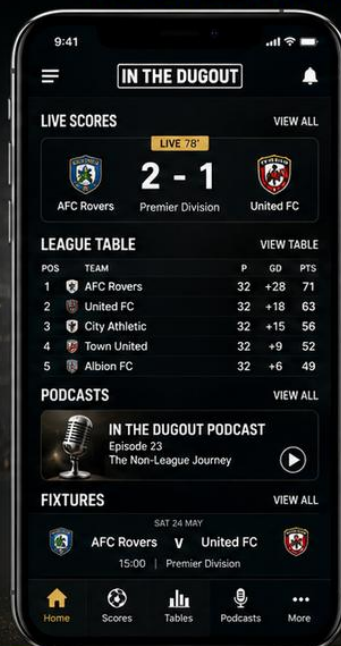


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4	£54,936	£79,914
5	£68,670	£99,892
6	£82,403	£119,871

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3	£90,000	£412,017	£206,008	£599,355	£299,678
4	£120,000	£549,356	£274,678	£799,140	£399,570
5	£150,000	£686,695	£343,348	£998,925	£499,462
6	£180,000	£824,034	£412,017	£1,198,710	£599,355

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WHEN THE MONEY DIES, WHO BURIES THE CLUB?

BY THE UNDERTAKER



THE UNDERTAKER

DUGOUT NEWS COLUMNIST • FINANCE

Digging into the money behind non-league football

Football loves talking about ownership when the champagne is flowing. New chairman. New investment. Five-year plan. Promotion ambition. Professional structure. New signings photographed holding scarves. Everyone smiles. Nobody takes photographs when the direct debit bounces.

That is why every financial crisis in non-league football should matter to supporters far beyond the club directly involved. The players rarely create the problem. The supporters don't. The volunteers certainly don't. Yet those people ultimately experience the consequences. Those making the biggest decisions don't necessarily carry the biggest emotional cost when those decisions go wrong. Owners come and go. Supporters inherit the history.

When a club goes through financial uncertainty, everything around it begins shaking. Players wonder whether wages will arrive, staff wonder whether jobs are safe, suppliers wonder whether invoices will be paid, opponents wonder whether scheduled fixtures will happen and supporters wonder whether the club they've followed since childhood will exist next season. That isn't football. That's anxiety wearing a scarf.

When a fixture disappears, the damage travels. The opposing club can lose gate receipts, hospitality revenue, food sales, bar income and sponsorship activation. Volunteers may already have organised their Saturday, supporters planned travel,

programmes produced, stock purchased and casual staff booked. A financial crisis doesn't politely remain behind one boardroom door. It spreads.

Which raises a question football probably should have asked far more aggressively years ago: how much evidence should an owner have to provide that they can actually finance the season they're entering? Not August. Not Christmas. The season.

If you're committing to playing budgets, contracts, coaching staff, travel costs and operating expenses, should the league know where that funding is coming from? Some will scream interference: "My money. My business. My club." Except football clubs aren't ordinary businesses. If a restaurant closes, customers find another restaurant. If your football club disappears, you don't casually support the team six miles down the road because their burgers are decent.

Football allegiance is generational and emotional. Supporters remember sitting on a parent's shoulders at grounds that barely resemble the ones standing today. Their children now stand in the same end. Try putting that value on a balance sheet. You can't. That's precisely why ownership comes with responsibility.

You can own shares, property and intellectual property, but can you really own a community institution in the same way you own a warehouse? Legally, perhaps. Morally, I'd argue not. A football

club's owner is a custodian with temporary control of something that existed before them and, hopefully, survives long after them.

Perhaps clubs operating at serious levels of the National League System should lodge financial guarantees. Perhaps major owner-funded budgets should be stress-tested. Perhaps authorities should intervene earlier when tax liabilities or other significant debts begin accumulating. Perhaps supporters should receive more meaningful financial transparency. None of those things would eliminate failure. Businesses fail, owners encounter genuine difficulties and plans collapse. But football has an extraordinary ability to describe obvious warning signs as unforeseeable disasters.

A club signs players. More players arrive. Crowds don't materially increase. Infrastructure doesn't improve. The benefactor continues paying. Questions are asked and those asking them are called negative. Then the money stops and suddenly everyone wants to know: "How could this happen?" Sometimes it happened because everybody was having too much fun to ask.

Sustainability needs to stop being treated as the boring uncle at the football wedding. A club finishing 14th, paying its tax, improving its ground, building its youth section and living within its means might genuinely be one of the best-run clubs in the division. There isn't a trophy for surviving 100 years. Maybe there should be.

Promotion photographs look better than spreadsheets. You can't chant "cash-flow forecast" behind the goal and nobody sets off blue-and-white smoke because the VAT return was submitted on time. But those boring things keep clubs alive.

Supporters may also need to change what success looks like. We demand signings, ambition and spending. We question boards when rivals spend more. "Why aren't we matching them?" Maybe because they can't. Maybe because they shouldn't. Maybe the responsible chairman saying "no" is doing more for the club than the popular chairman saying "yes" to everything. Sometimes the most important signing of the summer is the one you don't make.

There is also danger in allowing ownership to become personality-driven. One person becomes synonymous with the club: their money, their vision, their contacts and occasionally their ego. But a club should never be so dependent on one person's mood, finances or goodwill that their departure becomes an existential threat.

Succession planning sounds painfully corporate, but it is essential. Who runs the club if the chairman walks away? Who owns the ground? Who owns the debt? Which liabilities remain? Could supporters operate it? Could another investor realistically take over? Those questions should be answered before the emergency meeting, not during it.

So enjoy ambition. Celebrate investment. Dream about promotion. Build stands and sign quality players. But whenever somebody arrives promising to transform everything overnight, ask the unpopular question: what happens when they leave?

Because sooner or later almost every owner does. The supporter behind the same barrier every Saturday is usually still there — and too often they're the person left holding the shovel.

DON'T PRICE THE NEXT GENERATION OUT OF NON-LEAGUE

BY THE GATECRASHER

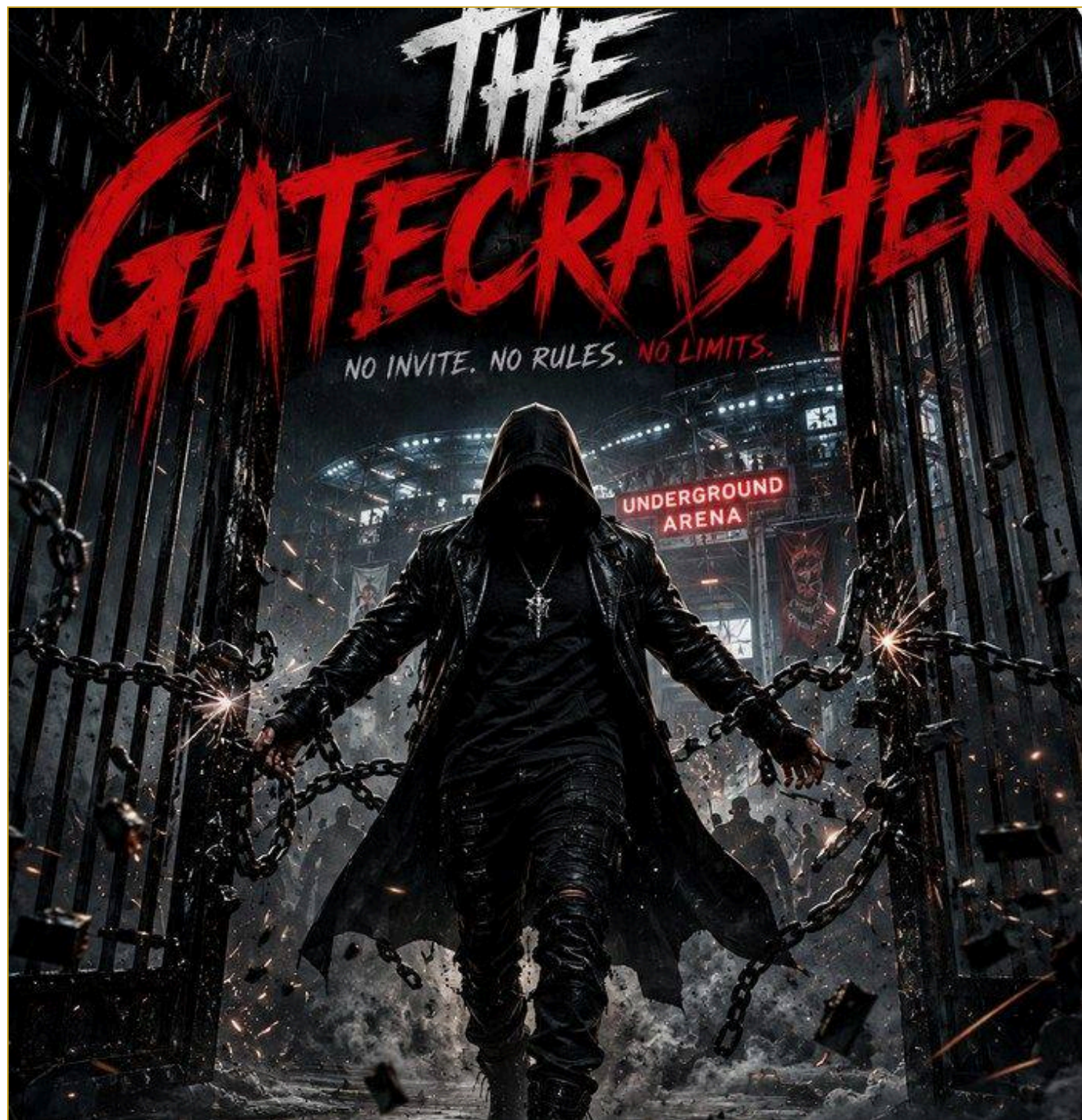


IMAGE: DUGOUT NEWS

Every non-league football club says it wants younger supporters — right up until younger supporters start behaving like younger supporters.

