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A VERY WARM WELCOME TO AFC PORTCHESTER

A very warm welcome to AFC Portchester for our first competitive home game of the 2025-26 season – and what a game to kick off the campaign here at The OnSite Group Stadium with!

We extend a warm welcome to our visitors Melksham Town and thank them for their hospitality and hosting us on Saturday – an excellent club with superb facilities.

Welcome to the players, officials and supporters of tonight's visiting team and also to the match officials.

We also thank the sponsors of tonight's FA Cup Extra Preliminary Round Replay, The OnSite Group, as well as for their continued support as the club's main sponsors.

Saturday brings our first ever game at Step 4 level but equally as important is tonight's visit of Melksham Town and the opportunity of progressing in the FA Cup.

Round one of the encounter between these two sides was a cracker – a competitive fixture between two evenly matched teams which sprang into life on the goalscoring front in the final quarter of the game.

We will be in for an entertaining evening if this replay is as good as the first attempt by both sides to win this opening round tie in the FA Cup.

Both sides go into tonight's match knowing who their opponents will be in the next round - a



trip to Moneyfields awaits the winners on Saturday, August 16.

It has been a busy summer on and off the pitch at the club. On the pitch as well as pretty much all of last season's quadruple winning squad remaining at the club, a number of new signings have arrived and fans will get their first look at the new players on home soil this evening.

Off the pitch the facilities have continued to be renewed and refreshed throughout the close season and there are some new additions to the stadium already in place and some more to come too.

These are exciting times for the club and we thank both our sponsors and supporters for their backing for the season ahead. Your support, as ever, remains crucial.

You saw the part it played in bringing success last season – now it's time to renew that backing once more and take it up some more levels for the new challenges that lie ahead of us.



GR H



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AFC PORTCHESTER HONOURS

FIRST TEAM

Hampshire Senior Cup Winners - 2023-24

Runners-up - 2024-25

Wessex League Premier Division Winners - 2024-25

Wessex League Premier Division Promotion Play Off Semi Finalists - 2023-24

Wessex League Division 1 Runners-up - 2011-12

Wessex League Cup Winners -2014-15, 2017-18, 2024-25. Runners-up - 2023-24

Wessex League Charity Cup Winners - 2023-24, 2025-26

Russell Cotes Cup Winners – 2013-14, 2016-17, 2024-25

Portsmouth Senior Cup Winners – 2024-25. Runnersup – 2017-18 Hampshire League Division 2 Runners-up - 1999-2000

Division 1 Winners - 2001-02

Portsmouth and District League Runners-up - 1997-98

RESERVES

Hampshire Intermediate Cup Winners - 2011-12

Wyvern League Premier Division Winners - 2014-15, 2015-16

Wyvern League East Division Runners-up - 2011-12

LADIES

Southern Region Women's League Division 1 South Winners - 2023-24

Hampshire County Women's League Division 3 Winners - 2015-16, 2020-21

Division 2 Runners-up - 2016-17, 2021-22

Division 1 Winners - 2022-23

Hampshire County Women's League Invitation Cup Winners - 2021-22

Hampshire FA Women's Junior Cup Winners - 2015-16

Hampshire FA Women's Trophy Winners - 2021-22

PDFA Women's Senior Cup Runners-up - 2023-24

Reserves – Hampshire County Women's League Division 2 Winners – 2024–25

Development - Hampshire County Women's League Division 6 Winners -2024-25



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JUST 75 days after Crystal Palace stunned Manchester City to lift the FA Cup at Wembley for the first time in their history, the world's most famous cup competition is back for its latest instalment.

Indeed, it seems almost unfathomable that, in the week the kids break up for their school holidays, the summer is all but over in the world of non-league football with the 2025-26 campaign already up and running.

The first name in the history books for the new campaign is Sherman Artmeladze. His goal after two minutes of Soul Tower Hamlets' 5-2 Essex Senior League win at White Ensign was English football's first goal of 2025-26.

It's rare for The Non League Paper to report on competitive football in July, but it was great to sink our teeth into a bit of league action with no fewer than ten Step 5 and 6 leagues kicking off ahead of the FA Cup openers.

Star of the show was veteran former Notts County striker Craig Westcarr, who hit four goals in Sherwood Colliery's 5-1 openingday victory at Gresley Rovers in United Counties League Premier North.

