



OFFICIAL KIT PARTNER OFFER

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Pitching In Southern Football League Preview Mag 2025/26

NEWS VACANCY | ADMINISTRATION OFFICER

The Southern Football League is looking for an enthusiastic person with good administration skills to join its team based in Clourester.

The successful candidate will undertake such duties as processing player registrations, data input and analysis, general administration duties, and other tasks as required for the effective running of the business.

The position is part-time, working three days per week. Remuneration amount subject to negotiation.

For further information on how to apply for the position and the remuneration, please email the League's Operations Manager via: operations@southern-football-league.co.uk Closing date for applications is Friday 12th September 2025, with a view to commencing employment in October 2025.



SCORE PREDICTOR

Throughout the 2025/26 season we are going to pit the players against the media and supporters in our score prediction competition.

The rules are simple; each week we select a game at random from each of our four divisions and then invite representatives to make their predictions. It's three points for getting the score correct, one point for getting the right result and nothing an incorrect score/result.

To take part, email: news@southern-football-league.co.uk

Last week the honours went to Quorn's Adam Etheridge who scored three points for the Media, he beat off the challenge of Kettering Town fan, Ted Russell, who chalked up two points for the Fans and Rayners Lane goalkeeper, Charlie Patmore, who mustered a point for the players.

This week we are joined by Real Bedford's Brett Longden, who takes on Malvern Town Media Man, Will Neville, and Stamford AFC supporter, Richard Curtis.

WEEK FIVE	Longden	Neville	Curtis
Weymouth v Hanwell Town	1-2	1-3	2-1
Barwell v Needham Market	1-1	2-2	2-2
Bristol Manor Farm v Shaftesbury (FA Trophy)	1-3	0-2	0-2
Ware v Hadley (FA Trophy)	1-3	1-2	1-1

LEADER BOARD	Score Correct	Result Correct	Points
Players	2	5	11
Media	1	6	9
Supporters	1	3	6

southern-football-league.co.uk Friday Preview Mag 2025/26

LEAGUE STANDINGS





Premier Division South

#	Team	Р	W	D	L	F	Α	W	D	L	F	Α	GD	PTS
1	Sholing	5	2	1	0	10	6	1	1	0	1	0	5	11
2	Farnham Town	5	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	7	4	4	11
3	Walton & Hersham	5	2	0	0	8	4	1	1	1	5	4	5	10
4	Gloucester City	5	2	0	0	7	2	1	1	1	4	4	5	10
5	Taunton Town	5	2	1	0	6	2	1	0	1	4	4	4	10
6	Berkhamsted	5	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	3	4	1	10
7	Poole Town	5	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	1	6	7	0	10
8	Hungerford Town	5	2	0	1	6	4	1	0	1	2	2	2	9
9	Wimborne Town	5	2	1	0	8	3	0	1	1	1	3	3	8
10	Uxbridge	5	1	1	0	2	1	0	3	0	6	6	1	7
11	Hanwell Town	5	2	1	0	5	1	0	0	2	0	4	0	7
12	Basingstoke Town	5	1	1	0	3	1	0	2	1	4	5	1	6
13	Evesham United	5	0	2	1	2	3	1	1	0	4	2	1	6
14	Chertsey Town	5	0	1	2	3	5	1	1	0	2	0	0	5
15	Bracknell Town	5	1	1	1	7	7	0	1	1	1	2	-1	5
16	Gosport Borough	5	1	1	1	6	6	0	0	2	3	6	-3	4
17	Havant and Waterlooville	5	0	0	2	3	5	1	1	1	5	6	-3	4
18	Weymouth	5	0	1	1	2	4	1	0	2	4	6	-4	4
19	Plymouth Parkway	5	1	0	2	2	4	0	1	1	4	7	-5	4
20	Tiverton Town	5	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	2	4	6	-5	3
21	Dorchester Town	5	0	1	2	5	9	0	1	1	0	1	-5	2
22	Yate Town	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	8	-6	2

