

# Sutton & Epsom Keep The Wind In Their Sails

7 October 2025



Sutton & Epsom 40 Old Colfeians 24 Saturday 4th October. The cheeky aside that last Saturday's break from league action was to commemorate Sutton winning their opening three fixtures of the campaign is untrue but has some historical merit. It was only the fifth time, in the league era, that such a start had occurred – the last being in 2012-13. Meanwhile, their opponents Old Colfeians had sounded a klaxon call of intent with the notable scalp of Sidcup in the previous round of fixtures. A tough tussle was expected at Rugby Lane between two sides that had shared the honours in this fixture last season. The hosts maintained their perfect start in a magnificent match between two quality teams, winning 40-24.

There was a welcome return for captain Freddy Bunting, as Euan McTaggart rejoined the ranks with a proud 100% winning record as caretaker captain. He was joined by Rob Hegarty, Michael Bennion and Ben Tame, as ailments and absences ruled out Finney, Ghumra, Lennard and O'Brien. The visitors were missing the mountainous figure of their captain and powerhouse, Andy O'Malley.

Storm Amy had created testing, blustery and unfavourable conditions. Sympathy immediately went out to the full-backs and hookers as a sense of foreboding descended upon Rugby Lane with expectations of a scrappy and error-strewn contest. Perhaps the only point of interest would be whether the Bunting boot might set a personal distance record for a successful penalty kick. How wrong we were. Both sides produced a thrilling exhibition of running rugby, combining for ten tries to the delight of all assembled.

Captain Bunting kicked off with the benefit of the gusting gale that fortunately blew across rather than down the pitch. After an impressive opening by Sutton that was thwarted by sterling defence, Bunting lofted a kick towards the wing. With perfect timing, Josh Rea arrived and, after an initial juggle, secured the ball to coast home under the posts. Bunting gratefully accepted the simple conversion for 7-0.

Five minutes later, the S&E pack exploited a perfect attacking position to advance towards the posts and Sam Lennie was unstoppable from short range. With the extras added it was 14-0 as the hosts made light of the conditions. The first quarter concluded with Sutton's third and finest score. Exploiting a generous narrow side, Archie Fitzgerald and friends interchanged passes from halfway for Laurence Wise to streak home under the posts. The conversion established an impressive 21-0 lead.

Old Colfeians, aided by a flurry of penalties, enjoyed their best passage of play and were rewarded with their opening try. Control and continuity in the hosts' 22 stretched the defence and the powerful presence of Estefan Ellis scored in the corner. The comeback was short-lived as Sutton exploited a penalty from ten metres in front of the uprights. Dan Jones ran wide, the ball was recycled, and a few carries later that man Jones was on hand to score. Bunting judged the wind to perfection for 28-5 as the Black and Whites secured the bonus point for their fourth try.

As the crowd discussed how many points the wind was worth, Sutton and Epsom pressed for more. For the final ten minutes of the half, S&E were frustrated by quality defence and an abundance of infringements. Referee Mr Edwards concluded the first moiety with the scoreboard showing Sutton & Epsom 28, visitors 5.

There had been a surprising lack of kicking and a refreshing desire to run the ball. The Sutton handling had been impressive with a minimal error count as forwards and backs combined to great effect. Old Colfeians, when given the opportunity, also looked to get the ball to their backs and showed enough to suggest there was still plenty left in this contest.

It did not require the wisdom of Solomon to imagine the coaches stressing the importance of the opening ten minutes of the second half: for Colfeians, to get an early score and a foothold in the game; for Sutton, to extinguish all hope and force the visitors into damage-limitation mode.

The men from Horn Park could not have asked for a more encouraging start as the powerful running of centre Louis Baker contemptuously brushed aside potential tacklers for a stunning solo score from halfway after barely a minute. Ryan Napper's conversion appeared to be perfection until the wind had the final say, leaving his team trailing 10-28.

A couple of minutes later, the exceptional Laurence Wise was forced from the field having been squashed beneath a considerably heavier opponent. As the pessimists trawled their memories for record reversals, the hosts responded in classical fashion. Sam Lennie made an eye-catching break, marauding into the opposition half and leaving tacklers in his wake or dumped on their behinds. Agu Benson continued the attack, cutting inside, and prop Dan Johnson arrived in support to score. The conversion never threatened, but Sutton had the comfort of a 33-10 lead with 25 minutes to play.

Old Colfeians were not deterred by this reverse and threw themselves at the Sutton defences with fury. Inches from a try they were penalised, and as hard as they tried it appeared that the home defences would not be breached. In the final ten minutes OC's full-back Chris Harris changed the game with individual brilliance. A mesmerising run from 40 metres deserved a try; he was denied by the last man, but Ryan Napper was in support to cross the whitewash. The No.10 converted his score for 17-33.

Five minutes later, the elusive Harris was on halfway being pushed towards touch. He caressed the ball between on-rushing tacklers, re-gathered it and disappeared over the horizon for a fabulous score that spoke volumes for his vision. It was one-way traffic and belief was coursing through Colfeian veins as the lead narrowed to 33-24.

Before the Chris Harris show, Sam Lennie had left the field with a knock. The hooker re-entered the fray as Sutton worked their way into the opposition 22. From a perfectly executed catch-and-drive from an attacking lineout, the irrepressible Lennie scored his second try. Bunting converted for 40-24 and Sutton had finally secured the win. Moments later, the contest was over.

