



Bedfordshire Football League
August 2008 Newsletter
Season 2008-09 Preview



Premier Division Supported By Sportsform

With the 2008-09 season now only just a matter of days away its that tradition time of the year to undertake the coming seasons preview and try to predict who will be the winners and losers come May 2009.

The burning question everyone wants to answer is can **Campton** retain their title ? a feat only **Caldecote** of the current crop of Premier Division Supported By Sportsform clubs have ever managed to do and despite losing the services of midfielders Lee Bilcock who is off to University and Kevin Rimmer who his moving out of the area to take up a teaching post in Essex you still feel their fire power up front in the shape of Gary Gibson and Andrew Hayday supported by a now fully fit Wayne Goldsmith will see them start the campaign to do just that.

So if **Campton** are not to retain their crown where will the challenge come from ? well perhaps we need to look no further than the six clubs who chased them home last season.

Leading that chase and the Northern challenge will be Jim Burke's **Oakley Sports** who took the silver medals last season but in the words of Jim himself we are still very much short of a striker to bang in the goals on a regular basis to compliment what I feel is the best defence in the league and give us that Championship winning look, also expected to be right there in the mix will be **Meltis Corinthians** who did so well to finish third in their first ever season of top flight Bedfordshire League Football and with this experience behind them are certainly going to be a force to be reckon with over the next nine months especially if they can repeat their impressive home record of last season.

Of the Southern Challenge perhaps the main threat will come from either **Blunham** where manager Kevin Smith appears to be adding daily to his new looking squad which as already lifted the Jesse Piggott Memorial Trophy for the first time since year 2000 or **Caldecote** who under the new management of Neil Mapletoft will be seeking a record breaking ninth top flight title and are very much odds on to better their seventh place finish last term.

Of the other two top six finishers in season 2007-08, **Ickwell & Old Warden** already seem to have the injury list piling up with goalkeeper Martin Hammocks now expected to be out for a lengthy period after breaking his arm in the Jesse Piggott Trophy Final and the very much influential Andrew Vallom sidelined for at least the opening month of the season with a groin injury and apart from the intake of Matthew Burney from **Saffron** and Steve Hinton from **Sandy** their squad looks very similar to

last season when their hopes fell just short of the target, a fate they might once again have to settle for whilst **Sandy** under the new management of Pete Fil don't appear on pre-season evidence to look as strong as last season having lost the already mentioned Hinton to **Ickwell** plus key defender Bill Sells to South Midlands League Football and Arlesey Athletic without adding any notable signings to their squad, facts which suggest a top six finish does not appear to be on the cards this coming season for the Bedford Road outfit.

Well what of the remaining eight clubs is there a dark horse amongst them that might just come and join in the championship race ? yes I think there might be in the shape of **Renhold United** who under manager Buzz Leason enjoyed a sterling finish to the their 2007-08 season and with some already impressive pre-season results already achieved could well become serious top six material or even better.

Of the other clubs one can quite easily see **Sharnbrook** again making progress and becoming this term a more settled middle of the table club rather than struggle in the bottom six but new **AFC Kempston Town** manager Lee Moon looks to have his hands full in keeping **Town** in the top half of the table after losing so many experienced players during the summer as they adopt a more youthful policy for the future.

For the other two Premier Division clubs of season 2007-08 you would expect **Wilshamstead** to finish above **Riseley Sports** who under new manager Andy Milne could well have a tough task on their hands to keep out of the bottom three as all of the three newly promoted clubs **Bedford Sports Athletic**, **Dunton** and **Henlow** will all expect to figure in the middle of the league table rather than face a quick return to Division One for season 2009-10.

So just for fun here are the editors tip for the top six places, 1) **Campton** 2) **Meltis Cornithians** 3) **Blunham** 4) **Oakley Sports** 5) **Caldecote** 6) **Renhold United**

All comments would be most welcome by email to peter.francis30@ntlworld.com .

