

Timeline

Inside: Pre-season tour | Transfer timeline | Jack Waddle | HE in focus



Midlands clubs focus on Elite Player Plan

LFE LAUNCHES...

The 11

£50 PRIZE

All winners will receive a certificate and £50 prize as well as being featured on the LFE website – so check back to see if you or anyone you know has made 'The 11'.

LFE has launched a fantastic new competition, 'The 11' to replace the long running Apprentice of the Month award.

Starting this September, LFE will celebrate the success of eleven players on four occasions during the 2013–14 season, in line with apprentice review periods.

Our team of Regional Officers will each nominate one player from their caseload of clubs with their judgements based on the following criteria:

- **Academic progress**
- **Football progress**
- **Other factors:** Including participation in external initiatives e.g. community work or overcoming adversity of some form.



Academy Leagues



Image by Paul Hazelwood

Rochdale have opened up the new campaign with all guns blazing. With five wins from five matches including a 5-0 drubbing of **Wigan**, Dale already look like the team to beat in the North West Youth Alliance.

In contrast to the high flyers from Spotland, **Wrexham** last terms champions have taken just one point from their opening five fixtures.

Bradford City sit at the top of the tree in the North East division ahead of **Doncaster** on goal difference with four straight wins each, which sets things up very nicely for their first meeting of the season at Cantley Park this month.

Bristol Rovers and **Cheltenham** have both earned seven points from their opening three fixtures, however **Torquay** and **Newport** will be looking for some quick fixes after a slow start.

In the South East league, newcomers **Colchester United** have won four from four topping the table from **Watford** and **Luton**.

In the revamped Under-18 Premier League, which has now been split into two North and South divisions, **Wolverhampton Wanderers** hit **Leicester** for six on the opening day but were then subject to the same fate two weeks later at **Manchester United**.

Nevertheless, wins over **Newcastle** and **West Ham** leave Wolves in a healthy third spot behind the Manchester clubs.

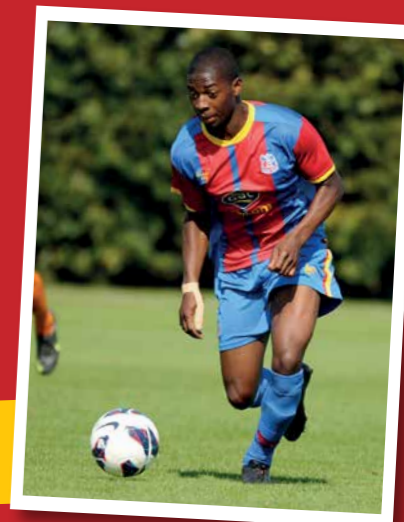
Millwall and **Huddersfield** lead the way in the U18 Development Leagues but the game of the season so far came on the south coast when **Brighton** and **Ipswich** played out a seven goal thriller, Charlie Harris' exquisite long-range strike proving the difference for the Seagulls.

Goal of the month

LFE's Goal of the Month competition returns for another season and promises to be even bigger and better than ever.

Last season's winning goals resulted in a fierce competition for the Goal of the Season accolade but Crystal Palace winger Sullay KaiKai's (pictured) right footed finish against Liverpool in the U18 Premier League last August proved a popular choice.

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



Watch **Sullay KaiKai's** winning goal from August and any of last season's goals at:

www.lfe.org.uk/goal-of-the-month
www.youtube.com/LFETV

Fantasy football returns



LFE's Fantasy Football is back for another season

Used as a resource to help Apprentices complete their Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance, players manage a budget of £20m and select their best XI from the Football League Championship.

As in previous years cash prizes will be awarded for the top three placed Apprentices. A first place finish is worth £250 while those in second and third places can expect to collect £150 & £100 respectively.

If you've not registered yet visit fantasy.football-league.co.uk, pick your team and join LFE's private league by using code:

7409857

All requests to join the competition are verified by LFE. Please note that any inappropriate team names will be rejected.

W M W O E A
 CASH PRIZES FOR THE
 TOP 3 APPRENTICES

www.fantasy.football-league.co.uk | League code: 7409857

Education Support Fund



The Education Support Fund will operate once again during the 2013-14 season but all clubs wishing to access it should be aware that levels of financial support will be determined by external funding received by LFE.

