

Careers advice that delivers for the whole season

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News from
League Football Education

Transfer

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League
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New Season New Structure



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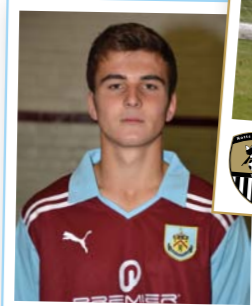
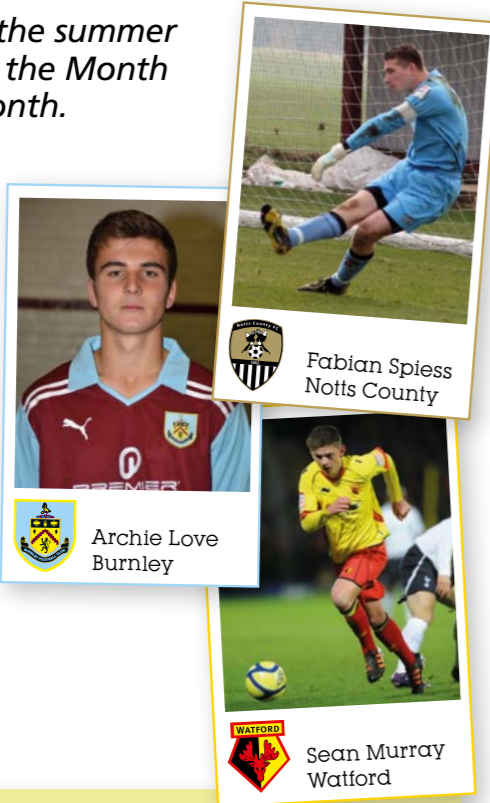
Apprentice of the Month

After a break over the summer LFE's Apprentice of the Month is back later this month.

Last season the likes of Johnny Williams (Crystal Palace), Lucas Lidakevicius (Barnsley) and Fabian Spiess (Notts County) were among those named as 'Apprentice of the Month'.

Each month our Regional Officers and Clubs will work in tandem to nominate their chosen players. An LFE panel will then judge the winner based on how each individual is progressing on his apprenticeship.

Once that has been decided the winner will be announced via our website and a presentation will be arranged at the player's respective club.



Archie Love
Burnley



Fabian Spiess
Notts County



Sean Murray
Watford

The 2011-12 Roll of Honour

September Johnny Williams – Crystal Palace	January Sean Murray – Watford
October Billy Daniels – Coventry City	February Lucas Lidakevicius – Barnsley
November Archie Love – Burnley	March Ryan Hopper – Accrington Stanley
December Luke James – Hartlepool United	April Fabian Spiess – Notts County



Fantasy Football Competition Returns

LFE's Fantasy Football competition is back for the 2012-13 season. Designed as a resource to help Apprentices complete their Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance, players manage a budget of £10m to select their best XI from the Championship.

