

CAMELS TO GIVE SHELFORD THE HUMP?

NATIONAL TROPHY PREVIEWS
SOUTH

WADEBRIDGE CAMELS v SHELFORD

NOT often have Wadebridge been able to claim the underdogs tag but they believe that's the case for this weekend's EDF Energy National Trophy against London One outfit Shelford.

For two and a half years the Camels have been unbeaten on home turf – that is until a depleted side fell to a 13-5 defeat to Kingsbridge at the start of the month.

"It's been a case of mixed emotions this season," admitted Wadebridge player-coach Julian Wilce.

"We lost our captain and No.8 Gary Gynn in the first game of the season with a broken leg, we have had to rearrange things because off every set piece he's our main ball carrier and he would have had a field day this season with the new laws.

"We have had a few other injuries – our openside Sam Stone broke his jaw but he's now back and we've had a few lads away playing university rugby at UWIC.

"So we've had to transform someone into a No.8 and redo our threequarter line but all in all we are not doing too bad and with everything that has gone against us I'm not too upset at

the moment."

The 32-year-old former Launceston player has high hopes that the Camels can do well – in both league and knock out rugby.

"I love the opportunities that the Trophy brings and that we are massive underdogs," he said.

"I love a challenge and this Shelford side are unbeaten. I've looked on their website and they have a lot of experience, but we've got a team that doesn't like losing and they'll give blood and guts, especially at home.

"Wadebridge has always been a junior club and my main incentive is to make us the best club in Cornwall outside of the National Leagues. All our players live in the town and there's a real togetherness, and we want to be the best side in the county outside of the National Leagues.

"Three years ago you would never have thought of Wadebridge playing Camborne in a league match and now on paper we are above them – there's only St Ives to go now. They are in the league above us and we beat them last season in the Cup. I want Wadebridge to be seen as a team that is taken seriously."

Shelford will make the journey from Cambridgeshire for the tie via an early morning flight from Stansted.

Player-coach Sam Tovo, a Tongan-born former New Zealand Colts triallist who played for Wellington's sevens and



Camels' Julian Wilce is happy to have the underdog's tag

development teams, is resting an injured shoulder, though if Shelford succeed in their five-year plan to reach the National Leagues, he aims to make a comeback.

Tovo, a flanker, is in his fifth year at the club after joining from Rugby Lions, with whom he played two seasons in National One.

"We're taking our strongest available side to Wadebridge and definitely not taking them lightly even though they are a couple of leagues below us," Tovo said.

"The Swanage & Wareham director of rugby let me know a bit about

Wadebridge and he told me they have a tough pack of forwards.

"We'd like a good cup run as, being a village in Cambridgeshire, people don't know much about us. We're getting around 400 spectators to home matches and our facilities are pretty smart."

Tovo picked out Tongan No.8 Aki Lea and full-back Edward Gough as key players for his side, although Gough, the top points scorer in London One, may start at fly-half on Saturday against Wadebridge, who take their nickname from the nearby River Camel.

FORMER COACH OVERSEES CLASH BETWEEN RIVALS

LONDON SCOTTISH v RICHMOND

LONDON SCOTTISH head coach Brett Taylor will have no need to familiarise himself with the opposition in the second round in the EDF Energy National Trophy - he was coach of Richmond, Scottish's co-tenants at the Athletic Ground and opposes this Sunday, for two years until last summer.

Now the boot is on the other foot for the second meeting this season of two of rugby's oldest and most neighbourly rivals, though it will be the first Taylor has witnessed in person.

"The terms of my move were that I did not start at London Scottish until October 1," Taylor, the former Northampton scrum-half, explained.

"We played Richmond in the league in September and I was in my garden that day, just after getting back from a holiday in Minorca.

"I fully understood both clubs' points of view but it was frustrating for me not to have any involvement with the team in pre-season.

"It was never going to be ideal but it did give me plenty of time to collect my thoughts and my wife gave me a long list of gardening jobs to do."

The transition appears to have gone smoothly for London Scottish, who received investment earlier this year from a consortium including former Scotland wing Kenny Logan, and sponsorship from Saudi firm Saudex Global.

The team now coached by Taylor have won 10 matches out of 10 in National Three South this season - including the 21-12 success 'away' to Richmond on September 27 - while Richmond have five wins in 10.

Scottish maintained their run by winning 45-10 at Lydney last Saturday, with former England Sevens captain Simon Amor at fly-half, and ex-Scotland lock Iain Fullarton and recent Premiership back rows Paul Volley and Mark Soden in the pack.

"We have a strong squad but it's the same with Chelsea and the 'Abramovich factor', you have got to get the recruitment right," said Taylor, who understudied Bryan Redpath and Matt Dawson for Scotland A and Northampton Saints respectively before he established Northampton's academy and coached the USA backs in the 2003 Rugby World Cup.