They sing. They make noise. They arrive in groups. They move around. They're occasionally irritating. Some are occasionally complete idiots. Welcome to being 15.

The challenge facing clubs is real. Grounds must be safe. Abuse cannot be tolerated. Dangerous behaviour creates obvious problems. Parents need confidence that children can attend safely, and officials, players, volunteers and supporters should never be threatened.

Nobody sensible disputes that.

But there is another danger. In trying to eliminate every possible problem, football could accidentally eliminate part of what makes non-league attractive to young people in the first place: freedom, belonging, noise and identity.

For decades, the route into supporting your local club was gloriously uncomplicated. Meet your mates, walk to the ground, pay at the turnstile, buy chips, stand behind the goal, talk nonsense for 90 minutes, go home and repeat next Saturday. That's how habits form.

A 14-year-old casually attending six matches can become the 40-year-old sponsor, volunteer, coach, director, groundsman or season-ticket holder. You don't know which kid becomes which adult. That's why young supporters aren't an inconvenience. They're future infrastructure.

Non-league is facing an enormous battle for their attention. Young people have PlayStation, TikTok, YouTube, Netflix, Premier League football, gaming, streaming and phones. A Step 5 club cannot assume that because grandad attended in 1987, grandson will automatically appear in 2026. He won't. You have to earn him.

This is where non-league possesses something elite football can't easily manufacture: access. A youngster can stand metres from the action, hear tackles and players communicating, see the manager losing his mind, get an autograph after the game and sometimes talk to the scorer in the clubhouse. Elite football increasingly feels like an event. Non-league can still feel like participation.

Protect that.

When a teenager chooses your ground over staying home watching the Premier League, that's an opportunity. Don't immediately make the experience feel like airport security.

Some clubs understandably introduce restrictions requiring younger supporters to attend with adults. Sometimes incidents make intervention necessary. But blanket solutions can have unintended consequences. Consider the perfectly well-behaved group of 15 and 16-year-olds wanting their first taste of football independence. Mum isn't attending. Dad isn't interested. Their mates are going. If they're told they cannot attend without someone over 18, they might not return when they reach 18. They'll find another habit.

This is also a financial issue. Requiring adult accompaniment can effectively double the cost. A teenager may have £7. They may not have £7 plus an adult ticket, food and travel. For families already stretched financially, "bring an adult" can unintentionally become "don't come."

Non-league has traditionally been the accessible form of football. We should be extremely careful before introducing barriers that affect good youngsters because of the behaviour of bad ones.

The answer isn't pretending teenagers never cause trouble. Anyone saying that has clearly never stood behind a goal. The answer is intelligent management. Identify individuals. Deal with individuals. Use CCTV where appropriate. Speak to parents. Work with schools and youth organisations. Have visible stewarding without treating every 14-year-old in a hoodie like a suspect.

Give youngsters somewhere to belong. Create areas where they can make noise safely. Offer affordable youth season tickets. Give them flags. Let them help create banners. Invite them into media teams. Let them interview players. Give them matchday jobs. Get them involved in fundraising.

Something interesting happens when a young person feels ownership of a club: they start policing themselves. If you're simply a customer, you don't care if something gets damaged. If you feel it's your club, you tell your mate to stop being an idiot.

Clubs should also rethink how they communicate with young people. Posting a fixture graphic on Facebook and wondering why no teenagers

attended probably isn't enough anymore. Show goals, celebrations, characters, missed chances and personality. Let players engage. Create content that makes attending feel culturally relevant.

Non-league doesn't need to pretend to be Manchester City. Its imperfections are the content. The cold terrace, the dog walking behind the goal, the volunteer chasing a runaway corner flag — that's what makes it different.

And then there's the mathematics. A club could spend thousands over several years attracting customers through marketing, or it can give a 13-year-old an unforgettable Saturday afternoon. If that child falls in love with the place, you've potentially created a supporter for the next 50 years.

Customers leave when the product becomes poor. Supporters turn up when you're 17th and it's raining sideways.

One day that annoying teenager banging the advertising board could be the groundsman repairing it. The kid singing too loudly might coach the under-12s. The girl filming the winning goal might become your media officer. The group of youngsters you nearly banned could eventually be the committee keeping the club alive.

Non-league football constantly talks about sustainability. Usually it means money. But sustainability isn't just money. It's people, succession and making sure someone loves the club enough to care when today's directors, sponsors and volunteers are gone.

So protect our grounds. Deal strongly with genuine trouble. Protect officials, volunteers and supporters. But don't confuse youth with disorder, and don't sanitise football until the atmosphere resembles a library with floodlights.

Because if the next generation doesn't fall in love with these clubs now, one day there may be nobody left to inherit them.

WORTHING UNITED HIT SEVEN AS WALCOUNTIANS AND INFINITY SET THE EARLY PACE

SCFL DIVISION ONE ROUND-UP – SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



11 YEARS ON – GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

PHOTO: WORTHING UNITED FC (X)

If anybody needed reminding just how unpredictable the Southern Combination League Division One can be, Saturday provided 90 minutes of evidence pretty much everywhere you looked.

Ten matches produced 36 goals, two teams preserved perfect league records, Worthing United scored seven away from home, Mile Oak ripped up Arundel's unbeaten start, Loxwood stunned Selsey and Shoreham finally got their season moving.

At the top, AFC Walcountians and Infinity are the only two sides sitting on maximum points after three league games, both reaching nine points with victories on Saturday.

Walcountians edged Hailsham Town 2-1 while Infinity made a considerably louder statement with a 4-1 victory against Dial Square.

Just behind them, Guildford City remain unbeaten after drawing with Westfield, while Arundel's excellent opening finally hit the buffers at Mile Oak.

But perhaps the result that will make everybody else in Division One sit up and take notice came at Oakwood.

OAKWOOD 0 WORTHING UNITED 7

Seven.

Away from home.

And Worthing United have now scored ten goals and conceded only one in their opening two league matches. The Mavericks might have played fewer games than those above them, but nobody is going to ignore numbers like those.

WORTHING UNITED SEND A MESSAGE

OAKWOOD 0 WORTHING UNITED 7

There are victories and then there are results which make everybody else in the league check the score twice.

This was the latter.

1 Worthing United travelled to Oakwood having opened their league campaign with a 3-1 victory over Loxwood. Their schedule had subsequently been disrupted by cup football, including an emphatic 4-0 FA Vase victory against Ringmer.

Saturday brought them back into Division One action.

They didn't so much return as kick the front door off.

Oakwood 0-7 Worthing United.

The result gives the Mavericks six points from their two league matches with ten scored, one conceded and a goal difference of plus nine. That puts them fifth despite having games in hand on every side above them.

It is ridiculously early, of course.

Nobody wins promotion in August.

But this is Worthing United, a club which was already involved in the promotion picture last season and lost out in the play-offs. They did not

arrive in 2026/27 needing to convince people they could compete towards the top.

What they needed was a start suggesting they could go one step further.

Ten goals in two league matches will do.

And while everyone will naturally concentrate on scoring seven, perhaps the more interesting statistic is at the other end.

One goal conceded.

Promotion challenges at this level are rarely built purely on spectacular afternoons where you score six or seven. They are built upon being able to win the ugly games as well.

Worthing appear to have attacking firepower.

If the defensive record remains anything close to its current level, the rest of Division One have a problem.

For Oakwood, the contrast could hardly be greater.

They began with a 2-0 victory over Westfield, but successive league defeats have now come by 5-0 at AFC Walcountians and 7-0 at home to Worthing United.

Twelve unanswered goals across two matches.

That needs stopping immediately.

2 Oakwood are 15th with three points and a minus-10 goal difference.

It is August, so panic would be ridiculous.

But the next objective could not be clearer: make the team difficult to score against again.

INFINITY — THREE PLAYED, THREE WON

INFINITY 4 DIAL SQUARE 1

Quietly — although perhaps not so quietly anymore — Infinity have started like a train.

They opened with a 1-0 victory over Mile Oak, courtesy of a late Evan Harris winner, then went to Reigate Priory in midweek and won 3-1.

Saturday made it three from three.

A convincing 4-1 victory over Dial Square means Infinity now sit second with nine points, eight goals scored and only two conceded.

That is an excellent opening.

Infinity have been gradually establishing themselves in this division over recent seasons, but the early evidence suggests they could be ready to become considerably more than merely competitive.

Eight scored and two conceded gives them balance.

More importantly, they are winning different types of matches.

The opening-day victory over Mile Oak required patience before Harris finally broke through late.

Reigate was a strong away performance.

Against Dial Square they simply put four on the board.

Three different challenges.

Three victories.

Nine points.

Dial, meanwhile, have experienced both sides of life following their arrival in the division.

Their first-ever SCFL league fixture brought a 1-0 victory against East Preston through Daniel Martin Cenzano's early goal. Since then, however, they have lost 2-1 at Arundel and now 4-1 at Infinity.

3 One win and two defeats leaves them 13th.

There is no disaster there.

They are adjusting to a new level and have already shown they belong.

But Saturday demonstrated just how unforgiving Division One can be once momentum swings against you.

WALCOUNTIANS KEEP WINNING

HAILSHAM TOWN 1 AFC WALCOUNTIANS 2

If Infinity have been impressive, AFC Walcountians have technically been even better.

Three matches.

Three victories.

Ten goals scored.

Two conceded.

Nine points.

