

**Ofsted**  
Outstanding  
2011/2012

Issue 19 - December 2012  
News from  
League Football Education

League  
Football  
Education

# Timeline

Inside: A Year in Pictures | Fantasy Football Update | GOTM

## Stepping up to the Mark



It was awarded by  
The Football League  
and the Professional  
Footballers' Association



Skills  
Funding  
Agency

Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills



Apprenticeships

# LFE Pre-Season Tours & Progression



*Middlesbrough, Tranmere Rovers and Chesterfield have successfully secured a place on LFE's pre-season tour of the Netherlands next summer.*

The trio fought off intense competition from 14 other Football League clubs after a rigorous application and selection process.

The tour, which will help the clubs prepare for the 2013-14 season, will see their youth-teams pitted against top Dutch sides and for many it will be their first experience of playing continental opposition.

"It's great for the lads," said Chesterfield's Head of Coach Development Mark Jules. "When I was a player I went on tours to Europe pretty much every year and you're able to learn from it and bring things back that help your game."

While the chance to sample a different football culture is one attraction, Tranmere's Head of Youth, Shaun Garnett believes the trip offers much more.

"It's not just about football," said Garnett. "The lads get the chance to go out and spend a couple of weeks away from home in a new environment and sample a different culture and lifestyle."

LFE is also pleased to announce that Create Your Legacy 2013 will be held on 20 March 2013 at St George's Park, Burton – while the Assessment Trials will take place on 2 May and 7-9 May.

[www.lfe.org.uk/progression](http://www.lfe.org.uk/progression)



# Youth Alliance & U18 League Update

**With the new season well underway and the Christmas break almost upon us, it's an ideal time to reflect on the first half of the campaign.**

At the time of writing Watford look set to hold the top spot over Christmas in the Youth Alliance South East with a seven point lead over Leyton Orient. The newcomers to the competition have made a fantastic start to the season and racked up 30 goals to date.

Oxford United, Hull City and Preston North End all top their respective divisions by a whisker so the December fixtures will determine who sits at the summit over the festive break.

At the other end of the table spare a thought for Tranmere in the North West. While Rovers have a fine tradition of producing youth players, including the half dozen that currently inhabit Ronnie Moore's high flying first-team - Shaun Garnett's U18s have yet to pick up a

win - with their only point coming from a draw with Port Vale in August.

In the Professional Development League (South) Charlton top the pile with seven victories from their nine games so far, separated only by goal difference from Colchester United in second place.

Nottingham Forest and Leeds United head up the top of the Northern division with only goal difference separating the two clubs. There is room for improvement from Derby County and Brentford, with both yet to register a win.

Reading and Bolton Wanderers are racing ahead in their U18 Premier League group, with West Ham a distant third some 13 points behind the leaders.

# Goal of the Month

Over 30,000 votes have been cast so far this season, with a record 17,000 recorded for September.

Crawley Town's Alex Laing won that contest for his unstoppable 30-yard effort in a 2-2 draw against Portsmouth. While Sullay Kaikai (Crystal Palace) and Levander Pyke (Charlton Athletic) have also been crowned monthly winners.

With more and more spectacular strikes to choose from each month just selecting a shortlist is difficult enough. That's why LFE is producing a festive feast of goals that contains every goal submitted to us during 2012.

The video will be released over the Christmas period on LFE's website and Youtube.

[www.lfe.org.uk](http://www.lfe.org.uk)    LFEonlineTV





# Fantasy Football Update

At the time of writing, Rotherham United's Connor Johnson leads the way in LFE's Fantasy Football League which sees Apprentices juggle their resources to select their best Championship XI's.

Jake McCarthy (Bournemouth), Liam Triggs (Portsmouth) and Joe Cracknell (Hull City) closely follow but there

is still a long way to go before May, with £250, £150, £100 being offered as prizes for the top three placed Apprentices.