Arguably, this was Sutton's best performance of the campaign so far. The tempo, fluency and handling in the first half were exceptional in the conditions as they spread the ball wide at every opportunity. Wingers Archie Fitzgerald and Agu Benson offered a formidable threat on the flanks, avoiding being ushered into touch with their combination of strength, skill and rugby intelligence. The mobile back-row trio of Rea, Jones and Hegarty were always on hand to offer continuity. Laurence Wise provided the tempo at 9 while Freddy Bunting orchestrated the plays from 10.

The front row of Johnson, Lennie and Mount not only provided a stable set piece but also offered a great deal around the paddock, including three tries. It was a superb team effort from 1 to 18.

No team will relish playing Old Colfeians this season. The front-row trio of Rameaux, Holland-Oliver and Agorioge boast over 300 appearances and were a formidable unit. The centre combination of Baker and Storey were the creative hub in an experienced back division. The icing on the cake is the attacking threat of Chris Harris, who countered with great intent. They were unfortunate to be missing some regulars, leaving them short of their usual heft in the back five. In the second period they came back strongly and deservedly were rewarded with a bonus point, coming close to a second as the clock wound down.

Next Saturday, 11 October, Sutton visit the historic Crescent Farm for an encounter with one of their oldest rivals, Sidcup RFC. At this early stage of a long season the Black and Whites lie second in the league behind Beckenham, who also have the maximum 20 points from four outings.

## Sutton & Epsom:

Bennion, Fitzgerald, Scott, Bibby, Benson, Bunting (capt), Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Mount, McTaggart, Duey, Rea, Jones & Hegarty.  
Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Munford.

## Old Colfeians:

Harris, Ellis, Storey, Baker, Mutongwizo, Napper, Spaczil, Rameaux, Holland-Oliver, Agorioge, Collins, Ramdhan, Amor, Moles & Correa.  
Replacements: Bantango, Blythe & Burkett.

John Croysdill

Image credit Robin Kennedy

## Epsom’s Rainbow Leisure Centre Places new operators

7 October 2025



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is pleased to confirm that Places Leisure will take over the operation of the Rainbow Leisure Centre in Epsom from 1 October. This follows the Council’s announcement in July appointing Places Leisure as the new operator on a 10-year contract, with the option to extend for a further five years.

This marks an exciting new chapter for the Rainbow Leisure Centre with members set to continue benefitting from high-quality leisure, health and wellbeing services.

Places Leisure, part of the PfP Group the UK’s leading social enterprise, will be investing its own capital into the leisure centre, upgrading the gym, studios, swimming changing rooms and more.

From 1 October, existing members or anybody looking for a new membership should contact [enquiries@pfpleisure.org](mailto:enquiries@pfpleisure.org). More information can be found on their website – Rainbow Leisure Centre | Places Leisure. Places Leisure has been working closely with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the outgoing operator, GLL, to ensure an efficient and safe handover.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) , Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee said:

“The wellbeing of our community is at the heart of everything we do, and our Health and Wellbeing Strategy continues to shape how we support residents to live healthier, happier lives. We’re proud to be entering a new era at the Rainbow Leisure Centre, one that embraces a holistic approach to health and fitness, and delivers an inclusive Active Communities programme, alongside activities delivered both at the centre and outside in the wider community.

“Places Leisure is providing a platform where everyone in our borough can thrive – opening up opportunities for residents of all ages, including young people, the elderly and those living with a disability or illness, wherever they may be on their wellbeing journey.

“I’d like to thank Places Leisure and Greenwich Leisure Limited for working together to ensure a smooth transition for members. I’d also like to extend our gratitude to Greenwich Leisure Limited for the positive legacy they leave behind, which we are proud to build upon.”

**Dan Walker, Business Development Director at Places Leisure, said:** “It is clear that the Rainbow Leisure Centre stands at the heart of the community, providing opportunities for local people of all ages and abilities to enjoy being active and to bring people together. We are delighted to be the new operators of the centre, and we thank GLL for the hard work they have put in during their time as operator. We look forward to a successful partnership with Epsom and Ewell Council, local stakeholders, and of course the colleagues who bring the centre to life.

“A thriving community is a community where everyone is welcome in a truly inclusive way, which is why within the first year of our contract we will invest c£4.7million in a series of projects including a new fitness suite, studios and changing facilities to support community engagement. Our commitment will further boost community activities, inspire people of all ages to lead an active and healthy lifestyle, whilst generating over £5million of social value each year.”

Places Leisure website – <https://www.placesleisure.org/>

Places Leisure will also offer a wider range of health and wellbeing-related activities, delivered both inside and outside of the leisure centre, including:

- An Active Communities programme, including exercise referrals for falls prevention, cardiac rehab and weight management; community wellbeing walks, as well as programmes such as ‘move through menopause’ and Health MOTs, which will support local people in an inclusive way and enable the community to thrive.
- New leisure centre programmes targeted at under 16s and the elderly: including LES Mills exercises classes and Saturday Night Project activities for the under 16s and new EGYM and walking sports to help older adults be more physically active.
- Social value initiatives: such as work placement opportunities including for unemployed and disabled people; leisure industry careers advice and curriculum support; and supporting the local economy by keeping spending within the local supply chain.

Places Leisure will continue to invest in the environmental sustainability of the centre, this will be overseen by an environmental coordinator.