Top of the league.

Saturday's 2-1 success at Hailsham Town was perhaps less spectacular than their 5-0 midweek demolition of Oakwood, but there is arguably more information to be taken from a narrow away victory than another thrashing.

Hailsham is not an easy place to go.

The Stringers returned to the Beaconsfield this season following promotion and celebrated their opening fixture on the new surface by coming from behind to defeat Dorking Wanderers B 2-1, with Tyler Pearson scoring twice.

Walcountians went there and won.

They had already beaten Jarvis Brook 3-1 on opening day, when a first-half Charlie Moore brace put them firmly in control.

They followed that by sticking five past Oakwood.

Now they have dealt with Hailsham.

4 Ten goals across three matches is eye-catching.

Only two conceded is arguably more impressive.

Walcountians were already a good side last season and their start suggests they have no intention of hanging around in mid-table this time.

Hailsham slip to 12th after losing their last two league fixtures following that opening-day win.

Again, context matters.

They are newly promoted and adjusting to Step Six football. Three points from three matches is hardly disastrous and there have already been enough positive signs to suggest they can compete.

MILE OAK END ARUNDEL'S UNBEATEN START

MILE OAK 4 ARUNDEL 1

This was one of the major results of the afternoon.

Arundel arrived at Mile Oak unbeaten and sitting among the early leaders.

The Mullets had beaten Ringmer 4-2 on opening day, drawn an entertaining 2-2 at Dorking Wanderers B and then come from behind to defeat Dial Square 2-1 in midweek.

They had seven points from nine.

Mile Oak ripped the script up.

The Oak ran out 4-1 winners, inspired by an Alex Joy hat-trick, with Ambler adding the other goal.

That is a massive result for Mile Oak.

Their campaign had started with a desperately late 1-0 defeat against Infinity, but rather than allowing that disappointment to linger they responded by beating Hailsham 3-2 and have now followed it with four against one of the division's strongest starters.

Six points from three puts Mile Oak sixth.

More importantly, they have scored seven goals across their last two matches.

Alex Joy collecting the match ball will naturally dominate the headlines, but the bigger story could be Mile Oak themselves.

Back-to-back victories against Hailsham and Arundel is a proper response to losing on opening day.

5 For Arundel, perspective is important.

Seven points from four still represents a good start and leaves them fourth.

One heavy away defeat should not erase what came before it.

But conceding four will hurt, particularly after looking so solid during the opening fortnight.

The Mullets now have an opportunity to react, and their response will tell us far more than the defeat

itself.

SHOREHAM FINALLY HAVE LIFT-OFF

SHOREHAM 2 CLANFIELD 0

Now that is more like it from Shoreham.

The Musselmen's opening league fortnight had been rough.

Selsey walked into Middle Road on opening day and were 3-0 ahead inside seven minutes, eventually winning 4-1. Westfield then beat Shoreham 3-0 in midweek.

Played two.

Lost two.

Seven conceded.

One scored.

Saturday therefore mattered.

Not because anybody should be staring desperately at league tables after two matches, but because another defeat would have allowed doubt to begin creeping in.

Instead, Shoreham delivered exactly what was required.

SHOREHAM 2 CLANFIELD 0

Owen Waters and Ramon Santos got the goals as Shoreham collected their first league victory and, equally importantly, their first clean sheet.

Three points changes the mood instantly.

Instead of looking at three consecutive defeats, Shoreham can now view the first fortnight as a poor start which has already been interrupted.

6 And the clean sheet might please the management as much as anything.

After conceding seven in two league games, shutting Clanfield out was exactly the foundation they needed.

Shoreham climb to 14th.

That position itself means little this early.

The win means plenty.

LOXWOOD STUN SELSEY

LOXWOOD 3 SELSEY 0

Another result which jumped straight off the page came at Loxwood.

Selsey arrived having enjoyed an excellent league start.

They smashed Shoreham 4-1 on opening day, with Fred Chipp-Smith scoring an early double as Selsey raced into a three-goal advantage inside seven minutes, before edging Jarvis Brook 1-0 in midweek.

Six points from six.

Then came Loxwood.

The Magpies had lost 3-1 at Worthing United in their only previous league fixture but responded in emphatic fashion by beating Selsey 3-0, with all three goals arriving before half-time according to FA Full-Time.

That is some response.

Going from conceding three at Worthing to shutting out a Selsey team which had started perfectly demonstrates exactly why judgement should be reserved this early.

Loxwood suddenly have three points from two.

Selsey remain on six from three.

Nothing disastrous for Selsey, but certainly a reminder that there are very few straightforward Saturdays in this division.

7 SALTDEAN KEEP THEIR PERFECT LEAGUE RECORD

SALTDEAN UNITED 3 REIGATE PRIORY 2

Saltdean United are another club who should probably be receiving more attention.

They have played only twice in the league.

They have won both.

Opening day produced an impressive 3-1 victory away to newcomers Clanfield.

Saturday brought a much tighter affair, but Saltdean came through again, beating Reigate Priory 3-2 at Hill Park.

That leaves Saltdean seventh with six points from six available.

Their league programme has been lighter because of cup involvement, but maximum points is maximum points.

Reigate's position is altogether more surprising.

Last season's Division One runners-up are bottom of the table after losing their opening three league fixtures.

Guildford beat them 2-0.

Infinity won 3-1.

Now Saltdean have beaten them 3-2.

Three played, zero points, eight conceded.

Nobody seriously believes Reigate suddenly became a poor football team over the summer.

But football doesn't care what happened last season.

Three defeats becomes four very quickly if confidence disappears, and Priory need to put their first points on the board.

GUILDFORD HELD BUT REMAIN UNBEATEN

GUILDFORD CITY 1 WESTFIELD 1

Two clubs with positive momentum cancelled one another out at the Spectrum.

8 Guildford City's arrival into the SCFL has been impressive.

They opened with a 2-0 win at Reigate Priory, Luke Mitchell scoring both second-half goals, before producing arguably the most extraordinary result of the midweek programme by beating Dorking Wanderers B 7-0 at Meadowbank.

Westfield arrived following a 3-0 midweek victory against Shoreham.

This time neither could take everything.

A 1-1 draw leaves Guildford third and unbeaten with seven points from three games.

Westfield move onto four points from three.

For a Guildford side new to this competition, two victories and a draw represents a superb introduction.

They already possess a plus-nine goal difference — matching Worthing United for the best in the division.

POINTS SHARED AT EAST PRESTON

EAST PRESTON 2 DORKING WANDERERS B 2

East Preston and Dorking Wanderers B shared four goals at Lashmar in a 2-2 draw.

EP's start has been quietly improving.

They lost 1-0 at Dial Square on opening day before going to Ringmer and winning 1-0 in midweek. Saturday's point takes them onto four from three.

Dorking B remain without a league victory.

Their campaign began with a 2-1 defeat at Hailsham before a 2-2 draw against Arundel. Tuesday then brought that extraordinary 7-0 home defeat against Guildford.

Getting a point away from home after that kind of result is therefore worth more psychologically than the league table might suggest.

Dorking have two points from four and sit 16th.

They have conceded 13 already, so the issue requiring attention is obvious.

But Saturday was at least a response.

9 GOALLESS AT JARVIS BROOK

JARVIS BROOK 0 RINGMER AFC 0

Not every match joined the goal frenzy.

Jarvis Brook and Ringmer produced the afternoon's only goalless draw, collecting their first league points of the season in the process.

Both entered Saturday having lost their opening two.

For Jarvis Brook there had been a 3-1 defeat against AFC Walcountians and a narrow 1-0 loss at Selsey.

Ringmer lost 4-2 at Arundel before East Preston edged them 1-0.

Sometimes when confidence has taken a knock, a clean sheet and a point is precisely what is required.

Neither will be doing cartwheels over a goalless draw in August.

Neither will hate seeing a zero in the goals-against column either.

SATURDAY'S SCFL DIVISION ONE RESULTS • East Preston 2-2 Dorking Wanderers B • Guildford City 1-1 Westfield • Hailsham Town 1-2 AFC Walcountians • Infinity 4-1 Dial Square • Jarvis Brook 0-0 Ringmer AFC • Loxwood 3-0 Selsey • Mile Oak 4-1 Arundel • Oakwood 0-7 Worthing United • Saltdean United 3-2 Reigate Priory • Shoreham 2-0 Clanfield

THE EARLY DIVISION ONE PICTURE There are already some fascinating numbers developing.

AFC Walcountians lead the way with nine points from three, ten goals scored and only two conceded.

Infinity are level on nine and also perfect.

Guildford City have seven points from three and are unbeaten.

Arundel remain fourth with seven despite Saturday's defeat.

10 And then comes the side everybody should probably be looking at very carefully.

Worthing United.

Six points from two.

Ten goals for.

One against.

Plus nine goal difference.

They have games in hand because of cup commitments and have already reached double

figures in league goals.

Then there is Mile Oak on six points and suddenly flying, Saltdean with maximum points from their two matches and Selsey still sitting nicely despite Saturday's setback.

At the opposite end, Reigate's zero points is the major surprise.

Clanfield are also pointless, although they have only played twice.

Dorking Wanderers B are still searching for their first win, while Ringmer and Jarvis Brook finally got themselves moving with Saturday's draw.

Oakwood's problems are different.

They have three points, but successive defeats by five and seven mean the goals-against column has suddenly become ugly.

DUGOUT NEWS VERDICT Three games is not a title race.

But sometimes you can spot the ingredients before the cake has even gone in the oven.

Walcountians look strong.

Infinity look strong.

Guildford have made an excellent entrance.

Arundel have already shown they will be competitive despite Saturday's setback.