Put yourself back in the race and review your team at:

[www.fantasy.football-league.co.uk](http://www.fantasy.football-league.co.uk)

	Manager	Team Name	Goals	Assists	Pts
1	Connor Johnson	ivory toast	57	27	265
2	Jake McCarthy	Ivory Toast	51	26	261
3	Liam Triggs	The	53	26	255
4	Joe Cracknell	Dream team!	50	29	255
5	Matt Murphy	FC Murph	49	24	255
6	Matt Carter	The Hammers	45	28	251
7	Charlie Davis	Helmet FC	44	27	249
8	Baily Cargill	cargill	51	18	239
9	James Randall	The Untouchables	39	30	239
10	Lewy Blackmore	Dyslexia Untied	47	29	238

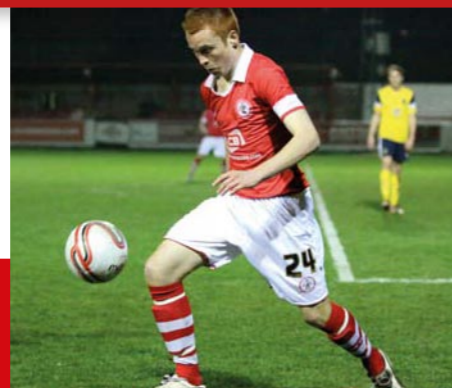
## Mike Johnson Award Winner

Former Accrington Stanley Apprentice Ryan Hopper has been named as the winner of the Mike Johnson Memorial Award.

Hopper, who made four first-team appearances for Stanley was also LFE's Apprentice of the Month in March. He signed a professional deal at the Crown Ground in May but has since been released.

This award recognises his contribution off the pitch and in particular on the NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance.

Hopper who received an engraved glass trophy and £250 cheque prize, said: "Hours and hours of hard-work go into the NVQ so it's nice to know I've been rewarded for going that extra yard and that my efforts have been recognised."



## You Said: We Did

LFE has been awarded a near perfect score of 9.5 out of 10 by an independent survey commissioned by the Skills Funding Agency. The FE Choices 'Employer Satisfaction' questionnaire was conducted by Ipsos Mori with club staff at the end of last season.

Feedback from stakeholders has also judged a wide range of enrichment activities including Sporting Chance and If U Care Share sessions as 'Outstanding'.

Meanwhile the task of appraising LFE's performance in its own Self-Assessment Report (SAR) has been relatively easy this year, after Ofsted's glowing endorsement of the organisation in April. Her Majesty's Inspectors graded LFE as 'Outstanding' across all areas of its provision, so it was no surprise to see these judgements replicated in the SAR after feedback from staff, clubs, Apprentices and education providers.

To read summaries of all available reports or for more information please visit:

[www.lfe.org.uk/apprentice-info/you-said-we-did](http://www.lfe.org.uk/apprentice-info/you-said-we-did)



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

# Development Fund 2012-13



'Come and get it', that's the message from LFE Chief Executive Alan Sykes to clubs in relation to the 2012-13 Development Fund.

"Clubs can now submit their requests to claim for a variety of resources or equipment to improve the Apprenticeship programme," Sykes told Touchline.

"I would urge all clubs to make applications as soon as possible and not to wait to the last minute. In the past video analysis software, video cameras, team building days and fitness equipment have been popular choices," he continued.

For more information or ideas of how to spend your allocation of funding please visit the LFE website where a dedicated area has been set up to offer guidance on claims and provide downloadable forms:

[www.lfe.org.uk/about/development-fund](http://www.lfe.org.uk/about/development-fund)

If you need any further help or advice in relation to 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 at:

[asykes@lfe.org.uk](mailto:asykes@lfe.org.uk)



# Making an Impact

Four months into the new season, it's time for Touchline to assess what impact the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) is having on our clubs.

The EPPP has seen all Academies and Centres of Excellence effectively reorganised into four groupings. Each club was then tasked with making their own application to join the category that best suited their financial, sporting and staffing situations.

## SO WHAT'S HAPPENED?

### The Games Programme:

While the majority of clubs continue to play at the same level as they were prior to the new infrastructure there have been several changes.

