



Touchline

PLUS

Kenna Ngoma

Summer Transfers

Pre-Season Trips

Life Skills



HEY JUDE!

Birmingham City's Jude Bellingham talks football, charity and education

GOAL OF THE SEASON

Almost 30,000 votes were cast across the nine LFE Goal of the Month competitions during the 2018-19 season, with a further 1,900 entering a Twitter poll to decide the 'LFE pick' for best loser. The 10 winners then qualified for Goal of the Season, with nearly 10,000 votes being recorded.

DEC: Lewis Farmer
Sheffield Wednesday

1ST

MAR: Dan Bradshaw
Forest Green Rovers

2ND

APR: Adam O'Reilly
Preston North End

3RD

OCT: Callum King-Harmes
Bolton Wanderers

4TH

SEP: Bradley Webb
Bristol City

5TH

NOV: Owen James
Oxford United

6TH

LFE Pick: Jack Baxter
Preston North End

7TH

JAN: Adam O'Reilly
Preston North End

8TH

FEB: Jenson Wright
Milton Keynes Dons

9TH

AUG: Luca Connell
Bolton Wanderers

10TH

View all the contenders at
youtube.com/LFEOnlineTV

LFE Apprentice of the Year Awards



Sky Bet Championship and Overall Award
Max Bird
Derby County



Sky Bet League One
Daniel Adshead
Rochdale AFC
now Norwich City



Sky Bet League Two
Arthur Iontton
Stevenage FC

ACADEMY LEAGUES

Winners 2018-19

North East Division
Grimsby Town

North West Division
Wigan Athletic

South East Division
Northampton Town

South West Division
Oxford United

Southern Merit League One
Southend United

Southern Merit League Two
Forest Green Rovers &
Plymouth Argyle (Shared)

EFL Youth Alliance Cup
Wigan Athletic

U18 Professional Development League North
Sheffield Wednesday

U18 Professional Development League South
Cardiff City

U18 Professional Development League National Play-Offs
Sheffield Wednesday

U18 Premier League North
Derby County

U18 Premier League South
Arsenal

U18 Premier League National Play-Offs
Derby County

U18 Premier League Cup
Manchester City

OCT 2018

- Luke Rowe
Coventry City
- Matt O'Riley
Fulham
- Hector Kyprianou
Leyton Orient
- Max Culverwell
Notts County
- Frazer Garner
Peterborough United
- Tyrone Lewthwaite
Rotherham United
- Isaac Rice
Sheffield Wednesday
- Arthur Iontton
Stevenage
- Sonny Haynes
Swindon Town
- Nick Long
Tranmere Rovers
- Gabriel Rogers
Yeovil Town

DEC 2018

- Reuben Collins
AFC Wimbledon
- Ben Forrest
Birmingham City
- Joe Adams
Bury
- Joe Neal
Cambridge United
- Jared Wild
Chesterfield
- Jordan Adebayo-Smith
Lincoln City
- Tyla Dickinson
QPR
- Daniel Adshead
Rochdale
- Tom Pugh
Scunthorpe United
- Marcus Dewhurst
Sheffield United
- Daniel Ojo
Yeovil Town

THE 11

Forty-eight Apprentices were recognised for their outstanding efforts on and off the pitch last season by being named in LFE's 'The 11'

FEB 2019

- Dwight Pascal
Barnet
- Luca Connell
Bolton Wanderers
- Ethan Vale
Burton Albion
- Ben Worman
Cambridge United
- Mattie Pollock
Grimsby Town
- Connor Tomlinson
Luton Town
- Owen James
Oxford United
- Jack Gurney
Peterborough United
- Jack Baxter
Preston North End
- Angelo Cappello
Sheffield United
- Charlie Jolley
Wigan Athletic

JUN 2019

- Zach Jeacock
Birmingham City
- Tom Dickens
Cambridge United
- Noah Chilvers
Colchester United
- Rio Adebisi
Crewe Alexandra
- Jason Knight
Derby County
- Charlie Cresswell
Leeds United
- George Alexander
Millwall
- Scott Pollock
Northampton Town
- Arvin Appiah
Nottingham Forest
- Ryan Campbell-Gordon
Port Vale
- Scott Smith
Wigan Athletic

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Apprenticeships

ACADEMY LEAGUES

Round-Up



NORTH EAST DIVISION

The goals of Jack Watson and Junior Smith have guided Doncaster Rovers to the top of the North East division, with both players netting seven goals each for Paul Stancliffe's side.

Donny are two points ahead of Mansfield Town after the Stags recorded a 1-0 victory against the leaders in September thanks to Jamie Chisholm's strike, although they have played a game more.

Scunthorpe United are hot on their heels in third position having come from behind to beat Mansfield 2-1 in their most recent fixture, leaving them four points off the top with two games in hand.

Elsewhere, Rotherham United remain the only unbeaten team in the region after avoiding defeat in all seven of their matches so far, while reigning champions Grimsby Town have suffered a slump as they currently languish bottom of the table.

NORTH WEST DIVISION

Wigan Athletic's step up to Category 2 level has left the North West section wide open, with Preston North End, Fleetwood Town and Salford City setting the pace early on.

Fleetwood have been particularly impressive as they hold the only 100 per cent record across all four EFL Youth Alliance leagues, conceding just once in the process. However, despite overcoming North End (4-0) and Youth Alliance newcomers Salford (3-0), they sit one point adrift of the Lilywhites having played three games less.

Preston have responded well from that convincing defeat with seven points from a possible nine, although they did also lose 3-2 to fellow contenders Salford in August.

The Ammies have been erratic so far, with six wins and three defeats, but they are the joint top scorers with 28 after opening up with a 7-1 win against Oldham Athletic, as well as registering 5-2 and 6-0 triumphs over Port Vale and Blackpool, respectively.

SOUTH EAST DIVISION

Northampton Town wrapped up the South East title before Christmas last year and they are the team to beat once again, although Peterborough United are in close contention just two points behind.

The Cobblers have been sensational in front of goal, scoring 52 times in 13 matches, having struck eight against Milton Keynes Dons and Southend United, seven against Leyton Orient and five on three separate occasions.

Posh were 2-0 victors at the end of August through a double from Flynn Clarke, but relinquished their control at the summit of the South East after suffering a 5-1 loss in the reverse fixture, which brought an eight-game unbeaten streak to an end.

Meanwhile, third-placed AFC Wimbledon produced the most dominant display of the campaign with an incredible 10-0 demolition of Orient. Ayoub Assal and Troy Chiabi both netted twice, with Dylan Adjei-Hersey, David Fisher, Kwaku Frimpong, Isaac Olaniyan, Elliott Bolton and Under-16 Quaine Bartley also getting on the scoresheet.

SOUTH WEST DIVISION

There is a familiar feel to the South West division, with AFC Bournemouth and Oxford United once again occupying the top two positions.

Back in September, goals from Fabio Lopes and Leon Chambers-Parillon put The U's in the ascendancy with a 2-1 victory, but a recent defeat to Newport County allowed Bournemouth to lead the way on goal difference.

Portsmouth had previously been in command, led by prolific striker Alfie Stanley, who has scored 15 goals in 12 games this term, including two in a 6-5 win against Exeter City and a hat-trick against Newport (6-3).

But Pompey's start of nine matches undefeated stalled in October with a 3-2 reversal against Oxford before they then suffered a second successive loss at Exeter – another high-scoring encounter between the two teams that finished 5-3 – leaving them one point off the pace with a game in hand on the leaders.

U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE NORTH

Competing in the Professional Development League for the first time, Wigan Athletic have taken the division by storm, creating a seven-point gap to nearest challengers Nottingham Forest.

The Latics, who won a Youth Alliance league and cup double last season, are the top scorers in the Northern section with 41 goals in 13 matches – with Scotland youth international Kyle Joseph already reaching double figures on 10 – and have put together a run of seven wins on the trot.

Forest are lurking in a distant second and were heavily beaten in their meeting with the leaders at the start of October as prolific first-year apprentice Sean McGurk bagged a brace in a 4-1 Wigan victory.

Elsewhere, Sheffield United and Barnsley are nine points adrift, but do have games in hand to cut the deficit. Defending National Play-Off champions Sheffield Wednesday have struggled to get up to speed so far, already losing once more (four) than they did in the entire 2018-19 campaign to leave them down in sixth.

U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE SOUTH

Millwall have emerged as the form team in the South in recent weeks after three wins in a row lifted them into second place, one point adrift of leaders Watford, who have played a game more.

As a result of a 6-2 victory over Bristol City in their most recent fixture, the young Lions now boast the best attacking output in the division, with Abdul Abdulmalik and Sean O'Brien leading the way on seven goals apiece.

Out of the 21 PDL clubs, Charlton Athletic are the only team to have maintained an unbeaten start, with 23 points from 11 matches putting them a win away from top spot.