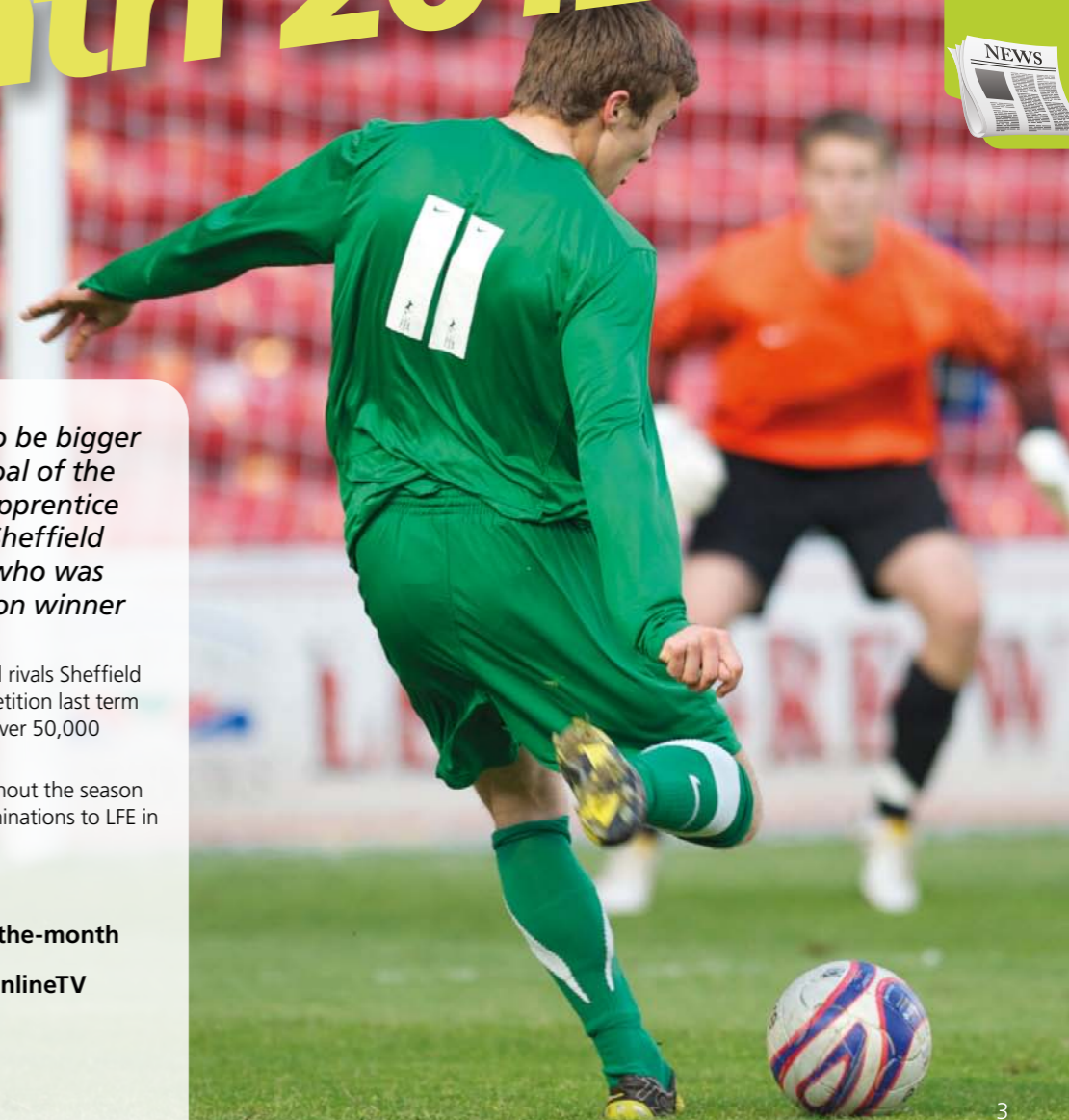
So if you're an Apprentice join in and go head-to-head with your team-mates and club and college staff in LFE's private league. And come May if you're the top ranked Apprentice you can expect to receive £250, while second and third placed Apprentices can expect to pick up cheques of £150 & £100 respectively.

All requests to join the league will be verified by LFE's Michael Cooke and if you haven't already joined you can still do so by using code 1809 on the website:

www.fantasy-football-league.co.uk

(Please note this code differs to the one contained within the NVQ Logbook. The Logbook provides further guidance for Apprentices.)

Goal of the Month 2012-13



It's back and it promises to be bigger than ever before - LFE's goal of the month. With over 1200 Apprentice players keen to emulate, Sheffield Wednesday's Jarrod Kyle who was crowned Goal of the Season winner in May.

His 25-yard thunderbolt against local rivals Sheffield United on 7 April beat off the competition last term with his winning strike watched by over 50,000 people.

The competition will operate throughout the season with clubs asked to submit their nominations to LFE in the usual fashion.

Watch any of last season's goals:

www.lfe.org.uk/goal-of-the-month

www.youtube.com/LFEOnlineTV





Got a story? Want to share news with other LFE partners? email: ssutcliffe@lfe.org.uk

The Performance Analysis in Sport course accredited by Northumbria University is available again to Club Staff, Coaches and current and former Apprentice players.

Last season 25 individuals passed the online work-based learning module which focuses on the skills, knowledge and understanding that are needed to develop professional practices and personal development.

Delivered remotely via nine online sessions, the Level 4, 20 credit programme, is flexible enough to fit around existing working commitments while providing students with evidence for future professional development portfolios.

Designed to take approximately 12 weeks this course is available from September onwards.

For more information or to apply for this course please visit: www.lfe.org.uk/videoanalysis

Performance Analysis in Sport



Youth Alliance & Premier U18 Leagues



The introduction of the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) has seen a move away from the two tier system of last season into four distinct categories.

As a result nine U18 leagues and five U21 leagues have been created as English football goes through its biggest overhaul at youth level since the Charter for Quality. This season LFE's website will be at the forefront of it all, bringing you all the fixtures, all results, top scorer tables and league tables.

