



Timeline

Inside: Create Your Legacy | Football League Awards | International Honours

Meet the Debutants



LFE was established by
The Football League
and The Professional
Footballers Association



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills

**Skills
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Innovation & Skills



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**



Academy League Round-up



Blackpool, Bradford City and Colchester United were able to celebrate early after ending the season as champions of their respective Youth Alliance League

Blackpool won an impressive 2.42 points per match to top the North West table and pip second placed **Oldham Athletic** while the divisions leading goal scorer Daniel Whitehall helped Rochdale to finish third.

On the other side of the Pennines, **Bradford City** continued their fine form to remain in top spot and take the North East crown scoring a national high of 68 goals along the way.

At the time of writing the young Bantams' had turned their attentions to Youth Alliance Cup

final – where they will meet **Colchester United** (29 April).

The U's also go into that encounter after a stellar campaign which saw them seal the South East title by just one decisive point, from runners up **Peterborough United**.

A three-way battle for the South West title was still underway as this edition went to print. **Oxford United, Exeter City** and **Bristol Rovers** were all battling for that particular honour.

In the Professional Development League (North) an impressive plus 29 goal difference from 22 games helped **Huddersfield Town** to spearhead the division ahead of Yorkshire rivals **Barnsley** and **Birmingham City**.

The Southern equivalent sees an exciting winner-takes-all final fixture between the top two, **Queens Park Rangers** and **Charlton**. The Addicks need to win to leapfrog Rangers and finish as champions.

Wolverhampton Wanderers look set to finish in seventh place behind **Manchester United** in the U18 Premier League (North) while **Blackburn's** hopes of a strong finish appeared to rest on the shoulders of 19-goal striker Jordan Preston's ability to maintain his happy knack in front of goal.

In the South, FA Youth Cup semi-finalists **Reading** are on the march though a tricky fixture with David Dodd's **Leicester City** will determine whether or not they can apply further pressure on London pair **Chelsea** and **Fulham**.

Assessment Trials

It is a crunch time and the opportunity to secure a footballing future in the UK or overseas is available at LFE's Assessment Trials

This summer another crop of Apprentices and first-year professionals will be released by their clubs but as one door closes another opens. And over 250 players will be able to showcase their abilities at four regional trial events in May.

Representatives from Premier League, Football League and Non-League clubs in the UK, European clubs and Higher Education institutions from both the UK and USA will be amongst the interested spectators at venues across the land.

For further information about the *Assessment Trials* please call **0845 074 0561** and visit: www.lfe.org.uk/progression/trials/assessment-trials-2014

Assessment Trials will take place at these venues:

- Thursday, 1 May 2014**
Bradford City FC, BD8 7DY
- Tuesday, 6 May 2014**
Staines Town FC, TW18 2PD
- Wednesday, 7 May 2014**
Port Vale FC, ST6 1AW
- Thursday, 8 May 2014**
Walsall FC, WS1 4SA

PASS4Soccer USA Trials

LFE's recommended USA-partner PASS4Soccer will also be hosting a USA Assessment Trial which takes place on Sunday 4 May 2014 and is exclusive to those individuals seeking the opportunity to study and play in the USA University on a soccer scholarship.

PASS4Soccer has been securing scholarships in the USA for over 10 years and during this time has built a strong reputation with USA Universities. PASS4Soccer has the ability to introduce players to an extensive network of Universities maximising scholarship opportunities.

For further information about the USA trial and opportunity please call **PASS4Soccer** on: **0191 229 5236** and visit: www.pass4soccer.com

Goal of the month

There has been an avalanche of super strikes in this season's goal of the month competition with voting at 16,000 and counting.

The names of Matt Bowles (Lincoln City), Jack Willbye (Ipswich Town) and Sam Humphreys (Oxford United) have recently been added to the roll call of winners. So expect to see them and others doing their finest impressions of Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge et al in this term's finale – Goal of the Season – which will feature on LFETV at the end of May.

To check out the goals visit: www.lfe.org.uk/goal-of-the-month

Education Support Fund



LFE chief executive Alan Sykes has warned clubs to meet the deadline for Education Support Fund (ESF) or miss out.