The reformation of the FA Premier Academy League has seen the creation of the Under 18 Premier League which consists of 22 clubs. Most are from the top flight but several are from the Championship.

The Under 18 Professional Development League (North or South) is a mixture of clubs that have dropped down from the old Academy League and those that have cranked up their academy arrangements by investing more money in better facilities and increased staffing levels. Barnet, Brentford, Brighton & Hove Albion, Colchester Utd, Millwall et al - all fit that bill.

Category 3 and 4 clubs compete in the Football League Youth Alliance which contains 52 clubs across four divisions.

Crawley, Yeovil, and new boys Fleetwood and Morecambe are the only sides in Category 4.

### Staffing:

Almost every club has had to increase staffing. Take Category 3 Clubs – last season 3 employees would have been the norm whereas this year they are required to have at least 5 full-time members of staff.

At the next level up clubs like Derby have around 12-15 full-time staff now, with areas

like fitness, strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, skills and player education bolstered.

In the top tier clubs can have over 30 staff in their academies.

### Facilities:

As well as finding space to house all the extra staff now required, many clubs have built new offices, classrooms, IT areas and added to their training facilities with, for example, all weather pitches.

### Education:

Apprentices at a Category 1 club are likely to integrate 10 hours of education with 14 hours of full time football training. Some even teach normal school lessons in on-site classrooms.

In the bottom two categories 12 hours of football development is mixed with academic work.

## A typical week for a category 1 & 3 club:

CATEGORY 1 CLUB			CATEGORY 3 CLUB		
Monday	AM	Match analysis session & training	Monday	AM	Team training session
	PM	College lessons		PM	NVQ session eg.match analysis
Tuesday	AM	Team training session	Tuesday	AM	Team training session
	PM	Gym work & NVQ session e.g. Nutrition		PM	Position specific training
Wednesday	AM	Position specific training	Wednesday	AM	College lessons
	PM	College lessons		PM	College lessons
Thursday	AM	Team training & core strength sessions	Thursday	AM	Team training session
	PM	College lessons		PM	College lessons
Friday	AM	Match preparation & Psychology sessions	Friday	AM	Match preparation sessions
	PM	Flexibility & agility session		PM	Rest time
Saturday	AM	U18 Premier League fixture	Saturday	AM	U18 Youth Alliance match
	PM	Watch first-team match (if at home)		PM	Watch first-team match (if at home)
Sunday	AM	Recovery session	Sunday	AM	Day off
	PM	Free time		PM	Day off



17 GAMES



17 GAMES



- National Player of the Week
- CAA Player of the Week
- Most Valuable Player

# STATE SIDE SUCCESS



Named National Player of the Week and the CAA Player of the Week, Most Valuable Player at the STIHL Soccer Classic Tournament and with a goal ratio that is better than one in two games, former Nottingham Forest Apprentice Tim Hopkinson is making a name for himself at Old Dominion University in the USA.

The Nottingham born forward went out to the States in the summer of 2010 after enlisting the services of a Sports Scholarship agency and while the Monarchs season has just ended, Hopkinson's performances have left a lasting impression.

Six goals in his first three appearances this term including one, in front of a 6,848 crowd at Creighton University set the tone and while he was unable to maintain that strike rate he has earned himself a reputation as one of the hottest properties in the country with 10 goals and five assists from 17 games.

"I've got great team-mates around me and I'm just putting the ball in the net after everyone else has done the hard-work," said Hopkinson recently.

**"As long as the team wins that's all I'm bothered about - individual accolades are nice but it's a team game."**

Based in Virginia, on the East coast a seven hour drive away from New York and three from Washington DC, Hopkinson admits he is often asked what made him choose to take up his scholarship at ODU.

"I had a few options and a lot of people ask why I came here but it's really simple. I spoke to Coach (Alan) Dawson and he made me feel really wanted and made me feel that I'd be welcomed. He told me out here your team-mates are like a family, like brothers everyone looks out for each other and that sold the place to me.