Ipswich Town and Bristol City are also in the mix, with just five points separating the top five. Meanwhile, Colchester United's Jake Hutchinson has enjoyed a profitable run in front of goal, notching 10 times to lead the scoring charts among LFE apprentices in the South.

U18 PREMIER LEAGUE NORTH

Defending national champions Derby County are going strong in the UEFA Youth League, but have slipped behind Manchester City, Liverpool, Everton and West Bromwich Albion in the Northern section this season.

The Rams youngsters lost their first three matches in August, but have recovered admirably with 15 points from a possible 18, including a tremendous 5-1 victory over Manchester United, with Archie Brown and Bartosz Cybulski both doubling up.

Middlesbrough are another team on an upward trajectory having collected five points from their last three games, with the highlight being a 4-3 Tees-Wear Derby triumph over Sunderland.

That result moved Boro above Blackburn Rovers, who have dropped to tenth and are without a win since becoming the first team this season to beat leaders Manchester City, when Chanka Zimba scored twice in a 2-1 victory in September.

U18 PREMIER LEAGUE SOUTH

While a leading trio of Fulham, Chelsea and Brighton & Hove Albion remain unbeaten, Aston Villa are steadily moving along in seventh position.

The Villains were only narrowly edged out by Chelsea (0-1) and Brighton (1-2), while they produced a magnificent display to see off sixth-placed Tottenham Hotspur 4-2 in October.

At the bottom of the table, Norwich City have yet to claim their first three points of the campaign despite starting with two positive draws against Leicester City (1-1) and pacesetters Fulham – where they overturned a two-goal deficit before being pegged back to 3-3 in stoppage-time.

The Canaries did, however, end a run of seven straight defeats with a late equaliser of their own during another 3-3 stalemate with Swansea City.

JUDE BELLINGHAM



At just 16 years of age, Jude Bellingham has already etched his name into the Birmingham City history books.

The beginning of August saw the rising star become the club's youngest ever player when making his senior bow in the Carabao Cup against Portsmouth, breaking a record that had previously been held for 49 years by Blues legend Trevor Francis.

By the end of the month, he added another to his tally after scoring the winner on his home debut against Stoke City to claim the youngest goal scorer crown.

However, Bellingham is determined to leave a lasting legacy that stretches beyond football, through his involvement with charity organisation The Mustard Seed Project.

"It's something I'm really passionate about," he told LFE. "Some friends of the family have set up a charity that helps students in Kenya. It's not a very wealthy country and a lot of people go into a school without good facilities.

"It's important to me to help that kind of community when I can. I'm trying to raise money and awareness through social media, which I think is something that I'm obliged to do being in the position that I am.

"I'm really eager to get out there at some point as well to see what I can do directly to help. I want to be remembered, not just for football but for my actions off the pitch. The only way I can do that is by carrying on doing what I've started to set in motion."

For added context, Bellingham is not even old enough to feature in EA Sports' FIFA 20. And yet, using his following of almost 40,000 people across Twitter and Instagram, as well as his connection with Adidas, the highly-rated midfielder is well on his way to reinvigorating the disadvantaged area.

"The ultimate aim is to make as much positive impact as I can," he added. "The project currently is to build as many classrooms as possible and I think as I grow, the charity will grow as well.

"The more attention I get from doing good things on the pitch, hopefully that will crossover to the charity, so it's definitely at the back of my mind as a driving factor for me to keep working hard and performing well so that the charity can benefit too. ▶



“I UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND HOW MUCH MY PARENTS WANT ME TO HAVE IT NAILED ON. I’M VERY CONCENTRATED WHEN IT COMES TO THE CLASSES AND GETTING ALL MY WORK DONE.”

“The fundraiser is still not at the target that I’d like to hit, but we recently sent some kit out for the football team. I saw a picture and it gave me a great feeling seeing how happy they were and knowing how much it will help them going forward.

“From an off the pitch point of view, it’s one of the best things I think I can do, so I’m just really excited to continue with that work.”

Bellingham’s commitment to developing himself away from football has also extended into his education, with the teenage prospect making it a priority to quickly settle on a formula to incorporate his studies into his busy timetable.

“I understand the importance of education and how much my parents want me to have it nailed on,” he said. “I’m very concentrated when it comes to the classes and getting all my work done.

“Mark Sinclair – Head of Education & Welfare at the club – has been amazing with me in creating a schedule, making sure everything is planned perfectly so that I can do my BTEC with the rest of the boys.

“I train more or less every day and then on a Tuesday and Thursday after training I join the boys for a two-and-a-half-hour session, as well as doing part of my sociology A-level for two hours afterwards.

“It keeps me occupied on those days, so I’m not just sat at home playing video games. I get to participate in another activity that keeps my mind fresh and keeps me thinking about new things that are also relevant to football.”

The England youth international believes that his academic work is not just helping him prepare for the future, but also providing an opportunity to develop transferable skills that improve him as a player.

Bellingham continued: “It can give you a lot of qualities that you can take into a professional environment. I’ve learned from the first-team games that I’ve played that you must be switched on at all times and education develops my concentration.

“College is also a great chance for me to see the rest of the boys as I’m not in the changing room with them anymore. Most of the lads are older than me, but I’d like to think I’m setting a good example and being a good role model by balancing football and education.

“That gives me good leadership skills as I’m someone that people look at in the classroom to stay focused and on with the task and I can carry that onto the pitch. On quite a few occasions I’ve been given the honour to captain England, so all this stuff is helping me gain valuable skills.

“Everyone at my age should enjoy learning. Football is enjoyable but it only covers a short amount of your time and there are many hours to fill, so it’s important to make the most of that time and make sure you keep developing your brain.”

Another aspect to Bellingham’s academic schedule is LFE’s Life Skills programme, which has so far seen the Birmingham apprentices attend sexual and mental health workshops.

He said: “They’re a good alternative to normal college because the sessions teach us more than just what’s on the curriculum. They give us knowledge about the real world and life skills that we can obtain.

“It’s great that we’re exposed to these topics at a young age. You see the number of males that have chosen to go down the path of suicide and we are in a pressurised environment, so to be educated about that at an early age is great.

“It increases awareness, not just for ourselves but also when looking out for others around us. You never know what people are truly feeling but it’s good to receive that information about spotting signs and how to help.”

Despite being in the early stages of his first year as an apprentice, Bellingham is already eyeing more memorable performances in his pursuit to cement a regular position in Pep Clotet’s starting line-up.

“Making my debut and then scoring to become the youngest player and scorer was a real honour because of who set the record,” Bellingham said. “I’m determined not to let the fans down and prove that I’m ready.

“Many other boys I play with for England don’t get many opportunities to play for their clubs and possibly won’t for another few years, so I’m really grateful that the manager and the staff have given me the chance to play at what I think is a huge club.

“I just want to keep improving, try to break as many records as possible and be as successful as I can for Birmingham City. I want to keep maturing as a person and try to help people wherever possible, whether that’s with the charity or just being a mentor to others closer to home.”

His breakout start to the campaign has not gone unnoticed by stars of other industries, too, with grime artist Jaykae being particularly influential in offering guidance to the youngster.

“It’s a bit surreal,” he admitted. “They don’t have to take the time to pay me any attention but the fact that they’ve decided to say some nice things is amazing, so I’m really grateful for that.

“You could say that they’re under similar pressure to what I am, in terms of having to be good at what they do, so being able to get advice from them is key. I use that just as much as what I might use information from my coach or my parents.

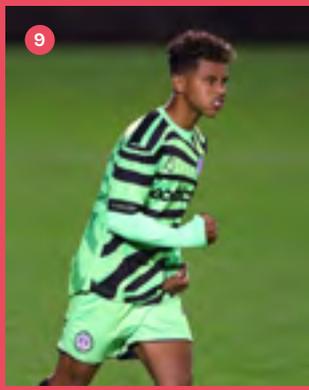
“Jaykae is someone that I’ve exchanged messages with a lot and is someone that’s really supportive. He’s a big Blues fan and it’s really good speaking to him and seeing how much it means to him.

“I get quite a few messages from fans as well, saying that I’m a role model. It’s still quite hard to believe for me because I have my own role models that are in the first team that I’m now playing with. To be called one for other people is obviously an honour and hopefully I can keep inspiring others.” ■



[Click here to donate to Jude’s cause](#)

DEBUTANTS



A round-up of talented apprentices who recently made their senior debuts

Cameron Archer Aston Villa



1 Deemed one of Aston Villa's brightest prospects, Cameron Archer kicked off the second year of his apprenticeship in style with a first-team debut in the Carabao Cup against Crewe Alexandra in August.

The promising striker was a late substitute in their 6-1 victory, while he has also appeared in the Leasing.com Trophy twice for the club's Under-21 team, scoring in a 2-1 loss at Tranmere Rovers.

