

# Encouraging signs as Woking Rugby Club prepare for start of new season.

Woking Rugby Club kick off their 2021/22 season in Surrey 4 when they take on University of Surrey this Saturday, Byfleet Rec, 3pm kick off.



Woking rugby club will play their first competitive league fixture since March 2019 when they host Surrey University this Saturday. It's been a tough 18 months but having completed two preseason fixtures there are signs that things on the pitch are starting to head in the right direction with an encouraging first half display away at Merton RFC in a 56-7 defeat last Saturday.

Having had to hastily find a fixture when their original opposition called off due to a Covid outbreak in their team. Woking travelled to Merton RFC to take on an opponent from the league above.

With a mixture of old and new faces Woking started sluggishly allowing Merton an easy score in the first couple of minutes. Merton's try fired up the Woking forwards who went on to dominate the next 20 minutes in the scrums and loose. Nearing the end of the first half, Woking found themselves

21-0 down after Merton capitalised on a couple of handling errors to score well worked breakaway tries.

Undeterred and determined to end the half with a score their efforts had deserved the Woking pack forced a series of penalties before their pressure told and crashed over for a try under the posts, closing the first half 21-7.

Woking struggled to replicate the same levels of performance in the second half despite a strong first 5 minutes. Notably losing their forward advantage when Merton had to go to uncontested scrums. This changed the game and with a surplus of players coming from the Merton bench Woking tired and struggled to match their opponents on what was a very hot afternoon.

With players returning from injury and unavailability Woking remain confident that they can build on the first half performance at Merton and kick off the new season with a positive result and performance.

# Woking kick off new season with hard fought away win.

Racal Decca 7 Vs Woking 24

For the second weekend in succession Woking RFC found themselves having to find new opposition as their original league opponents University of Surrey were unable to fulfil the scheduled league fixture.



A strong squad travelled to Tolworth to play Racal Decca buoyed by an encouraging performance the previous weekend away to Merton. There was a welcome return to the squad to some familiar faces and debutants Paul Worrell-Thompson and Jacob Woods.

Racal Decca started the stronger with a clear game plan to use their large ball carrying forwards to punch through the Woking defence. Despite a good 25 minutes of constant pressure Woking held firm with Mark Rose, Marc McGiven and Jacob Woods putting in some big tackles. Racal's pressure did finally tell on the half hour as they powered over for a try under the posts.

Woking responded immediately and put together several phases of play which eventually saw Callum Wogan go over. Mark Rose converting. Now in the ascendancy Woking capitalised on Racad Decca's indiscipline, taking advantage of penalties to work their way up the pitch.

In the final 5 minutes of the half Jacob Woods capitalised on some poor handling by Racad Decca tidying up the loose ball to run in unopposed from just inside their half. Shortly afterwards John Dickie barged his way over picking up from the base of the ruck to complete a dominant 10 mins for Woking.

The second half started in a similar fashion with Racad Decca determined to cut the deficit. Despite making a number of changes at half time Woking's defence held firm. Paul Worrell Thompson made several breaks in the centre to help get Woking up pitch as both sides cancelled one another out. With 10 minutes remaining and having been camped on the Decca try line for several phases Woking scored their fourth and final try, sealing a well-deserved and hard fought victory, as Dickie scored his second try of the afternoon.

# Tough afternoon for Woking against early league leaders

Woking RFC 5 Vs Streatham & Croydon 80

In torrential rain and high winds Woking took to the field to take on league leaders Streatham & Croydon.



Woking started poorly conceding three tries in the first 15 minutes. Much of which was self-inflicted rather than due to the conditions and it set the tone for the afternoon.

Woking rallied halfway through the half and a sustained period of forward pressure put the visitors on the back foot. Woking were rewarded when captain O'Shea crossed the whitewash from a few meters out. For a moment it looked like Woking had woken up and were starting to rise to the challenge of taking on the league leaders.

However, this was short lived as Streatham showed why they will take some stopping this season. Woking on the other hand will be disappointed that they were unable to build on the improved performances of the past few weeks.