The fund which ploughs £250,000 back into Football League clubs to support the education of apprentices has been used historically to pay for equipment like heart-rate monitors, outward bound days, and importantly, laptops and other IT equipment.

Yet while Sykes is keen to ensure as much money as possible finds its way to clubs, he admits they have to take a proactive approach to making applications.

"The deadline for receipt of the claim form and supporting documentation is 31 May," Sykes said.

"This fund has been available for most of the season yet it's amazing that some will choose to make last minute applications or none at all.

"I'd urge clubs to send through their paperwork sooner rather than later. Why run the risk of missing out," Sykes added.

For further details on the ESF please visit: www.lfe.org.uk/about/education-support-fund



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Fantasy Football update



Pos	Team Name	Manager Name	GLS	ASS	PTS
1	- Jacks Team	Jack Tuite	101	42	1478
2	- Pep Rowe's U16's	George O'Neill	71	70	1469
3	- Eddie Rogerson XI	Eddie Rogerson	78	61	1419
4	- Braidie's All Stars	Ian King	87	59	1414
5	- Keep the Ball United	Kieran Dunbar	83	62	1397

Top of the pile in LFE's Fantasy Football competition and gunning for the £250 top prize is Derby County and Republic of Ireland youth international Jack Tuite whose team selections have so far tallied up nearly one hundred goals amassing 1400 points.

Just two points behind is Birmingham City's George O'Neill who has had help from the high-flying Sam Vokes, Jamie Vardy and Ross McCormack. Barnsley first year Apprentice Eddie Rogerson looks comfortable in third place and will be hoping to claim the final cash reward of £100.

This season's competition isn't simply about cash prizes, it provides important evidence of selecting players and managing a budget supporting Apprentices to complete their NVQ in Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance.

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.

CASH PRIZES

1st	£250
2nd	£150
3rd	£100

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

The 11



Here's the line-up for the league's best 11 apprentices for the month of February:

- Hakeeb Adelakun** Scunthorpe United
- Ben Purrington** Plymouth Argyle
- Mark Waddington** Blackpool
- Dominic Calvert-Lewin** Sheffield United
- Cameron Murray** York City
- Ted Smith** Southend United
- Harley Wigley** Rotherham United
- Fraser Murdoch** Crewe Alexandra
- Ibrahim Keita** Wolverhampton Wanderers
- James Roberts** Oxford United
- Sam Ling** Leyton Orient



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

FA YOUTH CUP



Reading's bid to reach the FA Youth Cup final might have ended in a 5-4 semi-final defeat to Fulham but the Royals and plenty of others have shared some magical moments in this year's competition – here's some of the most memorable...



QUARTER FINAL
Reading 4 - 4 Liverpool
(Reading won 5-4 on penalties)

Reading stunned Liverpool to win an extraordinary game on penalties and reach the FA Youth Cup semi-finals for the first time in their history.

A brace from Harry Cardwell had given the Royals a comfortable two-goal cushion but the visitors earned a last gasp reprieve via 83rd and 90th minute goals from Jordan Williams and Jordan Rossiter.



Daniel Trickett-Smith and Harry Wilson's goals then appeared to have settled the tie in the visitors favour early in extra-time but De'Jaune Taylor-Crossdale set up a grandstand finish and team-mate and fellow substitute George McLennan scored in injury time equaliser to send the game to penalties.

Step forward Taylor-Crossdale, who held his nerve from 12-yards-out to score the winning penalty and spark wild celebrations.



Images from top to bottom: Huddersfield Town celebrate; Nathan Webb scores an acrobatic overhead kick for Accrington Stanley; Mykhail Kennedy was pumped up by Charlton's FA Youth Cup win over Forest; Josh Umerah scoring in style for Charlton.

5TH ROUND
Huddersfield Town 2 - 1 Manchester United

Huddersfield claimed a famous victory in front of a crowd of 1,385, at the John Smith's which included – United legend Sir Bobby Charlton and Town boss Mark Robins.

Midfielder Ben Atkinson set the Terriers on their way and though the Reds equalised through skipper James Wilson, the result was never in doubt after Jake Charles blasted home a second-half penalty.

3RD ROUND
Accrington Stanley 2 - 1 West Ham United

On a cold Lancashire night at the Crown Ground, the Academy of Football was taught a lesson as Accrington delivered the shock result of the competition.