Places Leisure is a social enterprise which is passionate about ‘creating active places and healthy people’ and improving opportunities for communities to be physically active. It experiences over 30 million visits per annum across the 101 leisure facilities that it operates on behalf of local authorities across the country and supports over 126k children and adults learning to swim each year. <https://www.placesleisure.org/>

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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## Epsom Racecourse: Preview and Tips for Sunday’s Seven-Race Card

7 October 2025





It’s Epsom Racecourse’s season finale Sunday, and the seven-race card card features the Apprentices’ Derby Handicap, alongside four other handicaps, a conditions stakes and a novice.

*Read on for a full preview of the Epsom card, courtesy of Boyle Sports, who provide all the latest **horse racing odds**.*

The first race of the meeting is a nursery handicap run over seven furlongs (1.45). We have seven runners here, of which the most experienced are Galileo Island and Penhallam, who have been in handicap company for a few runs now. Of those running in a handicap for the first time, Ralph Beckett’s Crystal Pier may make the most appeal, already proven over the trip and having run a nice race over course and distance last time. Penhallam might get the better of her with a five-pound claimer aboard, however.

Race two is a juveniles’ conditions race over an extended mile (2.20). We have just four runners in this race, but it is a hot contest nonetheless as three of the contenders have previously won a race and the only maiden, Alfaraz, was second on debut at Goodwood. He looks well qualified to improve and win this race under Oisin Murphy. With an entry in the Group One Futurity Stakes later this year, he must be well thought of at home.

Next is a mile and a quarter novice (2.55). This race looks to be between the Gosdens’ Gamrai and Alan King’s Alcarath as they are the only two of the six with winning or placing form to their names. The latter would have to improve a fair bit, though, in order to get past the former, who won on seasonal reappearance and should be able to defy his penalty easily enough.

The fourth race is the feature Apprentices’ Derby Handicap, run over a mile and half (3.30). Pat Phelan’s Naasma seeks a hat-trick today, having won her last two starts at Windsor, and hasn’t been so heavily penalised by the handicapper that she couldn’t get involved once more. Give It To Me Oj, a dual-purpose performer, won over course and distance last time out on soft ground, and has been sharply raised in the weights as a result. Odin Legacy should have a good chance under George Bass, but Way Of Life looks to have the strongest claims at the weights for Jonathan Portman.

Following is a mile and a quarter handicap (4.05). David O’Meara’s 10-year-old Orbaan has been steadily dropping back towards his last winning mark and, now just one pound above it, could get the job done under Tom Marquand here. He was fourth of 12 at this track last time over seven furlongs and it’s interesting to see him upped in trip. Richard Hughes’ Criminal also looks likely to be there at the sharp end, and is weighted accordingly to being one of only two three-year-olds in the race. Don’t forget Kimeko Glory, though, who made a winning start for Brian Toomey and could go well again.

The penultimate race is a handicap over an extended mile (4.40). This is another four-runner race, with half of the field having won their last starts. Jiff’s Army won over course and distance a month ago, while Falmouth Lad seeks a hat-trick after successes at Newmarket and Kempton. With Rossa Ryan in the saddle, Jiff’s Army looks the most likely to repeat the winning form, while Hot Cash has now come down to what should be a winnable mark and could be very competitive under Tom Marquand.

Finally, we conclude with a seven-furlong handicap (5.15). Kisskodi has won at this track twice this term already, while Ed Walker’s Tokyo Joe looks to have come down to a nice mark and could run a big race after some promising performances so far this season, despite not having got a win on the board yet. Course and distance winner Marlay Park should be very competitive also under Paddy Bradley.

**Epsom selections - Sunday:**

- 1.45 – Penhallam
- 2.20 – Alfaraz
- 2.55 – Gamrai
- 3.30 – Way Of Life
- 4.05 – Orbaan
- 4.40 – Jiff’s Army
- 5.15 – Marlay Park

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

## Reigatian Hoodoo Broken: Sutton and Epsom Scale the Heights

7 October 2025



**Old Reigatian 14 Sutton and Epsom RFC 49.** Saturday 20th September.

Sutton and Epsom may have enjoyed the better start to the campaign with two victories compared to their opponent’s two defeats but Old Reigatian could be considered the Black and Whites’ Kryptonite. Since resuming league hostilities in September 2023 the Old Boys have won all four encounters amassing 142 points and scoring 20 tries. So for Rugby Lane supporters the 49-14 win was a most welcome end to the historical hoodoo.

There was a welcome return to the ranks for Gareth O’Brien and Sam Lennie but hat-trick hero Rob Hegarty and Ben Tame were absentees from the Sutton and Epsom squad. There was also the reappearance of Eric Duey in the second row after an absence of biblical proportions of three seasons. Referee Pierce Young’s whistle announced the next chapter in the Old Reigatian v Sutton and Epsom story. Sutton and Epsom were to enjoy the first half benefits of the slope and the wind. This was amply demonstrated when Tom Lennard seized a loose ball in his 22 and kicked over the OR line for a drop out in the early moments.