The Football League Youth Alliance divisions remain split across four geographical regions, while Category 1 and 2 Clubs have been split into two U18 competitions. Twenty-two Category One clubs will play across three national groups while Category Two clubs compete in North and South leagues. At the time of going to writing seven clubs remain unbeaten in the Youth Alliance. Carlisle Utd, Walsall, Wrexham, Doncaster Rovers, York City, and Watford have all yet to taste defeat after solid starts to the new campaign.

Unsurprisingly, Eric Kinder's men sit top of the North West Division with four wins and a draw from their opening five fixtures. Hot on their heels though are fellow unbeaten clubs Bury, Walsall and Wrexham, while Shaun Garnett's Tranmere side prop up the table without a win. In the North East, Doncaster lead the way, with York and Hull City closely following Paul Wilson's side. Plymouth Argyle top the table in the South West, with Bristol Rovers in second only on goal difference. Swindon Town and Oxford Utd are a further point back. In the South East the top six is separated by just three points with leaders Leyton Orient keen to stay at the summit of a chasing pack that includes, Dagenham & Redbridge, Southend Utd, Watford, Portsmouth and Peterborough Utd. In the Premier U18 Leagues, Oliver Muldoon's goals have helped to propel Charlton Athletic to the summit of PL2 South while Nottingham Forest, Leicester City and Leeds Utd are split only by goal difference in PL2 North.

Bolton started life their PL1 U18 group in spectacular fashion. Top of the table Wanderers fired five past Arsenal on the opening day. Elsewhere, Southampton top their group with a one-hundred per cent record, while in London Chelsea and Fulham have both started the season in prolific form. Chelsea opened up with a 6 - 1 victory over Man City only for their West London neighbours Fulham to eclipse that score-line a week later in a 7 - 1 win over Wolves.

Image courtesy of PA

(All information correct at time of writing.)

At the Heart of the Matter

For many of LFE's Apprentices Saturday 25 August was nothing out of the ordinary. For most it was just another match-day in a long and arduous season but for Gillingham striker Jack Sellens, it was a momentous day.

He had returned to Youth Alliance football just three months after having open heart surgery.

Back in April, Sellens, along with other prospective Gills Apprentices, contracted youth players and first teamers attended a free heart screening day at Priestfield Stadium, organised by the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY).

It is a charity close to heart – literally and figuratively – for the people of Medway. Five years ago, Rochester schoolboy Jack Maddams died in his sleep, aged 17, and his family have since raised more than £17,000 to help CRY pay for young people to be tested for heart problems.

"The screening showed a slight abnormality with the rhythm and they checked what was wrong," Sellens explained to Touchline.

"They could see a blockage but they weren't sure what it was called because it's really rare. They thought it would probably require an operation though. We saw a consultant within a couple of days and he confirmed that prognosis."

Sellens had a 'Cor Triatriatum' where the left atrium was subdivided by some membrane, resulting in a restriction of blood flow from his top left atrium to the bottom.

"It was blocked by 80-90% so they had to cut it out. I was a bit nervous when I was first told but it happened so fast it doesn't sink in. Then the more they explained about it, I felt better.

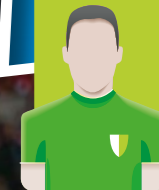
The consultant said he could sort it out and my fitness could well improve as a result.

Sellens underwent the four hour procedure at St Thomas's Hospital in South London just a month after first being seen and it was time so was able to sit his GCSE English and Maths exams and recover enough to take some part in pre-season training.

"All the previous operations the Consultant had done had been 100% fine so I felt okay about it. I've had this defect since birth so I've known no difference in how I've felt. I was obviously fit enough to play football! But the gap the blood was flowing through was so small that it putting extra stress on my lungs. They could've collapsed when I was playing or last me until I was 60-years-old but why take a chance."

At the first CRY screening day last year, Gillingham's youth team were screened and two of them, including manager Andy Hessenthaler's son Jake, had heart problems. Both were then seen by specialists before being given the all clear and allowed to continue to play, Jake earning a one year contract at the Gills.

Sellens now hopes to follow in Jake's footsteps after his ordeal. Having gradually increased his training over pre-season, he took part in an Under-16 friendly and then the big comeback: the second half of the Youth Alliance game against Portsmouth. Rarely has a 4-3 defeat felt so good!



At the start of each season every new Apprentice player that joins a Premier League or Football League club will undertake a Cardiovascular screening programme. This is jointly funded by The Football Association and The Professional Footballers Association.

And each year a small percentage of those tested will require some form of corrective surgery.

Derby County's Irish centre-back Mark O'Brien is one of the most well known players to have undergone heart surgery in recent years. The Rams defender going under the knife during 2009-10 to correct a valve problem.