"The student lifestyle is great. I even enjoy cooking my own food and doing all that sort of stuff. We all support all our friends on all the other sports teams and it's a real family atmosphere which is amazing when you consider the student population is something like twenty odd thousand."

# January



Wolves Defender Danny Bathth picked up Young Player of the Year at the inaugural Asian Football Awards (AFA).



Marvin Sordell moves to Bolton.



Jonny Howson heads to Norwich.



Mike Johnson Award Winner Dan Burn made a donation to help his former Darlington team-mates in their hour of need.

# February



Notts County's U18s paid tribute to those that lost their lives at the Battle of the Somme and their own Jim King.

# April



Burnley reach the The FA Youth Cup semi-final but their hopes of winning the trophy for the first time since 1968 are ended by their neighbours Blackburn who go through 3-1 on aggregate.

# May



Crewe Alexandra's Nick Powell (left) celebrates scoring his side's first goal in their League Two Play Off Final victory over Cheltenham at Wembley.



LFE is hailed as 'Outstanding by Ofsted' with sessions like this one at Accrington deemed an area of strength.



# A year in pictures - 2012

# March

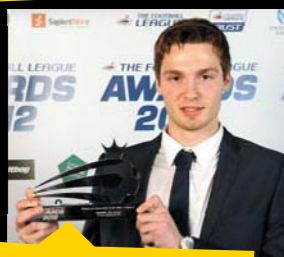
## The Football League Awards 2012



Apprentice of the Year - Championship : Gael Bigirimana.



Apprentice of the Year - League 1 : Jordan Cousins.



Apprentice of the Year - League 2 : Nick Powell.

## Create Your Legacy 2012



# June



Sheffield Wednesday's Jarrod Kyle wins Goal of the Season!

## Assessment Trials 2012



Assessment Trials provided the perfect opportunity for released players to showcase their talents.



# November

## England Friendly



Wilfried Zaha & Carl Jenkinson make their England debuts against Sweden. Both are recent ASE graduates.



# September



Positive Mental attitude: Trained Brain's Jamie Edwards starts his visits to Football League clubs.



Ryan Hopper won the Mike Johnson Award.



LFE's Paul Urwin completes the Alcatraz Swim to raise funds for the If U Care Share Foundation.



Exeter City's on loan winger Jake Gosling helps Dorchester knock Plymouth Argyle out of the FA Cup.

# October



Brentford's Myles Hippolyte looks to find a way past Barnet's Kamal Guthmy in The FA Youth Cup.



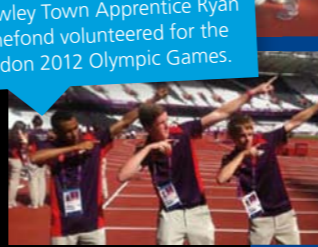
Meanwhile Doncaster Rovers start with a win at the Keepmoat.

# July

## London 2012

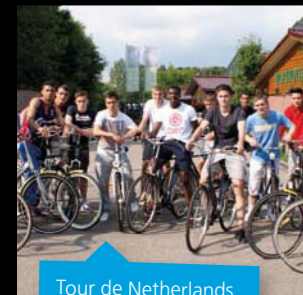


Crawley Town Apprentice Ryan Richefond volunteered for the London 2012 Olympic Games.



Burnley's Cameron Howieson was in action at the games in the Mens Football competition for New Zealand.

## Leonardo Pre Season Tour



Tour de Netherlands.



Cheltenham Town with Steve McLaren.



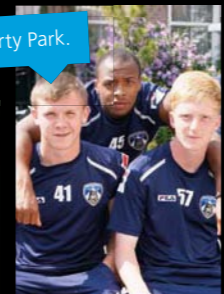
Oldham Athletic at Liberty Park.



Cheltenham and VFL Osnabruck teams lining-up.



This Derby defender has a culture clash.



# August

## Summer Transfers



Nick Powell starts to settle in to life at Old Trafford after a summer move to Manchester United from Crewe.



Jacob Butterfield made a move from Barnsley to Norwich City.



Jay Rodriguez made a £6m switch from Burnley to Southampton.