The vast difference in resources and the 70 or so places separating the club's league positions counted for nought as Nathan Webb's overhead kick put Stanley in charge. Jamie Harney hit a late leveller for the Hammers but the hosts regrouped and Max Hazeldine hit a 116th minute extra-time winner.

3RD ROUND
Nottingham Forest 2 - 3 Charlton Athletic

Years after nurturing the likes of Andy Reid, Jermaine Jenas and Michael Dawson, Paul Hart returned to the City Ground to lead Charlton to a 3-2 victory at Nottingham Forest.

In a game that to'd and fro'd, Tareiq Holmes-Aennis, Joshua Umerah, Kalan Ahearn-Grant found the back of the net for the Addicks while Derrick Otim and Jake Mulraney scored for last term's semi-finalists.

The Debutants

Since the last edition of Touchline even more LFE apprentices have made first-team bows – so we thought we’d run the rule over a selection of players who’ve tasted the real thing.



Hiram Boateng & Sullay Kaikai Crystal Palace/Crawley Town

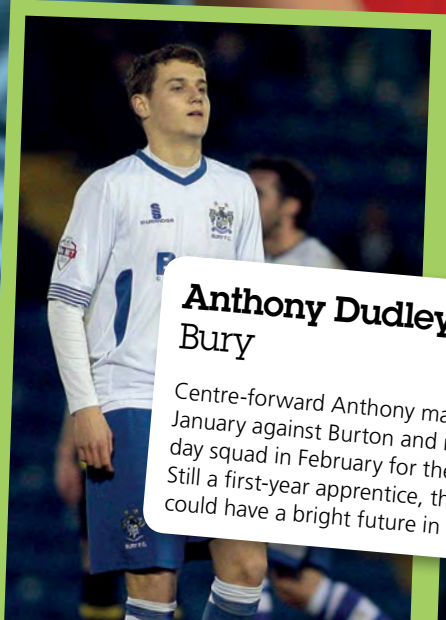
Two 18-year-olds from Crystal Palace spent March on-loan at League One side Crawley. Midfielder Hiram made his Eagles debut in their FA Cup win at West Brom in January and then made his league bow for Crawley, coming on in their draw with Stevenage.

Striker Sullay, winner of LFE Goal of the Season last year, made five league appearances for Crawley without scoring. Both have now returned to Selhurst Park.

Connor Mahoney Blackburn Rovers



Connor started this season in Accrington Stanley's first-team, despite being a first-year apprentice! In December he moved to his home town club Blackburn and within a couple of weeks made his first team debut live on TV against the mighty Manchester City in the FA Cup, aged 16! The winger has also won England Under-17 honours this term.



Anthony Dudley Bury



Centre-forward Anthony made his Shakers debut in January against Burton and returned to the match-day squad in February for the 4-1 win at Mansfield. Still a first-year apprentice, the 17-year-old local lad could have a bright future in the game.



Amadou Bakayoko Walsall



Striker Amadou made his Walsall debut against Port Vale in April, coming on in the second-half. The youngster who hails from Birmingham now hopes to help the Saddlers into the play-offs.



Fred Onyedinma Millwall



Central midfielder Fred made his Lions debut in the FA Cup defeat at Southend when the team was taken by his usual coaches, Academy manager Scott Fitzgerald and Under-21 boss Neil Harris, following Steve Lomas's departure.

When Ian Holloway took over he soon turned to Fred, a 17-year-old, first-year apprentice, to help their fight against relegation, as he made four league appearances in March.



Conor Dimaio, Otis Khan & Louis Reed Sheffield United



Sheffield United's teenage contingent increased this spring as Irishman Conor Dimaio and Otis Khan came on as last minute subs to make their Blades debuts in the win over Crawley in late March. Both played again in the win over Rotherham a few days before the FA Cup semi-final. They were joined by Louis Reed for the win over the Millers.



Ben Purrington Plymouth Argyle



Left-back Ben broke into the Argyle team on Boxing Day and has stayed there ever since!

The 18-year-old from Exeter, who is also managing to complete the BTEC Extended Diploma this year, has clocked up over a dozen appearances so far and registered his first goal for the club in an FA Cup draw at Port Vale in January.