Weekend Action

Saturday 6th September

Basingstoke Town v Hungerford Town

Berkhamsted v Wimborne Town

Farnham Town v Sholing

Gloucester City

v Dorchester Town Havant & Waterlooville

v Plymouth Parkway

Poole Town

v Chertsey Town Tiverton Town

v Bracknell Town

Uxbridge v Taunton Town

Walton & Hersham v Evesham United

Weymouth

v Hanwell Town

Yate Town v Gosport Borough

Premier Division Central

#	Team	Р	W	D	L	F	Α	W	D	L	F	Α	GD	PTS
1	Harborough Town	5	2	1	0	7	1	2	0	0	4	1	9	13
2	Bishop's Stortford	4	3	0	0	9	1	1	0	0	2	0	10	12
3	Kettering Town	5	2	0	1	5	2	2	0	0	6	3	6	12
4	Quorn	5	1	1	1	6	4	2	0	0	5	0	7	10
5	Spalding United	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	9	5	4	10
6	Banbury United	5	1	2	0	5	4	1	1	0	5	2	4	9
7	Halesowen Town	5	2	0	1	6	6	0	2	0	3	3	0	8
8	Leiston	5	1	1	0	4	2	1	1	1	3	5	0	8
9	Alvechurch	5	1	0	2	4	4	1	1	0	2	1	1	7
10	Redditch United	5	2	1	0	6	2	0	0	2	0	4	0	7
11	Needham Market	5	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	7
12	Bury Town	5	2	0	1	3	3	0	1	1	2	4	-2	7
13	Barwell	5	1	0	1	4	4	1	0	2	3	5	-2	6
14	Worcester City	5	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	4	2	1	5
15	Stourbridge	5	1	0	1	2	1	0	2	1	5	6	0	5
16	St Ives Town	5	1	2	0	3	2	0	0	2	2	5	-2	5
17	Real Bedford	5	1	0	1	2	3	0	2	1	2	3	-2	5
18	Stratford Town	4	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	2	4	7	-6	3
19	Bromsgrove Sporting	5	0	0	3	2	8	1	0	1	2	4	-8	3
20	AFC Sudbury	5	1	0	1	2	4	0	0	3	1	9	-10	3
21	Royston Town	5	0	1	1	5	6	0	1	2	2	5	-4	2
22	Stamford	5	0	2	1	1	4	0	0	2	0	2	-5	2

Weekend Action

Saturday 6th September

AFC Sudbury v Banbury United

Barwell

v Needham Market

Bishop's Stortford v Stourbridge

Bromsgrove Sporting v St Ives Town

Harborough Town

v Halesowen Town

Leiston v Quorn

Real Bedford v Redditch United

Royston Town v Alvechurch

Stamford v Bury Town

Stratford Town v Spalding United

Worcester City v Kettering Town

Division One South

#	Team	Р	W	D	L	F	Α	W	D	L	F	Α	GD	PTS
1	Malvern Town	5	3	0	0	7	1	1	1	0	4	2	8	13
2	Bishop's Cleeve	4	2	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	9	3	10	12
3	Shaftesbury	4	2	0	0	7	1	1	0	1	6	3	9	9
4	Portishead Town	3	1	0	0	6	0	2	0	0	5	2	9	9
5	Frome Town	3	1	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	4	1	6	9
5	Winchester City	4	2	0	0	5	2	1	0	1	3	2	4	9
7	Hartpury	4	2	1	0	13	3	0	0	1	1	2	9	7
3	Mousehole	3	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	6
)	Swindon Supermarine	4	2	0	0	7	2	0	0	2	1	4	2	6
10	Westbury United	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	6
11	Brixham	4	1	0	1	4	7	1	0	1	4	4	-3	6
12	Melksham Town	5	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	5	-1	5
13	Exmouth Town	4	1	0	1	6	3	0	1	1	2	4	1	4
14	Bristol Manor Farm	4	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	3	7	-4	4
15	Larkhall Athletic	4	1	0	1	3	4	0	0	2	2	4	-3	3
16	Sporting Club Inkberrow	4	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	5	-5	3
17	Tavistock	4	1	0	1	2	4	0	0	2	0	6	-8	3
18	Falmouth Town	3	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	2
19	Willand Rovers	5	0	2	1	2	4	0	0	2	0	11	-13	2
20	Bashley	3	0	0	2	1	5	0	1	0	2	2	-4	1
21	Didcot Town	4	0	0	2	4	10	0	1	1	1	7	-12	1
22	Bideford	3	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	0	7	-8	0

Weekend Action

Isuzu FA Trophy First Round Qualifying fixtures take place this weekend...