Accrington Stanley duo Bobby Grant (now Rochdale) and Peter Murphy are also among a band of players that have required corrective surgery both made a full recovery. And only last season, Crawley Town's Dan Millard had a similar procedure and is now back playing for the Reds Youth and Reserves sides.

On Tour



"I know it's subsidised by the Leonardo Da Vinci fund for Life Long Learning but LFE did a great job pulling everything together.

"Trips like this can only aid the development of our players who've not only had the chance to pit their wits against some of best young players in Europe but also look at some of the technical aspects of the game from a completely different angle."



The tour which was organised by LFE and lasted 12 days saw the three Football League clubs play a combined total of 11 matches against the likes of De Graafschap, Feyenoord, Fortuna Sittard, NEC Nijmegen, VFL Osnabruck and Vitesse Arnhem.

Derby County boasted the most impressive record of the touring party remaining unbeaten throughout their stay in Holland. Oldham Athletic won two, drew one and lost one of their four matches while Cheltenham won two and lost two of their four games.

"It was a great trip for the lads and really worthwhile exercise," said Derby County's Academy Manager, Darren Wassall.



While Wassall was cheered by his team's performances, the tour provided plenty of other footballing opportunities.

"The facilities were top class," said Cheltenham Town's Head of Youth Russ Milton, "Not only that it's great to spend so much time with your players from a camaraderie and social perspective.

"It's good for the lads as well. They will have learned quite a lot about their team-mates and themselves and what they're going to have to do if they want a career out of this game."

While the excellent training facilities were provided by Eredivisie outfits, Willem II, ADO Den Haag and VVV-Venlo one unexpected bonus



of the tour came in the form of a Question and Answer session with former England Manager and current FC Twente boss Steve McClaren who happily gave up his time to chat to the lads about his own football experiences.

"It was good for the lads to be able to talk to Steve McClaren," said Oldham Athletic's Academy Manager, Tony Philliskirk.

"It's a different voice than they are perhaps used to but a lot of the same messages that we try to drum into them came through. He spoke very candidly about his time as a player, coach and now as a Manager and some of the anecdotes he told the lads definitely provided food for thought."

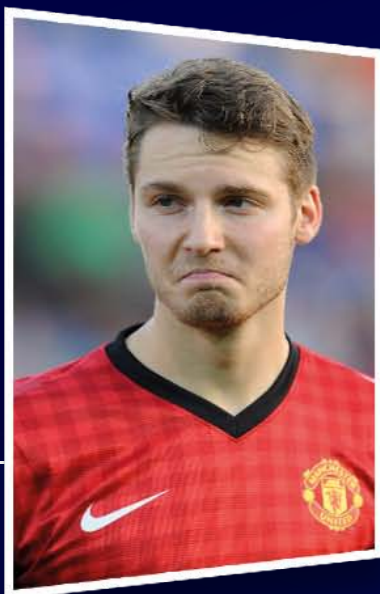
Dan Jolley, Project Manager at LFE added: "This is the fourth year we've been able to take clubs over to Europe using Leonardo funding. It's fantastic for club staff as they have been able to share best practice with their European counterparts but more importantly it allows us to support our Apprentices and take the work we already do as an organisation onto an even greater level.

"Culturally they all get the chance to sample a different way of life, while from a playing perspective, dealing with different styles of play, coaching and tactics can only help them improve."



On the move

The bi-annual frenzy when footballers are spotted at petrol stations, airports and football grounds up and down the country has come and gone. And while the climax to the close of the Transfer Window was as exciting as ever, this summer has seen an unprecedented number of former apprentices up sticks and move to pastures new. From those heading to the top of the tree to those moving to more modest surroundings, Touchline runs the rule over this summer's activity.



Nick Powell
(Crewe Alexandra to Manchester Utd)

After two years on the Apprenticeship programme, over 60 first-team appearances and with 16 goals Nick Powell signed off from his time at Crewe with a stunning Wembley strike that set Alex on their way to victory in last season's League Two play-off final. A regular for Steve Davis' side last term, opportunities to impress are likely to be less frequent this season after completing a big money move to Old Trafford in June.



Gael Bigirimana
(Coventry City to Newcastle Utd)

Born in Burundi, Africa, Bigirimana joined Coventry as a 12 year-old and moved through the club's youth ranks until he signed on as an Apprentice in the summer of 2010. Named as The Championship 'Apprentice of the Year' in March, the defensive midfielder made 26 league appearances for the Sky Blues last term. And while his efforts couldn't help City avoid the drop, his performances were rewarded with a £1m move to Newcastle in July.