The fund which was originally set-up in 2006 is designed to help clubs enhance and support the education of apprentice players.

Traditionally this has been used to fill any gaps in resources or equipment e.g. Desktop Computers, Laptops, Study Aids, IT, Sports Science equipment etc. However, the Elite Player Performance Plan has also brought the delivery of life skills into sharp focus.

Further details around funding levels, criteria and the claims process will be communicated to clubs by no later than October 2013 – though immediate queries should be directed to Alan Sykes via email:

asykes@lfe.org.uk



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

Mike Johnson Award

Spencer McCall picked up the Mike Johnson award for producing the best NVQ portfolio in the country last season.

The 18-year-old midfielder received a memento and cheque for £250 from LFE as reward for his efforts on his National Vocational Qualification in Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance Level 3 Diploma.

"I'm delighted for Spencer," said tutor Stephen Payne, who also coached Spencer in the Stevenage Under-18 team. "He always applied himself professionally to the NVQ work and

continually made his work relevant to his journey as an aspiring footballer."

"Spencer's level of detail and quality of work have contributed towards improving our standards of performance here at Stevenage FC which sets an excellent example for our existing scholars and really gives them something away from the football pitch to aspire towards."

Having played for Stevenage reserves and in the successful FA Youth Cup run last season, McCall was released by the club at the end of last term and has now signed for Wingate & Finchley in the Ryman League.



"I love being at Huddersfield Town. I can't think of a better job and I hope to now earn the opportunity to play in the first-team on a regular basis."

Donald Bell award

Huddersfield Town's Duane Holmes has been named as the inaugural winner of the Donald Bell Award by League Football Education (LFE).

Holmes received his prize last month in a presentation made at half-time during the Terriers 5-1 rout of Bournemouth in the Sky Bet Championship.

The award which commemorates the memory of Donald Simpson Bell VC was instituted to recognise the efforts of a player who has

overcome adversity in some form during their two-year Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (ASE) programme managed by LFE.

Bell was the first professional footballer to enlist in the Army during the First World War and went on to win a posthumous Victoria Cross for the bravery of his actions during an engagement in the Somme, France.

The 18-year-old who holds dual American and British passports after spending his early childhood years in the USA, said: "It was a massive surprise to receive this honour. I feel incredibly proud to be named as the first ever winner of the Donald Bell Award. When you hear about what he and others did during both wars it is very humbling. This makes all my hard work and perseverance over the last few years feel worthwhile."

Pre-season postcards

Results might have been mixed but **Chesterfield**, **Middlesbrough** and **Tranmere's** Under-18 players all benefitted from their LFE arranged pre-season trip to the Netherlands. Here are some of the best moments captured on camera.



BOBO



In, out shake it all about...



... but definitely not the hokey cokey approach to warming-up!



Learning about Amsterdam ahead of a stroll round the city



Junior Mondial grabs an equaliser as Boro come from a goal down to beat Ajax on their own patch



Who said school was out for the summer?



Middlesbrough ready themselves for a tough fixture v FC Twente

SPLITS



Cameron Mason, Joe Massey and Mitch Mullins take questions from the press



Chesterfield v Vitesse



Man overboard - Joe Bayne falls into the water much to the horror or should that be amusement of his team-mates



The Spireites line-up ahead of their fixture with Vitesse



Eddie Dakwa at the Amsterdam arena



While they enjoyed cycling the Chesterfield lads would be the first to admit that Team Sky have little to fear from them

ROVERS



Academy physio Paul Rudkin has Liam Davies, Jake Phillips & Mitch Duggan fighting fit



Conditions take a turn for the worse



Tranmere v Vitesse Arnhem



Sam Ramsbottom has everything under control



The Rovers youngsters pose for a squad photo on a much needed rest day



Shawn Garnett runs through set-pieces



Aspiring sports journalist and former West Bromwich Albion apprentice **Gez Mulholland** takes a look at how the Elite Player Performance Plan is being implemented at three clubs on his local patch

Elite Player Performance Plan

Midlands focus

Wolverhampton Wanderers, Birmingham City and Walsall may be separated by less than 20 miles but while the trio of Football League clubs are in close geographical proximity each has started this campaign operating at a different Academy level under the Elite Player Performance Plan.