Division One Central

#	Team	Р	W	D	L	F	Α	W	D	L	F	Α	GD	PTS
1	Biggleswade	5	1	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	7	2	7	13
2	Leighton Town	3	2	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	4	1	7	9
3	Welwyn Garden City	5	1	0	2	1	3	2	0	0	5	2	1	9
4	Flackwell Heath	3	1	0	0	4	0	1	1	0	3	1	6	7
5	Beaconsfield Town	4	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	6	2	3	7
5	Barton Rovers	3	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	3	2	3	7
7	Hitchin Town	4	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	4	0	3	7
3	Hadley	4	1	0	1	4	4	1	1	0	3	1	2	7
)	Biggleswade Town	3	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	7
0	Leverstock Green	4	1	0	1	3	3	1	1	0	3	2	1	7
1	Hertford Town	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	4	6
12	Ware	4	1	0	1	5	6	1	0	1	4	4	-1	6
13	AFC Dunstable	5	0	2	1	4	5	1	0	1	3	5	-3	5
14	Aylesbury United	4	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	4	4	-2	4
15	Enfield	3	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	2	1	4	0	3
16	Marlow	3	1	0	1	5	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
17	London Lions	4	1	0	1	5	4	0	0	2	0	5	-4	3
18	Rayners Lane	4	0	0	2	1	4	1	0	1	5	7	-5	3
19	Milton Keynes Irish	5	0	0	3	4	11	1	0	1	2	2	-7	3
0	Northwood	3	0	0	2	2	6	0	1	0	2	2	-4	1
1	Thame United	3	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	2	1	4	-6	0
22	Stotfold	4	0	0	2	2	6	0	0	2	6	9	-7	0

Weekend Action

Isuzu FA Trophy First Round Qualifying fixtures take place this weekend...



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PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE

PREMIER DIVISION SOUTH



Featured Match

POOLE TOWN v CHERTSEY TOWN

Pedal power will be the order of the day for one member of the travelling contingent at the BlackGold Stadium on Saturday.

Jake Warner is getting on his bike in support of his beloved Chertsey Town this season as he attempts to cycle to all 21 of their Pitching In Southern League Premier South away fixtures.

It's part of his quest to raise awareness of Crohn's and Colitis Disease, whilst also raising vital funds for Crohn's & Colitis UK.

Right now, an estimated 500,000 people in the UK are living with a lifelong disease that many people have never heard of. And the real number could be almost double that.

WELCOME TO

Tiverton Town F.C.

The Slee Blackwell Solicitors Stadium

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Because of the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding these diseases, thousands of people are suffering in silence. But

Crohn's & Colitis UK are working to improve diagnosis and treatment, and to fund research into a cure; to raise awareness and to give people hope, comfort and confidence to live freer,

"The inspiration for this challenge is that my father suffers from the illness and seeing him constantly inject himself and hearing about how little people know and how little support there is,

> I felt it was something that had to be spoken about," he told us. "The original plan was to run the London Marathon, but unfortunately I didn't get a place, but the one night I was watching YouTube and saw a video of the former goalkeeper, Ben Foster, cycling to every Sky Bet Championship ground in London, so I wondered if our League was possible.

> "I did the maths – 21 grounds and 1,700 miles – and here we are!"

> Warner will be cycling 60 miles to Southampton on Friday before embarking upon the final 40 miles of his journey on Saturday, ahead of Chertsey Town's game at Poole Town.