# Narrow defeat for Woking earns them two bonus points.

Woking RFC 42 vs Haslemere 46

Woking returned to Byfleet rec for the visit of Haslemere. After the heavy defeat to Old Hamptonians, it was an opportunity to put things right.



The side were bolstered by a full bench after travelling with 14 players last week due to injuries/illness, as well as a number of Woking alumni to offer support.

Woking started on the back foot with Haslemere having the lion's share of possession, this was aided by minor infringements by Woking which allowed Haslemere to dominate the territory statistics as well. Some strong defence, especially from Sines and Fenton, alongside a dominant scrum allowed Woking to come back into the game. This was not enough though, and after a number of penalties for infringements as well as comments to the referee, Haslemere broke the deadlock with two tries and a penalty in quick succession.

At this point, Woking could have lost their heads and let the floodgates open, however, Captain O'Shea urged Woking to keep their discipline and play their

rugby. This worked and it was the turn of Haslemere to feel the pressure, who conceded penalties, allowing Woking into their 22. A well taken lineout by Brennan formed a rolling maul which crossed the line, though Woking could not ground.

The points would come shortly, following a period of tight play by the forwards, Van Vuuren crashed through a number of tackles and over the line.

Minutes later, another maul setup by Brennan off the back of a lineout allowed Van Vuuren to break down the blind side, leaving a simple two-on-one and taking the unselfish option of passing to Plowright.

Unfortunately, Woking were not able to capitalise on this pressure, and it was Haslemere who finished the first half stronger. Despite some strong defence from Dinsdale and McGiven, the defensive line was pulled out of position to allow the Haslemere wing to score in the corner for the final act of the first half.

Woking used the break to recharge, and started the second half with intent. The forward pack, strong in the set piece through the first half continued the trend and tries from O'Shea and Nissen off the back of a scrum and lineout allowed Woking to take the lead for the first time in the game.

Like the first half, Woking could not build on the pressure and we punished after not securing possession at a kick off. There were more examples of great defence, however, it was not enough, with some poor organisation due to a combination of tiredness and lack of experience allowed two quick tries, and Haslemere were in control again.

The final exchanges were back and fore, a mazy run from Garvey saw him brought down short of the line and O'Shea crashing over for a second. Haslemere scored again before a well worked backs move led to Edwards scoring the final try of the day and Worrall-Thompson adding the extras.

Woking knew time was running out to get a winning score, however, they manages to lose possession again, which led Haslemere to the verge of securing the win. From a penalty, they to a 5m lineout, which Brennan managed to steal to give Woking some hope, but the length of the pitch seemed to be an impossible task, and shortly after the referee blew to call an end to proceedings.

Reflecting after the game, O'Shea commented "After this afternoon, I'm mentally and physically drained. I'm so proud of the boys in the way they responded to last week's result. However, I can't help wondering 'what if!?!'. With a bit more discipline and organisation, today could have been a very different result. We'll enjoy tonight and continue to rebuild on Tuesday evening."

**Scorers:** O'Shea (2 tries), Nissen (2 tries), Van Vuuren (2 tries) Plowright (1 try), Edwards (1 try). Worrall-Thompson (1 conv)

**Woking:** Simon Power, Mick O'Shea (captain), Ben Bremner, Matthew Brennan, Dan Christmas, Richard Benn, KJ Nissen, Gary Van Vuuren, James Plowright, Paul Worrall-Thompson, Jake Sines, Adam Colley, Adam Fenton, Will Nelson, Marc McGiven

**Subs:** Ben Dinsdale, Ryan Ditung, Lee Abi Haydar, David Garvey, Dan Edwards

**Man of the Match:** Gary Van Vuuren



# Disappointing afternoon for Woking after strong start.

Mitcham & Carshalton 59 vs Woking RFC 0

In previous weeks Woking have been guilty of starting slowly, allowing their opponents to get on the front foot and build a lead. Away to Mitcham & Carshalton that wasn't the case as Woking started positively with a focus not seen in previous weeks. Playing into a strong wind the visitors took the game to their hosts as forwards and backs combined to put their opponents on the back foot.



Mitcham improved as the half went on but Woking remained resolute in defence with Jordon Baker, Marc McGiven, Jake Sines and Ben Dinsdale impressive in defence. The match turned in the space of a couple of minutes.