Connor Morris & Jorge Sikora Bradford City



2 3 Two Bradford City youngsters were handed their first taste of first-team football in the Leasing.com Trophy, with Connor Morris and Jorge Sikora both coming off the bench against Manchester City Under-21s.

Sikora was a 66th-minute substitute and first-year apprentice Morris was introduced with a quarter of an hour remaining as the Bantams slipped to a 2-1 defeat at Valley Parade.

Jarrad Branthwaite Carlisle United



4 Seventeen-year-old Jarrad Branthwaite penned his first professional contract as a first-year apprentice in February and made his senior bow seven months later in the Leasing.com Trophy against Wolverhampton Wanderers Under-21s.

A Sky Bet League Two debut followed in October, with former Carlisle United manager Steven Pressley describing his performance as "outstanding", while the commanding defender was then selected as man-of-the-match in his second league start against Northampton Town.

Will Bapaga Coventry City



5 First-year apprentice Will Bapaga was thrust straight into competitive action with a three-minute cameo on the opening day of the season at Bolton Wanderers in Sky Bet League One.

Bapaga earned another brief outing against Walsall in the Leasing.com Trophy in September before making his full debut in the same competition for a goalless draw at Forest Green Rovers.

Louie Sibley Derby County



6 England Under-19 international Louie Sibley was part of Derby County's Under-18 Premier League National title-winning team last year and has established himself as a key member of the Under-23s this term.

Having impressed Rams boss Philip Cocu during pre-season, the second-year midfielder was awarded his professional debut in a 1-0 Carabao Cup win at Scunthorpe United before being handed his first start in the Second Round at arch-rivals Nottingham Forest.

Shayden Morris & Jay Matete Fleetwood Town



7 8 Fleetwood Town named a young bench against Liverpool Under-21s in the Leasing.com Trophy that included four current apprentices, with Shayden Morris and Jay Matete coming on in the second half for their senior debuts.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland youth international Barry Baggley featured for the full 90 minutes on his first start, having already amassed three substitute appearances towards the end of last season.

Vaughn Covil, Dan Jones & Isaiah Jones Forest Green Rovers



9 10 11 Forest Green Rovers Under-18 trio Vaughn Covil, Dan Jones and Isaiah Jones have all been drafted into the first-team squad to play in the Leasing.com Trophy this season.

The Jones double act were both introduced at the same time, coming on as 68th-minute substitutes during a 3-2 victory over Southampton Under-21s, with Dan heavily involved in the build-up to a late winner.

Covil was on the bench in the Carabao Cup against Charlton Athletic in August, but the 16-year-old had to wait until October to make his professional debut against Coventry City, where he lasted the full 90 minutes and then scored a penalty in an 8-7 shootout victory.

Jimmy Knowles Mansfield Town



12 Striker Jimmy Knowles has enjoyed a tremendous start to his second year as an apprentice having gained his first senior involvement in August during a 0-0 stalemate with Stevenage in Sky Bet League Two.

The 17-year-old truly forced his way into the spotlight in October after finding the net in back-to-back matches. Knowles opened the scoring in a Leasing.com Trophy clash with Crewe Alexandra and then bagged his first EFL strike four days later from the penalty spot in a 6-1 rout of Oldham Athletic.

DEBUTANTS

Alex Mighten

Nottingham Forest



13 Fresh from scoring a hat-trick for England Under-18s against Australia at the start of September, Alex Mighten took to the pitch for Nottingham Forest in a competitive match for the first time during their Carabao Cup Third Round fixture with Arsenal.

Having been an unused substitute in the first round against Fleetwood Town, the prolific forward was introduced off the bench for the final 12 minutes at the Emirates Stadium.

Fabio Sole

Oxford United



14 Midfielder Fabio Sole joined the apprenticeship this season after swapping Reading for Oxford United and quickly forced his way into the first-team reckoning with a brief display against Portsmouth in the Leasing.com Trophy.

With the game finishing 2-2, Sole stepped up to take the first penalty in the shootout after the final whistle, which he calmly slotted home to cap off a memorable night for the 18-year-old.

Jude Boyd & Rubin Wilson

Plymouth Argyle



15 16 Plymouth Argyle manager Ryan Lowe has used the Leasing.com Trophy to provide first-team experience to two second-year apprentices, with Jude Boyd featuring against Bristol Rovers and Rubin Wilson getting a runout at Swindon Town.

Midfielder Boyd was tipped to have a "bright future ahead of him" by the Pilgrims boss after his short cameo, while Wilson celebrated his 18th birthday with a 12-minute outing during a 3-0 victory.

Harrison Burrows & Ricky-Jade Jones

Peterborough United



17 18 Harrison Burrows made a flying start to the season after playing in three competitions within a month. The 17-year-old, who penned a professional deal in January, first appeared in a Carabao Cup defeat at Oxford United before making his Sky Bet League One debut away to Milton Keynes Dons.

Another EFL outing came against Sunderland a week later, while he then earned a first senior start at Northampton Town in the Leasing.com Trophy at the start of September, where he gained 78 minutes under his belt in a 2-0 win.

Toby Phillips

Rochdale



19 Rochdale's impressive recent record of bringing through Academy players into the first-team continued with a debut for Toby Phillips, who played the full 90 minutes in the Leasing.com Trophy against Manchester City Under-21s.

The teenage midfielder started alongside three graduates, while Under-16 player Peter Thomas came off the bench to become the club's youngest ever debutant. Elsewhere, first-year apprentice Luke Matheson has been a revelation, with his appearance tally already reaching double figures to add to his seven games before even starting the apprenticeship last season.

Joey Dawson

Scunthorpe United



20 At the age of just 16 years and 75 days, Joey Dawson entered Scunthorpe United's record books as the youngest player to appear in a professional match in the club's history.

The first-year apprentice, who is only the sixth 16-year-old to represent the Iron at senior level, was called into action off the bench in the 74th minute of a 1-0 defeat to Derby County.

Luis Fernandez & Jack Smith

Stevenage



21 22 Stevenage starlets Luis Fernandez and Jack Smith were both rewarded with professional contracts at the end of August after making their first-team debuts earlier in the month.

Fernandez was first to feature, starting in the Carabao Cup against Southend United before making his Sky Bet League Two bow just days later as a seventh-minute substitute, helping the Boro keep a clean sheet at Leyton Orient.

His full EFL debut coincided with a first showing for Smith, who was an 81st-minute replacement against Bradford City, while both were in the starting line-up to face Milton Keynes Dons in the Leasing.com Trophy at the start of September.

Elsewhere, first-year apprentice Ricky-Jade Jones made an impression on manager Darren Ferguson, who described him as "the quickest player I've ever managed" after showing glimpses of his ability as a late substitute in a Leasing.com Trophy win against Arsenal Under-21s.



DEBUTANTS

Bolton Wanderers



The early season turbulence at Bolton Wanderers allowed several apprentices to experience first-team football for the Sky Bet League One club.

Wanderers fielded their youngest ever team in August as they held Coventry City to a goalless draw, with four Under-18s players in the starting line-up and six more on the bench.

In total, nine members of the Academy team have featured this term. **Callum King-Harmes** and **Joe White** were the first to make their debuts when they came off the bench on the opening day of the season at Wycombe Wanderers.

Over the next month, they were joined by **Matthew Alexander**, **De'Marlio Brown-Sterling**, **Sonny Graham** and **Adam Senior**, as well as first-year apprentices **Jay Fitzmartin**, **Finlay Hurford-Lockett** and **Regan Riley**.

While Fitzmartin has only appeared in the Leasing.com Trophy so far, the other eight youngsters have all been given EFL experience, with midfielder Graham currently leading the haul of appearances.



Newport County



Newport County have used the Leasing.com Trophy to provide valuable minutes for their promising youngsters, with seven of their Academy products making contributions on the pitch.

Elis Watts and **Dom Jefferies** were involved for the full 90 minutes of their group stage opener against West Ham United Under-21s, while **Ioan Evans** and first-year apprentice **Ryan Hillier** were introduced off the bench.

Hillier, who came on after just 22 minutes, even managed to grab a debut goal to put County 4-1 up at half-time, although they eventually lost the game 5-4.

Ryan George joined the quartet against Exeter City in October, while **Callum Jones** and first-year apprentice **Joe Woodiwiss** featured in the final group game win at Cheltenham Town, which ended in a remarkable 7-4 scoreline.