Gael Bigirimana was rewarded with a £1m move to Newcastle from Coventry.

## Youth Alliance



The season kicked-off in the U18 Premier League, Professional development Leagues and The Youth Alliance.

# North of the Border

*In the 1970s a wealth of talent moved between Scotland and England. Dozens came South with the likes of Graeme Souness, Kenny Dalglish, Alan Hansen, Gordon Strachan and Charlie Nicholas representing some of English football's biggest clubs.*

Others including the likes of England internationals Trevor Steven, Gary Stevens, Chris Woods, Terry Butcher and Ray Wilkins were lured to the Scottish Premier League (SPL) during the 80s by the prospect of European football. (Between 1985 – 1990, English clubs were banned from European competition in the wake of the Heysel disaster).

More recently the likes of Chris Sutton and Welshman John Hartson have enjoyed successful spells at Celtic whose current keeper Fraser Forster also hails from Hexham.

And while the exodus of players moving from Scotland to the highest echelons of the English game seems to have slowed there is evidence that the footfall moving the other way is higher than ever before - with around forty English players playing their trade in the SPL alone.

That number doesn't include Mansfield born Kris Commons or Liam Kelly who hails from Milton Keynes – both Scotland internationals. Nor does it take into account Adam Matthews, Joe Ledley or Josh Magennis who started their careers in the Championship at Cardiff

or the dozen or so Eire or Northern Ireland internationals that began life in England.

Another startling statistic is that Clubs north of the border have, in the last three years, signed at least twenty-five players who embarked on Apprenticeships at Football League Clubs. Not all are still under contract but plenty remain. Kelly, released as an 18-year-old by MK Dons, is the one of the major successes. Instrumental in Kilmarnock's League Cup success earlier this year he counts former Tranmere right-back Alex Pursehouse as a team-mate.

Matthews meanwhile recently earned plaudits for his handling of Lionel Messi in Celtic's famous Champions League victory over Barcelona.

While another making a name for himself and hoping to help his boyhood team climb the Scottish pyramid is Rangers defender Chris Hegarty, two years after being told he was no longer wanted at Millwall.

The Northern Irish Under 21 made his long awaited Gers debut in August in a 1-0 win over Falkirk in the Ramsdens Cup. However after

being involved in several squads last term he was pleased not to be given too long to dwell on the prospect of finally making his senior bow.

"I found out I was starting two and a half hours before the game and I think that was a good thing for me," said Hegarty.

"I would have been nervous if I'd been told the day before so it wasn't a bad thing."

"I felt my performance was solid. The main thing was keeping a clean sheet and we did that. It was hard but that was the main thing for me."

The 20-year-old was the first player to sign for Rangers after the club was consigned to liquidation in the summer. The youngster's previous Ibrox contract had expired and he penned a new one-year deal with the newco in June.

"The main reason I'm still here is that I'm a Rangers fan and I wanted to stay at the club and help them win whatever they can and do my bit.

"The lads want it more than ever, just to prove a point to everyone. Everyone wants to win.

"Training is positive. Everything is positive now. We've got over what's happened to the club."



## Englishmen

Clubs	Number of Englishmen
Aberdeen	3
Celtic	4
Dundee	3
Dundee Utd	1
Hearts	2
Hibs	2
Inverness Caledonian Thistle	7
Kilmarnock	6
Motherwell	8
Ross County	1
St Johnstone	1
St Mirren	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>





# GETTING BACK ON TRACK

Former Barnsley youngster Luke Fedorenko has taken his time but he is now getting back on track after starting a BSc (Hons) Exercise and Sport Science degree at Manchester Metropolitan University in October.



'Feds' as he known to his friends - left Oakwell in the summer of 2008 and until recently could've been described as a non-league missionary, drifting from one club to the next (seven in four years) while hoping to earn a reprieve to the full-time game.

It's been a long road and a far cry from when he was rumoured to have attracted the interest of several Premier League clubs during some eye catching FA Youth Cup displays.