Following some clever play by scrum half Baker taking a quick penalty the Mitcham & Carshalton defence infringed once too often resulting in their blindside flanker being shown a yellow card. Rather than spurring Woking on it only served to wake up the well drilled hosts who took control of the game by scoring 2 quick breakaway tries, capitalising on mistakes by Woking.

Now on the back foot Woking struggled to contain the hosts who camped on their line, using the strong wind behind them to maintain field position to

score a further 2 tries. The latter coming during the last play of the half as Woking failed to clear their lines.

Having used half time to regroup and with the conditions in their favour Woking started in the same manner as the first half competing well without ever really threatening the Mitcham line. As the game wore on Woking were reduced to 14 men due to injuries and a limited bench meaning Mitcham were able to take advantage of a tiring Woking side and the additional man advantage to score several more tries. Again, capitalising on errors and poor decision making by Woking.

Woking Captain Mick O'Shea said afterwards, "Again I can only praise the lads for sticking to the task. As in previous weeks they left everything out there and can be proud of the effort. We are improving every week and for large parts of the game we were competitive against a good Mitcham & Carshalton side. We now need to focus on cutting out the individual errors and improve our decision making. Compared to last season and the start of this one, the improvement in the side has been massive despite the result."

**Man of the Match:** Marc McGiven

# Surrey Four club 'have achieved the impossible'

Woking RFC 20 vs Wandsworthians 24

Woking chairman Andy Jones is looking ahead to new challenges as the Surrey Four outfit battle back from near extinction.

As a tribute to club legend Richard Grady – who died in December 2019 – Jones took on the role last summer. Some felt it would be difficult to keep the club alive following the pandemic, but Jones gave it a go – and is now seeing the fruits of his considerable endeavours.



Jones, who also coaches the 1st XV, said: "Richard asked me to step forward as chairman back in 2019. So when I was asked earlier this year to do it, I felt ready.

"I feel like I owe it to Richard to be chairman.

"This place is the life and soul of a lot of people's lives. It's rescued a lot of people.

"I was very apprehensive as to whether I could pull it off. But Richard would've said 'We never give up'.

"And right now I feel like we've achieved the impossible and that we just might be able to keep it going."

Jones began his tenure with two modest goals, but he's already surpassed those – and now needs to consider the next steps in the club's revival.

He said: "The first goal was to get player numbers along to training. I said that if we could, other people would come.

"And that's what's happened – but better than I expected. So we've hit that goal.

"The other goal was to try to score one try. And we've absolutely smashed that already this season.

"So I'm in a bit of a hiatus now where I've got to think of a new target.

"The best thing we could hope for between now and Christmas is an outright, clean win where we've got our own players running the game. And I think we're on the precipice of achieving that." Every week I've tried to build on the positives.

"We've still got to build on some of our game management and decision-making on the field, but that's only going to come as we progress through the season.

"And it's also about getting the same team out consistently every week so we can firm up our game plan and how we want to tackle the game.

"But given where we were coming into the season, I'm mightily heartened that we're in a lot better position than I thought we would be."

On Saturday 6 November, Woking were handed a walkover against Wandsworthians.

With both sides at the foot of Surrey Four, it was set to be a vital clash at Byfleet Recreation Ground.

But the visitors could only bring 12 players. And though the match went ahead as a friendly – with some of the hosts' players turning out for their opponents – Woking were given the free victory in the league.

Nonetheless, the day was notable for other reasons, with a two-man delegation from the Dutch national rugby league team – competitions manager Matthew Rigby and player Adam Breksator – turning up to watch the match and parade their European Championship D trophy that they won in Turkey last month.

With Woking home to the largest Dutch community in the UK, it was a natural stop on their trophy tour.

Breksator said: "It's been great to get out here and meet the Dutch community and connections we have in Woking.

"It was a special moment to win the competition, with the amount of work everybody had put in.

"Now we move into European Pool B and then we'll get to play off for a position in the Rugby League World Cup.

"We'll be coming up against a lot more professional teams, but there's no reason we can't be competitive at that next level."