It will be his third away journey of the season.

Car

Park

"The challenge is going well so far," he said. "I'm two games in at this point: a 182-mile journey to Tiverton Town, which took 20 hours of saddle time, and an 'easy' trip to Yate Town, which was 104 miles, completed all in one day.

"Now I am about to head off for the game at Poole Town on Saturday, a journey I have split over Friday and Saturday morning.

"The highlights at this point would just be seeing what this country has to offer; you don't notice exactly how pretty it is until you're out

"The away day I'm most looking forward to is Walton & Hersham because it's the closest and Plymouth Parkway is going to be the worst because it's the furthest! It's also in the middle of February, so who knows what the weather will be like!?

"In all seriousness, I am looking forward to all of the journeys ahead, some more than others. never been to but look forward to seeing."

A supporter since the age of two, he has followed in the footsteps of his dad who has been a passionate fan of the club since the 1980s.

"The club is in my blood," he added. "Dad is a lifelong fan and mum worked behind the bar. Growing up I was a regular at the ground, not only for matches but I also had all of my Birthday parties there!

"I've been mascot for the visit of Whitley Bay in the FA Vase, which was a massive game for the club at the time, and I've been part of the 6,000+ fans that went to Wembley when we appeared in the FA Vase Final in 2019. To see the club lift the trophy was magnificent.

"My life basically revolves around the club and I'm seeing some positive performances from our new-look side. The club are in a rebuild stage with a new manager and basically a new team.

"This is a tough League; most years you can have a rough guess at where each team will be, but this season I have no clue, there are about six or seven teams that could go up and six or seven that could go down, so it really is all to play for.

"As a supporter, you never want to set targets because one way or another you'll end up disappointed! That being said, I would like to think that we can compete towards the top half of the table and have an FA Cup run... if we get to the first round proper and draw an EFL team away, I will cycle to that one wherever it may be!"

And with that it's time for Jake to depart to prepare for his latest iourney.

The Southern League would like to wish him every success with his challenge. You can give him your support by making a donation, no matter how big or small, via: justgiving.com/page/ tourdecurfew

Saturday's game sees Chertsey Town looking to add to their single League win from their five outings so far as they head to a Poole Town outfit who have lost just once so far as they look to improve upon last season's struggles in the lower reaches of



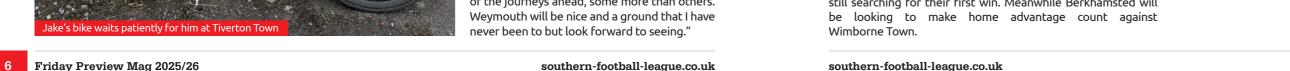
The Rest of the Action

There are three teams unbeaten going into the weekend action and two of them go head-to-head on Saturday as second-placed Farnham Town welcome leaders, Sholing. Both teams have 11 points to their name from their opening five League outings and this one has all of the ingredients to be a cracker.

The other unbeaten team is Uxbridge, who have drawn four of their five games thus far. They host Taunton Town who are living up to their billing as one of the fancied sides this season with ten points to their name so far. Also on the ten-point mark are Walton & Hersham, host new-boys, Evesham United, whilst Gloucester City welcome a Dorchester Town side who are still searching for their first win. Meanwhile Berkhamsted will

Basingstoke Town are up-and-running as they take on Hungerford Town, whilst Havant & Waterlooville and Plymouth Parkway lock horns with both sides looking to kick-start their season. Two more teams with just one win apiece are Tiverton Town and Bracknell Town who meet in Devon.

Recently returning into the hot-seat, Steve Claridge, will be hoping get Weymouth moving as they host a Hanwell Town outfit who have made a solid start to the campaign, whilst Yate Town try to get their first victory since promotion as they face Gosport Borough who have just one triumph to their name so far.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE

PREMIER DIVISION CENTRAL



Featured Match

LEISTON v QUORN

Quorn have adapted well to their new surroundings in the Premier Central.