Nor has the semi-pro game provided him with the audience or environment for his trickery and ball control to be as appreciated as they were when he starred on Soccer AM's 'Skill Skool' as an 18-year-old.

"I've found it hard really after having quite high expectations of myself," said Fedorenko whose attitude was questioned by the Tykes coaching staff shortly before he was released.

"I've probably taken it to heart about why my football hasn't really worked out and I've probably spent too long dwelling on things that really I needed to put behind me - so I could move on."

Moving on he is. With a UEFA B License already under his belt as well as a coaching role at Sheffield United's Academy, he was convinced that his next step should be into Higher Education to take on the challenge of a course that covers physiology, biomechanics and psychology and the impact these disciplines have on sports performance, health and well-being.

**"I'd been doing bits of coaching and the penny dropped. I realised I needed to start doing something with my life and getting some extra qualifications under my belt."**

"From my perspective the dream of playing professionally is over. I have to look forward and work hard to try to make a good career for myself in coaching. I've already got my B License and maybe I could help other players to not make the same mistakes I made."

**"The good thing is that by doing this qualification it gives me options. Route one is completing the degree and doing my A license and trying to work up the coaching ladder. The other would be to look at a PGCE with a view to going into teaching."**

Fedorenko, who is one of around twenty ex or current players on the distance learning course at MMU is already looking forward to a week's residential study at the end of the year, however, he admits that he might not have even started but for the support of The Professional Footballers Association:

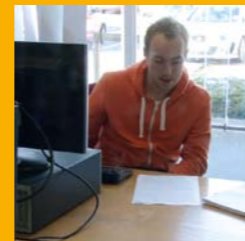
"I've got a friend who is at University and he pays out close to £9,000 a year and that's just in tuition fees!" he continued.

"The lads who've come on this course pay nothing like that because of The PFA. For someone like me that is no longer playing with a professional club or say has the money that the lads in Championship or Premier League earn, the funding is unbelievable. It helps me and my parents out massively.

"I don't think I'd be able to afford to do the course without it."

[www.lfe.org.uk/progression](http://www.lfe.org.uk/progression)

[www.thepfa.com/education](http://www.thepfa.com/education)



Federenko isn't on his own in deciding that a University education could help his prospects. 30 of last year's second year Apprentices started UK degree courses this Autumn, while over a dozen leavers went back to college to gain the

required A Level qualifications or BTEC top-ups for future HE study. That's not to mention the 24 lads who are continuing their studies via 'soccer scholarships' at American Universities or Colleges.

	Higher Education (UK)	Higher Education (USA)	Further Education
2010	40	21	12
2011	42	23	10
2012	30	24	15





# STEPPING UP

## *Fancy making the step up from Under-18 football to play against world-class internationals in your next game?*

That's what lots of Apprentices have done so far this season after the Elite Player Performance Plan's (EPPP) summer re-hash of youth development. Category One and Two clubs now compete in the U21 Premier or Professional Development Leagues (PDL North & South).

Eight clubs who have LFE Apprentices are in Category One and that means U21 matches against some of the biggest clubs in Europe.

Whether clubs call their second string the Under-21s, Development Squad or Reserves, Apprentices are being thrown in at the deep-end and gaining some great experiences.

Most games have gone in favour of the biggest clubs, but there have been some upsets. During a fine start to their campaign, West Ham beat Arsenal 4-1, Middlesbrough shocked Chelsea 3-1 in London, while also in the capital Crystal

Palace's first points of the campaign came with a 4-1 success at Fulham.

Only weeks after starting their Apprenticeships Hiram Boateng, Reise Allassani and Sullay Kai-Kai formed the Palace front-line for a Bank Holiday fixture with Liverpool at Selhurst Park.

While the game might have resulted in a 3-1 home defeat, valuable lessons were learned that day from going toe-to-toe with occasional Reds first-team defenders Jon Flanagan and Andre Wisdom. It certainly did Allassani no harm as he went on to be selected for England U17's Autumn Euro 2013 qualifiers.