**By: Rob Hemingway**  
**Sports Reporter**  
**Woking News & Mail**

# Woking left wondering what might have been following late call offs

Woking RFC 10 vs Reigate 53

On a chilly and windy afternoon at Byfleet Rec Woking took to the field with just 13 players against a full-strength side from Reigate. On the morning of the game Woking were able to name a squad of 18 players and headed into the match feeling confident that they could get a positive result against the visitors.



Reigate had beaten Woking earlier in the season when they played the return fixture, travelling on the day with just 13 players to fulfil their league commitments. However, history repeated itself as a series of late call offs prior to kick off meant that once again the hosts had to take to the field with an under-strength team and players playing out of position.

Kicking off into a strong wind Woking started poorly, visibly disheartened by the events prior to kick off. Reigate quickly used their 2-man advantage and the strong wind in their favour to work their way up to 10m from the Woking line. From the resulting ruck one of the big Reigate forwards picked up and simply strolled through the Woking pack unopposed. A further 2 tries soon followed as visibly buoyed by their early score and numerical advantage.

Midway through the half Woking finally got on the front foot and after several phases of forward play, John Dickie ran in from 25m out as the Reigate failed to stop his charging run. Around the same time Woking numbers were boosted to 14 players with a late arrival of a player who had been held up at work.

Having now scored and, with an additional player reducing Reigate's numerical advantage to just one, the expected Woking fightback did not materialise as the home side continued to struggle through the inability to win their own ball, lack of organisation and poor defending.

### **Half time Woking 5 Reigate 41.**

Half time allowed Woking to regroup and reorganise. With some home truths ringing in their ears the hosts came out with a point to prove and pride to play for. To a man Woking came out a different proposition. Aggressive in the tackle and turning ball over the side was unrecognisable from the team that had started so badly. Leading by example were Ben Dinsdale and KJ Nissen who hunted the ball down and opposing players down with relish. At times tempers flared and Reigate now knew they had a game. Both sides can be complimented for the competitive nature of the match without it ever boiling over. In part this can be attributed to a very good performance by the referee.

Woking did score their second try of the afternoon midway through the second half through KJ Nissen. They also missed several opportunities to score more which would have seen them gain a bonus point their second half performance deserved. As Woking tired Reigate were able to take advantage capitalising on handling errors which allowed them to score a couple of breakaway tries.

### **Final score Woking 10 Reigate 53**

Jim McGiven, Woking Club Captain "I'm super proud of the boys that played today. Watching from the side line I even forgot we were a man down in the second half. The last minute call offs killed us today and disrupted the warm up. We are a club and need to stand together. I am confident that as players return from injury and if others make themselves available for training and matches we can have a good second half to the season".

# Poor start leaves Woking wondering what might have been

Woking RFC 22 vs Old Hamptonians RFC 38

Woking returned to action after an extended break due to Christmas and the impact of Covid when they hosted Old Hamptonians RFC at Byfleet Rec. When the sides met earlier in the season the visitors ran out 124-19 winners when Woking were only able to field 13 players against a very strong Old Hamptonians side.

However, last Saturday's encounter was to be a much different with Woking being able to field a strong starting 15 and bench.



Having kicked off Woking were immediately on the back foot as Old Hamptonians attacked with speed and width. Woking looked like a team that had not played for several weeks but somehow managed to keep the visitors at bay through a combination of scrambled defence and turning the opposition ball over.

A frantic first 10 minutes culminated in Old Hamptonians scoring the opening try as a poor clearance kick by the Woking fly half Parker was capitalised on by the opposition back line. Following the restart Woking were able to get on



the front foot themselves only for a loose pass by Parker to be intercepted allowing the visitors to double their lead. Having weathered the early storm Woking found themselves 14-0 down with the possibility of history repeating itself no doubt in the minds of the home support.

To Woking's credit they responded and started to take control of the game as the forwards led by Captain O'Shea and supported by Neil-Dickie as well as Nissan started punching holes in the opposition defence. Following a sniping run by scrum half Blundell supported by Parker the Woking forwards were able to recycle the ball quickly allowing Sines to power over from 10 meters.