The EPPP for short, is the Premier League's blueprint for youth development, which it is hoped will improve the quantity and quality of young English players moving from youth to first-team football.

Speaking to Touchline the three clubs spell out how the system is affecting them:

"We've always had a good academy here but it has been difficult getting lads through whilst being in the Premier League," said Wolves' professional lead coach Mick Halsall, who is proud that Wanderers have gained the most prestigious status at youth level despite their slip into the third tier of English football over the summer.

"With the new manager (Kenny Jackett) coming in and with the club now in League 1, many people would suggest that the boys will get more opportunity. If the boys are good enough, they may get an opportunity earlier."

While relegation may have put a dampener on last season at Molineux, Halsall is acutely aware that by sitting at the top table at Academy level and mixing it with the likes of Liverpool, Manchester United and Manchester City it will help them to continue to recruit and develop talented youngsters.

"Being a Category 1 club allows us to play against and remain amongst the top sides, so it is very important to do well in the games programme. We have to maintain our standards through the EPPP for this to be sustainable. It also helps with our recruitment especially in the location that we are in, with all the teams in the West Midlands being very competitive."

Down the M6, Championship club Birmingham City have gained Category 2 status after making major changes to its infrastructure to meet the strict criteria involved.

"We feel that both financially and in terms of the programme and content that this fits our model the best right now" said Academy boss Kristiaan Speakman.

"We've had to really work hard to reach this standard. For example we've put a new 3G pitch in at the training ground and we've had to redevelop the changing block and indoor dome.

Walsall who will face Wolves in League One this season, sit two levels below at Academy level with the Saddlers soon to undergo their audit to confirm Category 3 EPPP status.

"We take pride in our youth system and we are doing everything we can to be as close as possible to Cat 2 standards which should mean that we're one of the best Category 3 clubs," said Neil Woods who heads up the Academy at the Banks's stadium.

With the likes of Ben George and Will Grigg graduating from the club's youth system to fully fledged first-team stars, Woods believes that Walsall, who are unable to match the financial clout of many of their West Midlands neighbours are capable of providing players with the best possible chance to become a professional.

"The philosophy at the club is every young player believes they have a chance and that is the best motivation for any young lad. We think we can use the new EPPP system to improve the service we offer our players."

While recent headlines around the EPPP have focused on bigger clubs cherry picking the best players from smaller clubs for small compensation payments, Woods is philosophical about the issue.

"There's always a fear for any club with regards to losing young players to bigger clubs but we see it as a positive. If clubs are looking at our players, it means we have good players and are doing something right," added Woods.

Birmingham City



Walsall



Wolverhampton Wanderers

His Wolves counterpart Halsall agrees and can see both sides of the coin having previously worked at Walsall.

"People have got to be aware of the bigger picture, this has been going on for years," added Halsall.

"Some clubs have the resources and money to go and take boys from any club. We have to work hard to ensure our players enjoy the working environment and realise that if they work hard they can progress through to our first-team. We've seen West Brom and Birmingham City lose players recently so we are keeping an eye on the situation."

That Birmingham City player was 15-year-old Foday Nabay, who left to join Fulham and Speakman admits he has concerns over that situation:

"We're keen to develop our own players and we think that young footballers develop better by being in an environment they're familiar with," added Speakman.

"Hopefully in years to come we'll be able to turn round as a club and say we've brought lads through our system but I do think it will become a regular occurrence for clubs to lose players."

"With the new manager coming in and with the club now in League One, many people would suggest that the boys will get more opportunity. If the boys are good enough, they may get an opportunity earlier."