So, the perfect pre-cursor then to the big FA Cup curtain-raiser last Friday night with seven matches to whet the appetite for the weekend. And it was one of those matches which threw up one of those quirky tales from which the FA Cup never fails to disappoint.

When NPL West side Bootle took on Midland Leaguers 1874 Northwich in a big battle of the north-west, it proved to be a proud day for the Woolley family.

Bootle's attacking midfielder Joe Woolley is a player who loves to dribble and take on his man, but the chances are the man wearing 1874 Northwich colours trying to stop him making forward progress will be his older brother Matt.

And that's not it, as Matt will be able to count on back-up in the

form of middle sibling Jack, who completed a transfer from Winsford United to 1874.

"I've mentioned to people at work that I'm playing in the FA Cup, and they loved it when I told them I'd be up against two of my brothers – it's an added reason for them to watch," Joe told The NLP.

"It's always weird when you come up against your close friends in a game, may be more so if it's your brother because it's so rare.

"I don't think I've got the better of him yet either, although I do remember him turning up for Christmas dinner once with a big grin on his face after scoring against us for Kidsgrove the previous Saturday.

"Dad [Stewart] will just want us to play well no matter what the result is," added Matt, 1874's recorc appearance holder and the only player to have featured every season since the club's formation.

"Nobody would choose to play an FA Cup tie as their first competitive game and we'll probably start as underdogs, but we're hoping to catch Bootle cold and sneak through if we can."

The FA Cup trophy paid a visit to Step 5 new boys Harwich and Parkeston, taking their place in the competition for the first time in six years on their 150th anniversary.

The Shrimpers have prestigious history in English football, having reached the FA Amateur Cup final in 1953 where they played at the old Wembley Stadium in front of a reported non-league record crowd of 100,000 people.

Among those in attendance that day was Harwich club president Terry Francis and he was at the club's Royal Oak ground to see the FA Cup in all its glory.

"It's a great honour for the club to get the FA Cup here at the Oak," he said. "It's our 150th anniversary later this year so it ties in wonderfully."

So, another year, and another place in history at stake.

BY JON COUCH





MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE ON AN AFRICAN ADVENTURE

AFC Portchester is proud to celebrate the achievements of a group of youth players who recently returned from a life-changing trip to Kenya, where they spent two weeks volunteering in local schools and communities.

Five players from the under-16s squads -Owen, Ashton, James, Jake and Thomas - took part in the experience as part of a school trip.

The trip, organised in collaboration with the African Foundation, saw the students volunteering in schools in Nakuru, Kenya, where they made a lasting impact.

Over the past 18 months, the group raised over £9,000 for the African Foundation. This funding helped to provide vital resources to three Kenyan schools, including drinking water tanks, materials for clay ovens, and supplies for building fences. chairs and other much-needed infrastructure.

While in Kenya, the lads rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in, helping to build and repair school facilities, teaching lessons, serving

meals, and coaching football.

They worked side by side with local students and staff, building friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

One of the many highlights of the trip was seeing football bring people together. The boys took over suitcases full of donations, including football gear.

Owen brought out a full kit from the disbanded Saxons under-14s team, and Ashton added more kit items. These were donated to local school teams who were thrilled to receive them.

The experience was not only rewarding for the communities in Nakuru but also deeply meaningful for the boys who took part.

They returned home with a new perspective and greater appreciation for the privileges they enjoy at home - including the opportunity to play football week in, week out for AFC Portchester.

The club is incredibly proud of what these youngsters have accomplished showing that AFC Portchester players make a difference not just on the pitch, but around the world.



TO SPONSOR A PLAYER & DISCUSS SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES CONTACT STEVE

STEVE.RUTTER@AFCPORTCHESTER.CO.UK



SILVERWARE AGAIN OLE OLE AS CHARITY CUP SECURED

AFC Portchester added a fifth piece of silverware to the trophy cabinet at The OnSite Group Stadium with victory over Hamble Club.

This win in the first of two home matches in their pre-season programme, saw the Royals add the Velocity Wessex League Charity Cup to the quadruple of titles they claimed during the 2024-25 campaign.