In the ascendancy Woking had visibly rattled their opponents who were now conceding penalties and uncharacteristically kicking the ball away. Woking were now playing their best rugby of the season and were rewarded with a second try not long before half time with a try from KJ Nissan.

#### **Half time - Woking 10 Old Hamptonians 14**

Following the break Old Hamptonians came out looking to reassert themselves. Once again strong defence from Woking kept them out for several minutes before the pressure finally told and they crossed the line following multiple phases of play.

Now trailing by 11 points Woking upped their levels and a passage of play where forwards and backs combined to take the hosts from their own half to within 10 meters of the Old Hamptonians try line. From the resulting line out Woking attacked again with powerful running from Armstrong and Sines resulting in Neil-Dickie scoring from short range.

Not long after, Old Hamptonians were reduced to 14 men when a member of their pack was yellow carded for a high tackle. Using their numerical advantage Woking worked their way up the pitch and Sines crossed for his second score of the afternoon. Parker converting.

With 10 minutes remaining and trailing by a point Woking were ahead for the first time and on the verge of a shock win. Back to full strength and following a series of penalties Woking were now defending their line desperate to hold on to their lead as Old Hamptonians attacked. Finally, the pressure told with the Old Hamptonians winger scoring a questionable try in the corner.

Woking's resistance had finally been broken to the relief of the travelling support. Old Hamptonians added a further try during the final play to give

the score line a more flattering look, denying Woking a second losing bonus point.

**Final score - Woking 22 Old Hamptonians 38**

Mick O'Shea, Woking Captain

"By far our best performance of the season and probably the last few years. The boys gave everything again and just shows the quality we have when everyone is available. We now have a series of fixtures against opponents that if we can keep this squad together will give us an opportunity to get that first win and start heading up the table"

# Indiscipline and mistakes prove costly for Woking.

Haslemere RFC 24 - Woking 7

Buoyed by their impressive performance the previous week Woking travelled to Haslemere for a league and cup double header. Once again Woking were able to name a strong squad and replacements despite several late call offs due to work commitments of players. Sporting their new gold and blue away kit Woking kicked off in perfect conditions for rugby.



Woking were soon penalised for not rolling away in the tackle allowing Haslemere to kick deep into the Woking half. This was a pattern that would continue throughout the first half enabling Haslemere to build continuous pressure. Woking defended their line impressively, but the hosts finally crossed for an unconverted try. More indiscipline allowed Haslemere to again work their way down the pitch and a further penalty for again not rolling away 5m from the Woking line resulted in Haslemere taking a quick tap penalty and scoring as several Woking defenders turned their back on play.

Eventually, Woking did work their way into the Haslemere half and got on the front foot with good handling by the backs seeing the ball make its way to both wingers to test their opponent's defence. Just as Woking were

coming back into the game miscommunication between backs and forwards lead to a mistake and the ball bouncing favourably for Haslemere to score a breakaway try under the posts.

### **Half time: Haslemere 17 - Woking 0**

Knowing that the first score of the second half would be pivotal Woking came out fired up to offer a more attacking threat and to get back in the game. Unlike the first half Woking started breaking the Haslemere defence and gaining yards. Largely due to strong running from Woods, Neil-Dickie, and Sines as well as Francis when he came on.

Mid way through the half Jacob Woods capitalised on a loose haslemere line out to power over from 15m out, taking several defenders with him as he crossed the line. Parker converting. With the game in the balance and Woking growing stronger there was still time to turn things around. The next 20 minutes were competitive with Woking putting their opponents under sustained pressure without really ever taking their opportunities. This was through a combination of more indiscipline and a lack of composure at crucial times.

A further penalty enabled Haslemere to gain good field position and with the final play of the match from the resulting lineout the Haslemere pack recycled the ball well and with the Woking defence stretched they scored under the posts.

### **Final score - Haslemere 24 - Woking 7**

Mick O'Shea, Woking Captain

"I felt confident coming into the match that we could get a positive result. Haslemere are a good side that have been playing together several seasons and were up for it today. Indiscipline and mistakes cost us in the first half and if we had been able to convert our chances in the second half, we could well be talking about our first league win of the season."