Transfer timeline

JUNE

Lewis Alessandra
Morecambe – Plymouth *Free*

Dale Jennings
Bayern Munich – Barnsley *£250,000*

Tom Adeyemi
Norwich – Birmingham *Free*

Jed Steer
Norwich – Aston Villa *Compensation TBA*

Sam Hoskins
Southampton – Yeovil *Free*

George Francomb
Norwich – AFC Wimbledon *Free*

Kealan Dillon
Hull – St Mirren *Free*

Sam Morsy
Port Vale – Chesterfield *Undisclosed*

Jack Payne
Gillingham – Peterborough *Undisclosed*

JULY

Luke Murphy
Crewe – Leeds *£1m (reported)*

Conor Wilkinson
Millwall – Bolton *Compensation TBA*

Jamie Paterson
Walsall – Nottingham Forest *Undisclosed*

Lewis McGugan
Nottingham Forest – Watford *Free*

Shay McCartan
Burnley – Accrington *Free*



Dale Jennings

Two years after leaving Tranmere for Bayern, Jennings called time on his German adventure to join Championship side Barnsley. Despite working under the tutelage of Mehmet Scholl and the great Gerd Muller, the 20-year-old's time in Bavaria was frustrating. Beset by injuries and a failure to settle, Jennings failed to make a first-team appearance for the European champions.

"I was a bit gutted not to break into the first-team but I was only 18 when I went over and it took me six to eight months to get used to it," he said.

"The German leagues are of a better standard than in England. It's not just athleticism and organisation; it's the skill level, general attitude and dedication to the game – so I learned a lot from my time there."

Luke Murphy

12 months after watching his former midfield sidekick and best pal Ashley Westwood make the move to Aston Villa, Murphy followed him out of the Gresty Road to become the latest on a long line of Crewe players to move on to bigger things.

"Luke going was another proud day for us," said Alex boss Steve Davis.

"We don't kid ourselves and we never have done at Crewe, when the time is right for a player to move they go with our blessing. Our young players know that, especially the ones that have come through the Academy."



Dan Burn
Fulham – Birmingham *Loan*

John Rooney
Barnsley – Bury *Free*

Adam Chicksen
MK Dons – Brighton *Undisclosed*

Ben Reeves
Southampton – MK Dons *Free*

Bobby Grant
Rochdale – Blackpool *Undisclosed*

Chris Atkinson
Huddersfield – Tranmere *Loan*

Jamie Devitt
Hull – Chesterfield *Free*

Lee Hodson
Watford – MK Dons *Free*

Ikechi Anya
Granada – Watford *Undisclosed*

Aidan Chippendale
Accrington – Bury *Free*

Josh Windass
Huddersfield – Accrington *Free*

Steven Davies
Bristol City – Blackpool *£500k (reported)*

Michael Smith
Charlton – AFC Wimbledon *Loan*

Josh Ruffels
Coventry – Oxford *Free*

Krystian Pearce
Notts County – Torquay *Free*

AUGUST

Marvin Sordell
Bolton – Charlton *Loan*

Tommy Spurr
Doncaster – Blackburn *Free*

Ben Nugent
Cardiff – Brentford *Loan*



Ikechi Anya

The much travelled former League Two Apprentice of the Year finally arrived last term making 29 appearances for Gianfranco Zola's Watford while on loan from Granada. While he endured the heartbreak of a play-off final defeat at the hands of Crystal Palace, Anya's own journey which started at Wycombe, went in to non-league and then continued in Spain is truly remarkable.

Piero Mingoia
Watford – Accrington *Free*

Callum Ball
Derby – Torquay *Loan*

Danny Mayor
Sheffield Wednesday – Bury *Loan*

Jordan Clark
Barnsley – Scunthorpe *Loan*

Connor Ripley
Middlesbrough – Bradford City *Loan*

Ryan Williams
Fulham – Oxford *Loan*

Kyle Brownhill
Stockport – Burnley *Free*

Jordan Sinnott
Huddersfield – Bury *Loan*

Adam Thompson
Watford – Southend *Loan*

Tom Naylor
Derby County – Newport *Loan*

Joe Ralls
Cardiff – Yeovil *Loan*

Adam Reach
Middlesbrough – Shrewsbury *Loan*

Joseph Mills
Burnley – Oldham *Loan*

Ronan Murray
Ipswich – Notts County *Free*

Jordan Holt
St Mirren – Notts County *Free*

Callum Bennett
Ipswich – Notts County *Free*

Aaron Tumwa
Watford – Blackburn *Free*

Matt Phillips
Blackpool – QPR *Undisclosed*

Charles Dunne
Wycombe – Blackpool *Undisclosed*



Kyle Brownhill

Released by the downwardly spiralling Stockport, Brownhill earned himself a one-year deal at Turf Moor after impressing on trial during pre-season.