Having romped to the Northern Premier League Midlands Division title last term with 103 points, they have lost just one of their opening five League games as well as making Emirates FA Cup progress where a mouth-watering home tie against Kettering Town awaits later this month.

Leading by example is inspirational skipper, Reece Fyfe, who made his 100th appearance for the club recently.

"To reach this milestone is a huge achievement for me," Fyfe told us. "To get to a century of appearances at any club is something to be proud of and I hope that there are many more to come for me here.

"I don't remember too much about my first game, other than we were at home. I joined when Quorn were in Step 5, I came in from Ilkeston Town knowing that I needed to play regular football again and try to get back to my best.

"I was given the platform to do that here and I haven't looked back since. So much has changed on the football side of things at the club; players have come and gone yet somehow I have managed to stay here and be part of the journey.

"The club as a whole is doing amazingly as well, the stadium/ club house is getting developed bit by bit, which is what the people who come down every week deserve, and we've also given them plenty to cheer about on the pitch too.

"Going into the Premier Central this season, it's just as challenging as I expected it to be. I knew it would be combative, technical and physically demanding, but as a team we are more than up for the fight.

"We are more than capable of competing at this level, as just

one defeat from our opening five League games suggests. Before we even kicked a ball this season, we would have snapped your hand off for that.

"The one difference I can see, though, is in the final third. Last year we were able to get away with missing chances. because we knew we'd get at least two or three more eventually, but this year if we don't manage to score, we can easily get punished down the other end.

"Personally, I feel that I have started the season really well; barring getting cramp against Worcester City in the first game! Since then I've grown again, like the team, and we have proved that we are up for the fight that this League demands from us.



eece Fyfe receives deserved recognition for reaching his 100th appearance for the club

"We have to keep pushing and wanting to be better, whilst bringing our own qualities to every game.

"There were a lot of predictions from outside the club over the summer that we would struggle, but that only gives us extra motivation to prove them wrong.

"As long as we keep reaching the standards that we know we are capable of and doing the right things, we will be okay."

A staunch supporter of his grandson, Fyfe's grandad watched him help the team chalk up a 5-2 victory over Stratford Town last month before sadly passing away the following day. Fyfe has taken to the field in the games since then with the kind of courage and determination that made his grandad so proud of him and that has made him such a popular and much-loved figure amongst everyone at Quorn FC.

They travel to face a Leiston side who have also suffered just one defeat from their opening five games this term.

Finishing just inside the top ten last time out, the Suffolk outfit have their sights set on pushing for the play-off places this season and go into Saturday's game on the back of three successive wins, including Emirates FA Cup progress last weekend with victory at Cheshunt to set up a home tie against Hackney Wick in the next round.



The Rest of the Action

Unbeaten leaders, Harborough Town, face a tough test as they host a Halesowen Town side who will be looking to respond in the right way to their first defeat of the season in their last League outing. There are two more unbeaten teams – Bishop's Stortford play host to Stourbridge, whilst Banbury United go to AFC Sudhury.

There's an interesting match-up at Worcester City where a large and vocal crowd is sure to be in attendance for the visit of Kettering Town as the two clubs renew acquaintances. Spalding United head to Stratford Town who finally got their first three points on the board in their last League outing.

Just a point separates Barwell and Needham Market as they battle it out on Saturday, whilst both Bromsgrove Sporting and St. Ives Town are searching for a spark to kick-start their respective seasons and they meet at the Victoria Ground.

There's a first-ever meeting between Real Bedford and Redditch United as Royston Town search for their first triumph of the campaign when they host Alvechurch, who have made a solid start to their season. Making a similar solid start are Bury Town following their promotion at the end of last season and they hit the road this weekend with destination Stamford, who are rather surprisingly still without a win to their name.

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ISUZU FA TROPHY FIRST ROUND QUALIFYING

PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Featured Match

BIDEFORD AFC v MOUSEHOLE AFC

Experienced Bideford AFC manager, Sean Joyce, has spoken candidly about the stop-start nature of his club's August fixture list.