The first half was fairly even between two sides who last met in the Velocity Wessex League Cup final on the same ground back in May.

Both teams appeared to have forgotten their shooting boots though as while there were many half chances created, neither side was able to seriously test their opponent's goalkeeper.

Two goals in two minutes towards the end of the first half determined the outcome of this match.

On 40 minutes Lee Wort was sent clear in some space and although his shot was

partially blocked by the Hamble keeper it continued to roll towards goal and trickled over the line. Two minutes later Oli Davies got himself on the scoresheet when the ball was set back into his path and he rifled his shot home from 15 yards out.

The visitors had a great chance to get themselves back into the game on 59 minutes when they were awarded a penalty and keeper Steven Mowthorpe was sent to the sin bin for his protests against the spot kick.

Defender Archie Willcox took over in goal but the spot kick was blasted well over the target.

A crowd of 172 watched what has become the season curtain raiser for the Wessex League and the trophy was presented to Calvin Davies and joined the Wessex League Premier Division, Wessex League Cup, Russell Cotes Cup and Portsmouth Senior Cup as trophies now currently held by the Royals.



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CONTACT:

STEVE.RUTTER@AFCPORTCHESTER.CO.UK

FIRST TEAM STATS 25-26

APPEARANCES

AI I LAILAINULU	
PLAYER	GAMES
CONOR BAILEY	1
CALVIN DAVIES	1
JACK LEE	1
STEVEN MOWTHORPE	1
RYAN PENNERY	1
MARLEY RIDGE	1
MAX SMITH	1
ALFIE STANLEY	1
ROB TAW	1
ARCHIE WILLCOX	1
CHARLIE WILLIAMSON	1
CONNOR DUFFIN	O (1)
ZACK WILLETT	O (1)
LEE WORT	O (1)



GOALS

PLAYER	GOALS
RYAN PENNERY	1
LEE WORT	1



TONIGHT'S FA CUP REPLAYS

All of the following ties are Extra Preliminary Round Replays due to take place this evening: AFC Portchester v Melksham Town Abingdon United v Aylesbury Vale Dynamos Albion Sports v Sheffield Ashford Town (Middx) v Eastbourne Town Barton Town v Loughborough Students Bedfont Sports v Guernsey Benfleet v Leighton Town Brantham Athletic v Walthamstow Bridlington Town v Knaresborough Town Bristol Manor Farm v Mangotsfield United Brixham AFC v Street Clevedon Town v Kidlington Concord Rangers v Harpenden Town Consett AFC v Guisborough Town Corinthian v Horley Town Crowborough Athletic v Punjab United Deal Town v Hilltop Downham Town v Mildenhall Town Faversham Town v Balham

Frenford v Witham Town Gresley Rovers v Eastwood Community Harefield United v Peacehaven & Telscombe Harlow Town v Saffron Walden Town Kings Langley v Cockfosters Laverstock & Ford v Cowes Sports Little Oakley v Baldock Town Longridge Town v Pilkington XXX Northallerton Town v West Allotment Celtic Reading City v Cirencester Town Shaftesbury v Baffins Milton Rovers Shepton Mallet v AFC Newquay Soham Town Rangers v March Town United St Helens Town v Glossop North End Thetford Town v Histon Virginia Water v Thornbury Town Welwyn v Ware Welwyn Garden City v Biggleswade Wombwell Town v Horbury Town Woodbridge Town v Cornard United Wormley Rovers v Enfield Wroxham v Fakenham Town



WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS MELKSHAM TOWN



WESTERN LEAGUE

Premier Division champions: 2014-15; Division 1 champions: 1979-80, 1996-97

WILTSHIRE FOOTBALL LEAGUE Premier Division champions: 1993–94; Senior Knock-Out Cup winners: 1993– 94

WILTSHIRE LEAGUE
Division 1 champions: 1903-04

WILTSHIRE PREMIER SHIELD Winners: 1980-81, 1981-82, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1997-98, 1999-2000

WILTSHIRE SENIOR CUP
Winners: 1904-05, 1969-70, 1977-78,
2002-03, 2007-08, 2012-13, 2013-14,
2015-16

The club was established as Melksham Football Club in 1876. In 1894 they were founder members of the Wiltshire League.