"Stockport seems to be a good breeding ground for young talent," said Clarets Development Squad boss Simon Weatherstone.

"Danny Whitehead went to West Ham and now Kyle has signed on here. Hopefully he can progress into the first-team in years to come."



Matt Phillips

"Matt's got a big, big future ahead of him in the game, so we're delighted we've been able to get him here," said Rangers boss Harry Redknapp, who announced the capture of the £5 million pound man.

"He can take people on and make things happen. He's quick, he gets at people, he can make goals and he can score goals. He gets people off their seats and that's what you want to see as a supporter," he added of the winger who started his career with Wycombe and was the League Two Apprentice of the Year in 2009.

Loughborough University



With perhaps the best integrated sports development environment in the world including a newly built 3,500 capacity football stadium, it's little wonder that Loughborough continues to attract the likes of former MK Dons full-back George Willams (pictured), Oldham midfielder Will McCall and ex York man Michael Emerson.



Ten times national champions at university and college level, Hartpury provides an idyllic setting for footballers to combine their efforts on the pitch with those in the classroom. More than 20 Hartpury students have gone on to secure professional deals in the UK and abroad.

Hartpury College



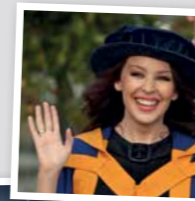
Higher Education in focus

If you're thinking about heading into higher education after your apprenticeship, you'll need to start planning soon. Each season around 60 players make this transition and here are some of their favourite destinations...

Anglia Ruskin University



Cambridge & Chelmsford



While Anglia Ruskin's most famous honorary graduates include Pop Queen, Kylie Minogue and Jockey Frankie Dettori, the University recently announced its plans to attract footballers via their new BSc (Hons) Coaching for Performance in Football degree.

Developed in conjunction with a host of clubs including Reading, the new programme has already been given a thumbs up by Royals boss Nigel Adkins:

"The course is excellent news for players and coaches. Lifelong learning in professional football is fundamental to an individual's progression, both on and off the pitch." said Adkins.



Staffordshire University



With one of the most reputable Journalism departments in the UK, Staffs continues to be a popular choice for those taking a media related degree. Lecturers include working professionals with World Cup and Olympic experience, while graduates have gone on to work for the likes of The BBC, Eurosport, ITV and Sky.



ON AIR

Support in making the move into Higher Education isn't just restricted to LFE.



The PFA who offer educational grants to members, has longstanding relationships with a number of institutions/courses including:

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
University of Salford

BSc (Hons) Sports Science & Coaching
Roehampton University

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
York St. John University

BSc (Hons) Sport, Coaching & Exercise Science MMU

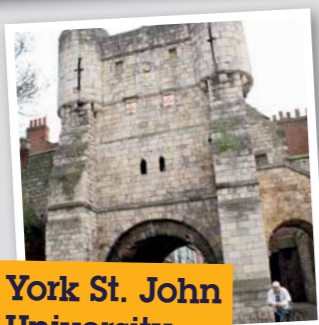
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
Brunel University

BA (Hons) Sports Writing & Broadcasting
Staffordshire University (2 year)

BA (Hons) Sports Management
The University College of Northern Denmark

Get our guide to Higher Education applications at www.lfe.org.uk/downloads/apprentice-brochures

York St John University



York St. John University

Situated in the historic city of York, YSJ already has links with football through its association with The Professional Footballers' Association and its funded BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy programme.



Manchester Metropolitan University



Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

With a brand new £10 million Exercise and Sport Science Centre, MMU offers a wide variety of sport-related courses designed to equip individuals with the skills, qualifications and experience that are needed to work in the industry.



The Open University



The Open University

The OU offers courses and qualifications at a range of levels from introductory courses to degrees. Having developed its own style of distance learning called 'supported open learning', it allows students to work whenever and wherever they choose around their other commitments.



Based in the vibrant city of Newcastle upon Tyne the lure of a football scholarship to play for Team Northumbria is an enticing option for any current apprentice player.