Saltdean haven't dropped a league point.

11 Mile Oak have just beaten one of the early leaders 4-1.

And Worthing United have scored ten goals in 180 minutes of league football.

That is before Reigate have even really started.

Before Shoreham have built on their first win.

Before Selsey have responded to their first defeat.

Before Hailsham have properly settled following promotion.

And before half the division has played enough football for the table to mean anything remotely sensible.

This is exactly why SCFL Division One is so difficult to call.

Last week, Arundel looked like the team everybody might have to chase.

On Saturday they conceded four.

Selsey had won two from two.

They lost 3-0.

Oakwood won on opening day.

Two league matches later they have conceded twelve without scoring.

Shoreham started with two defeats.

Now they have their first win and clean sheet.

Football at this level moves quickly.

For now, AFC Walcountians and Infinity have earned the right to look down on everybody else.

But somewhere just beneath them, Worthing United are making one hell of a noise.

And after what we saw on Saturday, anybody claiming they already know how this division finishes is either extremely brave — or hasn't watched enough Southern Combination football.

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SCFL DIVISION ONE

SOUTHERN COMBINATION FOOTBALL LEAGUE

D
DUGOUT AI

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

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

- ✓ $P = W + D + L$
- ✓ $GD = F - A$
- ✓ $PTS = 3W + D$
- ✓ 20 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026
DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

OUT NEWS • ISSUE 3 • SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2

DIVISION ONE FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

SCFL DIVISION ONE — SATURDAY 29 AUGUST

SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Arundel		VS		Loxwood	ARUNDEL FOOTBALL CLUB
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Dial Square		VS		Clanfield	BROOKWOOD COUNTRY PARK (KNAPHILL FC)
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Dorking Wanderers B		VS		AFC Walcountians	MEADOWBANK FOOTBALL GROUND
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Guildford City		VS		Oakwood	GUILDFORD SPECTRUM
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Jarvis Brook		VS		Infinity	LIME KILN PLAYING FIELD
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Saltdean United		VS		East Preston	HILL PARK STADIUM
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Selsey		VS		Reigate Priory	HIGH STREET GROUND
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Shoreham		VS		Hailsham Town	SHOREHAM FC
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Westfield		VS		Mile Oak	KNIGHT AND DAVEY COMMUNITY STADIUM
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Worthing United		VS		Ringmer AFC	ROBERT ALBON MEMORIAL GROUND

WESTFIELD 3-0 SHOREHAM

MATCH REPORT BY JACK STAPLEY



JACK STAPLEY

WESTFIELD FC CORRESPONDENT

Reporting on the Westies in SCFL Division One

Westfield got their league campaign up and running under the lights with a convincing 3-0 victory over Shoreham, putting in a controlled and energetic performance ahead of this weekend's trip to Guildford City.

The Westies welcomed Michael Rwabigwi back into the fold after missing the entirety of pre-season, while Dan Tewkesbury also returned following illness.

Westfield started brightly, with Rwabigwi and Brad combining well down the right before a dangerous cross was expertly blocked just as Brad looked set to tap home. The majority of Westfield's early attacking threat came down Rwabigwi's side, with the returning winger looking a constant menace to the Shoreham defence.

In midfield, Buckley and Ward marshalled the centre of the park, allowing Pritchard to roam freely, starting attacks and moving the ball with purpose. Ward was next to test the Shoreham goalkeeper following a neat interchange between Pritchard and Kent, but his effort was well tipped over the bar.

Buckley then saw an effort blocked from the edge of the area before Shoreham's lively number 11 created an opening for himself with some excellent footwork. Robertshaw was equal to the effort, tipping it away to keep the visitors at bay.

After 15 minutes, Tewkesbury had the best chance of the game so far. Dancing in from the left, he got

his shot away at the near post, only for the Shoreham keeper to make an excellent save with his feet.

By now, Westfield were building up a real head of steam. Rwabigwi and Tewkesbury both went close from acute angles, while Shoreham continued to pose a threat on the break. Their number 11 again tested Robertshaw, who produced another good save to tip the effort wide and keep the scores level.

The breakthrough finally came after 26 minutes.

Pritchard won possession on the halfway line before embarking on a superb run, taking on four Shoreham players as he drove towards the box. A fortunate bounce off a Shoreham defender opened up the opportunity, but Pritchard still had plenty to do, toe-poking the ball home from 12 yards.

Westfield 1-0 Shoreham.

The goal brought an extra swagger to the Westies, who began knocking the ball around nicely in the forward areas. Ridgers and Harvey both fired wide from the edge of the box as Westfield looked to extend their advantage.

Shoreham remained dangerous, though, and a long, bouncing ball left Robertshaw stranded. Ridgers produced an excellent piece of defending to clear the danger from his own six-yard line and preserve Westfield's lead going into the break.

Half-time: Westfield 1-0 Shoreham

The second half began in much the same manner, with Westfield continuing to look the more threatening side. G Murphy struck over on the volley before Tewkesbury fired high and wide from 13 yards after the Shoreham goalkeeper had handled a backpass.

As the game progressed, however, it began to fizzle into something of a midfield battle under the lights. Westfield enjoyed the lion's share of possession without really threatening the Shoreham goal, while the visitors continued to look for opportunities on the counter.

Despite their efforts, Shoreham were unable to properly test Robertshaw in the Westfield goal.

With nine minutes remaining, Westfield finally found the second goal their dominance deserved.

Rwabigwi did brilliantly to create the opening, providing the opportunity for Tewkesbury to finish from close range and make it 2-0. It was a

well-earned reward for Rwabigwi, whose return to the side had been a constant source of danger throughout the evening.

And just two minutes later, it was game, set and match.

Pritchard delivered an excellent cross into the danger area, and Tewkesbury was on hand once again to finish the move and complete his brace.

Westfield 3-0 Shoreham.

The final whistle confirmed a strong opening league victory for the Westies. While there were periods where Westfield could have been more clinical in front of goal, the overall performance was one of control, energy and composure, with the clean sheet providing an added bonus.

A welcome three points gets Westfield up and running in the league, and attention now turns to a trip to Guildford City at the weekend as the Westies look to build on an encouraging start.

GUILDFORD CITY 1-1 WESTFIELD

MATCH REPORT BY JACK STAPLEY

**JACK STAPLEY**

WESTFIELD FC CORRESPONDENT

Reporting on the Westies in SCFL Division One

Westies continued their excellent start to the season with a hard-earned draw away at hotly tipped Guildford City.

On another day, Westfield could easily have come away with all three points, but an inspired display from the Guildford goalkeeper ensured the spoils were shared.

FIRST HALF

Guildford started brightly, turning Westfield around and causing problems, with their excellent No. 11 proving a constant threat. Ford was equal to everything thrown at him early on.

Once Westfield got to grips with the difficult pitch, however, they began to flex their muscles. Efforts from Michael Rwabigwi and Brad Pritchard forced the Guildford keeper into saves, with the one from Brad particularly impressive as he got down low to keep it out.

On 22 minutes came Westfield's first big chance. Great work from George Murphy saw him win the ball back on halfway before Tewkesbury delivered a cross to Michael, whose effort came back off the upright.

Six minutes later, Tewkesbury went close himself, his rocket of a shot taking a deflection off a Guildford defender and flying just wide.

Then, on 31 minutes, the Westies deservedly took the lead.

Tewkesbury brought down the goal kick, drove forward for around 30 yards, twisting and turning his way through the Guildford defence before finishing across the keeper with his left foot. Another contender for goal of the season already!

Ford was called into action again before the break, showing great alertness to prevent a 30-yard free kick from creeping in.

Half Time: Guildford City 0-1 Westfield

SECOND HALF

The second half started brightly for Westfield, with chance after chance coming their way — but the Guildford goalkeeper was equal to everything.

Ward headed over from 12 yards, while Murphy fired wide on the half-volley. Tewkesbury then smashed the crossbar from an almost impossible angle, before Rwabigwi saw an effort well saved when through on goal.

It really was all Westfield.

Against the run of play, Guildford found an equaliser when their excellent No. 11 got onto the end of a through ball before lifting the ball over the onrushing Ford to level the scores.

For the next 15 minutes, Guildford were camped in the Westfield half. Ford made two important saves, before Guildford's No. 14 smashed over from 12 yards after a cut-back.

With just five minutes remaining, the Guildford goalkeeper once again backed up his claims for Man of the Match, producing a smart stop to deny Tewkesbury's volley.

Full Time: Guildford City 1-1 Westfield

Westfield will take massive confidence from this performance. They set their stall out early, created

the better chances and, for large periods, looked the more dangerous side.

One of the biggest differences we've noticed so far between Step 7 and Step 6 is the quality of the goalkeepers — and Guildford's was excellent today.

The Westies now look ahead to another tough test next Saturday as they travel to Mile Oak.

INFINITY 4-1 DIAL SQUARE

MATCH REPORT BY CHARLIE BONE



CHARLIE BONE

INFINITY FC CORRESPONDENT

Reporting from the Infinity dugout

The first half of the game was a bit lacklustre. The only positive to take from it was the passing, as every pass seemed to be going to the right person. A lot of the plays, however, weren't getting to where they needed to be. We had a couple of chances in the box, but not a lot that greatly affected them. You couldn't really see anything coming out of that half until we got a free kick from outside the box, where Ashton Leigh hammered it top bins to put us 1-0 up going into the second half.

The second half was a bit more productive, with the players really putting their all into it. Then, out of nowhere, one of the Dial Square players kicked the ball from just outside the box, and it went over our keeper and straight into the goal. It was a great shot.

They had another goal which was eventually given offside, but for about two minutes the ref gave it, even though the lino had his flag up the whole time.