LEAGUE 2

LFE Apprentice of the Year

The Football League Awards

Bradley Walker

Hartlepool United



LEAGUE 1

LFE Apprentice of the Year

The Football League Awards

Brendan Galloway

MK Dons



Midfield hotshot Brad Walker saw off Plymouth Argyle's Ben Purrington and Portsmouth's Jack Whatmough to take the League Two Award

Just 24 hours before picking up the gong at the glitzy ceremony in London, Walker had scored a 25 yard screamer in Pool's 4-0 rout of Bristol Rovers, demonstrating the ability which has earned him rave reviews since breaking into the first-team last August.

Speaking at the awards, Walker said: "It's brilliant. It was very good to be nominated and I didn't think I would win it but I have and I'm very happy."

"It's going well. I'd like to thank the gaffer and the club for giving me the opportunity to play. My family is the main thing for me, they have been very important and are very supportive."

Walker follows in the footsteps of team-mate and midfield partner Luke James who took the League One Apprentice of the Year award a year ago leading to former first-team boss Colin Cooper lauding his nomination.

"To have consecutive nominations for this award is brilliant for the club. Brad has already had some pats on the back but this is another massive one."

"I keep saying that this club should be very proud of what we are producing. These two young men are very proud and happy to be playing for Pools."

Winning a place in the England Under-18 squad has capped off a meteoric rise for Walker after he was plucked from the youth-team last summer to become a midfield mainstay.

The England people have been very impressed with him, both as a technically-gifted young footballer, but also a really grounded, humble young man," Cooper added.

Becoming part of the national side will give Walker the chance to match himself against the best in the country and it is a challenge he is looking forward to.

"For myself, winning England recognition does give me a lot of confidence. Being alongside lads from Premier League and Championship clubs, matching their tempo, is brilliant for me," said Walker.

Walker joined Hartlepool as a 13-year-old and even up to his apprenticeship days would often cycle to training, however it is fair to say that the teenage star has come a lot further than his bicycle round-trip of 12 miles.

Winning a place in the England U18 squad has capped off a meteoric rise for Walker

The name of Brendan Galloway was etched onto the trophy ahead of fellow nominees Josh Brownhill of Preston North End and Samuel Szmodics of Colchester United

The six foot one inch defender became the youngest first-team player in Milton Keynes Dons' short but eventful history as a 15-year-old in 2011 during a 6-0 victory over Nantwich Town in the FA Cup.

The young Don who has also earned international recognition with England's Under-16 and Under-18 teams is known for his composure on the ball and his ability to turn defence into attack in the blink of an eye.

He made his league debut after starting for MK Dons in a 2-1 victory at Rochdale on 28

April 2012 and has now made 13 appearances for the club, 9 of which have come this term as has his first goal for the club which contributed to victory against Halifax in the FA Cup.

"This season has been great in the first-team, especially scoring in the FA Cup," said Galloway.

"I'm still trying to complete my college course, give back to the community while playing but my ultimate aim is to play in the Premier League. I have to thank the manager [Karl Robinson] for giving me the chance."

LFE's regional officer Darren Bloodworth offered his own tribute to the 18-year-old, saying:

"Brendan's a well-mannered and polite member of the group. His attitude to work is always good and he has always redoubled his efforts to catch-up with his academic work after he's been on first-team or international duty."

After the ceremony Galloway tweeted: "Great evening at the @football_league awards tonight, very pleased to win an award too, thanks for all the messages."

The accolade proved to be an early birthday present for Galloway who turned 18 years-old the day after receiving the award.

His attitude to work is always good and he has always redoubled his efforts to catch-up with his academic work after he's been on first-team or international duty

create your LEG☆CY

THURSDAY 27TH MARCH | UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK



Michael Starkey
Huddersfield Town



Sergeant Pearce
Royal Air Force



Robin Deen
Brighton & Hove Albion



Sean England
Nottingham Forest



What they said

We could've written a long and interesting piece about the success of this year's Create Your Legacy careers event but instead we decided to let others do our talking. So here are the views of those that dropped in on the day at the University of Warwick on 27 March.

"I spoke to a lot of young players and I think most understood where I was coming from when I stressed the importance of having a Plan B."