Jay Rodriguez
(Burnley to Southampton)

A goal every other game last season was enough to tempt Southampton Boss Nigel Adkins into paying around £6m for the Clarets youth graduate over the summer. The only apprentice in his year group to turn professional at Turf Moor in 2007, Rodriguez played well over 100 games for Burnley and has represented England at U21 Level.



Sean Scannell
(Crystal Palace to Huddersfield Town)

Another former Championship 'Apprentice of the Year' winner (in 2009), Scannell burst onto the scene with Crystal Palace during the 2007 – 08 season. Still only 21-years old the Striker cum winger has an excellent pedigree in the form of over 140 appearances for The Eagles and caps for The Republic of Ireland at Youth, U21 and B Levels. No wonder then that Simon Grayson moved to snap him up to bolster his Huddersfield Town outfit for a fee reportedly in the region of £900,000.



Jacob Butterfield
(Barnsley to Norwich City)

He might have suffered a serious knee injury last season but that didn't stop Norwich City from swooping for the England U21 International and Barnsley's youngest ever captain earlier this summer. Described by his former Boss Keith Hill as 'one of the most sought after creative midfielders in the Championship', last year, the two club's finally agreed a fee for the 22-year-old in July after weeks of wrangling.

- Adam Barton - Preston North End to Coventry City
- Adrian Mariappa - Watford to Reading
- Aidan Chippendale - Huddersfield Town to Accrington Stanley
- Andrew Coughlin - Tranmere Rovers to Wrexham
- Billy Bodin - Swindon Town to Torquay Utd
- Byron Webster - Northampton Town to Yeovil Town
- Chimdi Akubine - Watford to Brighton & Hove Albion
- Chris Gunter - Nottingham Forest to Reading
- Conor McLaughlin - Preston North End to Fleetwood Town
- Courtney Richards - Coventry City to Brighton & Hove Albion
- Craig Curran - Carlisle to Morecambe
- Danny Mayor - Preston North End to Sheffield Weds
- Elliot Chamberlain - Leicester City to Exeter City
- Gavin Massey - Watford to Colchester Utd
- George Miller - Preston North End to Accrington Stanley
- Jaime Proctor - Preston North End to Swansea City
- Jaime Tank - Walsall to Wolverhampton Wanderers
- Jake Caprice - Crystal Palace to Blackpool
- James Baxendale - Doncaster Rovers to Walsall
- Joe Anyon - Lincoln City to Sheffield Weds
- Joe Mattock - West Bromwich Albion to Sheffield Weds
- Joe Thompson - Rochdale to Tranmere Rovers
- Jordan Fagbola - Rochdale to Stockport County
- Lee Hills - Crystal Palace to Stevenage
- Lloyd James - Colchester to Leyton Orient
- Luke Clark - Preston North End to Accrington Stanley
- Michael Jacobs - Northampton to Derby County
- Nathaniel Clyne - Crystal Palace to Southampton
- Nathaniel Mendez-Laing - Wolves to Peterborough Utd
- Oliver Norburn - Leicester City to Bristol Rovers
- Paul Black - Oldham Athletic to Tranmere Rovers
- Reece James - Preston North End to Manchester United
- Sam Hird - Doncaster Rovers to Chesterfield
- Scott Loach - Watford to Ipswich Town
- Seanan Clucas - Preston North End to Bristol Rovers
- Shane Byrne - Leicester City to Bury
- Steve Davies - Derby County to Bristol City
- Steven Jennings - Motherwell to Coventry City
- Theo Jones - Norwich City to Brighton & Hove Albion
- Tommy Elphick - Brighton & Hove Albion to AFC Bournemouth





Getting Involved

Images courtesy of PA

Crawley Town Apprentice Ryan Richefond has had an interesting few weeks. Just three weeks after joining the Reds on the first-year of his apprenticeship the 16 year-old swapped his duties at the Broadfield Stadium for the Olympic Stadium in Stratford as a volunteer at the greatest show on earth.

Here he tells Touchline just what it meant for him to be involved at London 2012.

"The chance to get involved with London 2012 started months ago" said Richefond.

"Our School Sports Coordinator took a mixed group of students over to the Barclays Building, in London's Canary Wharf. There we were interviewed and participated in a couple of challenges. After that, the LOCOG panel chose the people who worked well together to go forward and be trained to work at the Olympic Stadium.

"It felt surreal in the build up to the games to think that in a matter of weeks, I would be standing on the track in front of 80,000 people with a billion more watching live on TV. As the time drew closer and the games were underway, I started to get more excited at the prospect of rubbing shoulders with some of the biggest names in sport.

"And on Thursday 3 August 2012, the day finally arrived: and I was one of the few privileged people

to be involved as a kit carrier for the world's finest athletes.