The Devon outfit only had one game over the recent Bank Holiday weekend and then last weekend were forced to frustratingly sit out of the action once more as they look to bounce back from a run of four straight defeats, include a 3-0 away reverse in their last outing, ironically against Saturday's Isuzu FA Trophy opponents.

"It's been a very stop-start opening month of the season," said Joyce. "It certainly doesn't allow us to get into any momentum and in many ways makes the pre-season pointless because of the lack of games that we have played recently in this opening month of the season.

"What makes it even more frustrating is that in the final weeks of the season we will more than likely have an overly busy schedule of games.

"We have also suffered at the hands of injury and unavailability, which has meant that we haven't been able to get our full team out.

hese two teams locked horns over the August Bank Holiday weekend

"A lot of clubs suffer from this at this stage of the season, and now, with three successive home games ahead of us, we will be looking to get players back, find our rhythm and build some momentum.

"Saturday's game sees us up against familiar opponents. Whilst the result against them a couple of weeks ago was disappointing, I felt that our performance was generally good.

"The difference was in both

boxes, which is where your bread-and-butter is. They were better than us in that respect and that's why they went on to win the game.



"We're looking forward to having the opportunity to put it right at the weekend and, as I say, the players are chomping at the bit to get back out there and get things moving."

Recently playing his 100th game for the club is Javan Wright, who is confident that fortunes will start improving for his side.

"If we're being totally honest, it hasn't been the start that we hoped for having ended last season so strongly, but the results will come, we're confident of that," he said. "We've been playing some good football and going toe-to-toe with teams, but the results so far haven't reflected our performances so far.

"Once we get the ball rolling and get into a rhythm, we've got the quality here to do well. It seems that every year we start slowly and then get into our stride.

"I am confident that we can have a positive season and my main focus is to keep myself free from injury and able to make a contribution with goals and assists.

"Our aim is to get into the top half of the table and then taking things from there, but this weekend our focus is on making progress in the FA Trophy and using the positivity that a winning result would bring to take us forward."

This will be the third season in which Mousehole AFC have participated in the Isuzu FA Trophy. Each of their last two forays have ended at the third round qualifying stage, so they will be keen to improve on that this time around.



THE REST OF THE ISUZU FA TROPHY ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH CLUBS

There's a home tie for Sporting Club Inkberrow as they look to make their mark in what is their first involvement in this competition. They play host to St, Neots Town, whilst Malvern Town also welcome opponents from another League as Loughborough Students head for Worcestershire.

Two Division One South clubs go head-to-head, just a week after they also met in the Emirates FA Cup as Brixham AFC this time host Falmouth Town, who found themselves well beaten by their in-form opponents last weekend.

There are more all Division One South match-ups as Tavistock AFC welcome Larkhall Athletic, Bristol Manor Farm entertain

Shaftesbury, Hartpury will be looking to make home advantage count after hitting eight in their last game as they face Didcot Town, whilst the team that were hit for eight at the hands of the students, Willand Rovers, host Bishops Cleeve.

Meanwhile Swindon Supermarine make their way to Exmouth Town, Winchester City take on a Frome Town that suffered relegation out of the Premier South with them at the end of last season and finally, Portishead Townwill belooking to continue their bright start to the campaign as they welcome Melksham Town.

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ISUZU FA TROPHY FIRST ROUND QUALIFYING

PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Featured Match

HERTFORD TOWN v FELIXSTOWE & WALTON UNITED

With two wins from two in their Pitching In Southern League Division One Central fixtures so far as well as Emirates FA Cup progress, Hertford Town will also be looking for joy in the Isuzu FA Trophy on Saturday when they play host to Felixstowe & Walton United.

It's been a largely positive start to the campaign for Ben Herd's young side, with the only sour note coming with a serious injury sustained by Harry Watson, which forced the abandonment of their encounter with Enfield.

Watson suffered a triple leg break, which has required an operation to insert a metal rod inside the main bone of his lower leg.

"I can remember the majority of what happened," he told us. "I somehow found myself running onto a ball down the left wing; it looked like I was in a race to get to the ball first and then a very

strong challenge came in which resulted in sustaining the injury.