ALL BETS ARE OFF

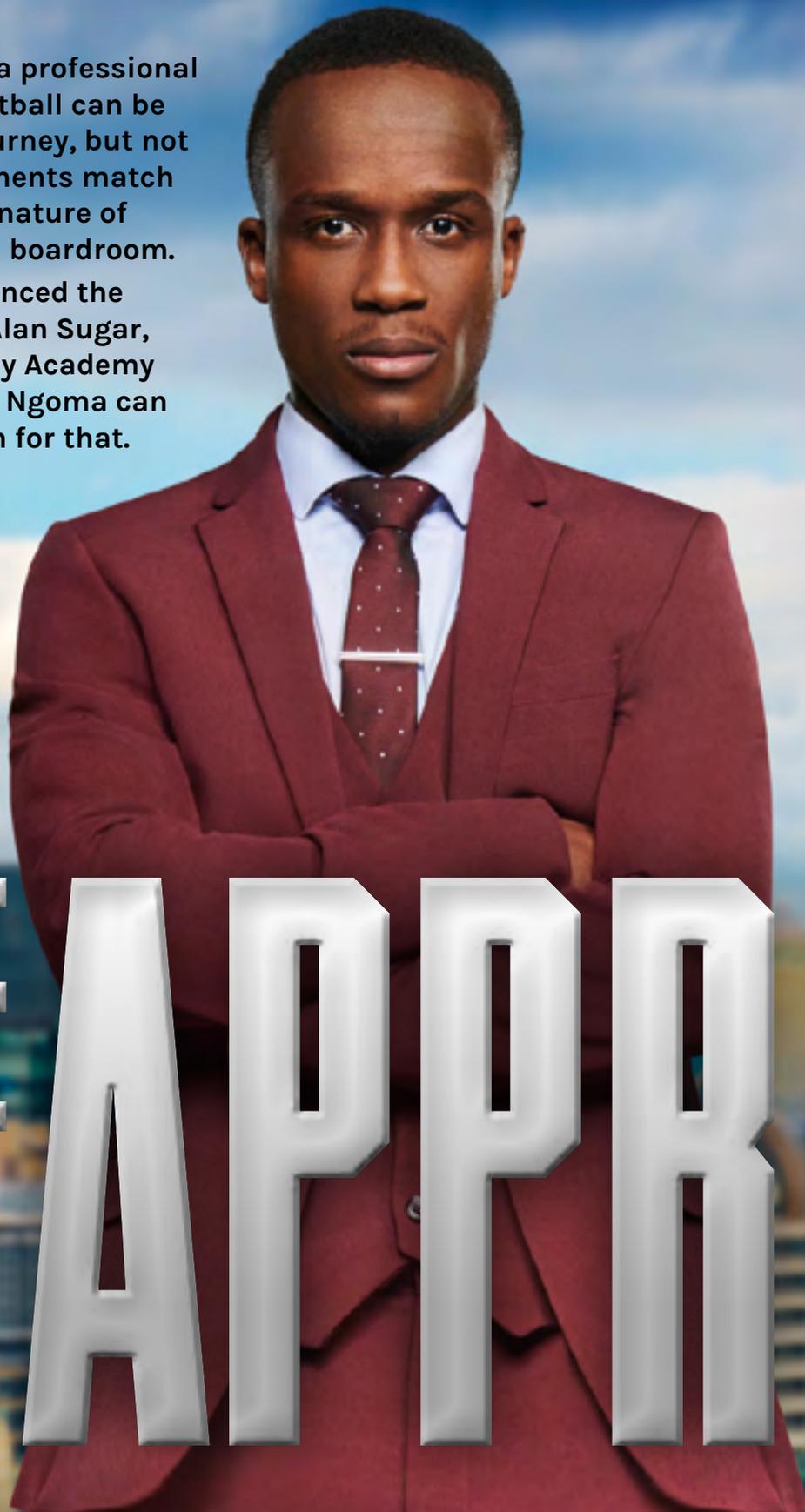
You are not allowed to place **ANY** bet on **ANY** football, **ANYWHERE** in the world.

This covers any match or competition, wherever it is played in the world. It means you cannot bet on scores or results, or any other event that takes place in any match or competition. It also means you cannot bet on any other football matter, worldwide – for example, who the next manager of a club will be.

So don't fall foul of the rules and remember – you cannot place **ANY** bet on **ANY** football, **ANYWHERE**.

To view The FA's Rules and Regulations, visit TheFA.com

The pursuit of a professional contract in football can be a relentless journey, but not many environments match the cut-throat nature of The Apprentice boardroom. Having experienced the wrath of Lord Alan Sugar, former Barnsley Academy product Kenna Ngoma can certainly vouch for that.



Since being released by the Tykes in 2013, the 24-year-old has dedicated himself to achieving a career in business, earning a Business Administration and Management degree at the University of Gloucestershire and gaining valuable experience in a range of areas within the industry.

And this year, with the view to building the profile of his emerging ice cream company Beaumonde Desserts, Ngoma took on the challenge of the BBC One reality show in the hope of receiving the £250,000 investment from billionaire business magnate Sugar.

"I always said when I watched the first show in 2005, 'I'm sure I could get on that, I just need a good idea,'" he told LFE. "I've now worked in different industries and different roles and I'd seen pretty much every episode of The Apprentice, so there wasn't much that I felt could throw me off where I'd feel uncomfortable.

"As soon as we arrived in the board room to start the show, we found out we were going to South Africa. We went straight into the task of selling a safari experience. We were given a fact sheet of animals and were given around an hour to memorise everything and present it the next day. It was a whirlwind, but such a great experience."

Despite being a popular contestant to viewers, Ngoma unfortunately only lasted two weeks in the process before being 'fired' after his task as Project Manager – making and selling ice lollies – ended in defeat following plenty of in-fighting between members of the team.

"I think the disappointing thing is that it's mostly reality TV – it doesn't replicate real life," he said. "If you create an ice lolly, you'd create the mixture and freeze it multiple times, so you'd see it in its final form and we weren't able to do that, which ultimately let us down on the task.

"When Lord Sugar speaks to you, it's so tense. You need to try your best to compose yourself and have a clear idea of your rebuttals and comebacks. Anything can come up and you must be prepared for it.

"I said I tried to create a formation where I told people where to play, but certain individuals didn't apply themselves properly. There's only so much you can do. I still think I got stitched up, but I guess you need to find a way to adapt. Hindsight's a beautiful thing but I don't think I'd change much.

"I spoke to Claude (Littner) off camera and he said it was some of the worst in-house squabbling he'd seen in a long while. He said I did well, but I was always going to struggle with the bickering, so at least he did notice that." ▶

THE APPRENTICE

The disappointment of an early exit has not dampened Ngoma's spirits, however, with plans ramping up to fully establish his business, which specialises in creating vegan, alcohol-infused ice cream.

"I used to think you could launch a product in six or seven weeks, but it's almost impossible," he continued. "Especially in food and drink, there are so many regulations.

"You need certain certifications, certain people need to vet your company or product, you need the labels to be correct, etc. It's such a long process – you get to a certain point and then have to wait. We're just finalising manufacturers at the moment.

"I enjoy it because, even now, I'm always learning. You think you know everything about your product and then something else crops up that is new. You have to put so many different hats on and that's what was so good about my University degree because I went through all those different aspects of business and then had to apply it in a different context.

"Modules included the likes of entrepreneurship, financial decision making, marketing, strategic management and leadership, so it provided a great understanding of business and it's up to you which area you ultimately want to specialise in."

Ngoma credits his commitment to education during the apprenticeship at Barnsley as a key factor in helping him already build up a strong CV.

Having secured the required grades to attain a University scholarship, he graduated within two years before working in several roles across multiple companies, such as Sustainable Procurement Advisor, Project Analyst and

various Project Management and Business Analyst roles at a loans, mortgages and finance company.

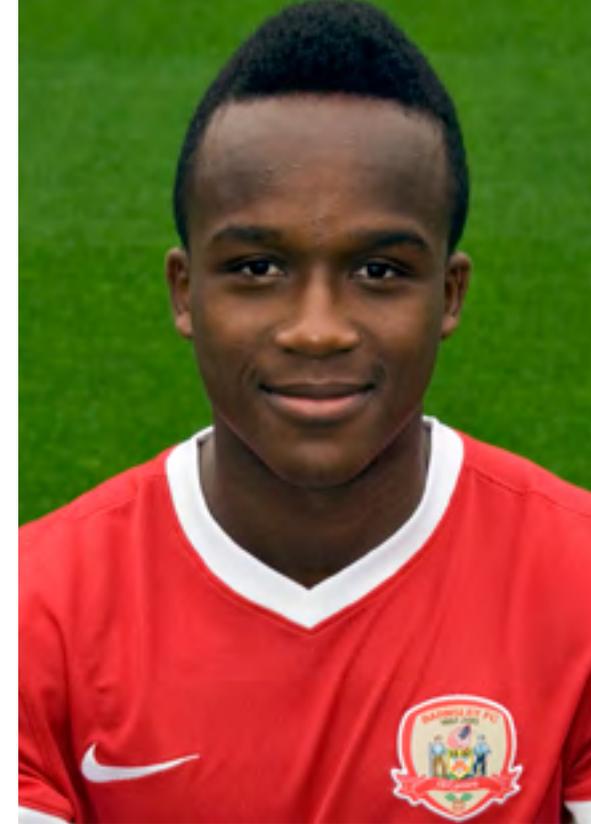
He said: "Since I was young, my mindset was always that I need to stay on top of my football, but more importantly I need to stay on top of my education. I used to train as much as anyone else – I always tried to be first one in, last one out – but you're only doing that for a limited period of the day.