The plays we were making were quality, and one finally led to a second goal from Zach Willett, who dribbled around the defence and slotted it in calmly. Not even two minutes later, Zach Willett was back up again and scored a disgusting chip over the keeper to make it two goals for himself.

Once again, not long after his second, he was back up there and scored his hat-trick, continuing his consecutive hat-trick streak. But it wasn't just special because of that — it was special because he broke the club record for the most consecutive hat-tricks, previously held by an ex-player of ours called Danny Phillips.

Full time finished 4-1.

FOUR TEAMS PERFECT AS DIVISION TWO STARTS TO TAKE SHAPE

SCFL DIVISION TWO ROUND-UP — SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026



TD SHIPLEY — ONE OF FOUR SIDES WITH A PERFECT START IN DIVISION TWO

PHOTO: TD SHIPLEY FC (X)

Two Saturdays into the Southern Combination League Division Two season and we already have four teams sitting there with perfect records.

Chichester City B, Hurstpierpoint, Rustington and TD Shipley have all taken six points from six, and perhaps even more eye-catching is how difficult three of those sides have been to score against.

Chichester have scored 19 goals without conceding.

Hurstpierpoint have scored 11 without conceding.

Rustington have seven without reply.

TD Shipley have six points, six goals and just one conceded.

It may only be August, but those numbers will certainly have caught the attention of everyone else in the division.

Saturday's seven fixtures produced 25 goals, with five winning teams keeping clean sheets. Bosham bounced back from an opening-day defeat by hitting four at ASC Brighton Rangers, Southwater collected their first points with a 3-1 victory over

Worthing Town, while Ferring and Brighton Electricity fought out the day's only draw.

At the other end, Copthorne, Storrington, Brighton Rangers and Worthing Town are still waiting for their first points.

Two matches tell us almost nothing about where a team will finish next spring.

But they can certainly give us a few clues.

And there are already some interesting ones appearing in Division Two.

CHICHESTER CITY B JUST KEEP WINNING

ALFOLD 0 CHICHESTER CITY B 2

After what happened on opening day, perhaps the most impressive part of Chichester City B's second league victory was how ordinary the scoreline looked.

1 A week earlier they had produced one of those results which makes you assume somebody has entered the score incorrectly.

CHICHESTER CITY B 17 WORTHING TOWN 0

Nine-nil at half-time.

Seventeen by full-time.

Then came a completely different test at Alfold.

No avalanche. No double figures. No outrageous first-half destruction.

Just a professional 2-0 away victory and another three points.

That might actually tell us more about Chichester than the 17 did.

The very good sides do not need every match to become a goal fest. Sometimes you go away from home, keep the opponent out, score twice and get back on the coach.

Chichester City B have now done both.

Their record after 180 minutes of league football reads:

Played two. Won two. Scored 19. Conceded zero. Six points.

Unsurprisingly, that extraordinary goal difference puts them top of the table.

And this has not appeared from nowhere.

Chichester finished fourth last season, winning 19 of their 28 matches and scoring 107 league goals. Only champions Hailsham Town matched that goals total.

So perhaps the warning signs were already there.

This is a side which knew where the goal was last season and appears to have returned with exactly the same appetite.

The difference so far is the clean sheets.

If a team capable of scoring at that rate also becomes difficult to score against, everybody else should pay attention.

Alfold should not be overly concerned.

2 They opened with a good 2-1 away victory at Storrington and were facing one of last season's leading teams.

Three points from two is perfectly respectable.

But this was a reminder of the standard required to live with the strongest sides in this division.

HURSTPIERPOINT HAVE ARRIVED WITH A BANG

COPTHORNE 0 HURSTPIERPOINT 6

Welcome to SCFL Division Two, Hurstpierpoint.

Two games.

Eleven goals.

None conceded.

Maximum points.

It would have been difficult to design a more emphatic opening.

Having begun their campaign by going to ASC Brighton Rangers and winning 5-0, Hurstpierpoint travelled to Copthorne on Saturday and somehow went one better.

They were already 4-0 ahead at half-time and added another two after the break to complete a 6-0 demolition.

This is particularly interesting because Hurstpierpoint were playing in the Mid Sussex Football League last season. Their 2025/26 record there included big victories and a strong defensive return, and they have carried that momentum straight into their new surroundings.

There is sometimes an assumption that a team arriving at a new level will need a bedding-in period.

Hurstpierpoint appear to have ignored that memo.

Eleven scored.

Zero conceded.

And their first two victories have both come away from home.

That last point deserves emphasising.

3 They haven't needed the comfort of their own ground to establish themselves. They have gone

into two opponents' backyards and won by an aggregate score of 11-0.

Now comes the difficult part.

Everybody knows.

No opponent is going to look at Hurstpierpoint as the new boys anymore.

They will be treated as one of the teams to beat.

How they respond to that will be fascinating.

COPTHORNE'S START IS BECOMING PAINFUL For Copthorne, the first fortnight could hardly have been tougher.

Opening day brought a 5-0 defeat against Upper Beeding.

Saturday brought six more.

Played two. Lost two. Scored zero. Conceded 11.

Nobody needs telling that this represents a difficult start.

But the context around Copthorne is also important.

The club has moved its first-team base to Roffey FC for the 2026/27 campaign, another change to absorb after recent seasons in which the club had previously risen as high as Division One.

The priority now has to be simple.

Forget league positions.

Forget what everybody else is doing.

Score a goal.

Keep a game tight.

Get something on the board.

When you have conceded 11 without scoring, the worst thing a team can do is try to fix everything in one afternoon.

4 Copthorne need something positive to build from.

Their next fixture?

Away to Chichester City B.

Football does have a sense of humour sometimes.

RUSTINGTON LOOK LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS AGAIN

STORRINGTON COMMUNITY 0 RUSTINGTON 6

Anyone surprised to see Rustington near the top probably wasn't paying attention last season.

They finished second in Division Two in 2025/26, collecting 70 points, scoring 105 goals and losing only twice in 28 league matches.

They have begun this campaign like a side with unfinished business.

Opening day brought a gritty 1-0 victory at Southwater.

Saturday brought something completely different.

A 6-0 win at Storrington Community.

Rustington led 2-0 at half-time before completely taking the game away from their hosts after the break, adding another four without reply.

That gives them six points, seven scored and none conceded.

The contrast between their two victories should concern rivals.

Southwater made them work.

Rustington still won.

Storrington gave them space to impose themselves.

Rustington scored six.

That ability to win in different ways is usually one of the first things you look for in a side expected to challenge near the top.

And Rustington already know what a title race feels like.

5 Last season they won 22 league matches and finished seven points behind an outstanding Hailsham Town side which lost only once all season.

Hailsham have now moved up to Division One.

Rustington remain.

You do not need to be Sherlock Holmes to work out that they will fancy another serious crack at it.

STORRINGTON NEED TO STOP THE BLEEDING
Storrington's start is almost the mirror image.

They opened with a narrow 2-1 defeat at home to Alfold.

That was competitive.

Saturday wasn't.

Six unanswered goals leaves Storrington with no points, one scored and eight conceded.

They sit 12th after two matches.

The encouraging point is that there is plenty of experience within this club of dealing with difficult periods.

Storrington finished tenth last season, and their campaign included several heavy defeats but also enough victories and draws to remain comfortably competitive within the division.

Nobody should judge them on a defeat against Rustington.

But the manner of the second half will hurt.

Two down at the interval is not ideal, but it still leaves a match alive.

Conceding four more means the game completely escaped them.

The response next weekend matters far more than Saturday's result.

TD SHIPLEY — SIX POINTS AND BUSINESS AS USUAL

TD SHIPLEY 3 UPPER BEEDING 0

While Chichester, Hurstpierpoint and Rustington have generated some spectacular numbers, TD Shipley are just getting on with winning football matches.

6 They began by defeating Bosham 3-1.

On Saturday they beat Upper Beeding 3-0.

Two matches.

Two wins.

Six goals.

One conceded.

Six points.

There is nothing surprising about Shipley being competitive near the top.

They finished third last season with 66 points, winning 21 of their 28 league matches.

In most seasons that kind of return puts you right in the middle of the promotion conversation.

Unfortunately for Shipley, Hailsham and Rustington were both exceptional.

The Dragons therefore arrive in 2026/27 as another side with a serious body of evidence behind them.

They are not an August surprise.

They are a proven Division Two team winning Division Two football matches.

And there might be another positive hidden within Saturday's scoreline.

Upper Beeding had destroyed Copthorne 5-0 on opening day.

They arrived at Dragons Green having already shown that they possess plenty of attacking threat.

Shipley shut them out completely.

That is arguably the most impressive aspect of the afternoon.

UPPER BEEDING BROUGHT BACK DOWN TO EARTH Football moves quickly.

Seven days earlier, Upper Beeding were celebrating a five-goal away win.

Now they are reflecting on a 3-0 defeat.

7 One victory and one defeat leaves them seventh with three points, five goals scored and three conceded.

There is absolutely nothing alarming about that.

Upper Beeding finished seventh last season with 42 points, so an opening fortnight containing one huge win and one defeat against last season's third-

placed side probably tells us very little about where they ultimately land.

It simply demonstrates the strength near the top of this division.

Copthorne gave Beeding opportunities and were punished.

Shipley did not.

That is the challenge when you start playing the better sides.

BOSHAM BOUNCE BACK IN STYLE

ASC BRIGHTON RANGERS 0 BOSHAM 4

One of Saturday's most important results came at Culver Road.

Bosham began the season with a 3-1 defeat at TD Shipley.

Given that they finished second-bottom last season, winning only three league games, an opening defeat against one of the division's strongest sides was hardly cause for panic.