Sutton and Epsom’s first chance came after five minutes with a 5-metre lineout. The ball was overthrown and devoured by the defence and the opportunity squandered. But Ewan McTaggart, wearing the temporary burden of captaincy lightly on his broad shoulders, charged down the clearance and with almost divine intervention it landed in Eric Duey’s hands for the try. Tom Lennard added the extras for a 7-0 lead. The remainder of the first quarter was entertaining fare as expansive play was matched by dogged defence by all concerned. In the 20th minute Sutton and Epsom were held up over the line but Reigatian relief from the long clearance was fleeting. The ball was run back and Gareth O’Brien sidestepped his man near halfway and scorched home for a fine solo score. Tom Lennard extended the advantage to 14-0.

On the half hour the sizeable following support from Rugby Lane were applauding their third try. A 5-metre lineout appeared to have been superbly defended as the packs slid towards touch but Dan Jones erupted from the heaving masses to score. Tom Lennard maintained his kicking excellence for 21-0. Emboldened by their lead and with Lennard exploiting the slope with intelligent kicking Sutton and Epsom dominated territorially. The valiant home defence once more held up the Black and Whites over their line. Once more it was only a temporary respite. Kyren Ghumra ran the ball back and Sam Lennie saw a gap in a scrambling defence to touch down for the bonus point score. Lennard maintained his 100% record for 28-0.

There was still time for the visitors to add another score to their first period riches. It was arguably the best of the first half five. The forwards provided clean ball on the 22 and it was spun wide. Laurence Wise ran the perfect supporting line from Number 9 to collect an inside pass that opened up the defence and he sauntered home. The Lennard boot made it 35-0 and the referee concluded the half with Sutton and Epsom handsomely placed having made the most of the topography and meteorological assistance.

The hosts would enjoy the benefits of the slope and a strengthening wind. Even with their talented back division and their habitual winning of this fixture a 35-point deficit was considerable, perhaps not Everest but certainly Himalayan in proportions. Old Reigatian began the second half with great intent pegging back the visitors in their 22 and laying siege. It was one-way traffic with 5-metre penalties and lineouts accumulating as the Black and White line was put under the severest pressure. But courageous Sutton and Epsom defence repelled every attack.

Having survived the siege Sutton and Epsom scored on their first visit to their opponent’s 22. The returning Sam Lennie brushed aside defenders in his usual imperious manner and passed to his fellow countryman Adam Bibby to score under the posts. Tom Lennard caressed over the conversion for 42-0. As the game entered the final quarter Sutton and Epsom faced disruption in their ranks. They lost Gareth O’Brien through injury and Adam Bibby through indiscretion. The former did not return but the latter reappeared after the mandatory 10-minute breather.

Finally, Old Reigatian scored a try that their efforts certainly warranted on an afternoon where the scoreboard did not reflect the nature of the contest. The score followed another period of sustained pressure. The ball was relayed to the left and Jonny Bridges manufactured the break and having been tackled stretched to the line to score. He celebrated his try with a finely struck conversion for 7-42. The weather deteriorated as the wind intensified. The Sutton and Epsom pack was now in the ascendancy but the Old Boys demonstrated immense character and were rewarded with a second try. Exploiting a retreating opposition the impressive Number 9 Max Nicol sniped with clinical efficiency to score. Bridges’ kick made it 14-42 with five minutes left on the clock.

Sutton and Epsom had the final word with a magnificent seventh try. Steve Munford passed and looped near halfway to create an overlap. Agu Benson stormed down the touchline and passed to fellow flyer Kyren Ghumra who timed his pass to perfection for the ubiquitous Dan Jones to score triumphantly under the posts. The 100% Man, Tom Lennard, made it 49-14 and brought his personal tally to 14 points. In the dying moments a final Reigatian attack was thwarted by an interception near the Sutton and Epsom line to deny the hosts a consolation.

For the Black and Whites Tom Lennard had a first-rate afternoon, kicking superbly, whether tactically or bisecting the uprights, and marshalling a back division that impressed in defence and attack. The team defended superbly and the seven tries reflected their attacking intent in a strong overall display. Old Reigatian are in transition with the departure of familiar faces but they should take heart from their defence and resilience from the first to the last minute. Their backs were slick with ball in hand and will pose a threat to all teams. Max Nicol at 9 has the quality to get the best out of the backs and their collective passion and hard work in defence will provide a solid platform for improved results.

The league has a Saturday off whilst England play Canada for the World Cup. The competition returns on October 4th when Sutton and Epsom host Old Colfeians at Rugby Lane.

**Sutton and Epsom:** O’Brien, Benson, Scott, Bibby, Ghumra, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Mount, McTaggart (c), Duey, Rea, Jones and Finney. Reps: Boaden, Fitzgerald and Munford.

**Old Reigatian:** Woodford, Coyle, Parker, Allen (c), Bridges, Holder, Nicol, Garrec, Marshall, Collister, Grant, Jones, Blackburn, Brooks C. and Niven. Reps: Lee, Brooks O. and Flynn.

John Croysdill

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

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## Dartford fail to bridge the gap with Epsom rugby

7 October 2025



**Sutton and Epsom RFC 33 Dartfordians 29** Saturday 13th September

Last season’s meetings between these two clubs reflected the Sutton and Epsom campaign. The early encounter in Bexley was one of several tight matches where the Black and Whites prevailed. The Rugby Lane return bore witness to a rampant Sutton and Epsom win in their end of season pomp. However, the hosts were greatly assisted by injuries to the experienced forward duo of prop Stephen Garrett and lock Lewis Potter who collided before the break and went straight to A and E. On the opening Saturday Sutton and Epsom enjoyed a resounding 49-19 success at Bromley RFC. In contrast, Dartfordians endured a chastening 80-14 loss at the hands of a sadistic Sidcup. There was mitigation for this dire defeat as the Kent Club were handicapped by absentees on a golf weekend. At this time of asking the sides shared ten tries and Sutton and Epsom won a hard fought contest 33-29.