"In the four days I spent working at the stadium, I had so many thrilling memories. Undoubtedly the stand-out moment was carrying Yohan "The Beast" Blake's kit for his 100m heat! I admired the fact that he managed to stay so calm and relaxed before running such a big race, so much so that he was chatting and joking with me. I also carried the kit for the Kenyan 3000m steeplechase champion, Ezekiel Kemboi, who shook my hand to thank me afterwards. I got to see the legend that is Usain Bolt in a breath-taking 100m final, Jessica Ennis achieve a lifetime dream and Oscar Pistorius run an awe-inspiring 400m.

"The actual kit-carrying task itself was fairly straight forward: prior to a race other volunteers and I lined up in the tunnel and waited for the athletes. Once they arrived we would then walk out before them to the roar of the crowd and place our numbered boxes behind the corresponding lane marker.

"When the athletes had taken off their warm layers and put them in the boxes, it was our job to then take the kit to the 'Mixing room'. This was where the athletes came to after their races.

"Although it sounds far from glamorous; I was in my home city, in an amazing atmosphere, meeting world class athletes and when you combine the three it makes it one of the most special experiences of my life.

"Seeing these athletes that I admire so much has not only made me more determined to succeed as a footballer but to be successful in everything I do. Working at the London 2012 Olympic Games was a short insight into the world of professional sports people and the hard work that is required to become the best. I now hope that my best efforts will help me make the most of my football career.

"I was back at Olympic Park in September for the Paralympics, this time as a ball boy for the wheelchair tennis but I'd just like to sign off by thanking Crawley Town for allowing me to have time-off to enjoy an unforgettable Olympic and Paralympic experience".

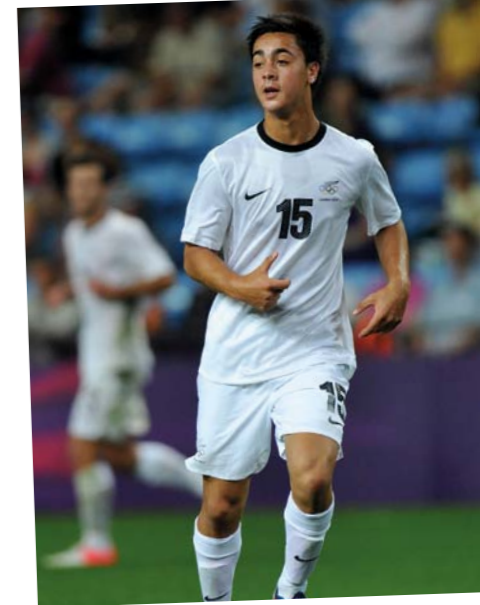
Ryan Richefond wasn't the only player on the ASE programme to be involved at London 2012. Burnley's Cameron Howieson was in action at the games in the Mens Football competition for New Zealand. The 17-year-old who earned his first international cap against El Salvador in May featured in the Olly Whites three group games which resulted in two defeats (against Belarus and Brazil) and a draw (vs Egypt). And while they were eliminated at the first stage he took a lot from the tournament.

"It's hard to pick out any one thing as a highlight," Howieson told Touchline.

"It was fantastic and you felt part of something really special.

"The buzz around the athletes village was something else, personally though I don't think I'll ever forget the experience of playing against Brazil or playing in front of a packed Old Trafford.

"These are the sort of experiences you dream of as a kid and I feel privileged to have taken part and represented my Country at the games".



Ship comes in at Seaside Clubs

Fleetwood Town and Morecambe are new arrivals on to the ASE programme for the 2012-13 season.



Ten miles of Irish Sea may separate the two coastal towns but the Cod Army and the Shrimps have their similarities – both compete in League Two, play in red and share the same vision to develop professional footballers.

Fleetwood's meteoric rise from the North West Counties League to The Football League comes after five promotions in seven years. A new £4.5m stand was opened at Highbury last year, a signal of intent for the future.

And now the club is hoping its success on and off the pitch can be replicated within its newly formed youth department, as Academy Manager Steve Carlin was keen to tell LFE:

"There has been a massive change all the way through. For the youth it's the prospect of working with LFE, playing in the Football League Youth Alliance and being able to bring better quality players into the club."

"The Chairman and the Gaffer have a vision of developing players on our own turf. It's something we see as a must. They know they can't keep signing players for the first-team and the infrastructure of the club will only be stabilised if we bring young talent through."

Although as Apprentices of the famous fishing town will find out, it's not just about playing matches on a Saturday morning.