"The recruitment of senior players that Jim Kelly and his colleagues did before I arrived was absolutely spot-on in terms of the character of the players who came in."

In this season's meeting, Scottish scored tries by Gareth Swales and Rory Greenslade-Jones and 11 points from former London Irish and Worcester fly half James Brown.

On Sunday the No.10 jersey could be worn by Scott Hadden, son of the Scotland coach Frank, with Brown and Amor - who is off to Dubai next week as coach of England's women's sevens side - rested.

"One-off cup games are awesome and I was with Richmond when we had a great day at Doncaster last season, holding the lead up to about 60 minutes," said Taylor.

"Gary Trueman, our former Worcester centre, will be playing on Sunday but it is also an opportunity to look at other players. Rory Damant at outside centre is just one player who has been getting better and better, with the more senior guys' experience rubbing off on him.

"And it is Richmond versus London Scottish and whoever pulls the shirt on is going to play as hard as they can."

ALBION CRAVE 'CUP FEVER' AGAIN

BRIDGWATER & ALBION are hoping to recreate some memorable cup magic this Saturday when they take on Havant. Two seasons ago Bridgwater, who are the only Somerset side playing National League rugby, fought their way through to the fifth round by beating Blackheath and Bradford & Bingley, before going down at home to Division 1 side Newbury.

Previous cup runs have been ended by Harlequins in what was a great run for the now National 3 South club, culminating in a superb home clash against some of England's domestic rugby greats.

In recent seasons Albion have also enjoyed reaching the third round, so after the disappointments of going out of the National Trophy in round one last

BRIDGWATER & ALBION v HAVANT

season following defeat to Old Patesians 'cup fever' is nothing new to the 'Bridgy' crowd.

Their opponents this time around, Havant, although currently languishing at the wrong end of the National 3 South league table and without a win this season, have also enjoyed success in the cup over the years. Many will remember their famous run in the late 1970s when they were beaten by a Rosslyn Park team that boasted a number of England internationals, including the legendary Andy Ripley in their side.

Looking ahead to Saturday's game Mike Tewkesbury, Bridgwater & Albion's director of rugby said: "In the

EDF Energy National Trophy you can't afford to take anything for granted, which we found out to our cost last season when we were beaten by Old Patesians away from home.

"A good run in the cup is always an attraction to spectators, especially if you can get through to the later rounds and draw one of the bigger clubs which in turn brings in good revenue. It would be nice to have a good cup run so we will be hoping to progress through to the next round."

In the first round of the EDF Energy National Trophy, Havant travelled to Woodford where they gained a 34-25 victory, while Bridgwater and Albion beat Haywards Heath at home 36-25.

Bridgwater find themselves in seventh place in the league, with 23 points from their 10 outings, five of which have been won.

When the two sides met last season it was Bridgwater who won both matches but there was very little in either game - 20-15 away and 29-25 at home, so there could well be another thrilling tie in store for the large crowd who will turn out.

Bridgwater & Albion chairman Steve Smith added: "Havant are not having a particularly good time in the league this year but we always have close games with them and they are one of the teams that you write off at your peril.

"The EDF Energy National Trophy is a very important competition to us and we are always looking to do as well as we can in it. More games, especially if they are at home, means more for the fans to watch and also more revenue."

NATIONAL TROPHY ROUND-UP

They take on Hereford who progressed to the second round courtesy of a walkover against Eton Manor.

The Hawks had to earn their passage, overcoming a five-point interval deficit to despatch Rosslyn Park out of the competition by a 20-10 scoreline.

BASINGSTOKE will take on Oxford Harlequins after a comfortable 55-7 success over Wymondham. The visitors lost their first round tie against Bracknell but the Berkshire side were found guilty of playing an

unregistered player in that match and were thrown out of the competition.

EXMOUTH will make their second journey to Kent in this season's competition after disposing of Bromley 35-14 in the first round.

And although they journey a few miles further down the A2 this time, they will hope to face a Canterbury side displaying league rather than cup form.

The Kent side have just four victories to their name in Three South but demolished Staines 45-8 in the first round of the Trophy.

BARKING were made to fight hard by Worthing before emerging with a 17-14 success – they will hope for an easier day against Cleve who were 33-15 winners at Chobham.

CIVIL SERVICE's reward for a 56-6 thumping of High Wycombe in the first round is another home tie – and once again against non-National league opposition.

Barnstaple will make the long journey from the south west for a tie that could be evenly balanced – though the Devon side will look for a repeat of their first round form that saw them

knock out Clevedon 80-7.

DINGS CRUSADERS have one of the hardest tasks of the weekend when they entertain Three South opponents Ealing.

Although the Crusaders have found some good form of late – winning their last three matches in Three South – they face an Ealing side who finished 46-9 winners when the two sides met in a league encounter in west London in September.

HENLEY HAWKS will fancy their chances of progress to the third round.