Sutton and Epsom had three changes to their squad with the return of the experienced front row duo of Boaden and Mount. In addition, there was the opportunity to see the mercurial talents of the lesser-spotted Archie Fitzgerald on the wing. The shrill blast of Mr Simon Matthews’ whistle initiated proceedings with the visitors playing towards the Cabbage Patch on an afternoon of changeable weather. Dartfordians started brightly before a superb 50/22 from Tom Lennard put Sutton and Epsom on the offensive. The Kent side’s resolute defence turned over the ball on their line and their bold counter was rewarded as moments later they were back in the Sutton half. It took another fabulous 50/22, this time by Adam Bibby, to set up another scoring opportunity. Rob Hegarty duly obliged surging over the line from a 5-metre scrum for the first try of his personally profitable afternoon. Tom Lennard added the conversion for a 7-0 after 17 minutes.

Not downcast the Dartfordians started to dominate possession and territory. A defensive lapse had the hosts defending deep in their 22 before a clearing kick. There followed a stunning break by fly half Gubby Thomas that had Sutton scrambling to cover a chip ahead. After a momentary respite Sutton conceded a penalty only for the away team to kick the ball dead in search for the attacking lineout. However, it was not long before they had another chance to punish a Sutton indiscretion. This time the penalty resulted in a 5-metre lineout. The ball was secured and winger Liam Brencher was stopped on the line before lock Ryan Chandler forced the ball over for the try. The conversion went astray but with the first period drawing to a close the Bexley-based side only trailed 5-7 and the scoreboard now reflected more accurately the balance of play as driving rain descended upon Rugby Lane.

Crucially Sutton and Epsom raised their game scoring two tries deep into time added on. On both occasions it was the forwards who earned the garlands. Second row Kieran Finney was the first scorer touching down under the posts. As the away team discussed the score in a huddle Tom Lennard hit the upright limiting Sutton’s lead to 12-5. Soon after the Rugby Lane crowd were applauding another try. Following a searching kick another lineout ball was secured and Rob Hegarty was celebrating his second score. With the successful conversion the whistle went to end the first half. At 19-5 to Sutton and Epsom the pristine new scoreboard’s score rather flattered the hosts who had struggled to find the fluency of last week. Dartfordians were unfortunate to trail at all let alone by 14 points as they had the better of the half in those important currencies of territory and possession. The visiting forwards had carried powerfully and full back Joe Scott’s incursions into the line had been a constant threat.



Alex Mount announced his return at the start of the second half with a thunderous tackle on Harvey Whyte but the centre managed to complete a precise kick to the Sutton 22. The Dartfordians pack resembled an unstoppable juggernaut as the catch and drive’s relentless advance of 15 metres had a sense of foreboding and inevitability with flanker Kieran Clarke scoring. Sutton’s lead was reduced to 19-10. The wind dropped but the rain increased as conditions became difficult for handling. Quality back row play from Dan Jones won Sutton a penalty that was advanced to the corner. The lineout was dropped but recovered by Mount before his fellow prop Dan Johnson lost control near the line. The reinvigorated Kent players confidently ran the ball from their line and averted the danger.

Soon after, another penalty gave the Rugby Lane team chance to make amends with a lineout in the opposition 22. Finney secured the ball and Howes broke into the open field. The forwards carried up to the line before scrum half Laurence Wise espied a route to the line to score the Black and Whites’ bonus point try. Tom Lennard stepped up to make it 26-10. As the final quarter approached Dartfordians went in search of a way back into the game. The crowd thought that Mr Matthews was raising his hand aloft for a try but inches from the line he spotted an infringement. Undeterred the visitors continued to lay siege and finally they were rewarded as fullback Joe Scott scored by the uprights and Thomas Gubby added the conversion as the margin was now 17-26 with 10 minutes remaining.

With the match back in the balance Sutton and Epsom produced some of their best rugby. The rain stopped, the sun shone and a rainbow covered the ground. For Sutton and Epsom there was a pot of gold at the end of it. They declined a kickable penalty in front of the posts 30 metres out as Tom Lennard drilled the ball towards the corner. A clean catch, the pack on the move and a jubilant Rob Hegarty completed his hat trick. With his fourth successful kick Lennard made it 33-17 with 5 minutes of normal time remaining and one would have thought that the win had been secured.

There was plenty of time to add there having been several stoppages for injuries and the visitors dominated every second of it. After five minutes of time added on Dartfordians scored their bonus point fourth try courtesy of a wonderful solo effort from Harvey Whyte who glided through the defence. Soon after a stunning run from Joe Scott from halfway was thwarted by a timely cover tackle from Kyren Ghumra. The Kent club continued to turn the screw as the field was littered with Sutton players requiring assistance. The visitors scored with the final play as Harry Wright crossed the whitewash to gain their second bonus point. The contest culminated with Thomas Gubby’s conversion to leave the final score 33-29 to the Black and Whites.