"Both physios were straight there and didn't leave me until the paramedics arrived and took over. I am incredibly grateful for the amazing job that they did and I thank them most sincerely for their care and attention.

"You never fully realise the extent of the football community until something like this happens. A huge thing for me was having Ben Herd and Dave McAdam [Hertford Town's management team] come to the hospital and the frequent visits and phone calls/texts that I've received since it happened.

"So many other clubs, players and fans have reached out and then I saw that a fund-raising page had been set up and it just makes you realise what caring and thoughtful people there are.

"I'm definitely determined to get back on the pitch, but at the same time I understand that it will be a long and hard process.

"I was really looking forward to this season, amongst a great group of lads at Hertford Town. I'll take things stepby-step after the surgery and hope to be back as soon as I can.

"The support of those around me will be very important along the road ahead."

The development and progression of young players is at the heart of everything that Hertford Town do.

Since taking over at the helm six years ago, Ben Herd has overseen the emergence of some extremely gifted young footballers, a number of whom have moved into professional clubs.



The latest are Riley Carr and Liam Crutchett, two teenagers who featured in the first-team in the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central last season at the age of just 16 and have now landed moves to Leicester City and Brighton & Hove Albion respectively.

They follow in the footsteps of the likes of Kurai Musanhi, who landed a move to Crystal Palace, and Archie O'Brien who joined Queens Park Rangers earlier this year.

"When we first came in, the development of young footballers was at the very heart of our model," Herd, who had a long playing career in the professional game, told us. "We give them a platform and the tools they need; I think that's eight teenagers now who have moved on to professional clubs since we've been here, five in the last 12 months, something we're extremely proud of.

"Both Riley and Liam deserve their chances; I am extremely proud to see them take this step. In Riley's case, he was released by Stevenage and this is a classic example that there is an alternative route to bounce back."

Herd, who has played over 200 times for the club, will oversee a young group of players again this season as they look to improve upon last season's finish just below halfway in the table.

"Our model is to go with a young group and I'm pleased with what we have and the unity amongst the lads," Herd added. "We are maybe one attacking player away from where I wanted us to be at this point, but I am happy and looking forward to properly getting stuck into the season.

"It will be an open League this year; budgets do make a big difference at every level and I expect the relegated clubs to all be up there challenging. There's also a group of clubs, including the likes of Leighton Town, who will also be very strong and then there's the rest. I don't see any particular stand-out teams this time around like I did this time last year.

"It always about focussing on ourselves, though, and ensuring that we continue to evolve and move in the right direction."

Saturday's test comes in the shape of a Felixstowe & Walton United side who have started the season brightly in the Isthmian League North Division with three wins from their opening five League games, including a commanding 3-0 triumph over Grays Athletic in their last outing.



THE REST OF THE ISUZU FA TROPHY ACTION FOR PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL CLUBS

It's been an unbeaten League start for Flackwell Heath, albeit that they have only played three games so far, but they face a tricky away tie at AFC Portchester. Likewise, Leighton Town will know that they have been in a game as they go to Brightlingsea Regent.

Another high-flying team so far have been Biggleswade FC and they go to Concord Rangers, whilst Enfield host Wroxham. It's a road trip for Beaconsfield Town as they head for Fareham Town and MK Irish are Grays Athletic bound as they look to build on their first League win of the season in their last outing.

London Lions will be hoping to make home advantage count against Tilbury, whilst Leverstock Green and AFC Dunstable go to Lowestoft Town and Maldon & Tiptree respectively. For Thame United it's an away tie at Moneyfields as Northwood entertain Beckenham Town. A trip to in-form Stanway Rovers is the prospect that stands before Aylesbury United as they plot a route into the next round.

Home advantage is with Stotfold for the visit of Mildenhall Town as Welwyn Garden City take on Takeley and Rayners Lane go to VCD Athletic. Finally, there will be familiarity as Division One Central rivals, Ware and Hadley, battle it out.

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