



# touchline

News from League Football Education

News p2 Coach Focus p6 & 7 Progression 08 p8 & 9 Apprentice profiles p5 & 12 Club Focus p14



BENTLEY WEARS THE v1-178: SPEED LEGS

UNTIL THEN



v1.08: THE SPEED BOOT



Progression 2008

# Be part of it!

Progression 2008, the first careers event exclusively for elite sports people opens its doors at the City of Manchester Stadium on March 27th. See Page 8.



GRADE 2



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

LFE is a partnership between The Football League and The Professional Footballers' Association.



LFE Technical Partner





# news



## FA Youth Cup Quarter finals

### Valiants blown away by Gael force while City cruise past Pilgrims

As the premier competition in youth football reaches its final stages eight clubs battled it out in a high scoring and entertaining Quarter final round.

Carlisle Utd conquerors of Manchester Utd and Sheffield Wednesday in previous rounds, finally came unstuck against a strong Aston Villa side. With manager Martin O'Neill flying back from a warm weather training camp to watch his young charges defeat the Cumbrians 2 - 0 at Brunton Park.

Port Vale faced London giants Chelsea as a reward for their defeat of Tottenham Hotspur in the last round but the Valiants shorn of influential midfielder Simon Richman and defender Adam Copeland were blown away by Chelsea's Gael Kakuta

who helped himself to a hat-trick as the Londoners took the spoils with a 5 - 2 win in front of a 3,628 crowd at Vale Park.



It's the end of a dream for the Vale youngsters as Chelsea progress to the semi-finals.

Meanwhile over 2,000 expectant fans turned out at Home Park, hoping Mike Pejic's young Pilgrims could continue the good form that has seen them knock out three Premier League Academy teams already. Manchester City however were

a different proposition. The visitors boasted England Youth International and regular Premiership performer Daniel Sturridge in their ranks and ran out 4 - 1 winners despite an evenly contested opening to the game.

In the final game of the Quarter Finals, Charlton Athletic faced Sunderland at the Valley in front of another large crowd. After a goalless first half, it was the visitors that broke the deadlock when Martyn Waghorn thumped home in the 55th minute. However the home side rallied and following some good work by right-back Chris Solly, Rashid Yussuff drilled home an equaliser. It remained all square until deep into injury time when the Black Cats snatched victory courtesy of a spectacular 25 yard Jordan Henderson lob.

### Semi Final Draw

Sunderland v Man City  
Chelsea v Aston Villa

## Top Marks

Congratulations go to the five Clubs (Burnley, Derby County, Norwich City, Shrewsbury Town and Sunderland) already sitting on a full house of completed NVQ's. Sixty Apprentices across ten Clubs in total have already completed and signed off the NVQ Logbook in anticipation of completing the two-year Apprenticeship this summer.

A great deal of work goes into the NVQ and LFE will continue to work with Clubs, Apprentices, Assessors and Verifiers to ensure many more NVQ's are completed over the coming months.



## Apprentice of The Month



### Congratulations go to John Dunleavy of Wolverhampton Wanderers as the January Apprentice of the Month

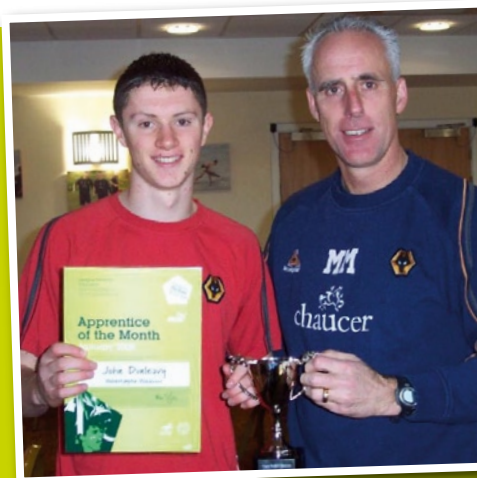
John has captained the Wanderers U18 side and is a regular in the Reserve team despite being only 16 years old.

Having successfully made the transition from Ireland to life in the Black Country, John has

settled in superbly and is highly regarded by both his peers and the staff at the Club.

A regular member of the Republic of Ireland U17 team, he recently captained the international squad in the European U17 qualifying tournament, and has also been nominated for the 'Republic of Ireland U17 Player of the Year'.