In a keenly contested match that could have been claimed by either side the turning point was the two late Sutton and Epsom tries in the first half. The Dartfordians inspired by the athleticism of locks Chandler and Akinsete carried powerfully all game. Joe Scott made considerable yardage from 15 in a back division not afraid to run the ball out of defence. After a traumatic game last weekend every supporter from Kent will take great heart from how strongly their team have bounced back and finished strongly to push Sutton and Epsom to the very end. Once again scrum half Laurence Wise was not only at the heart of Sutton’s play but also scored a try. Rob Hegarty’s return of three tries highlighted once again how clinical he is when he has the ball in the last few metres. Sutton and Epsom were not at their best which was more credit to the visitors than to the detriment of the host’s play but they earned the spoils for another 5 points.

Next Saturday Sutton and Epsom travel to Old Reigatian for a 3pm start against their Surrey rivals who are looking for their first win of the campaign following defeats to Old Colfeians and Sidcup. Dartfordians will host Beckenham to complete the testing trio of the top three for their opening three fixtures this campaign.

Sutton and Epsom

Ghumra, Benson, Scott, Bibby, Fitzgerald, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Howes, Boaden, McTaggart ©, Finney, Rea, Jones and Hegarty. Reps: Mount, Tame and Munford.

Dartfordians

Scott, Kpaka, Soler-Gomez, Whyte, Brencher, Gubby, Chappell, Garrett, Hooban, Chapman, Chandler, Akinsete, Williams, Clarke and Wright. Reps: Banks, Tuffley and Taylor.

Photo credit : Robin Kennedy

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## Surrey County Cricket Club ground in the red

7 October 2025



A Surrey sports ground is set to get a £114,000 hand out to keep it afloat after the site racked up a big budget shortfall last year. But councillors insist residents will now get clearer oversight on how the pavilion is run.

The sports ground – home to Guildford Cricket Club and Surrey County Cricket Club – was hit by major staffing problems in 2024/25, leaving the management company more than £114k in the red.

As the ground is run as a charity and doesn’t have money of its own, Guildford Borough Council, as trustee, has agreed to step in and cover the gap. Without the cash, the charity would be unable to pay its bills and could go under.

Alongside plugging last year’s hole, councillors have also signed off on a three-year business plan. That means topping up the ground’s budget with a further £80,687 in 2025/26 and £20,572 in 2026/27 – though beyond that no more bailouts are expected.

Without this, officers warned, the charity could fail, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill while the council runs the site directly without the specialist know-how of its cricketing partners.

Speaking at the Executive meeting on September 12, Cllr Catherine Houston said it was “encouraging to see this coming into shape,” adding: “It is not the shadowy ‘what’s happening here’ question that we’ve all had. I’m really pleased to see the council is able to keep an eye on what is happening in a much more formal way.”

She praised the new structure, with three directors and dedicated officers in place, saying it gave the council confidence there was now ‘a vision’ for the site.

CEO Pedro Wrobel also backed the move, recognising that the problems stemmed from decisions made before the current Executive was in place.

“This is an issue that has a legacy that starts from prior to this Executive coming to force,” he said. “What you are doing here is getting a firm grip on that [...] and putting it in a position where you are able to improve the value for money the organisation is getting.”

The Pavilion was refurbished in 2018 and reopened the following year, with the idea that hosting events and matches would help cover running costs. The council’s Executive will make a decision on the extra funding in the coming weeks.

The Guildford Pavilion. (Credit: Google Street View)

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## Today’s racing at Epsom racecourse

7 October 2025



This afternoon’s first race is a two-year-olds’ seven-furlong novice (1.37). Each of the seven runners have been seen before, with the best currently presenting as Ollie Sangster’s Red Tsarina, who won a fillies’ race at Chelmsford most recently. She makes her turf debut today, while the best with turf form is St Anton, who placed on debut at Newmarket and will be a big player once again.

*Courtesy of Boyle Sports, who provide all the latest **horse racing odds**.*

Next is a seven-furlong handicap (2.12). Rod Millman’s Cypriot Diaspora seeks a hat-trick, having won her last two starts at Ffos Las, but may not be so well suited to this track, so it may pay to look elsewhere. Dylan Cunha’s Valley Ofthe Kings went well over course and distance last time out and, running off the same mark again, could pick up at least a place, but David O’Meara’s 10-year-old veteran Orbaan looks the most likely candidate given his good track record and recent strain of form.

Race three is a handicap over a mile and a quarter (2.47). Racing Demon should have a good chance after a recent pair of places and the addition of a visor for today. Didaar also should be able to run a good race off the same mark which saw him place last time at Ffos Las, and has a useful five pounds from his rider. Questionable could be the winner, though, now just one pound above his last winning mark.

The Jump Jockeys Derby is next – a handicap over a mile and a half (3.18). Balhambar could have a good chance for Paul O’Brien, now two pounds below his last run on the Flat, in which he finished a respectable third of 11 last October. Returning from a break, he could win this, but will have to watch out for Alan King’s Westerton, who has dipped down to a very workable mark.

Race five is another handicap over a mile and a half, this time for three-year-olds (3.53). Owen Burrows’ Girls Night Out could go well, having come down a couple of pounds in the weights. She is ridden by a five-pound claimer, which helps her case. Drawn next door, though, is Love You Back, who makes more appeal with a good bit of course form from July and a workable mark for Gary and Josh Moore.