But going to ASC Brighton Rangers and winning 4-0?

That changes the early mood completely.

Bosham led only 1-0 at half-time before adding three goals after the interval.

That is exactly the kind of result which can transform belief.

Last season Bosham scored only 21 goals across their 28 league games.

They already have five after two matches this time around.

Nobody is suggesting two games erase an entire previous campaign.

But four goals away from home represents progress.

The clean sheet matters too.

8 Bosham conceded 80 league goals last season.

If they can become harder to break down while finding additional goals at the opposite end, their experience of 2026/27 could look completely different.

They are sixth after Saturday's win.

A WORRYING START FOR BRIGHTON RANGERS
ASC Brighton Rangers have had one of the toughest openings of anybody.

First, Hurstpierpoint put five past them.

Then Bosham scored four.

Two home matches.

Two defeats.

Nine conceded.

No goals scored.

That is particularly surprising when you compare it with last season.

Brighton Rangers finished ninth but scored 74 goals, a very healthy total for a mid-table side.

So the absence of goals across their opening 180 minutes feels more likely to be a temporary problem than a permanent one.

Even so, conceding nine at home cannot be ignored.

Southwater away next weekend now becomes an important opportunity to settle things down.

SOUTHWATER GET MOVING

SOUTHWATER 3 WORTHING TOWN 1

After the frustration of losing 1-0 at home to Rustington on opening day, Southwater responded exactly as they would have wanted.

They were 2-1 ahead at half-time against Worthing Town before adding a third after the break to secure their first victory of the campaign.

9 Southwater were one of the division's better sides last season, finishing fifth with 47 points, and there was certainly no disgrace in losing narrowly against runners-up Rustington in their first match.

Saturday puts them back on track.

Three points from two and a positive goal difference.

Nothing spectacular.

Nothing to worry about.

Just a solid start.

WORTHING TOWN SHOW SOME FIGHT AFTER SEVENTEEN-GOAL HORROR There will not be many occasions where losing 3-1 can reasonably be described as progress.

For Worthing Town, this was one of them.

A week earlier they lost 17-0 at Chichester City B.

Seventeen.

They were 9-0 behind at half-time.

Saturday they went to Southwater and were still firmly in the contest at 2-1 during the interval.

They eventually lost 3-1, but after the psychological damage a result like 17-0 can cause, simply returning seven days later and competing properly deserves acknowledgement.

Worthing Town finished bottom last season after conceding 122 league goals.

So nobody is pretending the underlying issues have disappeared.

But this was at least a step in the right direction.

Sometimes rebuilding starts with very small victories.

Being competitive again was one.

10 NO WAY THROUGH AT FERRING

FERRING 0 BRIGHTON ELECTRICITY 0

Amid 25 goals elsewhere, Ferring and Brighton Electricity apparently decided everybody had seen enough.

Nil-nil.

The result keeps Ferring unbeaten after two matches.

They opened with a 3-0 victory over Rudgwick and now have four points with no goals conceded.

That puts them fifth.

Ferring finished sixth last season, so four points from six represents a perfectly solid beginning.

Brighton Electricity were playing their first league match of the campaign and will surely be pleased to begin with a clean sheet and a point.

That is particularly significant considering they conceded 103 league goals last season.

From that perspective, 0-0 away from home is not boring.

It is progress.

RUDGWICK HAVE THE WEEK OFF With 15 teams in Division Two, somebody will always be left without a league fixture.

On Saturday it was Rudgwick.

Their only match so far remains the opening-day 3-0 defeat at Ferring.

They return to action next Saturday with a trip to TD Shipley — not exactly the gentlest way to restart.

SATURDAY'S SCFL DIVISION TWO RESULTS ASC Brighton Rangers 0-4 Bosham

Alfold 0-2 Chichester City B

Copthorne 0-6 Hurstpierpoint

Ferring 0-0 Brighton Electricity

11 Southwater 3-1 Worthing Town

Storrington Community 0-6 Rustington

TD Shipley 3-0 Upper Beeding

THE EARLY DIVISION TWO PICTURE It is only two games.

That sentence needs repeating before anybody starts engraving trophies.

But what an interesting top four we already have.

1. CHICHESTER CITY B — 6 POINTS, +19

Nineteen scored.

Zero conceded.

Enough said.

2. HURSTPIERPOINT — 6 POINTS, +11

The newcomers have not simply won their first two.

They have dismantled both opponents away from home.

3. RUSTINGTON — 6 POINTS, +7

Last season's runners-up look exactly like last season's runners-up.

Dangerous.

4. TD SHIPLEY — 6 POINTS, +5

Third last season and maximum points this season.

Nobody should be surprised.

Then comes Ferring on four, with Bosham, Upper Beeding, Southwater and Alfold all sitting on three points.

Brighton Electricity have one after their opening fixture.

12 Rudgwick, Storrington, Brighton Rangers, Copthorne and Worthing Town are still waiting to get moving.

DUGOUT NEWS VERDICT Division Two is often overlooked because it sits beneath the senior National League System steps.

It shouldn't be.

There are proper clubs here, proper rivalries and some excellent players.

And already there is the outline of what could become a brilliant battle at the top.

Chichester City B scored 107 goals last season and have started this campaign with 19 in two.

Rustington won 22 of 28 last year and have started with consecutive clean-sheet victories.

TD Shipley won 21 league matches last season and have started two-from-two.

And then Hurstpierpoint have walked into the division and announced themselves by winning their first two fixtures 5-0 and 6-0.

That is four teams with maximum points.

Three have not conceded a goal.

Something has to give eventually.

Then underneath them you have Ferring unbeaten, Upper Beeding capable of sticking five past teams, Southwater coming off a top-five finish and Bosham showing immediate signs that this season could look very different from the last one.

Even at the bottom there are stories developing.

Worthing Town responding to a 17-0 defeat by competing properly at Southwater.

Brighton Electricity starting their season with a clean sheet after conceding 103 last year.

Copthorne trying to find their feet after a difficult opening fortnight.

Storrington needing a response.

Brighton Rangers looking for the goals that flowed so freely last season.

We are two games in.

13 Nobody knows anything yet.

But we know this much.

Chichester City B are scoring for fun.

Hurstpierpoint have arrived.

Rustington still look like contenders.

TD Shipley haven't gone anywhere.

And if those four keep moving at anything close to this pace, SCFL Division Two could produce one hell of a race.

14

SCFL DIVISION TWO

SOUTHERN COMBINATION FOOTBALL LEAGUE

D
DUGOUT AI

POS	TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Chichester City B	2	2	0	0	19	0	+19	6
2	Hurstpierpoint	2	2	0	0	11	0	+11	6
3	Rustington	2	2	0	0	7	0	+7	6
4	TD Shipley	2	2	0	0	6	1	+5	6
5	Ferring	2	1	1	0	3	0	+3	4
6	Bosham	2	1	0	1	5	3	+2	3
7	Upper Beeding	2	1	0	1	5	3	+2	3
8	Southwater	2	1	0	1	3	2	+1	3
9	Alfold	2	1	0	1	2	3	-1	3
10	Brighton Electricity	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
11	Rudgwick	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0
12	Storrington Community	2	0	0	2	1	8	-7	0
13	ASC Brighton Rangers	2	0	0	2	0	9	-9	0
14	Copthorne	2	0	0	2	0	11	-11	0
15	Worthing Town	2	0	0	2	1	20	-19	0

DUGOUT AI • LEAGUE TABLES

DOUGIE'S TABLE

DUGOUT AI



STAT CHECK

- ✓ $P = W + D + L$
- ✓ $GD = F - A$
- ✓ $PTS = 3W + D$
- ✓ 15 teams checked

UPDATED

23 AUGUST 2026

DATA • TABLES • NON-LEAGUE

CHECKED & REBUILT FOR CLARITY

OUT NEWS • ISSUE 3 • SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2

DIVISION TWO FIXTURES THIS WEEK

WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

SCFL DIVISION TWO — SATURDAY 29 AUGUST

SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Alfold		VS		Rustington	ALFOLD RECREATION GROUND
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Bosham		VS		Upper Beeding	BOSHAM RECREATION GROUND
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Chichester City B		VS		Copthorne	OAKLANDS PARK (CHICHESTER)
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Ferring		VS		Worthing Town	FERRING FOOTBALL CLUB
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Southwater		VS		ASC Brighton Rangers	SOUTHWATER SPORTS CLUB
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	Storrington Community		VS		Brighton Electricity	STORRINGTON RECREATION GROUND
SAT 29 AUG 15:00	TD Shipley		VS		Rudgwick	DRAGONS GREEN PLAYING FIELD

B TEAMS IN THE PYRAMID – IS IT REALLY A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

BY PAUL WISE



PAUL WISE

DUGOUT NEWS COLUMNIST

On B teams, promotion races and competition integrity

Listening to the IBB10 Sunday Night Show this week, an interesting debate came up around B teams and their place within the lower reaches of the non-league pyramid.

It's a subject I have fairly strong feelings about, partly because I've experienced first-hand the impact a B team can have on a league and a promotion race.

The question is a fairly simple one: should B teams belonging to clubs higher up the pyramid be allowed to compete at Steps 6 and 7 alongside traditional first teams?

For me, the answer is no.

That's not because I don't see the value of B teams. Far from it. Young players need competitive football, fringe players need minutes and senior players returning from injury need somewhere to regain match fitness.

My issue isn't with the existence of B teams.

It's where we put them.

This debate has come back into focus following Chichester City B's extraordinary 17-0 victory over Worthing Town in SCFL Division Two. One of the players involved was Josh Irish, who scored six. Josh has previously scored plenty of goals higher up the pyramid, including at Step 5.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with Josh choosing to play for Chichester B. But it does raise a question.