Melksham were Division 1 champions in 1903–04 and they won the Wiltshire Senior Cup the following season. In 1920 the club was renamed Melksham and Avon United as a result of their new ground being owned by Avon Rubber, before reverting to the original name in 1926–27 season.

Melksham were runners-up in the league in 1924-25, 1929-30 and 1936-37. In 1951 the club adopted its current name and went on to finish as runners-up in Division 1 in 1959-60 and 1971-72, also winning the Wiltshire Senior Cup again in 1969-70.

They moved up to the Western League in 1974. After finishing third from bottom in 1975–76, they were demoted to the new Division 1 as the league expanded to two divisions.

Melksham won the Wiltshire Senior Cup again in 1977-78 and were Division 1 champions in 1979-80, earning promotion to the Premier Division.

Their first season in the Premier Division saw them win the Wiltshire Premier Shield, a trophy they retained the following season and won again in 1984–85 and 1985–86.

However, Melksham were relegated to Division 1 again at the end of the 1987-88 season.

In 1992-93, they finished bottom of Division 1 and were relegated to the Premier Division of the Wiltshire Football League.

They then won the Premier Division and the Senior Knock-Out Cup the following season, and were promoted back to the Western League at the first attempt.

In 1996-97 they were Division 1 champions and were promoted to the Premier Division. They won the Wiltshire Premier Shield the following season, and again in 1999-2000, before winning the Wiltshire Senior Cup in 2002-03 and 2007-08.

Although they were relegated to Division 1 in 2009–10, Melksham were Division 1 runners-up in 2010–11, earning promotion back to the Premier Division.

They then won the Wiltshire Senior Cup in 2012-13 and 2013-14, before winning the Western League Premier Division title in 2014-15.

However, delays to making ground

improvements meant they were denied promotion.

The following season saw the club win the Senior Cup again. The club were runners-up in the Premier Division in 2017-18, earning promotion to Division 1 West of the Southern League.

Melksham played at Challymead Common until moving to the Old Bear Field in 1883.

Relocating to the Conigre in 1920, the ground was part of the Melksham House estate, centrally sited in the town. It had been purchased in the same year by Avon Rubber, with the house turned into a social club.

A wooden stand was erected on one side of the pitch and wooden fencing installed around the ground.

During the 1960s covered stands were built behind the Rugby Club End and on the other side of the pitch and floodlights were installed in 1986. The wooden stand was demolished in the early 1990s and replaced by a modern metal stand in 1994.

In 2017, in preparation for redevelopment at the Melksham House site, the club moved to Oakfields, a new £7.3m facility shared with Melksham Rugby Club on the eastern edge of the town.

The first match at the new ground was played on January 14, 2017, against Bristol Manor Farm in the FA Vase, with the visitors winning 5–3 in front of a crowd of 1,215.



REPLAY NEEDED AFTER HOME SIDE NET LATE EQUALISER

AFC Portchester and Melksham Town must try again to win their way through to the Preliminary Round of the FA Cup after a drama packed first tie saw the two sides draw 2-2 on Saturday.

The game only came alive in the last quarter in terms of goals and it took a penalty awarded in the 11th minute of injury time for the home side to send this tie to a replay at The OnSite Group Stadium.

The first 70 minutes of Saturday's game was largely battled out in midfield between two evenly matched sides.

There were plenty of robust challenges throughout, the majority of which were allowed to go unpunished by the referee, the exception being two incidents in either box which led to two crucial penalties being awarded.

Neither goalkeeper was tested for the majority of the game as control ebbed and flowed between the two sides as they tried to win the midfield battle.

Melksham had the first half chance of the game after just three minutes when Jamal Lawrence's cross from the left picked out Olly Mehew at the far post but he put his header over the goal.

On 20 minutes Charlie Williamson picked up the ball in midfield and drove forwards before laying it off to Marley Ridge but his shot was always rising over the target.

Three minutes before the interval the visiting defence headed a long throw in clear and it fell to Archie Milne 25 yards out but his shot was deflected wide for a corner.

Melksham created two decent half chances around the hour mark when first a ball inside from the right found Lawrence in the penalty area but after holding off his marker he put his shot well over.

Then a minute later the Royals struggled to clear a ball played into their penalty area and it was worked to Mehew around eight yards out but as he tried to get his shot away keeper Steven Mowthorpe smothered the ball at his feet.