"There's the rest of the day to fill and you can either waste that time or you can use it to research things, learn new stuff and start preparing for your future. I always thought that if it didn't work out at Barnsley then I wanted to go to Uni straight away, so I didn't want to have to do a top-up course or a Foundation degree or anything like that.

"You need to be so driven and ambitious to become a footballer and I've still got that same fire; I'm just applying it in a different field by striving for success in business."

"I love the land of unknown, where you'll start at a new place and you'll have to learn new skills and expand your knowledge. There are so many things I've done across all the different places that are then applicable in my current position as a Senior Project Analyst at AstraZeneca, but in a different context, so then you start piecing things together.

"I always forget that I'm only 24 and people often won't commit to a certain area until their late twenties, so I'm just using this time to find what I truly want to commit to. Also, who you know can be just as important as what you know, and I believe it'll be beneficial to my future that I've been able to meet a wide variety of people by exposing myself to new industries."



Although Ngoma has elected to transition away from football, he insists there are plenty of comparable themes between the world of business and his time progressing through the Academy system.

"When I was interviewed for The Apprentice, one of the questions they asked was about how my past footballing career would help me," he added.

"I thought that it really toughens you up mentally because every day you have to push yourself and you're competing with the other lads in your team.

"You need to be so driven and ambitious to become a footballer and I've still got that same fire; I'm just applying it in a different field by striving for success in business. That time as an apprentice teaches you to manage your time, working with others, maturing and being professional, which are all skills that relate to business.

"If there's one thing I've learned so far, it's the need to be patient. I'm one of those people where I dip into several activities or ideas, but struggle to finish things. My advice would be to have a clear vision from the start and then focus on achieving it properly.

"However, you've also got to be innovative and think one or two steps ahead to keep progressing. There's one project that I've already got in my head that I think is better than the ice cream one, but I'm finalising it at the moment to make sure I'm launching the right product.

"Sports people are naturally competitive, so if you find an area that interests you, you'll work hard to be the best you can be. You'll read up on that topic, keep sticking at it and you'll slowly reap the rewards from that." ■



SUMMER TRANSFERS



Former LFE apprentices continue to command substantial fees in the transfer market, with around £200million spent this summer. Here is a selection of the biggest deals.

Harry Maguire

(Former Sheffield United apprentice)

Leicester City > Manchester United

£80m

Ryan Sessegnon

Fulham > Tottenham Hotspur

£25m

Ademola Lookman

(Former Charlton Athletic apprentice)

Everton > RB Leipzig

£22.5m

Adam Webster

(Former Portsmouth apprentice)

Bristol City > Brighton & Hove Albion

£20m

Oli McBurnie

(Former Bradford City apprentice)

Swansea City > Sheffield United

£17.5m

Lloyd Kelly

Bristol City > AFC Bournemouth

£13m

Ezri Konsa

(Former Charlton Athletic apprentice)

Brentford > Aston Villa

£12m

Arvin Appiah

Nottingham Forest > UD Almería

£8m

Jack Clarke

Leeds United > Tottenham Hotspur

UNDISCLOSED

James Justin

Luton Town > Leicester City

UNDISCLOSED

OTHER MOVERS THIS SUMMER

Daniel Adshead

Rochdale > Norwich City

Tom Bayliss

Coventry City > Preston North End

Rumarn Burrell

Grimsby Town > Middlesbrough

Luca Connell

Bolton Wanderers > Celtic

George Edmundson

Oldham Athletic > Rangers

Kion Etete

Notts County > Tottenham Hotspur

Josh Galloway

Carlisle United > Leeds United

Liam McCarron

Carlisle United > Leeds United

Bailey Peacock-Farrell

Leeds United > Burnley

Dru Yearwood

Southend United > Brentford

LIFE SKILLS

Apprentices at Preston North End explored the topics of identity, stereotypes and societal pressures during a 'Being Yourself in Sport' workshop, led by Keegan Hirst.



The professional rugby league player, who in 2015 became the second British professional player to come out as homosexual, is a new addition to the Life Skills programme for the 2019-20 season, sharing how his honesty towards his identity helped him professionally and in his personal life.

Hirst told LFE: "I speak about how we view people and how important it is to be a well-rounded person, in addition to being a good athlete, and how that can actually contribute to you being a better player.

"It's important for them to not focus solely on one aspect of their lives. By not just focusing on rugby all the time, it's made me a better person because I've built better relationships with the people around me.

"Ultimately, it made me a better player and helped me be successful in the Super League, playing a lot of games in good teams. It really does have a ripple effect into the rest of your life.

"It's important to broaden your horizons and have a diverse range of interests. It's getting the lads to realise that even if they end up being professionals, football won't be there forever and they need to fill the gap with other things. The earlier they do that, the better equipped they'll be to deal with life away from football."

Although Hirst's career is in rugby, his journey shares many similarities to that of the apprentices, having been in an academy system at Bradford Bulls. And while he struggled for many years to reach the professional ranks, the 31-year-old finally managed to progress to rugby league's top division with Wakefield Trinity in 2017 having re-evaluated his priorities in life.

"I've been in an environment with other young lads where you're trying to break into the first team and becoming a full-time professional, so I understand the pressures that they're going through and they seem to respond to that," he continued.

"I think it's really important to get across my experiences and what I've learned so that people don't fall into the same traps that I did. It's also about teaching people that you can be gay in sport.

"The vast majority of the players I'm speaking to aren't, but someone might be and it's not just about that individual, it's about the other team-mates and how they deal with that. There are lots of things that resonate with people, so hopefully they can take something from it to make them better players.

"With the younger generation, being gay is not as taboo as it has been in the past and they are really open with talking about it. I'm honest about my experiences and it's just part of my story – it's not the main focus.

"My talk is quite interactive, so they break off into groups and I get some good and varied responses back to certain questions and tasks, so it's good to get their responses on things instead of just telling them mine."

Second-year apprentice Tyrhys Dolan was impressed by the session and believes it can make a positive impact on apprentices across the country.



"IT'S IMPORTANT TO BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS AND HAVE A DIVERSE RANGE OF INTERESTS."

"It was great that he was so open and free to talk about his story," he said. "This sort of workshop shows that kids don't have anything to worry about. Never be ashamed of who you are and always be honest with yourself.

"In sport, all you want to focus on is becoming a professional and as a kid that gets drilled into you. It's good to know that there are other things you can do and things that you are good at. It's about finding who you are and not what you're told to be.

"When he was talking about his other interests, I instantly thought about coaching and teaching kids. I'd also like to be a speaker like he is and encourage people to not just focus on one thing. Everyone's got loads of hidden talents that they may not know about yet."

Irish goalkeeper Jimmy Corcoran echoed those thoughts. He added: "You don't know if someone's gay or not unless they come out and tell you. Keegan had the confidence to come out and nobody has a problem with it – and nobody should have a problem with it. Times have changed and it's really good to see that he's done it. Hopefully it will encourage more people to be confident and be open about it.

"These sessions make you think about your mental health and just looking after yourself a bit more by chilling out and not thinking about football all the time. If it becomes too much, you'll get sick of it and you don't want that.

"I live away from home and over here it's all focus on football. Maybe I could get my parents to come over a bit more or go home myself and spend more time with them."

This summer, fourteen EFL Academy squads took part in LFE's pre-season trip, funded by Erasmus+

With eight clubs visiting the Netherlands and six sides staying in Spain, around 250 apprentices were able to experience a two-week trip that included host coaching sessions, cultural visits, language lessons and matches against European teams.