Would a player with that pedigree normally be playing Step 7 football for a traditional Step 7 club, or does the pulling power and pathway offered by a club like Chichester change the equation?

That's one of my problems with B teams in senior football.

They aren't necessarily operating with the same resources as the traditional clubs they're competing against. They have the name, infrastructure, facilities, coaching and player pool of a club operating considerably higher up the pyramid behind them.

And I've experienced another side of the problem myself.

When I was managing Seaford Town in the 2023/24 season, we were competing for promotion alongside Roffey. We travelled to play Dorking Wanderers B on a weekend when Dorking's first-team fixture had been called off.

The side we faced contained a significant number of players with senior first-team experience. It was a completely different proposition to what you would ordinarily expect when playing a development side at that level.

A few weeks later, Roffey played Dorking B and faced a side much more representative of their normal young B-team setup.

I want to make something absolutely clear here.

I am not saying Seaford didn't win the league because of Dorking Wanderers.

Over the course of a season, you finish where you deserve to finish. Roffey won the league on merit and deserved their success. This isn't an attempt to rewrite history or find an excuse for why we finished behind them.

My point is much simpler.

That situation should never have been allowed to happen in the first place.

Dorking did nothing wrong. If the rules allowed those players to play, they were perfectly entitled to select them. My criticism isn't aimed at Dorking for using the resources available to them.

My problem is with a system that allows it.

A B team's strength can potentially change dramatically from one Saturday to the next depending on what is happening with its parent club.

Imagine two clubs fighting for promotion. One plays a B team when its parent club's first team has a fixture and faces a group of academy players. The other plays exactly the same B team when the first-team game is postponed and suddenly faces five or six senior players.

How is that a level playing field?

The same applies at the other end of the table. Imagine two clubs fighting relegation and their survival is decided because one happened to face the development version of a B team while the other faced a substantially strengthened version.

We're talking about clubs' seasons, promotions and relegations potentially being influenced by circumstances completely outside their control.

And there's another fundamental issue.

B teams can influence who progresses through the pyramid while, in many circumstances, being

restricted in how far they can progress themselves.

That doesn't sit comfortably with me.

Traditional non-league clubs enter senior leagues with an ambition to progress. Chairmen, committees and volunteers spend countless hours trying to improve their clubs. Managers recruit players to win games. Supporters travel around the county every Saturday. Sponsors put money into clubs.

Promotion matters.

Just because we're talking about Step 6 or Step 7 doesn't make that ambition any less important.

The level might be lower, but the ambition isn't.

For me, we already had a much more appropriate system for reserve and development football in competitions such as the Suburban League.

That environment catered for reserve sides from professional and semi-professional clubs.

And importantly, everyone understood what they were entering.

A reserve side might field a couple of first-team players returning from injury one week and a group of youngsters the next. But the opposition had broadly the same opportunities available to them.

That's reserve football.

If your centre-forward has been out for six weeks and needs 60 minutes, play him in the reserves. If a young player needs his first experience of men's football, give him that opportunity. If a fringe player needs minutes, get him a game.

That's exactly what those competitions should be there for.

The difference comes when those teams are placed alongside independent first teams in the senior pyramid.

A traditional Step 6 club can't suddenly borrow six players from a Step 2 squad because their game has been postponed. They don't have another senior squad sitting above them.

So why are we asking them to compete against clubs who potentially do?

Perhaps the easiest way to look at it is to turn the pyramid upside down.

Dorking Wanderers have had an incredible rise through non-league football. They've fought their way through the divisions and experienced exactly what promotion means to a football club.

So imagine Dorking were fighting for promotion from the National League into the Football League.

Now imagine Premier League clubs were allowed B teams in the National League.

Dorking have a crucial Saturday fixture against one of them. The Premier League club doesn't have a game that weekend, so its B team suddenly contains several players with Premier League first-team experience.

Dorking lose.

Two weeks later, their title rivals play exactly the same B team. This time the Premier League first team is playing, so their opponents face a team predominantly made up of young academy players.

Would that feel fair?

Would anyone involved with Dorking consider that a level playing field?

If the answer is no, then why should the principle be any different six or seven levels further down?

And again, this isn't an attack on Dorking. Nor is it an attack on Chichester or any other club operating a B team within the current rules.

The clubs aren't the problem.

For me, the structure is.

B teams absolutely have a place in football. Young players need somewhere to develop and senior players need somewhere to get minutes.

But I don't believe that place should be within the senior pyramid.

Give B teams competitive reserve football. Give academies meaningful fixtures. Build strong competitions for professional and semi-professional development sides.

But don't ask independent clubs to put their own ambitions at risk in order to provide somebody else's development pathway.

Because whether you're trying to reach the Football League, Step 3, Step 5 or Step 6, promotion means something to the people involved.

The level might be lower, but the ambition isn't.

And the integrity of the competition should matter just as much.

WHO REALLY NEEDS POLITICS IN FOOTBALL?

BY RUSS COCHRAN



RUSS COCHRAN

DUGOUT NEWS COLUMNIST • OFF THE PITCH

Politics, funding and the people who make clubs work

Well, we all do — and we shouldn't shy away from it.

We all know football has its internal politics. There are disagreements, personalities, rivalries and, from time to time, issues that nobody really wants to deal with. That's football.

Whether you're involved at grassroots level, non-league level or higher up the pyramid, what happens away from the pitch can have just as much influence on a club as what happens on it.

When we talk about politics in football, though, it shouldn't automatically be seen as a dirty word. Sometimes it's simply about getting the right people around the table, having difficult conversations, finding compromises and trying to move something forward.

Take external funding. Organisations such as the Football Foundation can make a huge difference when a club is fortunate enough to secure investment. A new 4G pitch, floodlights, changing facilities, a clubhouse, a community stadium — or even something as straightforward as a storage container — can transform what a club is able to offer.

But this is also where the green-eyed monster can appear.

Local rivals, neighbouring communities and supporters can look at another club receiving

investment and ask why they aren't getting the same opportunity.

The County FA may also have to step in, provide guidance or make decisions that not everyone agrees with. That's part of the process. There have to be rules, accountability and a way of deciding how investment and resources are allocated.

The important thing is how that process is handled.

SOMETIMES THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE IS OURSELVES

Some of these frustrations can ultimately come back to the club itself.

Why?

Because someone didn't make the phone call.

Someone didn't seek advice.

Someone didn't put the proposal in front of the board.

Someone decided it was too much work.

Or perhaps nobody managed to convince the people making the decisions that the idea was actually worth pursuing.

That can be incredibly frustrating when you look at another club nearby and see them moving forward.

But there is another side to this.

Sometimes saying no is the right decision.

Capital projects can involve considerable expenditure, ongoing maintenance and financial risk. It's easy to become focused on securing a new facility without properly considering what happens once the ribbon has been cut.

Can the club afford to operate it?

Can it maintain it?

Will it generate enough income?

Will it actually benefit more than just the first team?

Those questions matter.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

One of the biggest risks is creating a master plan simply to satisfy planning conditions or obtain approval without properly understanding the long-term consequences.

Local authority planning departments have plenty to consider. Urban and rural locations bring different challenges, while issues such as neighbours, land use, access, parking, hours of use, noise, lighting, drainage, existing use and services all have to be considered.

It can become a daunting minefield.

This is why development isn't simply about putting something new on a piece of land. It's about understanding how that development will work for the club and the surrounding area for years to come.

There are plenty of potential pieces to the puzzle: Government funding, including DCMS programmes, the Football Foundation, County FA support, Community Infrastructure Levy funding where applicable, local authority investment, developers, community organisations, contractors, suppliers, architects and other professional advisers.

All of these can potentially help provide solutions.

But getting the mix right is crucial.

A club shouldn't only be thinking about what the first team needs on a Saturday afternoon. It should be looking at what the wider community could get from the facility as well.

BUILD MORE THAN A FOOTBALL GROUND

This is where I think some clubs can miss a trick.

You don't just build it and they will come.

If the catchment area isn't particularly large, you have to give people reasons to become involved.

Does the club have youth football?

Women's football?

Girls' football?

Inclusive football?

Walking football?

Community sessions?

Not every club can immediately provide all of these, and there will be practical reasons why some schemes simply aren't possible.

But the questions should still be asked.

What could we offer?

Who are we currently missing?

What could we do with the facilities we already have?

The wider the range of people who have a reason to connect with a club, the greater the potential support around it. That can mean players, parents, volunteers, coaches, sponsors and supporters — people who develop an attachment to the club and want to see it succeed.

LOOK BEYOND MATCHDAY

Training and education are other areas worth exploring.

Does the club offer opportunities for people to develop skills away from the pitch?

Facility management, sports science, catering, administration, marketing, media and

groundskeeping are all part of running a modern football operation.

A football ground doesn't have to be used solely for football.

Could the club work with a local college or education provider?

Could students gain practical experience while the club benefits from their skills and enthusiasm?

Could meeting rooms, classrooms or other areas of the ground be used during the week?

Suddenly, the facility becomes much more than somewhere to play a match on a Saturday.

GET THE SCHOOLS INVOLVED

Another relatively straightforward idea is building relationships with local schools.

Imagine working with schools in the area and offering a number of complimentary or subsidised tickets for selected matches.

Bring the children.

Encourage parents to come with them.

Give them a reason to enjoy the experience.

It doesn't have to be about filling the ground for one afternoon. It's about creating familiarity and building a relationship over time.

If a youngster has a great experience at their local club, they may want to come back. They might eventually play there, volunteer there, bring their own children or simply become a lifelong supporter.