Northumbria University



Chris the Dad
Jack the lad



JACK FACTS



- Name** Jack Waddle
- Twitter** @JackWaddle93
- Position** Attacking midfielder
- Nickname** Wadz
- Team supported as a boy** Sheffield Wednesday
- Strengths** First touch and passing
- Weaknesses** Heading and strength
- Football Hero** My Dad & Thierry Henry
- Best Player** Cristiano Ronaldo
- Best Advice ever received** A setback always leaves time for a comeback
- Favourite music** Arctic Monkeys and most indie
- Celebrity crush** Julia Roberts and Mila Kunis
- Other Sports** Golf and boxing
- Holiday destination** Marbella
- Where will you be in 5 years?** Hopefully playing professional football

Waddelle

Jack Waddle is hoping to re-launch his professional career by following in his father's footsteps.

The 19-year-old son of the Tottenham and England legend Chris Waddle, upped sticks and headed to Sweden in July after spending last year as a professional at Chesterfield.

Waddle senior made the move to Olympique de Marseille from Spurs over two decades ago and subsequently admitted that his time in France, "taught him a lot about the game that he would never have learnt in England".

That three-year spell at the Velodrome saw Marseille reach a European Cup final and the scintillating winger voted as the club's second best player of the Twentieth Century behind Jean Pierre Papin.

Yet while that move abroad was made in vastly different circumstances Waddle junior is hoping that he can take heed of his Dad's advice by using his own stint overseas as a launch pad back into professional football.

"He told me it's a new culture, environment and something different and that I should focus on making sure that I give it my best in the three to four months I'm here - and not to come home with any regrets," said Waddle.

Based just over an hour away from Stockholm at BK Sports in the city of Eskiltuna, the youngster has noticed a different football philosophy to the one he is used to.

"Out here the coaches just try to give you confidence and ask you to do your best," continued Waddle.

"We're told to go out and enjoy playing the sort of football we want to play. There's no

pressure to win they just want us to play good football. It's been great because we get it down and pass and I think that's the best style of play. I was brought up to play like that so I fitted in immediately.

Waddles acclimatisation to new surroundings has also helped by living with team-mates and fellow Englishmen Ed O'Neill and Darren Jefferies. O'Neill formerly of Barnet and Jefferies who was on Bristol Rovers books, like Waddle are midfielders and their close off pitch bond appears to be helping them to flourish on it.

"We can't go up this season but all of us are eager to do as well as we can for the club and see what comes from that," added Waddle who admits that he would be open to offers when he returns to England in October.

"Football is the national sport back home and it is so high profile that it's difficult to breakthrough. We all enjoy playing football in the right fashion and that is an enormous help. Some players have their confidence knocked and performances suffer because you feel inhibited in Scandinavia it's not as pressurised so it's an advantage to come over here and learn from a different culture.

"It's a slightly different training regime than we're used to. We train 3 times a week and play at the weekend but we've got free gym memberships so we've set-up our own schedule for that.

"Also because we've been away from home for so long we're used to that and I think that helps massively because football is such a transient career and you can literally end up all over the place. It's certainly helped me to mature and be more independent."

Since Plymouth's Toby Davis became the first LFE export to sign professional terms in Sweden in 2008, 93 players have tried their luck on foreign soil with 26 gaining full-time deals.

With 17 others like Waddle mid-way through placements that figure is set to climb to over 30 per cent and reach a high this year, here's how it breaks down...

Year	Professional deals
2008	1
2009	1
2010	6
2011	4
2012	7
2013	7 and counting

Laurie Bell

From UK to USA

Every summer hundreds of young players have their football ambitions dashed at the end of their apprenticeship but as LFE's new blogger Laurie Bell insists, 'the dream doesn't have to stop there'.

Bell, once of Rochdale, is one of over 100 former apprentices now residing across the Atlantic while completing a soccer scholarship. He caught up with LFE's Steve Sutcliffe to talk about his up and coming blog and life in the USA.

SS: Why have you decided to blog for LFE?

LB: Well first things first. The topic I'll be writing about, making the move to America is one I'm really passionate about. Just over two years ago the sky fell in on my football world when I was hauled into the manager's office at Spotland to be told I was being released. Now I'm studying Journalism and English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and I think my blog is a great chance for me to tell the story of how that happened.

SS: How big of a step was it for you to take up the soccer scholarship and was it something you had identified as a back-up plan before leaving Rochdale?