HOLLAND

PRE-SEASON TRIP

2019



RESULTS



- Barnsley**
- L** 2-3 Bayer Leverkusen U17
 - W** 3-1 Fortuna Koln U19
 - 4th Lochem Tournament



- Burton Albion**
- L** 0-4 Standard Liege
 - W** 2-1 FC Dordrecht U17
 - 5th Lochem Tournament



- Cheltenham Town**
- L** 0-10 Rot Weiss Oberhausen
 - D** 2-2 FC Dordrecht U19
 - 6th Lochem Tournament



- Ipswich Town**
- L** 1-5 Bayer Leverkusen U19
 - L** 3-5 Sparta Rotterdam U19
 - 3rd Dordrecht Tournament



- Lincoln City**
- W** 3-1 Sparta Rotterdam U19
 - L** 0-1 SV Meppen U19
 - 4th Volendam Tournament



- Nottingham Forest**
- L** 0-5 Bayer Leverkusen U19
 - L** 0-4 PSV Eindhoven U19
 - 4th Dordrecht Tournament



- Sheffield Wednesday**
- L** 1-2 Vitesse U19
 - L** 0-5 FC Koln U19
 - 2nd Lochem Tournament



- Walsall**
- L** 0-3 Rot Weiss Essen U19
 - L** 0-2 Vitesse U17
 - 2nd Volendam Tournament



Jasper Tetlow Lincoln City U18s



The biggest thing I learned about myself is that I'm able to persevere through mentally challenging situations and maintain a professional and determined mindset that I held throughout the trip. In relation to the group, it was clear to see how much closer as a team, on and off the pitch, we had got. The positive relationship that was established in Holland can still be sensed around training. We definitely benefited from the two weeks we had away together.



Kieron Dyer Former Ipswich Town U18s Assistant Manager



One thing that stands out with European teams is their professionalism. Playing against a German team in Bayer Leverkusen... they're renowned for being physically imposing and it's not a style that we come across too much in Academy football.

Because of the budget of the football club, we don't usually get to enter the lads in tournaments. The tournament at the end of the trip offered competitive football, which they often don't get coming through the Academy. The bigger teams in the country go away to competitions all the time and I think that benefits the kids. Being away from home for two weeks, no parents, team-building exercises... it's all beneficial.



Cees Keizer FC Volendam Youth Coach



It was a wonderful experience leading a session with the Lincoln players. It was nice to see them play under Dutch circumstances and I have to say I was surprised by their ability.

They listened carefully and it's always nice to work with those sorts of players. We focused on attacking phase one, I tried to do it like we do at Volendam - the Dutch way of playing a lot through the centre of the field. We started with some skills to execute that phase in a good way, then we moved on to smaller positional play and then on to a game that we expanded to 6 against 6.

Dutch players look for a solution forward through the centre, while these players automatically went from side to side, so that was the main difference I noticed.



Fin Back Nottingham Forest U18s



We played games against PSV and Bayer Leverkusen, who are top sides that have played UEFA Youth League football, so they were a great challenge for us. I think they focus quite a lot on the technical aspect on creating space for other people and being very fluid in their build-up. The trip also allowed us a lot of time as a group away from football, which has helped us come together and get to know each other's personalities which we can hopefully take out onto the pitch.



HOLLAND 2019 PRE-SEASON TRIP





SPAIN

PRE-SEASON TRIP



2019



RESULTS



AFC Wimbledon

- D** 1-1 Real Betis
- W** 8-1 Xerez Deportivo
- L** 0-1 Castilleja CF



Blackburn Rovers

- W** 2-1 Rayo Majadahonda
- L** 2-3 CD Leganés
- D** 0-0 Real Madrid



Fleetwood Town

- D** 0-0 Rayo Vallecano
- D** 2-2 Getafe CF
- L** 1-2 Atlético Madrid



Port Vale

- W** 1-0 Aravaca CF
- L** 1-3 Club Atlético de Pinto
- L** 2-3 AD Unión Adarve



QPR

- L** 1-3 Sevilla
- L** 0-4 Cádiz CF



Wigan Athletic

- W** 2-0 Málaga CF
- D** 3-3 Granada
- W** 2-1 Antequera



Stuart Jones
Blackburn Rovers
Head of Academy



We finished the trip with the amazing opportunity to play at Real Madrid's training ground against their Under-18s, which was great for the lads to experience. It's good for them to come up against different opponents with different styles and other ways of playing.

I went across to meet with Real Madrid's Academy Director and it's a fantastic link to have with one of the greatest clubs in the world. Having a look around the Real Madrid Academy and speaking to the coaches and seeing how they work, it's great for our own coaches and important as part of their education.



Hayden Campbell
Port Vale U18s



The guest coaching sessions were good because it's an opportunity to learn a new way of playing. There were new ideas and new voices telling you other opinions about your game and the team's game. We also learned Spanish phrases during language lessons which helped on and off the pitch. I found that it helped when talking to the referees, but also around the building being able to speak to the local people, the chefs and our hotel reps, so it's been good to integrate with them.

SPAIN 2019 PRE-SEASON TRIP



Joe McWilliam
Wigan Athletic U18s



The lads really bonded as the trip went on and we progressed in terms of our ability and fitness while we were out there. We learned a lot about different techniques and different manipulation of the ball. On the cultural side, we had a guided tour of Granada which was good as it deviated our minds from just football. We were given plenty of information from the tour guide to take in and it gave us a different perspective to the trip away from football.



COMMUNITY WORK

The Erasmus+ pre-season trip to Spain allowed apprentices at AFC Wimbledon and QPR to make an impact within the Seville community.

The Rs integrated with disadvantaged children from nearby town Pilas, while Wimbledon ran sessions for underprivileged kids from the area of Puebla.

"It's good for the community because not everyone is as privileged as us. We've come over here and it's a chance to give a bit back. We can show our appreciation and hopefully the kids enjoyed a good day out."

Luke Jenkins
AFC Wimbledon

"The language barrier was a challenge, but it's an experience that pushes us out of our comfort zone. It's great to have made an impact in the short time we've spent here."

Matteo Salomon
QPR

"It was great to see the smiles on their faces. They might be from another country but we all share the same love for football, so it was a very good experience."

Arkell Jude-Boyd
QPR

"We put on a few different activities - we had a 3v3, a penalty shootout, a game of bulldog and king of the ring. The kids seemed to love it and it was good for us to help out the local community and represent the badge."

Dylan Adjei-Hersey
AFC Wimbledon



OLLIE SMITH

Back in 2014, York City were flying high having reached the Sky Bet League Two play-offs.

For Ollie Smith, it signalled the start of a new adventure as he was released at the end of his apprenticeship with the club.

And while York's fortunes have dipped since then, with consecutive relegations sending them down to the National League North, Smith's career is taking off after pursuing a route into aviation.

The 24-year-old has spent the last few years training to become a pilot, gaining around 300 hours of flying time under his belt and securing a job as a Boeing 737 first officer for a popular budget airline.

He told LFE: "Once I got released, I probably spent six months to a year considering my options. I went to a couple of careers events and doing pilot training was always in the back of my mind, but I wasn't sure if I could do it.

"I visited quite a few flight schools and went to an event called Pilot Careers Live at Heathrow, where you can speak to different flight schools and current airline pilots about their route.

"There are financial implications to overcome, but you don't have to be super rich – there are ways to get the funding, which you can look into. I emailed someone at the PFA and they got back to me within a day. They made funding available to me at certain intervals during my training, which was a massive help.

"People always say 'you must be really clever' but that's not the case, I'm just average academically. Anyone who is willing to work hard and commits to the training is capable of flying an aircraft. You have to be prepared that it's going to take a couple of years, but the reward of being an airline pilot is great."

Smith decided to take a modular route to completing his training, which started with earning a private pilot's licence at his local flying club. A distance learning Ground School course followed before spending four months in Poland for Advanced Flight training, while he concluded with a Jet Transition course back in the UK.

"My first flight was around three years ago," he said. "I was visiting a flight school and they asked 'have you been in a light aircraft, are you sure you're going to like it?' I did about an hour being taught the basics of maintaining a level flight and things like that and it was really good. Once I went up in that aircraft, I knew straight away it was going to be the career for me.

"In order to go from your private licence to commercial licence, you have to do hour-building, which means you have to fly a plane by yourself and I've done about 100 hours of flying solo.

"You can just rock up at your local airfield, have a look at the weather and think 'where should we go today?' I've had some great trips up to Scotland and the Lake District. I've taken my parents up and my girlfriend as well, so it's a great option to have."

After completing his flying training, Smith quickly secured a co-pilot role for short-haul flights across a range of European destinations.

"Thankfully, the job market is really strong at the moment," he added. "I applied for about 10 different companies and I think I had offers from four of them, so there are plenty of jobs available.

"My schedule is quite stable – five days on and four days off. We'll turn up 45 minutes before our first flight, print off the flight plan, check the weather, go out to the aircraft and then we'll fly to a destination, try to turn it round in 25 minutes and fly straight back. We'll have two or four sectors and always end up back at home base.

"For some companies, you can do trips around Europe. If you're long haul, you generally spend two or three days in a place, so you do get to go sight-seeing and then come back. It's a perfect industry if you want to travel the world.

"Due to the fact that you are limited with the number of hours you can fly – because they're conscious about fatigue and stuff like that – you do get quite a lot of time off. I definitely think my working pattern is favourable in comparison to some other jobs.