John has displayed an excellent attitude and enthusiasm towards all aspects of the Apprenticeship which is reflected in his College work and around the Club.



John being presented the award by Mick McCarthy



## Trio hit the big time

It's onwards and upwards for three ASE Apprentices who were the subject of big money moves during the transfer window. Dan Gosling of Plymouth Argyle, Chris Gunter of Cardiff City and Ben Tozer of Swindon Town have all made the

move to the big time and joined established Premier League Clubs.

Chris Gunter was sold to Tottenham Hotspur after a successful run at Cardiff where he notched up 3 full Wales caps. Defender Dan Gosling made the move

to Goodison Park after the Toffees agreed a deal with Plymouth Argyle in early January. Promising 17 year-old, Ben Tozer, left Swindon for Newcastle United in a four-and-a-half year deal for an undisclosed fee.



## It's your Newsletter

Got a story? Want to share news with other LFE partners?

This is your newsletter and we welcome any contributions from all Apprentices, coaches, clubs, parents and partners. If you have a story, email [ssutcliffe@lfe.org.uk](mailto:ssutcliffe@lfe.org.uk)



# The Way Ahead

Jamie Robinson  
PFA Regional  
Coach Midlands



The PFA are keen to provide pathways for Apprentices who foresee Coaching as a viable career path. Many Apprentices pass the Level 2 Coaching Certificate as relatively inexperienced coaches and tend to underestimate themselves as the next generation of teachers of the game.



Jamie Robinson

Some 18 year olds have been with clubs since the age of 9 and have been involved with some of the most highly qualified coaches modern professional sport possesses. In order to fulfil their potential they need to be successfully mentored and trained to the next level.

The majority of Football clubs have Football in the Community programmes and an Academy or Centre of Excellence where the opportunities for a young, knowledgeable and qualified coach are numerous. Colleges of Further Education, Council led Sports Development teams and private companies all now require more qualified coaches than ever before.

Apprentices who continue to enjoy a career as a professional player or who join another profession have all gained some transferable skills through

the completion of the Level 2 Coaching Certificate. The ability to plan, organise, deliver and evaluate a session underpins the principles of teaching and learning. A prospective employer or a university admissions board will not underestimate these skills.

The PFA is an organisation that is always trying to equip its membership for life after a playing career. The only guarantee when beginning life as a young professional footballer is you cannot play for ever and one day you will need a new set of skills to embark on another career.

As a department we are keen to educate these young players to use their maturity and experience in the world of coaching.

Gary Challinor and Matt Goodwin, who both featured in the last edition of Touchline, have applied to enrol on the PFA Level 3 Coaching Certificate in May. They have recognised that vocational qualifications in combination with an academic degree programme will supply the comprehensive set of skills necessary for the workplace.

Rene Gilmartin, 20, at Walsall and Andy Gooding, 21, at Coventry City are

already using their L2 Coaching Certificate by taking Academy teams alongside their professional playing careers.

With the continued support of the PFA and LFE, the majority of clubs are now recognising that the Level 2 Coaching Certificate provides a core of planning, teaching and delivery skills. These transferable skills will enhance a young players self-confidence and understanding of the game and help them fulfil their potential both on and off the pitch.

# RYAN BENNETT



Now in his second year at Grimsby Town Ryan Bennett has made huge strides forward during his time with the Mariners.



Arriving as a sixteen year old on his release by Ipswich Town in the summer of 2006, Ryan quickly established himself as one to watch in the youth and reserve teams last season.

His impressive displays caught the attention of Alan Buckley and his staff and he was rewarded with a two-year professional contract on his 17th Birthday last March.

Since making his debut in a 2-1 away victory at MK dons last April the centre half / right back has gone from strength to strength and he was awarded the number 5 shirt at the start of this season.

A calm and composed defender Bennett opened his account for the Mariners on

the opening day of the season, scoring with a header from 6 yards in a 1-1 draw with Notts County at Blundell Park. A string of consistent performances have followed and Bennett has made a further twenty plus league appearances for Grimsby Town this season and gained national acclaim at the recent Football League Awards ceremony where he was named as the League Two Apprentice of The Year.

