

# BATH RUGBY ACADEMY

## UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP BLOSSOMING

INTERVIEW - ALEX FERGUSON, WORDS - ED PASHLEY

*"The strength of rugby in our City is hugely important to the Club. It has huge benefits in terms of our needs in player development but more broadly, it's important as a rugby City that our teams are doing well and that is what it is beginning to feel like."*

*"We have strong partnerships, good people are working together to keep them moving forwards and we are all hopefully going to reap the benefits in the long run."*

*Andy Rock, Bath Rugby Academy Manager*

**Now in the second year of its partnership, the relationship between Bath Rugby and the University of Bath is continuing to go from strength to strength and is clearly demonstrating its value for both player and coach development.**

At press time, the University of Bath have won their previous four

games including an impressive victory on the road against table-toppers the University of Exeter at the end of last month. The experiences that are being shared have built a strong squad mindset off the field, giving those involved the belief that irrespective of opposition, the team can win against the strongest opponents.

A large contingent of Bath Rugby Academy players have been integral to this journey, none more so than Arthur Cordwell and Will Butt. It's not only on the pitch,

as the duo have been combining their playing duties with studies at the University.

Cordwell is currently studying a Physics degree, which entails 25 hours of contact time a week and additional outside work, whilst Butt is working towards a Sports Science and Exercise degree. Juggling commitments has been made seamless with the relationship between the University and Bath Rugby Academy Manager Andy Rock.

"Time management is a big thing," Cordwell explains.

"It's about communicating with Bath Rugby, Rocky (Andy Rock) and the University about how best to fit my training around my academic commitments and vice versa."

Butt adds: "I think we are helped quite a lot in the way that our weeks are scheduled at the Club. We get up and train before all of the lectures and then gym in the evening, so we have the rest of the day for lectures and other University related work. If there is a clash, there is a degree







of flexibility from both sides to ensure that we find alternative solutions.”

From a playing point of view, both Cordwell and Butt have benefited from not only game time with the University, but also sharing their experiences from the professional environment at Bath Rugby.

Cordwell continues: “This season has been good - it’s great to get consistent game time and to be part of a team with like-minded people who are also studying degrees, so we are all in the same boat in terms of academic commitments.

“I personally had never beaten an Exeter side before, whether that be with the University, the U18s or with the A-League, so it was a massive result that pushed us towards a shot at the title.”

“Being up at Farleigh, it gives you valuable information and knowledge to take back into the University. In areas particularly around the scrum, I take the lead on that and take reviews and previews with the University.

“You pick up a lot of information and that’s not just tactics and techniques, but just the way you talk to people and the way you can bring professionalism into the University environment.”

Butt agrees: “It’s really important to get game time when you can and the university and the BUCS standard is so high, you are being challenged every week, which is really important.

“In pre-season when we were training with the first team every day, it was really good to have people like Jamie Roberts around to talk to and he is always willing to give you help and information. You can ask questions of some of the other young centres as well and they will be willing to give you a bit of time. That’s important. It’s nice to come from a group over here, where we are all learning and then go to the University and feed that learning back.”

Whilst many elite sportsmen and women have not processed what they’re going to do once their careers are over, Cordwell believes that having that long-

term focus is hugely important for him.

“The most obvious point about studying is that it makes you a fairly well-rounded individual. I think you can see the bigger picture in that life isn’t all about rugby and actually there will be a day when won’t have rugby.

“Just thinking about rugby all the time can drive you mad - you think about games, you think about the mistakes you made. It’s good to have something else that keeps you busy and occupied, which is why the relationship is so beneficial for everyone involved.”

The immediate focus for Cordwell and Butt is rounding the University season off on a high, but the aspirations do not stop there.

“Short-term we want to do as well as we can in the play-offs. The target is absolutely going to Twickenham with the University boys, long term our aim is to consistently perform to the best of our ability with Bath Rugby and earn our place in the first team environment.” Cordwell concludes.