"In my current company, there are opportunities to move into instructing after a couple of years and then you can get the commander upgrade and become a captain. That's the sort of progression I'm looking at.

"You can progress even further from there and eventually move off the flying into more of the training aspect, which is something I might consider further down the line, or if I wanted to go long haul I could maybe look into that as well."

Although the former Academy player has now hung up his boots in favour of a life in the sky, Smith insists there are qualities he developed as an apprentice that help him in his flying career.

"It's a totally different industry, but I think that football prepares you very well," he continued.

"I generally prepare for a flight in the same way I would've done for a big game, in terms of eating well and getting the right amount of sleep.

"Handling nerves is another thing that you're prepared for as a result of being an apprentice. You're going to be nervous before a game or a trial or something like that, so going through that as a footballer definitely teaches you how to handle that.

"Leadership is also quite key in both industries, as is communication and teamwork, because you've got to work together as a unit to perform well. If you learn those sort of skills, they certainly transfer into aviation.

"Taking the BTEC seriously and getting good grades unlocks so many doors. Not only due to the UCAS points that it offers, but it also gives you the confidence to think that actually you are capable of doing well in further education."

LFE Personal Development Programme

Following the successes of My Future Today, a new LFE personal development programme has been launched for the 2019-20 season.

Three personal development options are now available to clubs:

PROVIDE

Resources and guidance for club delivery, including a module to create an individualised plan

PREPARE

Personal development awareness workshop delivered in one session

PLAN

Personal development mentoring programme delivered across eight sessions

LFE's Personal Development Mentors



Dru Spinks
Ex-Professional Basketballer



Mark Roberts
Ex-Professional Footballer

PROVIDE

'LFE's Personal Development Module' creates an individualised personal development plan for download or email. Over 200 plans have been created so far this season.

Here are some snippets from apprentice commitments to personal development:

Communication: "I will talk more in the next group discussion when there is a debate and I will ask more questions about things."

Confidence: "I will listen to a new self-improvement audiobook."

Courage: "I should look to seize opportunities and educate myself to become more knowledgeable about where to invest money and how to do it."

Creativity: "To cook for myself at least four times per week. This means that I will research new dishes of my interest and I will shadow my mum whilst she cooks too."

Discipline: "Be stricter with my daily, weekly, monthly and annual routines by becoming more stubborn to overcome tiredness and fatigue. This will allow me to get the most of my day at football and at home."

Encouragement: "I will contact my old school and volunteer for one day teaching P.E. in different classes, demonstrating helpfulness to the students."

Unselfish: "I plan to speak to the club's community department, give time to others and share experiences which will help me to develop too."

PREPARE

A two-hour awareness workshop helping apprentices to understand:

WHY
personal development is beneficial

HOW
personal development takes place

WHAT
personal development opportunities are available

Apprentice Feedback

"It's having different skills, qualities and interests that build your personality and character."
NORTHAMPTON TOWN U18

"To have other interests and hobbies that keep you stable and make you stronger at times when you may feel low or down. It's also how you act as a person, how you are seen by others, by yourself and what you are able to do outside of football."
FOREST GREEN ROVERS U18

"Personal development is independent opportunities to develop your life skills in any way, shape or form. It's also improving yourself as a more well-rounded person, not just as a footballer."
DONCASTER ROVERS U18

LFE's plan to be the best you can

PLAN

An eight-session programme for first-year apprentices focusing on the growth of characteristics and skills. The programme aims to support three outcomes: *Performance, Well-Being and Transition.*

- 1 Mentoring
- 2 Personal Development
- 3 Self-Awareness
- 4 Plan
- 5-8 Confidence
- Discipline
- Focus
- Motivation
- Resilience
- Respect
- Social Competence
- Teamwork

The schedule is built to fit the group's needs and complements the wider development programme set by the academy.

Some programme features include career and life challenges, practical tasks, self-reflection, action targets, inspirational examples and social action.

Eight clubs have started the mentoring programme:



"The mentoring programme has been a huge success with our players so far. They are becoming more open and thoughtful with every session and the way that Dru delivers it makes it a safe and enjoyable space to develop. The programme allows the players to be reflective about who they are, what they stand for and gives them strategies to apply these traits to their on-field performance."

With the support of LFE, we are enabling our players to gain a better understanding of themselves and their team-mates which is an essential part of their holistic development."

Dale Brunton,
Luton Town Head of Education

"Personal development has had an enormous impact on my own life both on and off the field but, if the truth be told, it has been driven by my own curiosity. I feel I'm someone who would have benefited greatly from the support we, at LFE, are now able to offer."

"Playing a part in their journey is a humbling experience and the key for me has been the opportunity to build a relationship over a period of time because that enables us to create a roadmap to navigate their individual needs."

Mark Roberts,
Personal Development Mentor

"The first-year apprentices have loved the personal development mentoring sessions. Mark Roberts has been excellent with them individually and as a group. They are learning about themselves and their team-mates, dealing with setbacks and helping each other and how social media can affect you."

Mike Whitlow,
Mansfield Town Lead PDP Coach

"I really enjoy the mentoring programme we do with Dru. I think it benefits us both as footballers and off the pitch as well. It gives us set time to learn new skills and understand how we can take those onto the pitch. In doing so, I've tried to develop my traits and skills as a person, such as leadership and enthusiasm."

Matt Moloney,
Luton Town U18s

"It's interesting, fun to do and I think it's important that we understand that there are other things away from football that we need to focus on to help us improve our performance. I think the programme helps with confidence as well, being able to open up to your team-mates and talk about anything."

Callum Nicolson,
Luton Town U18s

"This programme is built on the foundations of My Future Today and with this extra contact time, it brings a real opportunity to support apprentices in developing themselves to a plan. Professional football isn't an easy career to find success in. Players being equipped for the demands of the industry and life in general is something we want to help clubs achieve."

Simon Williams,
LFE Life Skills Manager



LIFE SKILLS

LFE's Life Skills programme provided Burton Albion's apprentices with the opportunity to increase their sexual health awareness through a 'Playing Safely' session delivered by Colin Avery.



The interactive workshop, which includes a quiz and practical exercises, covers a range of topics related to respectful relationships, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and testicular cancer.

"What I want them to do is remember how much fun they had learning," Avery told LFE. "The more we can keep them involved and have some fun, while at the same time getting across some really crucial messages to them, then that's a success for me.

"Once you've raised an issue and put it in a context that's relevant to them as a young footballer, that always makes them aware of what the potential consequences of their actions or inactions can have on their careers and personal lives.

"It's about that self-awareness of what does this mean for me, what does this mean for my future and what can I do that helps me stay safe, stay well and stay healthy for me, my family and my future career."

During the two-hour seminar, the apprentices split into two groups and compete against each other in answering a number of questions, where they learn several facts and figures relating to the various sexual health subjects.

The youngsters take part in practical activities with self-check apparatus and safe sex protection and delve into extended discussion about the sensitive issues, while relevant case studies are also included throughout to highlight the ever-present risk to physical welfare.

"In the overall health and well-being of these young men, sexual health is equally important to how you eat, exercise and look after yourself mentally," said Avery. "We look at testicular cancer and it is important to put that into the context of other footballers.

"Some outcomes have been successful in terms of people who have been treated and continued with their careers and lives, but we also highlight the circumstances, like with former West Ham United Academy player Dylan Tombides, where the outcome was not what you would've wanted.



"When we've done testicular health in the past with other clubs, people have had conversations afterwards. Others have admitted that there are issues with their relationships that they've not felt comfortable about sharing.

"It's important to stress to the lads that it's alright to say this is a situation that's affected me. We're challenging the attitude of what does it mean to be a man. To be a man is to be vulnerable and prepared to share and not be afraid to do that. That's not being weak, that's being strong.

"It's about sending that message – not only to your teammates, but also the people who will watch you on the pitch and admire and look up to you – that if you're willing to be open about saying 'this is what's going on for me', then hopefully that will be mirrored in their lives as well."

Burton Under-18s duo Ciaran Gilligan and Said Idourab acknowledged that the thought-provoking session provided them with a wealth of insight to absorb and be mindful of.

Seventeen-year-old midfielder Gilligan said: "I've not really had anything like this since I was at school doing sex education, so it's good to refresh the knowledge two or three years on from that.

"The sexual harassment examples were an eye-opener because there are so many factors that can go against you, even if you wouldn't necessarily consider something an issue at the time. It can have massive repercussions on your career and life in general, so it's important to be careful."

Meanwhile, first-year apprentice Idourab added: "Sexual health is not a hot topic in the changing room or around the club, so it's good to share our thoughts with everyone and actually think about these things.

"The number of people that are affected by STIs was a lot higher than I thought and Colin added context to the information, with actual examples. It's not just what could happen, these things have happened to people, which I found quite shocking and hard-hitting."