The Apprentice Awards reflect not only excellence on the pitch but also academic aptitude and hard work and it was just reward that his efforts were recognised by an expert panel of judges so says LFE's Paul Bartlett "Ryan has

been a credit to himself and the club during his time at Grimsby, his success on the pitch has been mirrored off it. He has displayed maturity beyond his years and looks set for a promising career and I for one wish him every success in the future"

Head of Youth Neil Woods who has monitored his protégé progress keenly commented "Ryan has impressed everyone at the club with his ability to maintain a level headed approach to everything, despite the fact that he has set himself and performed to very high standards. He has been able to maintain a fantastic approach to his education and through his everyday life as a footballer"

**"He has displayed maturity beyond his years and looks set for a promising career"**

*Paul Bartlett-LFE*

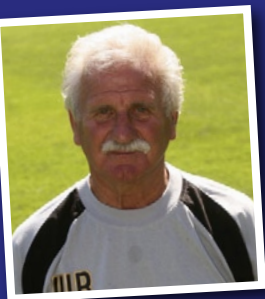
The last word comes from Bennett himself who for now appears just happy to be a Mariner "I have enjoyed my time at Grimsby because I am now part of the first team and that is what every player hopes to achieve. When I was first called up I was up for the challenge and as I have played more and more

I have had to come in to the education department more in my own time and it's great because the coaching staff and people like Oliver Cowling (Head of Education) are supportive and always available to help me. I find the education programme of great benefit because I can apply it to everyday situations. A good example would be when we studied injuries I now understand more about what is happening to my body when I take a knock or whatever. Any accolades that I receive are great and are a reflection of my own hard work and that of the staff around me."



# 20 years at the helm for Rovers Rimmer

**This season marked Warwick Rimmers' 20th year in charge of the youth development department at Tranmere Rovers.**



Birkenhead Born and bred, Warwick found fame as a player with Bolton Wanderers where he came through the ranks and gained a reputation as a footballing but tough tackling half back. Installed as captain in the late 60's, he suffered the heartache of two relegations before he led the Trotters to the Third Division Championship in 1973. All in all, Rimmer amassed 528 appearances and scored 17 goals for Wanderers before he left to join Crewe Alexandra, where he would later become Player Manager.

114 appearances and 4 years later and Warwick was off to West Africa to face a new challenge as national team coach for Sierra Leone. During Rimmers' tenure, the Leone Stars narrowly missed out on the 1982 World Cup Finals held in Spain, defeated in the final play off match by the odd goal to an Algeria team that would go on to shock West Germany at the tournament.

From there, Rimmer moved back home to Birkenhead and initially started work as Tranmere Rovers' commercial manager replacing the outgoing Ray Stubbs. Soon after, Peter Johnson, Tranmere's multi-millionaire owner, approached Rimmer, and charged him with the task of establishing a youth system at Prenton Park.

New in this role Rimmer used his experiences from his Bolton days and quickly established a blueprint for youth development that has made a lasting contribution to the Wirral club. Players were produced that were ready for the first team and graduates of Tranmere's successful youth programme that have been moved on to wealthier clubs have included the likes of John McGreal, Kenny Irons and Alan Rogers through

to Alan Mahon, Steve Simonsen, Jason Koumas and Ryan Taylor.

But more than the material benefits, Rimmer and his department have earned a reservoir of respect, admiration and goodwill for Tranmere across all levels of the game. Former England Skipper Jimmy Armfield is not surprised by Rimmer's success: "Warwick was an excellent pro and my choice as a club captain when I managed Bolton. He was the mainstay of my team leading by example and directing our young players both on and off the pitch. He seemed well suited to a pastoral role even back then so it has been no surprise to me that he has enjoyed such success with Tranmere".

Brian Flynn, the Wales under-21 boss says simply: "Warwick's record is incredible." Flynn believes Rimmer owes his success to an old-fashioned, paternal style. He said: "Warwick is a member of the old school of youth development officers. Every boy who comes under his wing sees him as an uncle – the best uncle they ever had."

Former charge Alan Mahon who left Tranmere to join Sporting Lisbon on a free

transfer in the summer of 2000, echoes these sentiments: "Warwick was fantastic to me during my time at Prenton Park. He was instrumental in me signing for the club and when I arrived he made sure I settled well in a very new environment which helped me produce my best on the pitch"

**"It has been no surprise to me that he has enjoyed such success with Tranmere"**

**Jimmy Armfield - Former England Skipper**

Rimmer himself would admit that there were a number of difficulties in the early years: "In terms of building the structure, we had to work it out as we went along and the first job was to recruit a few boys, South Liverpool had just lost their YTS programme and we were lucky to recruit Tony Thomas from that group. Back then, youth team training was held on Tuesday and Thursday nights and we had people like Chris Malkin, who worked in a bank, training with us"

Of course Tranmere's operation grew and within several years they had expanded to be able to run teams at every level from under 9s to under 16s.

