

Badgers unite behind Pitbulls in battle to save city's ice rink



● Players from the Bristol Badgers baseball team pose with Richie Hargreaves, centre, to show their support for the Bristol Needs a Rink campaign. The Badgers players are, left to right, Tom Hollies, Dan Looney, Luke Looney and Peter Pfenig
 Photograph: Graham Goodman

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LOCAL baseball team Bristol Badgers have lent their support to the Pitbulls' campaign to keep the Frogmore Street ice rink open.

The owners of the 46-year-old ice rink last month revealed plans to close the venue in October to make way for the building of student accommodation.

The rink has been home to the Pitbulls since 2009 after businessman and current head coach Richie Hargreaves organised the return of professional ice hockey to Bristol following a 16-year absence.

Pitbulls' future beyond the end of this season remains uncertain, although a campaign to persuade rink operator John Nike and owners Unite to rethink their plan is already under way.

The Badgers joined the growing band of support behind that campaign by making a trip to Frogmore Street on Saturday night to

watch the Pitbulls defeat Bracknell Hornets 7-1.

"I grew up skating," said Badgers co-manager Dan Looney, who hails from Boston. "It is hard to believe Bristol will lose the heritage associated with the only ice rink within 40 miles.

"The popularity of the venue was highlighted when we left the game. There was a queue of people waiting to skate. The demand is quite obviously there so it is a shame that the planners can't find a solution that would suit everybody.

"Baseball offers an alternative sport for kids and I see ice hockey and figure skating in a similar category. We want to encourage participation in our sport and others.

"With increasing rates of adverse health issues, the planners obviously know the benefits of providing adequate facilities.

"I would hope a 45-year-old ice rink could be replaced with an efficient regulation-size structure, and you can still build student flats above and around it."

Pitbulls claimed what was their first victory of the new year to get their National League One play-off bid back on track.

Experienced Lithuanian international Egidijus Bauba, pictured, scored on his return to action following a lengthy spell out with a dislocated shoulder. Steven Fisher and Steve Osman both scored two goals, with Shannon Taylor and Mike Smith completing the victory.

Hargreaves' side ensured back-to-back victories by winning 5-2 at Slough Jets on Sunday evening.

Fisher grabbed another brace, Osman and Bauba were also on the scoresheet again, while Jamie

Newton also weighed in with a goal to move the Pitbulls up to sixth place in National League One.

The Badgers, meanwhile, are scheduled to begin training next month ahead of the new campaign.

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when they will be attempting to defend the AAA South League title they claimed for the first time last season.

The club run two senior teams and are always on the lookout for new recruits. For more information, go to the website: www.bristolbaseball.co.uk.

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