# Woking lose out in basement battle.

Wandsworthians RFC 35 - Woking 10

Woking travelled to bottom club Wandsworthians on a chilly but sunny afternoon looking for their first league win of the season. With several players unavailable due to injury, illness and other commitments the Woking starting line-up was much changed with a number of players playing out of position.



After kicking off Woking were immediately under pressure as their opponents took the game to Woking. However, the Woking defence held firm but whilst in possession the team lacked the structure and cohesion of previous weeks.

As the half went on Woking grew in confidence and took the lead following good play by the forwards recycling the ball through several phases allowing captain Mick O'Shea to bulldoze over in the corner. To their credit Wandsworthians replied almost straight away following some good handling and break by their backline to score a converted try.

A further try followed following a Wandsworthians catch and drive from a lineout on the Woking 22m line. Woking rallied and took the game to Wandsworthians with more good forward play allowing KJ Nissen to score from close range.

## **Half time: Wandsworthians 14 - Woking 10**

With the game there for the taking in the second half Woking started brightly but this soon faded as poor defending allowed Wandsworthians in for their third try of the afternoon. Spurred on by this and a large vocal home support Wandsworthians were able use their bench to put on fresh legs.

Ultimately, this proved decisive as a tiring Woking side, despite their best efforts could not stop Wandsworthians from scoring a further 2 converted tries.

## **Final score: Wandsworthians 35 - Woking 10**

Mick O'Shea, Woking Captain

"I'm disappointed. Wandsworthians deserved their victory today and were up for it. I can't fault any of the lads for their application or effort, especially those playing positions that were unfamiliar to them. We missed our big ball carrying forwards who would usually get us on the front foot, just a couple of them would have made a big difference and the game would have been a lot closer."

# Spirited display as Woking league campaign ends in defeat.

Harlequins Amateurs RFC 41 - Woking 12

Woking travelled to Bushey Park to complete their Surrey 4 league campaign against high flying Harlequins Amateurs. In front of a large and expectant home crowd, an experimental Woking side kicked off looking into a strong wind looking to put in a better performance than when the teams met earlier in the season.



Immediately on the front foot the home side attacked with power and pace. Recycling the ball well and stretching the Woking defence before scoring in the corner. Not long after, Harlequins scored their second try and were 10 points ahead inside the opening 10 minutes. A third try followed when the Harlequins hooker broke from halfway beating multiple defenders to score under the posts. Woking were now up against it and looked to be heading to another heavy defeat.

As the half progressed the Woking forwards woke up and started to get their hands on the ball and began matching their opponent's physicality at the breakdown. Now on the front foot scrum half Jordan Baker was able to get the back line moving and make some probing breaks himself. With renewed self-belief it was now a completely different game as Woking attacked,

forcing mistakes from the opposition. One of which resulted in Baker scoring Woking's first try as Harlequins spilled the ball on their own try line allowing the scrum half to dive on the loose ball. Worrell-Thompson converted.

Realising they were now in a game, Harlequins upped their levels and came back strongly to reassert their dominance, scoring a further two tries before half time.

### **Half time - Harlequins Amateurs 27 Woking RFC 7**

The second half started in much the same way as the first with Harlequins putting Woking under pressure. However, unlike the first 40 minutes the Woking defence held firm with Max Knight, Jacob Woods and KJ Nissen all making big tackles. Not only that they were taking the game to the hosts when in possession. Knight and player of the match Woods were making ground every time they carried the ball giving the opposition defence plenty to think about. Likewise, scrum half Baker who made several probing breaks.

Now a much more even game both sides were cancelling one another out. Midway through the half after some sustained pressure Harlequins scored again. Undeterred, Woking hit back working their way into Harlequin's half and producing their best attacking move to put winger Ross Henson over for his first try in senior rugby. Harlequins did score a final converted try close to the end.

### **Final score Harlequins Amateurs 41 Woking RFC 12**

Mick O'Shea, Woking Captain

'If ever a game summed up our season that was it. Again, we started slowly gifting our opponents early tries before we started playing anywhere near the levels we can. When we have that self-belief, we match any team in this league. Unfortunately, we just don't do it consistently enough. As a club and squad, we have come so far this season. We have plenty of positives to build on and be proud of going into next season'.