MERSEYSIDE TO STATESIDE



From Tranmere to Ohio, football has given Nathan Jones a life he never expected.

After completing his apprenticeship in 2013, Jones swapped the Merseysiders for a U.S. scholarship at Urbana University, where he starred as a student-athlete before moving on to coach and study a Masters degree at Tiffin University.



He told LFE: "It wasn't until the first few months of my second year as an apprentice when I started to consider alternative options. My regional officer, Claire Wilberforce, came in and spoke about exit routes and the U.S. interested me straight away.

"I'd never been there beforehand, not even on holiday, so it was a big leap of faith. It took a couple of months to adjust, but the people are great, the culture is similar and the food is pretty much the same, so it isn't actually too different to being back home.

"It did help that I came out with Lewis Dunne, who was my teammate at Tranmere. It's funny really because we were together at Urbana for four years and now we coach in the same league.

"As a 16 or 17-year-old at Tranmere, I would never have thought by the age of 25 I'd be living in America and getting a Masters degree. And to top it off, my Masters is paid for and my Undergraduate degree was mostly funded via a scholarship, so I've come out near enough debt free."

Jones' experience in the States goes beyond being a student-athlete, with many opportunities to travel around the country and meet people from all over the world, as well as integrating with other major American sports.

"I played with people from France, Germany, Holland, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Canada and obviously America," he said. "There are so many nationalities that come together to form a team over here and you get to learn about all the different cultures.

"The travel was the thing that I loved the most. We flew to New York when we reached the last 16 in the country in my senior year, which was a whole new experience. That's something you'd never get back home and although we lost the game 2-1, I really enjoyed it.

"I've not ventured out to the West Coast yet, so that's on my to-do list, but I've been to basically every state on the East Coast.

"I've visited Florida a few times, I went to Miami for Spring Break, Virginia Beach was great and we've even gone over to Toronto in Canada. I would never have got to do those types of trips if I lived back home and that's something that just caps off the experience.

"Ohio State was 45 minutes away from Urbana and we'd go to their American football games with over 100,000 fans in the stadium. Being involved with those different sports is another unique learning experience.

"At Tiffin, there's a kid on the baseball team this year that could get drafted. Nate Washington is a Tiffin alumnus who won two Super Bowl rings. He floats around the campus quite often and you see him just chatting to people and helping out with various things, so it's crazy really."

A high achiever on and off the field, Jones received several individual honours throughout his time at the UU. The two-year captain was a Conference Defensive Player of the Year and picked up first team all-region and all-conference awards in his Senior year, while he also broke Blue Knights records for most clean sheets, save percentage, minutes and games played.

In addition, a combination of a strong academic profile, coaching at a local youth team, serving as a resident life assistant and volunteering in the Urbana athletics department led to him earning Male Student-Athlete of the Year 2015-16 and being an MEC Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year Finalist.

Jones was also recognised nationally as a Chi Alpha Sigma Inductee, which rewards outstanding performance in sport and education.

"Being a full-time student and footballer can be time-consuming, but you've just got to manage workload," he added. "The step up to the Masters has been more rigorous, but doing the Extended Diploma during my apprenticeship really helped to prepare me.



"I've never been a superstar academically, but the Extended Diploma forced me to work a bit harder and got me into the routine of balancing football and education, which has helped me transition into higher education. I ended up graduating a semester early as well.

"Awards are huge in this country and it's nice to be recognised for your hard work. The post-season is brilliant, too. It's fantastic to be competitive and play for a regular season league, a conference trophy and national rankings."

Having already spent six years across the pond, there are no signs of Jones making a permanent return to the UK. The Welshman is currently Tiffin's Graduate Assistant Men's Soccer Coach and Goalkeeping Coach for the men and women's teams, while he is determined to become a head coach in the future.

"When I was at Tranmere, I helped out with the Under-8s to the Under-16s and I fell in love with coaching from there," said Jones. "I've had a number of different coaching positions since I've been

out here and it's been one of the best experiences.

"In terms of growing as a coach, the opportunity to work with girls and boys and plenty of different age groups has been great for my development. Managing budgets is an additional part of being a collegiate coach and I'm also part of the recruiting process.

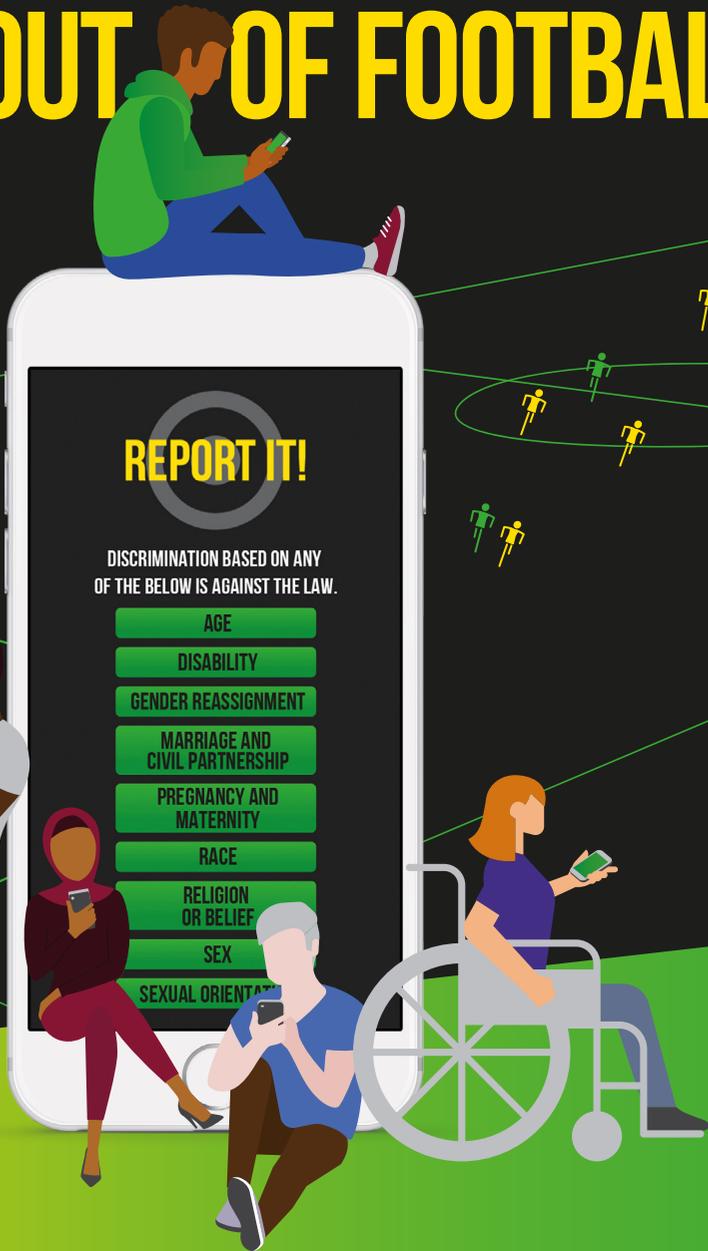
"Bringing in young guys and seeing them have the experience that I had, watching them flourish and enjoy the journey while getting an education as well, it's honestly the most rewarding aspect of my time here.

"Last year, we won the regular season and our conference tournament and that was unbelievable to finally win some silverware after being here for so long. We were named Regional Staff of the Year, so that was fantastic.

"I'd love to end up as a head coach within the college game. No matter what level, that's definitely a career ambition. Coming to America has changed my life forever and it's something I would certainly recommend."

"COMING TO AMERICA HAS CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER"

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Tom Palmer @tjpalmer
Great @kickitout session with Millwall u18s & @Town10 @marcus11gayle.



Joe Thompson @JLL_Thompson
#WorldMentalHealthDay2019
@LutonTown boys today was a pleasure 🙌
Slightly different talk focusing on mental resilience and wellbeing.
To be a high performing athlete you have to mentally tough but it's not to say your bulletproof.
#ItsOkNotToBeOk #MentalHealthAwarenessDay



League Football Education @LFEonline
Over the past 12 months, LFE has funded the delivery of 172 mental health-related sessions to EFL Academy players, staff & parents via LFE's Life Skills programme.
#LFLLifeSkills | #WorldMentalHealthDay

Steve Savage @savs73
Congratulations @tom_holland4 one of our @USWFootball performance players who graduates @UniSouthWales with 2:1 BA Business Management Degree. 3 years have flown by since meeting @LFEonline Exit Trials 🏆 #Education #Football #Pathway

Gavin Willacy @gavinwillacy
13 months ago David Kasumu was on @LFEonline @EUErasmusPlus tour in Madrid. Last night he played an hour in @MKDonsFC central midfield against @LFC international trio Adam Lallana, @Alex_OxChambo & Naby Keita. The boy done good!



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