Division One Preview

At first glance trying to find the 2008-09 Champions looks about as easy as finding a winning lottery line as there appears to be so many questions I cannot easily find the answer to which would lead you to come up with the Champions name, so lets just break the issues down in the hope that the picture will become clearer.

The record book shows that since Ampthill Town Reserves in season 1966-67 no reserve team as ever lifted the Division One crown so are we to assume this will rule out **AFC Kempston Town Reserves**, **Caldecote Reserves**, **Campton Reserves**, **Ickwell & Old Warden Reserves** and **Sandy Reserves** some one third of the field, well if you take on face value the tasks facing **AFC Kempston Town**, **Ickwell** and **Sandy's** first teams in the Premier Division Supported By Sportsform this season then perhaps it's a far bet to rule out those three sides but with both **Campton** and **Caldecote** finishing in the top six last season only a fool would rule out either of them repeating that effort or even doing better this time round.

Relegated clubs also have a poor record in recent seasons of making a quick return to the top flight which thus raises questions marks over especially **Woburn** but with **Westoning Recreation Club** having taken a voluntary drop having finished eleventh in the Premier Division last term to re-group with what will perhaps be with the majority of the players who were plying their trade with **Westoning Recreation Club Reserves** when they pulled out of the league from a top six Division One placing late in the season last term there case would seem as equal to that shared by **Caldecote** and **Campton Reserves**.

So what of the other clubs from last seasons Division One line-up are there to consider, well the top two must be **Flitwick Town** who have finished just one place short of being promoted for the past three seasons and **Marston Social** who finished like a train last term to suggest a repeat would put them right into the mix, of the others a return to their 2005-06 form for **Kempston Hammers** (Formerly **Reddings Wood**) would make them top six material at least but for **Elstow Abbey**, **Kempston**, **Royal Oak Kempston** and **Stevington**, a notable improvement is required for them to be classed as potential Championship winners.

Thus leaving us with just last seasons Division Three Runners-up and Bedfordshire FA Junior Cup winners **Meltis Albion** to consider and after they scored some one hundred and eight league goals last term one would be most foolishly to rule them out of a second straight promotion.

So again just for fun here are the editors tip for the top six places, 1) **Flitwick Town** 2) **Marston Social** 3) **Campton Reserves** 4) **Caldecote Reserves** 5) **Woburn** 6) **Westoning Recreation Club**.

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Division Two Preview

With no club being relegated from Division One at the end of last season the 2008-09 the Division Two season will kick off with a fifteen team line-up consisting of ten sides who completed in Division Two last term plus last seasons top five from Division Three who have all been promoted at the expense of relegated **Renhold Village**.

Normally when you look pre-season to find this campaigns winners a good point to start is at the clubs who just missed out on promotion last time around but of the top three remaining clubs from last season all seem to have a flaw in their armour, for fourth place **Meppershall Jurassic** the final 2007-08 league table shows just six sides conceded more goals than their seventy-three last term, for fifth place **Mulberry Bush** it's a matter of scoring goals just fourty last term the equal lowest with second from bottom **Woburn Reserves** last season and for sixth place **Oakley Sports Reserves** there was just five home wins, facts which suggest it would be better to look elsewhere for this season champions.

That look takes me to the 8th 9th and 10th place clubs last term, **Great Barford**, **Marston Shelton Rovers** and **Clifton**, for **The Rovers** it's a matter of somehow

putting together a decent second half of the campaign, as for the last two seasons they have lead the Division early doors only to fade away and like the fairy on the Christmas tree not be seen anyway near the top of the tree once the action gets underway in the New Year , so perhaps I'm inclined to suggest if only **Great Barford** and **Clifton** can get their home record in order this season they of the survivors from last season Division Two look more likely championship candidates.

However there is a dark horse in the race namely last seasons twelfth place side **Blunham Reserves** who after a awful start to the season last term came good once the action moved into the New Year and with their first team having strengthen up during the close season its fair to assume their reserves will gain some benefit and could well at least get into the promotion mix if not be real championship contenders.