The penultimate race is a handicap run over the extended mile (4.25). Another for Gary and Josh Moore, Oj Lifestyle goes well at this track and is on a mark which should lend itself to winning here. Magical Merlin could run for a place under claiming rider Millie Wonnacott, while Beau Jardine could do the same from the innermost draw.

Last of all is another handicap over the same trip, this time for three-year-olds (5.00). Nigel Tinkler’s Amidst The Chaos travels a long way for this and seeks a hat-trick today, while Pink Azalea – who also has a long drive from Malton to Epsom – looks more likely on a mark which may be winnable from under a five-pound claimer.

#### **Epsom selections - Thursday:**

1.37 – St Anton

2.12 – Orbaan

2.47 – Questionable

3.18 – Balhambar

3.53 – Love You Back

4.25 – Oj Lifestyle

5.00 – Pink Azalea

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

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## Should Epsom’s Derby revert to Wednesday?

7 October 2025



Epsom-based trainer: make the Derby “London’s Race” as town’s training revival gathers pace

### **“There’s a genuine feel that Epsom is back on the map”**

Epsom-based trainer George Baker says the town is poised for a racing revival and has urged The Jockey Club to reposition the Derby as “London’s Race”. Baker, who trains from Downs House “a furlong from the Derby start”, told Boyle Sports that Epsom’s facilities are comparable with Lambourn, Middleham and Newmarket and that the missing ingredient is simply more horses in training.

Baker points to the recent investment and new capacity at Downs House and Jim Boyle’s redeveloped South Hatch yard as signs of renewal: “There’s a genuine feel that you can have good horses trained at Epsom again.”

### **Call to engage London — and fill the yards**

With “a huge catchment area over the hill called London,” Baker says his team will be “rolling the dice” at upcoming sales and persuading owners to put horses into training at Epsom. Jockey Club Estates highlights the gallops’ proximity to the capital and the convenience of the Epsom Downs facilities.

### **Attendance slump sharpens focus on Derby’s future**

Baker argues the Derby needs a reset after a tough year for crowds. Official figures for the 2025 Betfred Derby put paid attendance at 22,312 — a modern-era low and down on 2024 — even as TV audiences remained significant.

### **Midweek return mooted**

Baker suggests returning the Classic to a weekday. Historically, the Derby ran on a Wednesday until 1994, before moving to Saturday in 1995, and he believes a midweek slot would give the race clear air and avoid clashes with other major sport.

## “Make it Epsom’s party”

His prescription: “strip it back”, keep the Hill accessible and festive — “come for free... bring a picnic, have a bet” — and aim to make the 250th running in 2029 a city-wide celebration drawing London “up the hill”.

## Deep roots: Churchill and Epsom’s heyday

Epsom’s heritage includes Sir Winston Churchill’s long association with South Hatch trainer Walter Nightingall and periods when hundreds of horses were stabled and trained around the Downs. In the 1950s around 800 horses were said to be in training on the Epsom Downs.

## Who actually holds the Downs’ long lease?

The long lease underpinning Epsom’s training grounds dates to 1969, when a 999-year lease of Walton Downs was granted to the Horserace Betting Levy Board to secure the future of training on the Downs, with management overseen via the Training Grounds Management Board. This is often conflated with The Jockey Club, but the leaseholder is the Levy Board.

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Editor’s note: EET requested comment from The Jockey Club on 3 September 2025. No reply had been received at the time of publication.

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# Sutton and Epsom rugby season opener

7 October 2025



Having enjoyed their first winning season since lifting the Level 5 title in 2018-19 Sutton approached this new campaign with renewed vigour, optimism and purpose.

The opening fixture was a delight for those with a sense of history. It may have been the first league encounter with Bromley, but they were originally the formidable Catford Bridge who first crossed swords with Sutton in 1897. Bromley had gained a thoroughly deserved promotion from Counties 1 Kent by avenging their opening day defeat at Ashford with a final day 22-7 win over the Toucans. It was a notable campaign with only two other losses, against the second strings of Canterbury and Sevenoaks, and a draw at Dover. Indeed, Sevenoaks II lost their last three matches including a crucial 28-30 epic against Bromley. On this opening afternoon of the new season it was Sutton who excelled, running in eight tries in a 49-19 win.

## First half dominance

Agu Benson was the only debutant in the Black and White ranks. Bromley were weakened by a wedding but could still call upon the experience of centurions Hawkins, Scott and the Griffiths brothers. On a sunny but breezy afternoon at the Warman Sports Club the hosts kicked off against the genteel backdrop of Hayes CC 2nd XI v Chislehurst CC 2nd XI.

With the regular pitch unavailable the home team dominated early possession and territory despite playing against the slope. The pattern of the game in the opening ten minutes was excellent continuity by the Kent team being neutered in the Surrey 22 by aggressive and organised defence. Almost the visitors’ first visit into the hosts’ territory resulted in a penalty. Tom Lennard, making his 50th league appearance and deputising in the kicking duties for the absent Bunting, made it 3-0.

The opening try followed a bizarre incident. A long Lennard clearance went straight to an opponent on halfway but its trajectory was in perfect alignment with the sun. The catcher lost sight of the ball which struck his shoulder, ricocheted and rolled into the in-goal area for a Sutton 5-metre scrum. Grateful for the celestial assistance Sutton scored as Gareth O’Brien jinked through the defence. The Rugby Lane men led 8-0 but soon offered Bromley a chance to open their account.