The first crop of Rimmer's graduates were harnessed by first-team manager John King and became increasingly influential in driving Tranmere's progress, via two promotions and five Wembley visits, to the division now known as the Championship by the early 1990s.

As the years have gone by Rimmer's role has changed immensely, today he orchestrates the work of dozens of coaches, scouts and voluntary helpers however it's no surprise to learn that he still feels at his happiest out on the training park talking to the boys about the game. You have an open canvas to talk and teach them and help them progress"

So what's been the worst part of his Job, "Well telling boys that they're not going to get that next contract is just about the hardest thing in my job, it's something I've not got any better at down the years but on the flip side

It's always good to see former players doing well. The first thing I look at in the Sunday papers is to see which of the lads who have left here have played on the Saturday and done well or scored"

When Rimmer reaches for his Sunday papers it's a testimony to his work that the list of former players runs deep but he is also pleased that the advancement of the ASE programme prepares those who don't make it.

"One thing about this programme is that it allows us as a club far more involvement on the education side of things. The Apprentices all undertake the same framework and we take ownership of that. It helps us enormously to ensure all our Apprentices leave the programme in a better position than in previous years"



## Rimmers' Graduates

**Jason Koumas** left to join WBA for £2.25million (Now Wigan Athletic)

**Alan Rogers** left to join Nottingham Forest for £2million (Retired)

**Ryan Taylor** left to join Wigan Athletic for £1.25million

**Steve Simonsen** left to join Everton for £1million (Now Stoke City)

**Ian Moore** left to join Nottingham Forest for £1million (Now Tranmere Rovers)

**Ged Brannan** left to join Manchester City for £750,000

**John McGreal** left to join Ipswich Town for £650,000.

**Iain Hume** left to join Leicester City for £500,000

**Kenny Irons** left to join Huddersfield Town for £500,000

**Sean Thornton** left to join Sunderland - fee undisclosed (Now Leyton Orient)

**Joe Murphy** left to join WBA fee undisclosed (Now Scunthorpe Utd)



### Other graduates from Tranmere's Youth System

**Danny Coyne** (Tranmere Rovers)  
**Craig Curran** (Tranmere Rovers)  
**Chris Dagnall** (Rochdale)  
**Steve Davies** (Tranmere Rovers)  
**Danny Harrison** (Rotherham Utd)

**Clint Hill** (Crystal Palace)  
**Richard Hinds** (Sheffield Weds)  
**Mike Howard** (Morecambe)  
**Steve Jennings** (Tranmere Rovers)  
**Gary Jones** (Grimsby Town)  
**Ian Joy** (Real Salt Lake)

**Paul Linwood** (Chester City)  
**Alan Mahon** (Burnley)  
**Kevin McIntyre** (Shrewsbury Town)  
**Phillip Palethorpe** (Chester City)  
**Ian Sharps** (Rotherham Utd)







# Progress and find new goals with LFE in 2008

**PRO  
GRES  
SION  
2008**

**27<sup>th</sup> March '08**  
City of Manchester Stadium

**The first careers event exclusively for elite sports people takes place this month when Progression 2008 opens its doors at the City of Manchester Stadium on March 27<sup>th</sup> as part of a strategy to support, re-train and provide alternative career and study opportunities to sporting apprentices and those retiring from sport.**

Hosted by League Football Education in association with the PFA (Professional Footballer's Association) and The Football League, the event is endorsed by other sports and working bodies including the likes of The Professional Boxing Association, The English Institute

of Sport, The Professional Rugby Association, The General Federation of Trade Unions and The Education Sports Forum.

LFE Chief Executive, Alan Sykes, says: "The sporting world produces hundreds of exceptionally disciplined, dedicated and talented young people each year who do not continue to compete as professional athletes but who have a huge amount of valuable skills to offer in sport and in other industries.

"Our aim is to ensure these athletes find other ways to use their talents and abilities by introducing them to new training and career paths.

"We want to prepare athletes for careers outside or alongside sport to make sure they never lose the skills they've worked hard to achieve. Whether they're starting out as apprentices or are heading

for retirement; choosing to stay in sport or take a completely different direction, we want to make sure they have a viable ongoing path to work."