For the other three Division Two sides of last term, **Lidlington United Sports**, **Saffron** and **Woburn Reserves** you feel a big improvement is required for them to mount a promotion challenge and a mid-table position is the best they can expect especially as all of the five promoted teams look at least to be mid-table material if not possible challengers for a second straight promotion.

Of these I see no evidence to suggest that **Kings AFC** and **Blue Chip** will not emerge like last season the best of the five whilst likewise I don't expect either **Meltis Corinthians Reserves** or **Marabese Ceramics** to progress passed **Potton Wanderers**.

So just for fun here are the editors tip for the top six places, 1) **Blunham Reserves** 2) **Great Barford** 3) **Clifton** 4) **Kings AFC** 5) **Meppershall Jurassic** 6) **Blue Chip**

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Division Three Preview

Perhaps trying to predict the champions of Division Three is the hardest task of the four division so will adopt the same method applied to Division Two and hope the picture becomes a little clearer.

A study of the clubs who just missed out on promotion shows **Riseley Sports Reserves** to be the highest ranking and when you consider they were the Watson Shield Winners plus were beat just seven times last season with five of those defeats coming against clubs that have now been promoted you would feel they must certainly be championship material, the down side perhaps being their first team look to be in for a tough time this campaign and this could effect the make up of the reserve side as the season progresses and it would be best to look elsewhere for the 2008-09 season champions.

Two sides who perhaps fit the bill are **Wilshamstead Reserves** who won some fourteen times last campaign, the best record of the eight sides from Division Three of last term who go to battle this term and **Marsh Leys** who won some nine times away from home last term, especially as the word on the street is that both of these sides are expecting to be stronger this coming campaign.

Of the other sides from last years Division Three, **Meppershall AFC (formerly AFC Shillington)** collected just fourteen home points, a total that **Flitwick Town Reserves** only bettered by three points facts which hardly make you confident in tipping them to win the league just twelve months later, for the two A teams **Caldecote** and **Sandy** it will be a case of letting Youth have its opportunity and whilst I can easily see **Caldecote** getting into a promotion battle, the league title just might be a bridge to far, and surely last seasons thirteenth place **Stewartby Village** can't change things overnight to mount a serious challenge.

Away from last seasons sides we have two clubs coming down the ladder, **Renhold Village** who finished bottom of Division Two last term and **Westoning Recreation Club Reserves** who are re-grouping after pulling out of Division One late in the season last term to help its first team complete its Premier Division fixtures and of the two you would fancy them to finish the highest.

So what of the chances of the five newcomers, word on the street is that **Leighton United** are fully expecting to make their stay in Division Three a short one, **Dunton Reserves** on pre-season evidence are quite capable of getting into the promotion mix whilst **Three Tuns Galacticos** appear to be signing a good looking squad but even at this stage of the seasons there are some doubts that **Bedford Park Rangers** will even get to the starting line and **Kempston Athletic** might just take a season before they become real promotion candidates.

So just for fun here are the editors tip for the top six places, 1) **Leighton United** 2) **Wilshamstead Reserves** 3) **Marsh Leys** 4) **Riseley Reserves** 5) **Caldecote A** 6) **Meppershall AFC**

Again all comments on email to peter.francis30@ntlworld.com would be most welcome.

www.bedfordshirefootballleague.co.uk

Is the address of the league's official website which will also give you a link to the football mitoo site for all the league's fixtures and results.

If you have not visited the site during the close season a visit today to the news section will quickly give you a chance to catch up on what's been going on during the summer before the season gets underway.next weekend.

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Have once again agreed to be a league supporter for season 2008-09 and will have their name attached to The Premier Division, please visit their website www.sportsform.co.uk which can also be reached via the links section on our own website to see just what they can offer to all our member clubs, or if you are in the area please pop into their shop they will be most welcomed to see you, especially if you mention The Bedfordshire Football League.