In late September, the trio were at it again this time against Ivory Coast star and former Arsenal captain Kolo Toure as they played out a 1-1 draw with Manchester City. The Palace line-up included first-year professionals Aaron Akuruka, Alex Wynter and Kadell Daniel while several Apprentices were on the bench.

As the Autumn leaves continued to fall, second year Reading Apprentice Aaron Tshibola appeared in front of the cameras and droves of

reporters as Jack Wilshere made his long awaited Arsenal comeback alongside Bacary Sagna.

In November, West Ham second year, Frazer Shaw was in the Hammers side that put two goals past Poland keeper Wojciech Szczesny as they beat Arsenal.

While the formation of the U21 Premier League has its detractors - with many keen to point out that the likes of Josh McEachran (Chelsea) and Ravel Morrison (West Ham) are being battle hardened in the fierce arena that is the Championship, it is providing opportunities to talented young players who were Apprentices just six months ago.

The Middlesbrough U21 side that won at Chelsea and narrowly lost to Liverpool was almost exclusively made up of former Apprentices, while an unused sub on the Reds bench, Jordan Ibe, went on LFE's pre-season tour to Holland in 2011 as an Under 16 with Wycombe Wanderers.

It's a similar story in the PDL, which is for the 23 Category Two clubs, all but two of which (QPR and Wigan) have LFE Apprentices in their ranks.

Competition rules state that sides are able to field three outfield players over the age of 21, while the goalkeeper can be any age but the biggest change from last year is that more clubs now have a weekly fixture.

Last season, only 28 clubs on LFE's programme played in a reserve league with many getting by on the odd midweek friendly and periodic county cup matches. Now there are 46.

In 2011-12, not one Barnet youth-teamer tested himself in a competitive match against professional opponents. Already this season, the aspirant club has played Millwall, QPR, Brighton and most recently Charlton, where Zach Khlaf, aged 16, had a central midfield tussle with 27-year-old Danny Hollands, a veteran of over 250 senior appearances!

As part of the EPPP, U21 matches are also played as close to a Saturday afternoon as possible - any time from Friday night to Monday afternoon seems the norm - with some having to take place at a club's main ground.

The aim is to move back towards traditional reserve-team football of 15-20 years ago to make it a step closer to the first-team.

Barnet's Apprentices had never played anywhere like The Den before they beat Millwall. Playmaker Solly March enjoyed the open spaces of The Valley in a Man of the Match display for Brighton at Charlton while defender Harry Lennon was part of an Addicks XI that beat Swansea at the Liberty Stadium.

## *With clubs using evening kick-offs as a way to replicate the first-team experience - youngsters are being put under the floodlights and in front of paying spectators.*

The South Wales derby between Cardiff and Swansea attracted over 1,000 fans to the Cardiff City Stadium on a wet Tuesday night recently while over 1,500 watched Palace take on Liverpool in August.

A new dawn? Maybe. But only time will tell what impact it has on the next generation of players.



# Check out the LFE team online

Keep up to date with all the action from League Football Education. From the latest news and results on twitter and facebook, goal clips on YouTube to all the information you need at [www.lfe.org.uk](http://www.lfe.org.uk).



LFEonline



LFEonline



LFEOnlineTV



[www.lfe.org.uk](http://www.lfe.org.uk)

# DIFFERENT THINKING

*Call it want you want, realisation, understanding or self awareness - but it is one of the most crucial skills you'll need if you want to fulfil your football dreams, says Jamie Edwards.*

This season I've seen over 200 players at 14 clubs. The purpose on each visit was to have conversations with people and footballers. I don't aim to preach about what's right or wrong. I'm genuinely interested to hear what 16-18 year-old footballers perceive their greatest challenges to be.

You'll notice I used the word 'conversations' earlier. That's because my sessions are about speaking, listening and getting a two way dialogue going.

Most conversations in life happen when they shouldn't. Think of the player who has been left out of the team that chats to his friends in the stand on a match-day about his omission. Is that the right place for that discussion?

Good performance and more importantly improvements that can take players up a level only happen if people have courageous conversations and are brutally honest, not just with others but with themselves.