Do that consistently across several schools and the effect can become significant.

You're not just chasing an attendance figure.

You're building something that could last.

ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS

Disability access is another huge topic and one I'll expand on in a separate article, but it needs to be

part of the conversation whenever facilities are being developed.

If we're talking about creating places for the whole community, then the whole community should be able to use them.

Accessibility shouldn't be an afterthought.

SOMEBODY HAS TO DRIVE IT

None of this is easy, and not every club will have the finances, land, volunteers or infrastructure to deliver everything I've mentioned.

But ideas don't move forward by themselves.

Sometimes you need a small group of people dedicated to a particular project. Sometimes you need one person who refuses to let an idea disappear. You need people who understand funding, planning, facilities, community engagement and, importantly, how to bring different organisations together.

That brings us back to politics.

Not politics for the sake of politics.

It's about relationships, negotiation, persuasion, compromise and getting people to pull in the same direction.

The clubs that progress won't necessarily be the ones with the biggest budgets or the largest grounds.

They may simply be the clubs that recognise an opportunity, find the right people and have the determination to see it through.

Getting the right people involved is one thing.

Getting people involved who have the dedication to keep pushing when things become difficult is another.

Because having a great idea is easy.

Making it happen is the real game.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES A FAN FROM A SUPPORTER?

BY CHRIS SHUTLER



CHRIS SHUTLER

DUGOUT NEWS COLUMNIST • FROM THE TERRACES

Home and away, every week — that's what it's all about

Two labels you hear when people refer to themselves when it comes to football. What is the difference?

If I speak for myself, I'm a supporter of a football club, and what that means is I go to games as regularly as I can, home and away. You become part of the club that you go to. You know the names of those that also attend the matches, friendships bond with others and it becomes that second family.

You get to experience football in the flesh. Don't get me wrong, I've also been a television fan of a club as well. I went to a couple of Chelsea games, but to be honest, the cost of it and the travel just for a home game to support a club that I don't really care about that much and feel that connection to, to me, wasn't worth it anymore. And I can tell you now, first-hand, watching a club that is a bit closer to you — maybe a little bit less quality in football — believe me, it's still football.

I think a lot of people want the glory of being a big football club fan. Some people tell me I'm mad to go home and away supporting the level of football that I do, but to me that's what it's all about. It's genuine.

On top of this is the financial aspect. As someone who supports a club in the fifth tier of non-league football, money coming in through the gate is huge for the club — and pretty much most clubs at this level of football — because unlike leagues such

as the Premier League, Championship and even in some cases League One, we don't get massive sponsorship deals or 20-plus thousand people regularly coming through the gate paying their money for season tickets and on-the-day ticket purchases.

Paying for beer and food at the ground is also a big contributor and helps clubs stay afloat.

We've seen it on a number of occasions where clubs that aren't completely massive, and don't have a global supporter base, struggle — and in some sad cases cease to exist — due to the financial cost of running a football club. This is why volunteers are so, so important at this level: those who will turn up and run a club to the best of their ability.

Now let's get onto a football fan.

Before I get into this, this is no dig or jab at anybody that watches football in this way.

To me, a football fan is somebody who, yes, will still have their club, but might not be as emotionally or financially invested as others are who go to clubs home and away.

A certain demographic on this list is somebody who lives in West Sussex but supports Manchester United, or somebody who lives in Ireland but supports Liverpool. In the business of football, that's called a glory hunter.

To me, I find it incredibly confusing as to why you wouldn't want to go and watch football live instead of giving all your money to Sky Sports.

Don't get me wrong — at the same time, I know people that live near me, or even a little bit further south than me, who have Liverpool season tickets, and that is incredible dedication. That's a football supporter.

There's also the argument of "it's your dad's team" or "your grandad's team" that you support. Well, yes, that is fair.

I have a great example of this. There's a young guy I work with who's Scottish and his team is Hibs, and the Scottish league is the only league he watches. To me it falls into a type of in-the-middle area, because it's a hard one — he still supports a Scottish team and the league itself.

There was a point in time when the Irish league was genuinely worried about its viewers and attendances due to there being a heavily Premier League-supporting affiliation in Ireland.

Like, come on — I know teams like Liverpool, Manchester United and Manchester City are good.

But football was meant to be experienced first-hand. To me, nothing beats the morning of an

away day, where it's a little bit cold in the air, you've woken up with the excitement and anticipation of meeting your mates, getting on the train, getting those looks of people who know you're off to football. You've got your beers in hand, ripping into each other, having a laugh. You make a long journey up somewhere you've never been before, or somewhere you have memories of previously. When the 90 minutes is up, you're either running that train home celebrating, or you're all sat there not talking to each other, trying your best to analyse what went wrong for the whole journey back.

You don't get that if you're sat on your sofa. You can just turn the TV off and life goes on, and you forget about it in an hour or two — because you're not engrossed in it, you're not consuming it properly. You're not going through the emotions and the heartbreak and the jubilation as you would do if you actually go to the match.

Anybody can watch football how they want to, but to me you'll never beat being at the football itself, no matter what level it is — Premier League or County Prem. And never be ashamed or embarrassed to support a club at that level either, because if you love it, what else matters?

ARE REFEREES NOW BECOMING TOO FOCUSED ON THE DUGOUTS AND TECHNICAL AREAS, AND NOT FOCUSED ENOUGH ON THE ACTUAL GAME?

BY THE WILD WEATHERMAN



THE WILD WEATHERMAN — BRACED FOR ANOTHER STORM IN THE TECHNICAL AREA

IMAGE: DUGOUT NEWS

The increasing focus on technical areas has made this question impossible to ignore. In many competitions, only two people are allowed to stand in the dugout at any one time. But what is the actual priority here? Is it really a major problem if a manager, assistant manager and coach are all standing together, as long as they remain in the technical area, behave appropriately and don't interfere with players or officials?

Football is emotional. Managers and coaches are there to coach. They need to communicate with players, make tactical changes and react to what is happening on the pitch. How are coaches supposed to do their jobs properly if they are constantly being told to sit down because there are already two people standing?

There is a huge difference between poor behaviour and simply coaching. Abuse, intimidation, dissent and aggressive behaviour should absolutely be dealt with. But a coach standing up, shouting instructions or showing frustration shouldn't automatically become a refereeing priority.

And this is where the bigger question comes in.

Are referees sometimes spending too much time watching the dugout instead of watching the game?

While a referee is checking whether the third coach is standing, something could be happening 40 yards away on the pitch. While an assistant referee is monitoring someone stepping outside the technical area, players are competing for the ball. While attention is being drawn to a manager's reaction, the next challenge, off-the-ball incident or potential foul could be missed. Surely the priority should be simple: get the decisions on the pitch right.

Nobody wants a referee who allows a manager to scream abuse at them for 90 minutes. But equally, nobody wants a referee who appears more interested in policing where coaches are standing than making the correct decisions that actually affect the result.

The technical area shouldn't become a second football pitch where referees are constantly looking for minor offences.

If three members of a coaching staff are standing in the technical area, communicating with their players and causing absolutely no problem, is that really more important than getting the next tackle, offside decision or handball correct?

Football needs discipline, but it also needs common sense. Referees deserve respect, but coaches and managers deserve the freedom to do their jobs too.

The biggest mistake a referee can make isn't having three coaches standing in a technical area. It's missing something important on the pitch because they're too busy watching the dugout.

NEW SERIES • A SUSSEX COACHING JOURNEY

NEW BEGINNINGS: A SUSSEX COACHING JOURNEY — SERIES INTRO

BY REECE MCQUADE



REECE MCQUADE ON THE TRAINING PITCH

Why I'm telling these stories — and who I'm telling them for.

Every coach has a beginning. Not the first match, not the first qualification, not the first win — but the moment they step into the game properly. The moment they decide they want to teach football, not just play it. The moment they choose to back themselves.

For me, that beginning wasn't a big moment. It wasn't a cup final or a promotion or a job offer. It was a message. A simple one. The first time I reached out to Jacob. That message set off a chain of events that shaped everything that came after — Jarvis Brook, Uckfield, Pagham, the C Licence, the rebuilds, the setbacks, the breakthroughs, the identity I've built as a coach.

This series is about those moments.

It's about the first sessions, the first games, the first team talks, the first disappointments, the first successes — all the "firsts" that make you the coach you eventually become. It's about stepping into environments you're not sure you belong in,

learning on the job, getting things wrong, getting things right, and finding your place in Sussex football one experience at a time.

But more than that, it's for the coaches who didn't come through academies. The ones who didn't play at Step 1, 2, 3 or 4. The ones who didn't have a pathway handed to them. The ones who love football, study football, teach football — and still wonder if they're allowed to be part of it.

I've been that coach. I still am that coach. And if my journey can show even one person that they belong in this game, then these articles will have done their job.

Across the next few months I'll be sharing the moments that shaped me. The raw ones. The honest ones. The ones that taught me more than any qualification ever could. And as I continue my own development, including starting my B Licence in November, I'll add new chapters as they happen.

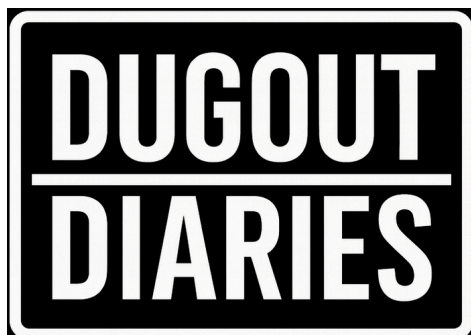
This isn't a finished story. It's a journey in motion. And I'm inviting you into it.

The first article arrives on Sunday 30th. A beginning — just like mine.

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