LB: It was a massive step. I played in LFE's end of season trials, took advice from their staff, spoke to numerous head coaches and six weeks later I leapt into the unknown. I'd love to say it was always my plan but it wasn't. It happened very quickly but at the same time America was the subject of many youth-team dressing room conversations. When you're scrubbing the boots of professionals you envy and want to emulate it can be disheartening, so life across the pond playing football at a University with thousands of sun-kissed students sounds appealing. Sadly though, I think for many it doesn't feel like a plausible option but it is – I'm doing it.

SS: So what can we expect to read about?

LB: Virtually every English player that I speak to over here that's on a scholarship says the same thing: "I didn't know what to expect when I came out here." I think my blog is a chance to set the record straight and let players know as far as I can, what they're in store for if they're also considering making this life changing decision.

SS: It sounds as though you're enjoying it, even if you've had to adapt to a new way of life and a lot more academic work than you were perhaps used to before?

FACTFILE ★★★★★★★★

- Name:** Laurie Bell
- Twitter:** @LBellBell
- Club:** Rochdale
- University:** University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Position:** Central Midfield
- Nickname:** LBell
- Team supported as a boy:** Manchester City
- Strengths:** Passing and scoring goals
- Weaknesses:** Dribbling
- Football hero:** Steven Gerrard
- Best player:** Andrea Pirlo
- Best advice ever received:** 'May all your dreams be big' – thanks Dad
- Favourite music artist:** Jamie T
- Celebrity crush:** Jessica Alba
- Other sports:** Surfing & other
- Where will you be in 5 years:** Hopefully playing football on a remote island



"I think my blog is a chance to set the record straight and let players know as far as I can, what they're in store for if they're also considering making this life changing decision."

LB: Very much so but I can remember when I first arrived in the States. I was immediately struck by seeing baseball field after baseball field. Forget football pitches. It was all so very different. I was questioning myself and my decision to come? Would I be able to settle? Was I too far from my family? What's the football going to be like? These days those doubts have been vanquished – coming over to America is just an amazing opportunity. The set-up at most universities is a match for professional clubs back home, there's thousands of fans at each game, a free education via a scholarship and potentially a chance to be drafted for the MLS as you finish your studies.

SS: You mentioned studying, is it true that Universities insist you're as successful in the classroom as the pitch?

LB: Yes that's key really. You're considered a student athlete while you're here and it does require considerable time and effort but earning a degree is very achievable and help is at hand for any students having difficulty. By the time I graduate, I'll have good qualifications, four competitive soccer seasons and a rewarding life experience behind me. It's my own version of an American Dream.

You can catch up with Laurie on a regular basis by visiting www.lfe.org.uk/blog



With more and more players keen to follow Laurie's lead, LFE sealed a deal with the PASS4Soccer agency over the summer which allows apprentices the chance to access their services at a discounted rate. Regardless of whether players choose to or not, Director Dan Gray believes America is a land of opportunity for English players:

"Our job is to complement what LFE is already doing so that players are more prepared and start to think of America as a viable option much earlier," said Gray.

"It's understandable for some players to have reservations but the facilities are top drawer over there and the way you're looked after is quite special. It's totally different to university sport in the UK – it's comparable to being a professional while gaining an education.

"The lads leaving the apprenticeship are uniquely placed because American Colleges and Universities regard them as the best quality of players they can bring in and they're keen to recruit those that bring a professional mentality and attitude into their institutions."

To see the full Dan Gray interview visit our YouTube channel LFETV.

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Huddersfield Town make the most of LFE...



By kicking off the new campaign with Social Media, Sexual Health and Sporting Chance workshops.

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While their players were still catching their breath during a pre-season training camp in Leicestershire – the positive and negative aspects of social media were spelt out to them via Cathy Wood's seminar.

In an eye-opening session, Wood, who is also a former Great Britain Triathlete, presented the teenage Terriers players with a chance to review their existing output across platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The youngsters were also asked to consider whether they felt the content truly represented them and whether it made them a risk or role model to their clubs and themselves.

"It came as a bit of a shock to realise just what possible effects your actions and those of online 'friends' can have on others, particularly team mates," said second-year apprentice Joe Wilkinson.

"The information about 'tagging' was new to most of us and something we all need to consider carefully in the future."

