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Full story: Page 11

NEWS

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Page 2

NEWS

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Page 3

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Pages 4&5

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SPORT

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Ford becomes a
1st Dan
- Page 63



Cricket

Wycombe ease to
Slough victory
- Page 66-67



RUGBY: Pair to play for Barbarians at Twickenham

Risborough Ladies hit the biggest stage



Emily Ingram is set to star for the Barbarians

RUNNING out at Twickenham is the dream for every grassroots rugby player and two Risborough RFC Ladies stalwarts are getting the chance to do just that next month.

Hannah Gale, 28 and second-row Emily Ingram have been chosen for a NatWest Grassroots Barbarians side to play at HQ on June 9.

They are part of the NatWest Grassroots Barbarians team, coached by Rugby World Cup winner Will Greenwood, who will pit their wits against another team made up of players from grassroots rugby clubs across the UK and Ingram is blown away by the

By Nicholas Tunney

opportunity to play on that famous turf.

"I'm really excited, very nervous and can't really believe it's happening," said Gale.

"I've only ever been to Twickenham to watch. I take every opportunity to go there as a fan and I guess I've done it again.

"It's great to represent the growth of women's rugby. I've played for the club and Coventry University for four years now so I'd like to think I'll bring some experience and spark to the team.

"It's a very exciting opportunity. If it helps continue the momentum behind the women's game, it's cool to be a part of it and worthwhile."

NatWest RugbyForce is a long-standing initiative run by the Official Banking Partner of England Rugby. This year, all clubs that registered for NatWest RugbyForce were entered into a draw for their chance for club players to be selected to join the Grassroots Barbarians.

On June 9, four teams of the most committed players from clubs around the country will go head-to-head, supported by their clubs, rugby legends and current players to celebrate the grassroots game.

Greenwood, who led his squad

through a coaching day in the Midlands last weekend, said: "It really is a tiny fraction of the rugby population who get to run out into the iconic, 80,000 seater stadium.

"Most of them will have seen it on the telly and now they're stepping into the shoes of titans and having a dig themselves. It's a wonderful initiative.

"I remember my first time playing at Twickenham with Lancashire in 1991 and the memory is as strong as any of my Test matches.

"It's critical to support the grassroots game. NatWest RugbyForce recognises this and gives grants to grassroots rugby clubs and it's so important."



Tom Ingram

Ingram happy with showing

Motorsport

WYCOMBE ace Tom Ingram declared himself happy with the progress made by Speedworks across the Thruxton weekend after maintaining his solid start to the new BTCC season.

Fresh from a first win for the new Toyota Corolla at Donington Park, the reigning Independents' champion produced a decent showing on race day at the picturesque Hampshire track.

Three points scoring finishes, highlighted by a fifth in race three, ensured that Ingram maintained his stellar record of scoring points in every race this campaign with the new car making him one of just two drivers to have a 100 per cent scoring record this season.

It leaves him sixth in standings with nine races run and in confident mood about the rounds still to come.

Ingram said: "We knew this was the weekend where we would have the most to learn as Thruxton is a very niche circuit, but we have worked hard to make improvements to the car and I think that showed in race three, which was our strongest race.

"Running higher up the order, we could see the strengths and weaknesses of other cars compared to us and I'm pleased with where we finished. The pace we have shown has been encouraging and we know we just have to find those last little bits, which is the most difficult part of developing a new car.

"This is actually one of the most important rounds of the season because of the fact we return here last in the year and we now have an idea of who will be quick when we come back in August. We know where we stand and what we have to work on with the Corolla."

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