Portchester went close to breaking the deadlock on 68 minutes when a long throw in from the left found Archie Willcox at the near post and keeper Adam Forster had to

push away his flicked header which was heading into the top corner of the net.

At the other end Jack Carter hit a curling shot that Mowthorpe watched drift wide of the post before the home side got their noses in front on 77 minutes.

The ball was cleared down the left channel and Lawrence was able to chase it down, hold off a defender and then took the ball past Mowthorpe and rolled his shot into the empty net.

However, Melksham's lead was short lived as the Royals were level again four minutes later. A deep cross into the box was headed on by Connor Duffin and as Alfie Stanley tried to run in to meet the ball the referee deemed he was pushed over and Ryan Pennery made no mistake with his spot kick.

The cup tie had now come alive and with eight minutes of injury time signalled by the match officials there was still plenty of time for a drama-filled finale to this encounter.

It looked like Portchester were heading through when they scored in the fifth minute of injury time.

A quick move down the left saw substitute Zack Willett deliver the perfect cross and Lee Wort got in front of his marker to steer the ball into the net.

The Royals almost put the game to bed after 90+8 minutes when Calvin Davies' free kick from 20 yards out came back off the crossbar, hit the keeper on the back of the head but the ball bounced away from the goal for a corner.

The final twist in this pulsating ending came when a goalmouth scramble developed after the home side had got the ball into the penalty area and the visitors couldn't get it clear.

As the ball worked its way loose from the melee the referee judged that a home player had been brought down and he awarded a penalty.

Davies was shown a second yellow card for his protest against the decision and Milne made no mistake with his spot kick, drilling it low into the net

The full time whistle went moments later and a replay will now be needed to decide who will go on to visit Moneyfields in the Preliminary Round on August 16.



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CLUB SPONSORS





















































TICKET OFFICE NEWS

Tickets have gone on sale for AFC Portchester's first two Isthmian League games at The OnSite Group Stadium – and supporters are being urged to buy their tickets as soon as possible.

The Royals will be playing at Step 4 level of the national non-league pyramid system for the first time in their history this season and excitement is mounting ahead of the start of the 2025-26 season on August 9.

And the first two home matches Portchester will face in the South Central Division are some of the most eagerly anticipated matches Royals fans were looking out for on the fixture list.

As opening day games go they don't get much bigger and better than welcoming Bognor Regis Town to The OnSite Group Stadium on Saturday, August 9 – kick off 3pm.

The Rocks have been playing their football at Step 2 and Step 3 levels for all of their recent history but their relegation from the Premier Division last season sees the Sussex club paired with the Royals for this opening day clash.

A large crowd is anticipated for this mouthwatering Isthmian League season opener, with both clubs well supported. Add to that Pompey being away at Oxford on the same day and the away allocation for the Championship match already sold out, that will help to push the attendance up even higher.

With a large crowd anticipated, AFC Portchester and Bognor Regis Town supporters - as well as anyone else considering coming to this game - are being strongly urged to purchase their match tickets as soon as possible.

While paying on the day for tickets will be possible (subject to availability), having advance tickets makes your entry into the stadium much quicker on the day.

Another opponent from the PO Postcode area will be coming to The OnSite Group Stadium on Bank Holiday Monday, August 25 – kick off 3pm.

Moneyfields are the visitors and these matches are always hotly contested between the two sides – as was the case when the teams met in the final of the Portsmouth Senior Cup at the end of last season.

Big crowds are always in attendance when these two clubs meet and with no Pompey game that day and the Victorious Festival already completed, what better way to enjoy the end of the Bank Holiday weekend than a local derby.

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SCAN THIS CODE FOR MONEYFIELDS TICKETS







THE ROYALS IN ACTION





THE ROYALS IN ACTION



FIRST EVER STEP 4 FIXTURE LIST FOR ROYALS REVEALED

AFC Portchester's first ever fixture list for Step 4 football has been released.

The Royals have received their Isthmian League fixtures for the 2025-26 campaign, with the South Central Division starting matches on August 9.

Portchester will play their first Step 4 fixture at The OnSite Group Stadium on August 9 when Bognor Regis Town will be the visitors.