"Football offers no guarantees. You can be one injury away from retirement and even if you enjoy a long career you're going to have to finish at some point so you need to broaden your mind and think about your next move."

"My message was, 'there's more to life than just kicking a ball around,' you have to engage with different things and be willing to learn new skills so that you have the versatility to be able to move in different directions – that's a path I'm on at the moment."

Fabrice Muamba
Former Bolton Wanderers midfielder



"You can never really learn too much about what you can do after football because things can change so quickly so the more information you have the better – it was a really beneficial day."

"A lot of it (refereeing) is man management skills but they've got a good knowledge of the game itself," said Marriner, who believes young players should not be lost to the game."

"They have the physical prowess and while the laws of the game theory work is slightly different to what they know once that has been learned their football background can help them go on to become really good referees."

Andre Marriner
Elite Select Group Referee



"As part of our recruitment we have over 50 different types of role in the RAF including engineering, air crew, logistics, human resources and medical so fantastic opportunities for any lads who are looking for a career beyond football. We also offer the opportunity to carry on your sport of choice as part of your duty."

"First and foremost we're an academic institution but our football programme is a massive draw and it's great for us to tell the lads about how we can help. We've got a great link with LFE and probably have 20 plus players who have either been released at 18 or after a year as a professional who've come to Hartpury to do a foundation degree or full degree."

"I didn't realise how much you could actually do while you're still playing in terms of all the courses you can take at universities."

"The event gives you a boost of confidence in terms of making you aware there are still a lot of things you can do if football doesn't work out."

Marc Richards
Hartpury



"This is something we've come to for the last 4–5 years because it's really important to make them aware of the sorts of careers available to them inside and outside sport. We feel we have a responsibility to prepare our boys because they won't all become professionals."

"Whether they go on to University, become employed, play part-time football or make it as a professional – they're all successful progressions but we're conscious that the skills they develop while they're with us will help them go on to that next stage."

"Even if you make it you have to have a plan and I think it speaks volumes that I'm here."


Chris Burke
Birmingham & Scotland








Statistics

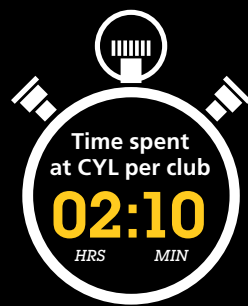
ATTENDANCE

1 x  = 5 attendees

 Apprentices (800)

 Exhibitors (50)

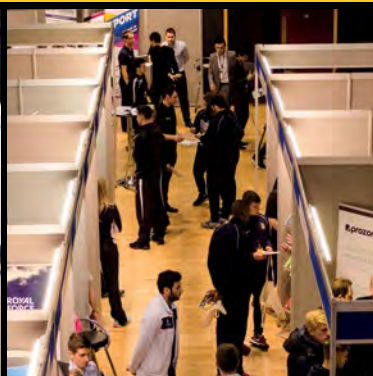
 Mentors (25)



40

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Exhibitors



International Honours

Spring brought exciting opportunities for a group of apprentice players who all won international honours

A little over a year ago, **Christian Walton** was playing in goal for Plymouth Argyle Under-18s. Now the Cornishman is an England Under-19 international and a regular for Brighton & Hove Albion's second team. Walton was the only current apprentice from a Football League club to play up a year for England Under-19s, coming on as sub in a 3-0 friendly win for Noel Blake's team over Turkey at Chester last month.

England now face Montenegro (24 May at Walsall), Scotland (26 May at Burton) and Ukraine (29 May at Burton) in the Elite Stage of the qualifiers ahead of the UEFA European Championship finals in Hungary.

In the Under-17 European Championships, having beaten both Albania and host nation the Czech Republic, England sealed their place in the finals with a 2-1 win over Italy in Zlin.

A trio from LFE's apprenticeship played for the Three Lions: centre-back **Joe Gomez** of Charlton and midfielder **Lewis Cook** of Leeds both started, with Middlesbrough's **Callum Cooke** coming on for Cook. His club-mate **Dael Fry** was an unused substitute. John Peacock's side will now prepare for the European finals tournament in Malta in May where they face the hosts, the Netherlands and Turkey.