The day will be attended by exhibitors including representatives from the IT, armed forces, health, construction, engineering, financial services and retail industries, as well as universities, further education colleges and business advisors. It will also provide information to those athletes who want to access help and support to run their own businesses.

Sports stars from past and present such as Barry McGuigan, David Bentley, Jason Wilcox, Tracey Neville, Kevin Sinfield and James Hickman fully endorse the Progression 08 initiative.

Chris Powell, Chairman of the PFA and former England defender, said: "As a Professional footballer

and through my involvement with The PFA, I know firsthand how important it is to have alternative career options. The employment and training opportunities that Progression '08 offers are an important resource for athletes at any stage in their career and I'm pleased to endorse such an important initiative.

**Be part of it - visit [www.Progression08.com](http://www.Progression08.com) for more information and to register**







# Development Fund

The LFE Development Fund was set up to provide Clubs with an opportunity to invest in the delivery and support of the ASE programme. Last year, clubs were able to claim a maximum of £3000 each and 67 of the 68 clubs engaging with LFE utilised this fund. In total £182,000 was invested through these clubs into the ASE scheme.

Clubs used the funds for a variety of purposes. Whilst all clubs are different and so are their needs, five main areas attracted investment.

1. Cameras and Video Cameras
2. IT equipment
3. Heart rate monitors
4. Smart boards
5. Basic training equipment

Additionally some clubs broke the general patterns

and investments were made in such things as team building activities and psychology consultants.

Overall, we think that clubs were glad of the funds and used them in ways which improved the ASE experience.

The good news is that the Development Fund is again available in 2008. This

year funding has changed slightly and Clubs entitled to £500 for every framework achievement they managed in 2007. Apart from this everything else remains the same as last year.

To date, only a small number of clubs have made use of the fund this season. Act now to ensure

that you maximise your funding and add value to your ASE programme.

If you need any further help or advice on the Development Fund or have any ideas on how the scheme could be developed in future years please do not hesitate to contact Alan Sykes on 0870 4589250 or email [asykes@lfe.org.uk](mailto:asykes@lfe.org.uk)



Brighton Hove Albion, Hartlepool Utd and Tranmere Rovers used the funds to partake in team building activities.





## Lee Hills is soaring with the Eagles

The energetic left back made his first league debut against Watford in October 2007 and in January penned a two and a half year professional contract with the South London club. Having been on the books of both Wimbledon and Arsenal as a school boy, he joined Palace as an Apprentice and his decision to settle at Selhurst Park now appears to be reaping dividends.

A nominee for the The Football League's 2008 Championship Apprentice of the Year, Hills has translated his success on the pitch to the classroom and is well on his way to achieving a full ASE framework. Having already completed his Level 2 Certificate in Coaching and his NVQ he is currently working at Merit/Distinction level on his BTEC qualification and recognises the value of his all round Apprenticeship programme, "The ASE Programme has helped me improve my technical knowledge of the game and my understanding of players around me. Through my coaching qualification I have fostered skills that I can put in to practice out on the pitch while continuing to learn about the game

Lee Hills joined Crystal Palace as an Apprentice in the summer of 2006 and has risen through the ranks to feature for the Eagles in this season's championship campaign.

Obviously playing in the first team has been a dream come true and I'm really pleased to be at Palace. The club have got a good record for bringing home grown players through and it's been my ambition to play in the first team since I arrived here. Hopefully both myself and the club can progress because I hope one day to be playing for Palace in the Premiership and testing myself against the best players in the game"

Palace Coach Keith Curle believes that Hills attitude is key to his success, "Lee's outlook to learning is first class. He is always looking to improve himself as an individual and within the team framework. As a body of staff, we cannot give him enough information and it was fantastic to see him rewarded with a new contract in January"

LFE's Keith Waldon is also full of praise for the youngster; "Lee is always ahead of the game. He does not wait to be told - he asks. His attitude will ensure that whatever in life Lee does, he will do it to the best of his ability. I wish him every success in his chosen profession of football."



**"Lee's outlook to learning is first class"**

## Meet Craig Skinner Regional Officer

As Regional Officer for the North West, Craig is responsible for nine Football League clubs including former club Wrexham.



Craig started his career at Blackburn Rovers and savoured promotion to the Premier League with them before going on to enjoy spells at

Plymouth Argyle, Wrexham and York City.