Royals fans are looking forward to the new stadiums they will be visiting on away days and the first fixture on the road will be the shortest one – away to Fareham Town on Tuesday, August 12.

The league fixture list in full is as follows:

SAT, AUG 9: AFC Portchester v Bognor Regis Town

TUES, AUG 12: Fareham Town v AFC Portchester

SAT, AUG 23: Bedfont Sports v AFC Portchester MON, AUG 25: AFC Portchester v Moneyfields SAT, AUG 30: AFC Portchester v Hartley Wintney

SAT, SEP 13: Southall v AFC Portchester TUES, SEP 16: Westfield v AFC Portchester SAT, SEP 20: AFC Portchester v Hendon SAT, SEP 27: Hayes and Yeading v AFC Portchester

SAT, OCT 4: AFC Portchester v South Park SAT, OCT 11: Raynes Park Vale v AFC Portchester TUES, OCT 14: AFC Portchester v Westfield SAT, OCT 18: AFC Portchester v Ascot United SAT, OCT 25: Egham Town v AFC Portchester

SAT, NOV 1: AFC Portchester v Metropolitan Police

SAT, NOV 8: Littlehampton Town v AFC Portchester

TUES, NOV 11: AFC Portchester v Fareham Town SAT, NOV 15: Hanworth Villa v AFC Portchester SAT, NOV 22: AFC Portchester v Kingstonian SAT, NOV 29: Bognor Regis Town v AFC Portchester

SAT, DEC 6: AFC Portchester v Harrow Borough



SAT, DEC 13: Binfield v AFC Portchester SAT, DEC 20: Hartley Wintney v AFC Portchester

SAT, DEC 27: AFC Portchester v Horndean

SAT, JAN 3: Moneyfields v AFC Portchester SAT, JAN 10: AFC Portchester v Leatherhead SAT, JAN 17: Hendon v AFC Portchester SAT, JAN 24: AFC Portchester v Raynes Park Vale

SAT, JAN 31: South Park v AFC Portchester

SAT, FEB 7: AFC Portchester v Hayes and Yeading United

SAT, FEB 14: Ascot United v AFC Portchester SAT, FEB 21: AFC Portchester v Egham Town SAT, FEB 28: Metropolitan Police v AFC Portchester

SAT, MAR 7: AFC Portchester v Littlehampton Town

SAT, MAR 14: AFC Portchester v Binfield SAT, MAR 21: Harrow Borough v AFC Portchester

SAT, MAR 28: Leatherhead v AFC Portchester SAT, APR 4: AFC Portchester v Bedfont Sports MON, APR 6: Horndean v AFC Portchester SAT, APR 11: AFC Portchester v Southall SAT, APR 18: AFC Portchester v Hanworth Villa SAT, APR 25: Kingstonian v AFC Portchester

THE SQUADS AND OFFICIALS

CONOR BAILEY CHARLEY BROOK HARRISON BROOK JOSH CLACK **JAMES COWAN CLAUDE DA COSTA** CALVIN DAVIES OLI DAVIES **CONNOR DIJEFIN CADE DYER ASH HOWES** STEVEN MOWTHORPE KANE O'KEEFE RYAN PENNERY MARLEY RIDGE OLLY SEARLE **MAX SMITH ALFIE STANLEY ROB TAW** RYAN WILKINS **ARCHIE WILLCOX ZACK WILLETT CHARLIE WILLIAMSON** HARRY WILLIS-CHAMBERS LEE WORT

ADAM FORSTER WILL CHRISTOPHER JOSH BENNETT **MARK COOPER RALPH GRAHAM NATHAN DAVIS** JAMAL LAWRENCE **OLLY MEHEW** DAVID THOMPSON **ARCHIE MILNE JACK CARTER CALLUM HOTINE ALEX HALLETT AYSA CORRICK LEON HARDMAN DEVANTI MCINERLEY KEGAN SMART**





TODAY'S REFEREE IS THOMAS COPPING



TODAY'S ASSISTANTS ARE ADRIAN KNIGHT AND MICHAEL PAINTIN

TODAY'S MATCH SPONSOR

NEXT HOME MATCH



SATURDAY, AUGUST 9 — KICK OFF 3PM BOGNOR REGIS TOWN — ISTHMIAN LEAGUE