Among the Czech Under-17s was Millwall's Canadian-born attacker **Kris Twardek**, who having travelled 800 miles to feature was given the opportunity to renew acquaintances with Gomez. The pair spend most days only a

couple of miles apart in south-east London and are Under-18 Academy League opponents.

Walton and Gomez had club-mates representing the Republic of Ireland Under-18s in April in their two friendlies, also against the Czech Republic: Charlton keeper **Harry Doherty** started in both the 2-2 defeat and the 2-0 win, while Brighton full-back **Dylan Barnett** played in the win, replacing Wolves' **Ryan Rainey** from the first game. Bristol City's **Pierce Mitchell** and **Joel Coustrain** of Sheffield United played a part in both games.

A third Brighton apprentice was in international action recently as Icelandic forward **Ragnar Larusson**, who joined the Seagulls last summer, played three times for Iceland Under-17s in their European qualifiers, losing to Ukraine and Portugal, and drawing with Latvia.

Tom Lang's first-half opener set Scotland under-17s on their way to a 2-0 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina in their European Championship qualifier.

The Birmingham City defender revealed his delight at grabbing his first goal for his country which held a special significance as his uncle Robbie had flown more than 4000 miles to see it.

"I'm proud my family got to see me play and to score was even better – I can't even explain the feeling," the teenager said.

Northern Ireland fielded a whopping 13 apprentices from the Football League in their Under-19 International Friendlies in March.

"You could see from my celebration what playing for Scotland means to me. I put my heart on the line for Scotland."

Teammate **Jake Sheppard** (Reading) showed he too had the magic touch a few days later by scoring with his first touch of the ball during a 3-1 win against Belgium - which ensured Scotland will compete at a major tournament for the first time since 2008.

Both then played in the 1-0 win over Romania at Kilmarnock. Scotland will now take on Germany, Switzerland and Portugal in the finals tournament in Malta.

At the start of March, PDL2's current top scorer **Jordan Preston** of Blackburn Rovers and Crewe apprentice **Fraser Murdoch** were in the Scotland Under-19s squad that beat Switzerland in a friendly at Livingston. They will hope to

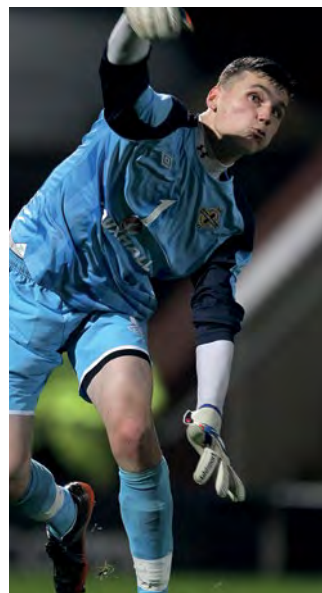
"You could see from my celebration what playing for Scotland means to me. I put my heart on the line for Scotland."

make the cut for the UEFA European Under-19 Championship elite round in England.

Northern Ireland fielded a whopping 13 apprentices from the Football League in their Under-19 International Friendlies in March.

In the 3-0 defeat to Switzerland in Belfast, Burnley's **Conor Mitchell** was in goal behind club-mate **Cameron Dummigan**, **Josh Doherty** (Watford), **Kyle Symons** (Notts Co), **Dale Gorman** (Stevenage), **Eoghan McCawli** (Hull), and **Mikhail Kennedy** (Charlton), with **Levi Ives** (Torquay), **Mark Edgar** (Blackburn), **George Gray** (Preston), **Lewis Collins** (Reading), **Sean Mullan** (Sheff Wed) and **Louis Rooney** (Plymouth) coming off the bench.

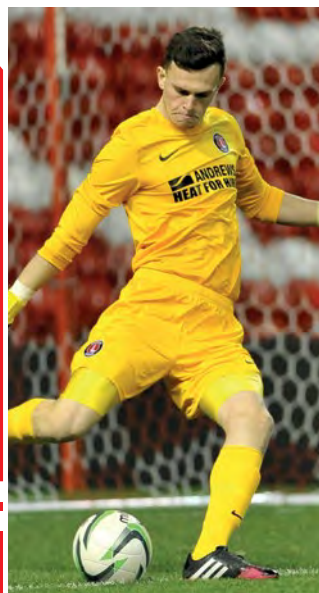
All but Symons played again in the 2-2 draw between the same two nations at Dungannon two days later, Ives and Doherty (with a late penalty) on the scoresheet.