It doesn't matter if you're a superstar playing in the Premier League or a 16 year-old just starting out. If you're a good player what's

stopping you from being great? How do you get better?

One thing that really struck me through this process has been the number of times I've had to ask coaches to leave the room because of the reluctance of players to speak out in front of those that are put in place to help them fulfil their potential. Yet so few seemed willing or able to discuss their apprehensions, expectations or pressures.

As part of the sessions I often ask Apprentices to tell me what attributes are required to make a top player. The answers are almost always the same. After two or three technical attributes players start to cite qualities like desire, motivation, passion and hard-work - yet when I ask them what they are doing to improve in these areas some find it difficult to respond.

I'm not talking about what the club or parents do but what they themselves think they need to do.

I worked with one Premier League player who told me he only used to give fifty or sixty

per cent in training. Yet former England and Manchester United defender Gary Neville talks openly about how he and the likes of David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs upped the tempo in training and practiced for hours after sessions had finished, to make the most of their talent.

Those afraid of standing out or being different from others by doing more shouldn't. It's a real paradox because you can't be exactly the same as your team-mate and stand-out.

Will you distinguish yourself by just doing enough to get by? What level do you need to be at in training? If you're not giving close to one hundred per cent, why is that? If you haven't got the desire to participate in a session on shape but can get up for small sided games do you really think that will have a positive effect on your game?

I wanted to put on sessions that make people think - can I do something differently to improve myself when I walk out the door because you can only reach your destination and potential if you realise where you're starting from.



## It's Okay To Not Be Okay...

*...is the message that If U Care Share has spread to Apprentices at Football League clubs up and down the land.*

The charity which is run by husband and wife team Dean and Shirley Smith, has visited 38 clubs since striking up a partnership with LFE just over 12 months ago, with the focus being on encouraging young players to discuss their personal problems and concerns.

And with the social wellbeing of footballers remaining under the microscope, the charity's Chairman Dean Smith believes this sort of support is essential to players at the outset of their careers.

"Our main aim through these sessions is to make young people aware that it is 'okay not to feel okay' and that 'there is always a way'."

The seminars delivered by If U Care Share aim to support and help Apprentices combat negative emotions and feelings of despair and distress both on and off the pitch.

Such issues can be the difference between an 18 year-old fulfilling a dream of life as a professional footballer or not - one reason why the impact of Dean and wife Shirley's presentations have a lasting effect on Apprentices.

But perhaps more importantly, the continuing wellbeing of Apprentices is critical to all those involved on the ASE programme.

"We are extremely grateful to LFE for giving us the opportunity to work with so many clubs and the feedback so far has been extremely positive," added Smith.

The work of the North East-based charity has not gone unnoticed, with the recent award of £411,854 made to them from the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) designed to help them reach out even further.

"Since we received news of our grant I have been completely overwhelmed," said Smith. "This support from the BLF is vital to a charity of our size and it will guarantee our campaign can continue to grow over the next 5 years and beyond."

That cash wasn't their only financial good news in November as LFE's Business Development Manager Paul Urwin took to the chilly waters of San Francisco Bay to complete the Alcatraz swim and in the process raised close to £700 for IUCS.

"As a relatively new organisation we are heavily reliant on fundraising so Paul Urwin's

recent sponsored swim is greatly appreciated because it provides invaluable funds towards our campaign."

Urwin, who took 40 minutes to complete the mile and a half swim, left the shores of Alcatraz and headed for the Bay without interruption from any hidden dangers beneath the surface, although he admits the possibility of meeting a Great White Shark did play on his mind:

"Prior to the swim a few people had been trying to wind me up about the possibility of coming face to face with one," said Urwin.

"In the main I laughed it off but I could definitely hear the Jaws music playing in my head as I was about to get underway."

There is still time to belatedly sponsor Paul and IUCS so if you wish to make a donation please visit:

 [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/alcatrazswim](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/alcatrazswim)

 [www.ifucareshare.co.uk](http://www.ifucareshare.co.uk)