"The ASE programme is a positive for the club and players," continued Carlin, "they will be studying at Blackpool Sixth Form College and LFE deliver a great package of the BTEC, NVQ and Coaching Certificate which is related to what they now do for a living."

Across Morecambe Bay, looking to implement the same strategy are Shrimps duo Richard Danson (Academy Manager) and Dean Ramsdale (Head of Youth).

"Morecambe is a progressive club and I hope that working alongside Richard we can bring further success to the club. Things are slowly developing and it's really exciting to be a part of what we are working towards."

"I am on the training ground each day working with the lads who are going to make up our youth-team and there's a real buzz about the place."

Manager Jim Bentley has proved in the past that he isn't scared to take a punt on young players. First-team forwards Lewis Alessandra (Oldham Athletic) and Jordan Burrow (Chesterfield) both started their careers with Ramsdale now onboard, the hope is, that the club will now be able to nurture their own conveyor belt of talent.

Ramsdale's arrival at the Globe Arena comes after six years at Preston North End where he shaped and influenced a number of careers of now professional footballers.

"My remit at PNE was to get players into the first-team. That was achieved with the likes of Danny Mayor, Adam Barton and Jamie Proctor who all became key players before being sold on. That's what I'm looking to achieve here and I already think we have one or two here that are capable of making the grade."

As if by fate the two newest kids on the block squared up on the opening day of the Youth Alliance season. The result a 1-1 draw. Honours even then for now as both clubs seek to grow and establish successful youth development programmes in their own right.



Turning it around

Four years ago, Kieran Kenlock was just starting his Apprenticeship at Crystal Palace. Two summers ago he was released by the club but now he is back, putting his experience to use as Assistant Sport Scientist.

With an outstanding set of GCSE results, Kenlock was a well regarded Apprentice at the club who gained Distinctions across the board on the BTEC National Diploma. He was also one of the top performers at the UK Sport 'Pitch to Podium' testing at LFE's Careers Events, making him a target of other sports. But what he wanted most – a professional contract at his local club, Crystal Palace – failed to materialise.

"At first it was quite difficult to come back to a club that in essence, didn't want me," admits Kenlock, a strong full-back in his time at Selhurst Park.

"However, over pre-season it's been easier and the lads here have been great with me."

When Palace gave Kenlock the dreaded news, he knuckled down to complete his BTEC with the aim of obtaining the highest grades possible and, having already made applications to several of the country's most renowned sporting universities, prepared for the next period of his life.

That started when he accepted a place at the prestigious Loughborough University to study for a BSc Honours in Sport and Exercise Science.

He continues: "Coming from an environment at a football club where you're required to grow up quite quickly, going to University meant I was able to enjoy a lifestyle that a young footballer doesn't. At first it was hard to adjust: going to lectures every day, being in the library and the whole experience.

I spent a lot of my first year wondering whether I wanted to be there but I found my feet, embraced change and realised how lucky I was to be at the best university in the country for my course."

Kenlock now appreciates what a fine preparation his Apprenticeship was for studying sports science. "We take similar modules to some of those I studied on my BTEC but everything is covered in much greater depth. There's more focus on 'how' and 'why' things happen and it requires patience and a lot of reading and research. Being back at Palace allows me to apply the theory and practice gained during my studies into a real-life working context.

Having completed his first two years at Loughborough, Kenlock is also keen to ensure, his work placement, at Palace sets him up for the final year of his course.

"I'll be using the next twelve months to see what else is out there for me. It's important for me to try and experience different opportunities

and then refocus my efforts ahead of my last year at Loughborough. I'm hoping that before I go back there, I'll have a better understanding of the sports science field and be ready to tackle my final year.

"My role at Palace involves monitoring players, helping to plan and deliver sessions and ensuring that players are properly hydrated at all times. I even get the boots on and get involved in the occasional session! I'm generally just a helping hand wherever needed!"

Since Kenlock's departure as a player, the club has continued to produce talented youngsters through their Academy. Wilfried Zaha spent last season as one of the most talked about teenagers in the Championship and was initially in consideration the Great Britain Olympic squad. Johnny Williams followed Zaha into the first team, the winger from Tonbridge in Kent becoming a first-team regular before breaking his leg on Wales Under-21 international duty. He completed his BTEC Extended Diploma with a triple distinction and is now back in Dougie Freedman's squad.

"It's good to see them taking great strides forward," added Kenlock, who now plays for Tooting & Mitcham Utd in the Ryman League. "It's strange because not too long ago I was in the same place as them, now I'm wearing staff kit."