Conor Mitchell BURNLEY



Lewis Cook LEEDS UNITED



Harry Doherty CHARLTON ATHLETIC



Dael Fry MIDDLESBROUGH



Josh Doherty WATFORD



Jake Sheppard READING



Joel Coustrain SHEFFIELD UNITED



Callum Cooke MIDDLESBROUGH

"There are a lot of skills you can pick up from football, in particular disciplinary and mental skills that are transferable into the wider working world."

Fred Holtom



Starting down the road to become a management accountant "might not be everyone's cup of tea" according to Fred Holtom but the former Preston North End defender insists that it's the "perfect fit" for him

While he once had aspirations of forging a living from football and emulating the achievements of youth-team colleagues Jamie Proctor and Bailey Wright, both now regulars in League One, Fred has moved down a markedly different route.

Almost two years after leaving Deepdale to return to his native Solihull, he is part way through his new 5-year plan for success after joining Fujitsu on an apprenticeship in accountancy.

"The general stereotype of a footballer isn't somebody who'll sit in an office all day looking at spreadsheets and numbers all day but each to their own and it fits for me," Fred told LFE.

"Finding another apprenticeship to get work experience as well as education was quite important to me. I joined as a finance apprentice, the idea being that I'd be used as a shared resource around the departments picking up different knowledge from each area and learning the different roles.

"I've now started to work towards management accountancy which is where I want to be in 5 years. I've got a 5-year plan and I'm currently doing my AAT qualifications and then move on to CIMA so my aim is to be fully qualified by the age of 25."

While Fred admits that he still harbours regrets about his football career, he maintains that his two years in the North West were extremely valuable.

"Looking back I could've maybe pushed myself harder but hindsight's a wonderful thing," Fred continued. "I thought I was doing everything I could but you might only have one chance so you have to make the most of it – that said the two year's I spent at Preston were two of the best years I've had.

"Living with your mates and guys you're playing football with is something that you can only enjoy and it's great to see people you've played with doing so well. When they (the club) make decisions about professional contracts it can hit you quite hard, especially as you're 17-18 years-old. Your whole life revolves around football and it can be quite daunting but my transition wasn't too difficult because I had a lot of support and guidance.

"There are a lot of skills you can pick up from football, in particular disciplinary and mental skills that are transferable into the wider working world especially if you keep an open mind and that helped me follow in my Mum's footsteps into accountancy."

Former York City winger Jamie Hopcutt is making his mark in Sweden after initially making the switch to Scandinavia via LFE's Leonardo funded Player Placement programme



"The first year couldn't have gone any better really, we won promotion on the final day of the season."

The youngster who had been playing for Tadcaster Albion after being released by the Ministermen after just three months of his first professional contract at Bootham Crescent – joined Ostersunds FK in 2012, via LFE's player placement programme.

Hopcutt who admits that he, "has loved every minute of his Swedish sojourn" is making the most of his time in his "adopted country" and made an immediate impact on the pitch helping his new club to promotion to the Superettan – the second tier of Swedish football.

That helped earn him a new deal under boss Graham Potter, himself a former York player and the winger admits that he is grateful for this opportunity.

"I knew the manager (Potter) here and he suggested doing the player placement programme through LFE, which really helped me take stock and work out if I liked it," Hopcutt said.

"The first year couldn't have gone any better really, we won promotion on the final day of the season and it was good to be part of that achievement for the club and the town.

"I came out here at 19 and I'm 22 this year and in terms of football that's a pivotal period to develop. I've had the perfect situation to do just that here, there's not many distractions, we train every day and the facilities at the club are second to none and comparable with a Championship club in England.

"I was gutted to leave York but I'm grateful that it happened now because I'm in a really good position over here – I've been living on my own which has been great, my girlfriend's Swedish, everyone speaks good English and I'm really settled.

"We faced Elfsborg in the Swedish version of The FA Cup in March and they were playing in the Europa League last year. When I look at the fact I was playing in front of 50 people in non-league two years ago it shows how far I've come," added Hopcutt.