The session, which also spelled out the dangers of paying scant attention to security settings on social media sites and how this can affect footballers, was welcomed by the club's Head of Education and Welfare, Karen Crosland:

"Regardless of whether or not our apprentices go onto enjoy careers as professional footballers,

the ability to communicate is an essential life skill and we aim to give them an all-round education," said Crosland.

"Cathy gave us a really good insight to how journalists use social media to learn about individuals, as well as examples of how players can change their online behaviour to showcase the positive activities which they are involved in."

With players barely finding the time to type 140 characters for a tweet, sexual health was the next topic on the agenda, as the NHS' Playing Safely initiative rolled into Huddersfield's Canalside Sports training complex.

Supported by the Calderdale & Huddersfield Chlamydia Screening Programme (CHLASP), the Academy players found themselves involved in an interactive session delivered by Colin Avery and Andy Williams which raised awareness of sexual health issues and the importance of respectful relationships and safer sex.

Former West Bromwich Albion defender Paul Raven, now of The Professional Footballers Association sat in on the session, which he believes has plenty of merits:



Joe Wilkinson It came as a bit of a shock to realise just what possible effects your actions and those of online 'friends' can have on others, particularly team mates.

"It's a great enrichment to the apprenticeship programme," said Raven.

"It's run so that it's fun and engaging and it provides some very clear messages to the players."

With two of the three S's covered by the end of August it was the Sporting Chance Clinic's turn to visit Town as September began.

While an ex footballer usually provides a personal story during the session, perhaps fittingly in Yorkshire, Bobby Goulding, a name that resonates with Rugby League spoke candidly from the heart.

"I just wanted to come across as an honest bloke who the lads could trust," said the former Great Britain scrum half.

"It's difficult but we must help these young men."

The former Challenge cup winner's efforts were appreciated by Academy Manager Mark Lillis who added:

"Bobby showed a lot of courage and bravery and his talk made a fantastic impact on the players and all the staff."

LFE initiatives

Each season LFE offers clubs the chance to engage with a variety of initiatives to enrich the apprenticeship programme. This season they are:

BARCLAYS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



IF U CARE SHARE



KICK IT OUT



SEXUAL HEALTH – 'PLAYING SAFELY'



SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING – CATHY WOOD



SPORTING CHANCE CLINIC



TRAINED BRAIN



BSM – DRIVER AWARENESS



What they've been tweeting

With so many current and ex apprentices on Twitter – we've picked out some of the best tweets we've seen in recent times:

Burnley's Callum Richardson eyes a new way to travel via team-mate Nathan Lowe...

Callum Richardson @Callumm_95
"@NathanLowe96x: Passed my driving test!" Yes brother! #shotgun

Ryan Colclough celebrates three points and 2 goals as Crewe get off the mark...

ryan colclough @ry_coco
Thanks for all the messages buzzing for our first three points and my first goals of the season #CAFC

LFE Regional Officer Paul Bartlett praises the #trfc U18s...

Joe Newton @JoeNewton_7
"@vonbartlett: My last day with the Tranmere boys - what a credit to their families, club and themselves - thanks lads x" cheers Paul

Middlesbrough's Callum Johnson voices his conspiracy theory on Man Utd's transfer deadline day...

Callum Johnson @callumjohnson96
3 mystery lawyers made the Herrera deal fall through who claimed they were representing United, Jose Mourinho written all over it #clever

Sam Magri encourages team-mate Jack Whatmough to shed his curly locks!

Jack Whatmough @JackWhatmough30
"@SamMagri: @JackWhatmough30 happy birthday mate. Now you're 17 get a trim!" ;D Cheers geez

Danny Higginbotham with words of encouragement for Sheff Utd starlet Jamie McDonagh...

Danny Higginbotham @Higginbotham05
Just like to wish @jamiemcdonagh64 all the best in his recovery from injury. Great prospect who will come back stronger.

Tom Lapslie decides the old school look is best for the new season...

Tom Lapslie @TomLapslie
New boots have arrived! Gone for the retro look #NikeGang #OldSkool



Birmingham keeper Callum Preston takes in England v Scotland...

Callum Preston @CallumPreston95
What an atmosphere at the England game!





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.



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