Check out the LFE team online

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When Portsmouth kicked-off their season against Plymouth in the Capital One Cup on Tuesday 14 August manager Michael Appleton handed 11 players their first year professionals. Amongst them were six first year apprentices graduates of the Club's Apprenticeship programme while one of this year's second year cohort, Adam Webster, started alongside his former youth-team colleagues.

Only two of last year's line-up had survived the summer exodus at Fratton Park, while nine of the starting XI were at school when Pompey drew with AC Milan in the UEFA Cup in 2008, the season after winning the FA Cup.

In times gone by the likes of Younes Kaboul, Nwankwo Kanu, and Niko Kranjčar could've been called upon to help fight any fires. How times change! At Home Park that evening, Appleton had only 17 year-old youth-team centre forward Jack Moloney and first year Apprentices Bradley Tarduck and Jack Whatmough in reserve.



Not only did the Club suffer at first-team level, eventually sliding into the Conference in 2007, but a succession of promising youngsters were snapped up by other Clubs.

The most telling fact to emerge is that Thompson is the first United youth graduate to make his full League debut for the club since Jimmy Benefield in 2003.

"I find it amazing that Niall is the first player to come through the youth system here and start a first-team game for nearly ten years," said Ling.

"Some of that is down to the scheme closing down for a while, and some of it is because it hasn't been strong enough. It scares me in a way, because something wasn't being done right. It sometimes comes down to a manager who is prepared to give youth a chance."

Of course bringing through teenage stars isn't just restricted to the South Coast – Others to watch out for over the season include:

- Bradley Dack – Gillingham
- Dean Snedker – Northampton Town
- Brad Potts – Carlisle Utd
- Sam Bryam – Leeds utd
- Carl Winchester & James Tarkowski – Oldham Athletic
- Cole Stockton & Jake Kirby – Tranmere Rovers
- Will Hayhurst – Preston North End
- Max Clayton – Crewe Alexandra
- James Husband - Doncaster Rovers
- George Sykes - Barnet
- Callum McFadzean – Sheffield Utd



Teenage Kicks

And once player coach Ashley Westwood was withdrawn, injured during the first-half, all ten outfield players left on the pitch were teenagers. Indeed Westwood at 35 years of age, had more league appearances than the rest of the squad put together!

Yet while the circumstances that saw Pompey field such a young side are unique many other Football League clubs have used the opening weeks of the season to blood some of their talented teenagers.

150 miles down the coast at Plainmoor, Torquay Utd boss Martin Ling is slowly developing his own crop of home-grown players.

Winger Niall Thompson and defender Kirtys McKenzie (both first year pro's) have already made debuts while Apprentices Jake Hutchings and Danny Sullivan were both named amongst the substitutes for the recent trip to Port Vale.

It's a far cry from the decision in 2004, to close the Gulls' youth scheme for financial reasons, and the lean years which followed.



"These things are never easy – they take time and investment, and I know that can be a problem for a chairman.

"I'm not saying that someone like Niall Thompson is the finished article, but what we do know is that he can have an impact on this season."

Should Ling require any further evidence of how a youth can prosper he need only look at several of the Gulls neighbours.

At Plymouth Argyle Luke Young has become a regular since penning a professional deal in 2011, while Jordan Copp, Jed Harper-Penman, Jared Sims, Isaac Vassell and current second year Apprentice Matt Leconte have also been exposed to the inner sanctums of the Home Park first-team dressing room.

In the same neck of the woods, Jordan Moore-Taylor, one of six Exeter apprentices promoted to the professional ranks over the summer faced a baptism of fire in his first start for the Grecians, a Capital One Cup clash with Crystal Palace.

The 18-year-old not only had to contend with playing in an unfamiliar left-back role, he also had to deal with Palace winger Wilfried Zaha who has been heralded as one of the shining lights in the Championship.

"It was exceptional for an 18-year-old making his first senior start," said Exeter Boss Paul Tisdale.

"He won't play every game this season as he's still got a lot of development to do and a lot to learn, but it's a good start."

With Moore-Taylor stepping into the starting line-up so convincingly Tisdale sees no reason why others can't follow.

"It puts them all closer to the first-team and with a good 3-4 weeks which Jordan has had you can quickly gain the trust of the manager and get a chance. He's (Moore-Taylor) has taken his," added Tisdale.

Elsewhere Southampton's start to life back in the Premier League might not have gone to plan but the mature performances of 17-year-old midfielder James Ward-Prowse have provided Saints fans with plenty to cheer.

Described by his Manager Nigel Adkins as an 'Outstanding talent' Ward-Prowse has featured in all three of the Club's opening fixtures since making his league debut away at champions Manchester City on the opening day.