JAMIE HOPCUTT



LFE Apprentice of the Year

The Football League Awards

Mason Bennett

Derby County



Mason Bennett claimed the Championship crown after fending off competition from Huddersfield Town's Jake Charles and Middlesbrough's Bryn Morris

The much-deserved accolade found its way to Mason Bennett shortly after he temporarily left Pride Park to join promotion chasing League Two Chesterfield on loan. Bennett made six appearances for the Spireites before being recalled by Steve McLaren ahead of the Rams play-off campaign.

On winning the award, Bennett said:

"It's a great achievement for me personally and for my family. I'd like to thank the academy and the manager for giving me the opportunity."

"It's been very hard because I haven't had much time to concentrate on my LFE work but there's a great education officer at Derby who has helped me get through it."

The youngster already knew a thing or two about being in the spotlight after making his Derby debut under the glare of Championship floodlights as a 15-year-old back in 2011 during a 2-0 defeat at Middlesbrough – the shirt he wore on that day is now framed and lives at his grandmother Gene's house.

That appearance made him the youngest player ever in the club's history and unsurprisingly the young forward also has the distinction of being the club's youngest goal-scorer after scoring against Tranmere Rovers in the FA Cup Third Round last term at the age of 16 years and 174 days old.

England youth international Bennett has now made over 30 appearances for the Rams and was described as an "excellent ambassador" for the club in his nomination. LFE regional officer John Barton added:

"Over the years of dealing with a large number of apprentices I have not known an apprentice

with such football commitments who has tried so hard to complete his education programme.

"This considerable effort is no doubt due to Mason attaching a huge value to achieving the academic aspects of his programme."

On the football front Derby County's academy manager Darren Wassall said:

"He has power, pace and strength beyond his years. He is a natural goal scorer and mature for his age". While the young forward is hungry to play a part in promotion chasing Derby's play-off games, he should not be too concerned if he has to wait a little longer to make an impact with first-team boss Steve McLaren earmarking him as one for the future:

"We see him as a big player for us next season," McLaren said.

"We wanted him to get some experience and go above under-21 matches to test himself in League football."

What they've been tweeting

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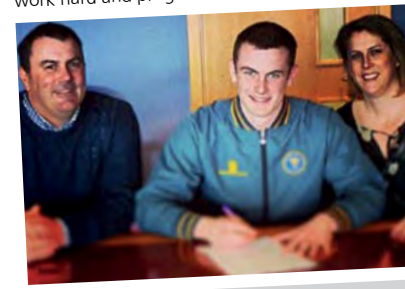
With so many current and ex apprentices on Twitter, we've picked out some of the best tweets we've seen recently:

Bournemouth's Ed Tierney passes on his best wishes to a peer

Ed Tierney @EdTierney1
happy birthday @CornickH hope you're well mate. Hearing good reports, keep it up pal!

'Time to work hard & progress' – just the right attitude from a delighted Callum Burton

Callum Burton @Cal_Burton96
Delighted to have signed my 1st professional contract for Shrewsbury today. Time to push on, work hard and progress!



Bristol Rovers goalkeeper, Kieran Preston talks to Fabrice Muamba

kieran @kieranprest0n
@LFEonline: Anyone up for a bout of verbal tennis? @fmuamba maybe with @Official_BRFC U18s players #CYL



Ben Newbould enjoyed talking to apprentices about what he's learned since leaving York City

Velocity PT Academy @Velocity1stPT
@MrBenNewbould taking @CTFCofficial YT's through their paces at @LFEonline Create Your Legacy



Derby County's apprentice line-up

DerbyCountyAcademy @dcfcacademy
@dcfcacademy scholars ready to get some crucial advice from Create Your Legacy event @warwickuni #careers



Former West Brom apprentice (now Staffs University) Gez Mulholland, enjoyed working for LFE at #CYL

Gez Mulholland @GezMulholland
interviewing @fmuamba for @LFEonline yesterday at the Create Your Legacy exhibition. Great experience #CYL2014 #LFE



Josh Brownhill puts pen to paper after starring for Preston this term

Josh Brownhill @Brownhill10
Glad to have signed a 2 and half year professional contract with @pnefc





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