A poor kick out on the full just outside the 22 was followed by a penalty and in the blink of an eye the Warman crowd were anticipating a score from a 5-metre throw. The ball was overthrown and recovered by Dan Jones allowing Tom Lennard to lift the siege. Bromley’s wastefulness was punished as Sam Lennie made a telling break that released Laurence Wise near halfway and the scrum-half did exceptionally well to evade the cover to score. At the end of the first quarter the Black and Whites led 13-0, rather against the run of play.

A spirited Bromley once more put Sutton under the cosh as wave upon wave of attack ran into the adamantine defence deep in the visitors’ 22. The defence was rewarded with a penalty which Wise took quickly and sprinted off down the touchline. The ball was switched to the open side and the ubiquitous Dan Jones carried it deep into the 22. The pack trundled towards the line before releasing the backs as Agu Benson walked in for a debut try in the corner. From touch Tom Lennard impressively added the conversion for a 20-0 advantage.

Moments later the Lennard boot created the next try as a 50/22 was followed by a penalty kicked into the corner. From the ideal attacking platform Sutton scored their bonus point try just after the half hour. Sustained pressure resulted in a 5-metre penalty and Gareth O’Brien scored his second for 25-0.

The scenario did not improve for the home side in the remainder of the first period. Ewan McTaggart, deputising as captain, stole a lineout ball. Sam Lennie made the break and was ably supported by fellow Kiwi Adam Bibby who weaved his way through the defence with a mesmeric 40-metre run to gift Kyren Ghumra his first try. Lennard added the extras for 32-0.

The mighty McTaggart once more seized a loose ball and the visitors, oozing confidence, opted to run out of defence. Agu Benson took it into enemy territory and passed to fellow wing Ghumra to run in a stunning score. The first half ended with a chastening score reading Bromley 0 Sutton & Epsom 37.

## Bromley’s fightback

It was imperative for the hosts to rally and ideally get the opening score of the second period to gain a foothold in a match that had rapidly gone against them. However, Sutton resumed where they had left off and created a perfect scoring opportunity after a minute. The final pass was intercepted with the line begging and Bromley survived.

Buoyed by the reprieve the Kent team were soon on the attack. Securing the ball from a 5-metre line their overwhelming pressure from the pack led to a try from close-range to open their account. Jonathon Griffiths added the conversion as the Warman crowd applauded a much-deserved score.

A determined opposition was frustrating the Black and Whites and ten minutes later they had conceded a second try. Once more the pack powered over with lock Harrison Pullen the beneficiary and Griffiths’ boot making it 14-37. A stunning comeback victory was very unlikely but a bonus point for four tries was certainly achievable at this stage.

To the great credit of the Warman warriors the Black and Whites never regained the fluency and dominance of their first half performance. However, they did add two further tries after butchering another golden opportunity with a wayward pass. The seventh try was of the popular but mundane variety as the excellent



Sutton lineout ushered Sam Lennie over the line for a catch-and-drive score.

The eighth, and final try from the visitors, was far more spectacular. Kyren Ghumra gathered a kick and evaded the close attentions of two tacklers to run the ball back 35 metres to complete an impressive hat trick. Tom Lennard added the simple conversion for 49-14 and his personal century of points for the Rugby Lane team.

Bromley, however, had the final say in this highly entertaining match. Full-back George Hawkins scored following some wonderful attacking play. The conversion came back off the upright and referee Oliver Munn concluded the match with Sutton victors by 49-19.

**Reflections and next fixtures**

Last season Sutton opened their account with a 50-7 triumph over Old Colfeians at Rugby Lane. This was another impressive first outing with eight tries. Captain McTaggart led from the front not only carrying powerfully but disrupting the Bromley lineout. Hooker Lennie once more excelled in a sterling performance in the loose by a mobile Sutton pack. Laurence Wise at scrum-half injected a high tempo into the match creating one try with his tap penalty and scoring another with a marvellous solo run.

Adam Bibby was devastating whenever allowed any space and the wingers benefited with four tries. Debutant Agu Benson impressed whilst veteran Ghumra took the plaudits with a hat trick.

Bromley’s preparations had been hindered by the drought and additionally they were short of key players. Their forwards carried with power but the telling offload was frequently prevented by a stubborn Sutton defence. Their lineout had an afternoon to forget under pressure from the opposition. The back line took every chance to run the ball with Harvey Young prominent. The hosts demonstrated great character to win the second half 19-12 and were competitive to the last.

Next Saturday, 13th September, Sutton host Dartfordians at Rugby Lane at 3pm. The Bexley club opened their account with a home game but endured an horrific afternoon against Sidcup. The Crescent Farm club denied Sutton top spot by annihilating Dartfordians 80-14 in a brutal display. Meanwhile, Bromley will travel to Beckenham in search of their first win of the season.

**Teams**

Sutton & Epsom: O’Brien, Benson, Scott, Bibby, Ghumra, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Lennie, Hilton, McTaggart (c), Finney, Rea, Jones, Hegarty. Replacements: Howes, Tame, Munford.

Bromley: Hawkins, A. Griffiths, Young, Rice, Richardson, J. Griffiths, Friday, Milne, Leach, Withers, Pullen, Walder, Laws, Scott, Brown (c). Replacements: Das Neyes, Rowley, Rushton.

Image: Rugby action from a previous game.

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**Epsom racecourse caught short of loos on family day**

7 October 2025



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