'Skins' played alongside the likes of future Premier League Winners Jason Wilcox and David May during his spell at Ewood, but following the arrival of Kenny Dalglish and a glut of new signings, he found his first team opportunities limited and moved to Plymouth Argyle in the summer of 1992.

A three year tenure with the Pilgrims allowed Craig the time to kick start his career and in the summer of 1995 Wrexham paid £50,000 to secure the services of the hard working winger. He enjoyed a four-year stint at the Racecourse Ground; Wrexham supporters have fond memories of his Maradona-esque goal scored at Turf Moor c.1996 and his contribution to a side that were regularly challenging for promotion to the Championship.

Craig cites Wrexham's fantastic FA Cup adventure during the 1996-97 season as his personal highlight from his time with the Red Dragons "We came very close to promotion for two or three years on the spin but the FA Cup run we had that year was unbelievable. We knocked West Ham out away from home in the fourth round and then went to Birmingham and won at St Andrews but we just fell short in the quarter final and lost one nil away at Chesterfield when a semi-final against Middlesbrough at Old Trafford beckoned."

**"The Apprenticeship programme is an important step for players to continue lifelong learning and enhance both their football or secondary careers."**

A deadline day signing for York City in 1999, Craig endured a torrid time at Bootham Crescent snapping his cruciate ligament and it was while injured that he started to explore his options for the future by enrolling on a BSc (Hons) in Sports, Coaching & Exercise Science through The PFA. He subsequently hung up his boots and secured employment with FFE & VTS Ltd via links made on the degree course.



Craig fires past Neville Southall to register his first senior goal for Blackburn



Peter Shilton greets Craig and fellow new signing Keith Hill on their arrival at Plymouth

Craig enjoys his daily interaction with Clubs and Apprentices and is a keen believer that the Apprenticeship programme is an important step for players to continue lifelong learning and enhance both their football or secondary careers.

Away from his work, he is an avid Manchester United fan and season ticket holder. He cites two famous number 7's as his favourite players past and present, Captain Marvel for United and England, Bryan Robson and current PFA Player & Young Player of the Year Cristiano Ronaldo. As a winger, Craig fully appreciates Ronaldo's talents and believes the Portugal star will go on to become one of the all time greats of the game. Craig also enjoys live music, spending time with his family and holidaying in both Italy and France.

### The Final Word

Craig has one last piece of advice for all the Apprentices, "Enjoy your time at your club, always work hard and try to make the most of the opportunities you're given."





# Gills youngsters flying high

For the second year running it looks like Gillingham will achieve a 100% full framework completion on the Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme.

In addition the club has already offered five current second year Apprentices professional contracts for next term going to show that success on the pitch goes hand in hand with academic achievement.

Chris Kiely, Rory Hill, Danny Walder, Tayler Thomas and Tom Wynter have all made a positive impression throughout the season, and with the team

now riding high in the Youth Alliance South East Conference League, the boys have been rewarded for their success.

Gills boss, ex-Newcastle and Pompey defender, Mark Stimson said:

"They have all done well this season and from watching them in training and watching their games I could see that these boys have what it takes to make the step up."

"Their success is further proof of Gillingham's flourishing youth system which is consistently bringing through players with excellent ability. Scott and I now want to nurture

their talent even further by taking them into the professional game."

The Club recently upgraded their facilities improving the overall environment, which their young stars utilise on a daily basis. LFE's Keith Waldon believes that the Apprentices at Gillingham are given the perfect surroundings and support to achieve both on and off the park:

"As a Football Club Gillingham understand how the ASE programme facilitates their coaching scheme to boost the chances of a professional career for every apprentice. The staff

at Gillingham are very supportive and involved in the whole process."

The Gills ASE programme is going from strength to strength and credit must also be paid to LAW Training who work in partnership with the Football Club to deliver the education programme. LAW Training's Director, Lawrence Langdon oversees this area and along with Youth Coach Mark Patterson ensures that all the Apprentices remain focussed with their BTEC, Key Skills and NVQ.

Gillingham's Youth Team Coach, Mark Patterson agrees the support they receive is invaluable

"We're very happy with the education provision from LAW Training, they help us to produce great results from the lads which is good for us, good for LAW and good for LFE. On the education side we hope to achieve a full house again this year and it's great testimony to the work that we're doing that five of the current second years will be Professionals with the club next season."



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