

The Debutants



ALSO INSIDE



the 11

The 11 kicked-off for the 2016-17 season with eleven starlets who have delivered on and off the pitch in the opening weeks of the campaign. Nominated by our team of regional officers, the XI was:

(Nominations are made four times each season by LFE's regional officers. The winners all receive a certificate and cheque for £50.)



- Dylan Sumner Blackpool
- Danny Barker Brighton & Hove Albion
- Harry Pickering Crewe Alexandra
- Ryan Sessegnon Fulham
- Charley Barker Leyton Orient
- Akin Famewo Luton Town
- Tom Marriott Mansfield Town
- Aaron Morley Rochdale
- Jordan Hallam Sheffield United
- Will Henry Swindon Town
- Eddie Clarke Tranmere Rovers

GOAL OF THE MONTH OVER 10,000 VIEWS VIA LFETV

32 STUNNING GOALS 9,000 VOTES

23 CLUBS FEATURED **27** PLAYERS

WATCH THE GOALS AND CAST YOUR VOTE
lfe.org.uk/goal-of-the-month LFETV

USA Scholarships

Since 2010 more than 200 LFE apprentices have crossed the Atlantic Ocean to join a USA university. Many have successfully gained a place to pursue their education in the States with the help of Pass4Soccer, LFE's chosen partner in this area.

Coaches in America are already searching for new recruits to bolster their squads for the next academic year. For more information download our Guide to American Scholarships.

www.lfe.org.uk/downloads/apprentice-brochures
01772 326875

Higher Education

If you're thinking about going to University next September, LFE's Guide to Higher Education applications is worth looking at.

It gives the lowdown on UCAS, the application process, deadlines and clearing, as well as student finance and support.

www.lfe.org.uk/downloads/apprentice-brochures
01772 326875

Welcome to Touchline, brought to you by League Football Education



LFE is supported by:



FA Youth Cup

The story so far

The FA Youth Cup has been renowned for producing shock results and this year has been no exception so far...

BY JACK WYLIE



Charlton Athletic U18s have been a dominant force in the Professional Development League South yet again this season, but Sergei Baltacha's team suffered at the hands of Stevenage in the second round.

Second half goals from Mark McKee and Michael Cregan gave The Boro a stunning 2-0 win. A third round tie with Tottenham Hotspur proved a step too far though as they fell to a heavy defeat.

Meanwhile, Norwich are another of the teams to have already sealed their progress to the fourth round after an emphatic 5-1 victory over Watford. Playing in front of 550 fans at Vicarage Road, Owen Wallis, Benny Ashley-Seal and an own goal put The Canaries 3-0 up at the interval. Anthony Spyrou and Devonte Aransibia secured the result before a late consolation strike.

Preston edged through following a close encounter with Sheffield United under the lights at Deepdale. Melle Meulenstein broke the deadlock inside 10 minutes from the spot before keeper Callum Roberts took centre stage with a series of fantastic saves to keep The Blades at bay.

National League South club Oxford City surprised Peterborough in the second round but Gillingham in turn halted their cup run. Goals from Jack Conway and Bradley Stevenson sent the Gills through to the fourth round stage for the first time in 13 years.

Fleetwood Town and Bolton Wanderers were less fortunate as they both crashed out to minnows Chester FC, who then lost to FC Broxbourne Borough in the third round, while Notts County fell to Northern Premier League First Division side Romulus FC.

Coventry, who last year only missed out on a quarter-final berth on penalties against Arsenal, also suffered in the early rounds, losing to Dunkirk 3-2 after extra-time.

Oldham and Mansfield both proved beneficiaries of those results, sending both non-league clubs packing in the second round.

Elsewhere, Leyton Orient have been rewarded with a clash against Leicester after smashing 13 goals in 2 games.

While Cardiff were unable to stop holders Chelsea, falling to a 5-0 defeat, Yeovil did spring a surprise at the Hawthorns, knocking out West Bromwich Albion. Callum Morton, Joe Tomlinson and Paul Akinuli scored as the Glovers progressed with a 3-2 win.

Over at Hillsborough, Sheffield Wednesday showed Luton no mercy, with a Jordan Lonchar hat-trick and a goal from Fraser Preston, giving the Owls a comfortable passage in to the fourth round.

The FA Youth Cup is the most prestigious of prizes at under-18 level





ERASMUS+ Player Placements

Christmas is the most hectic time of the football calendar in England but in Sweden it will signal a close to the season, meaning a well-deserved break for a raft of former apprentices.

One hundred and eighty two players (and counting) have taken advantage of Erasmus+ funding to jet off to Scandinavia since LFE started this programme 8 years ago. And for most it represents an opportunity not to be missed.

During a recent trip regional officers Simon Williams and Craig Skinner met with clubs and players to discover first-hand how LFE's influence has spread across the North Sea.

"It's clear that players with an open mind and willingness to try new things can benefit from this programme," Williams said.

"These sorts of opportunities are incomparable to anything else that a lot of our players have done before - they should grasp them. There is a lot to learn on and off the pitch.

"We have a clear understanding of football in Sweden and can support players flying out there to test themselves as a player and perhaps

more importantly, those willing to take on new life challenges.

"It was noticeable how many English players have now made the move a permanent one, Craig unexpectedly bumped into David Kuba-Kuba (ex-Preston) and others who he knew but didn't realise were in Sweden," said Williams.

Highlights from this season include record-breaking IFK Ostersund who soared to the Division 3 title scoring 101 goals along the way and offering former Rochdale duo Callum Schorah and Japhet Mata a contract for next season.

But the shock of the season is delivered by Ytterhogdals IK, a fifth tier outfit, qualifying for the prestigious Swedish Cup and being drawn into a four-team group including top flight IF Elfsborg. Manager Brian Wake has described the incredible journey as 'once in a lifetime' and recognises the programme as one of the keys to their success.

Education Support Fund

BY STEVEN SUTCLIFFE



LFE chief executive, Alan Sykes is urging clubs to get the ball rolling with applications for the Education Support Fund for the 2016-17 season.

Now in its tenth year of operation the fund has helped clubs to improve their apprenticeship programmes and the support they offer to young players.

Apple MacBook's, iPads, filming towers, video cameras, microphones, mobile whiteboards, outward bound days, nutrition and cooking classes, lab sessions, speed testing, plyometric jump systems and heart-rate monitors are just some of the items that have been commissioned by the fund in recent years.

Sykes is hopeful that clubs will once again take advantage of the fund and in particular look to bolster their IT capacities.

"It's typical for clubs to delay making claims and leave things to the last minute but the earlier the claim is made the sooner we can help and ensure that clubs are able to access their full allocation of funding," Sykes said.

"We want clubs to fully utilise the fund to strengthen and enhance what they can deliver and not put themselves in a position where they could miss out.

"Great advances have been made to increase e-learning resources and qualifications and we'd like clubs to ensure that they are in a position to embrace that within their apprenticeship programmes. This funding can help to address that.

"Since it was set-up in 2006, this support has taken many forms and if a club finds a new innovative way to improve their programme we will support it, if we can. Ultimately though our key criteria has to be how any proposal benefits the education provision and apprentices," he added.

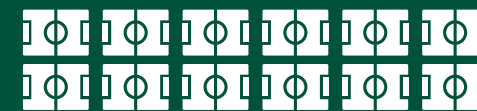
Any queries should be directed to Alan Sykes on 01772 326 870 or email: asykes@lfe.org.uk

Assessment Trials 2017

The Assessment Trials offer released players another chance to stay in the game by showcasing their talents in front of scouts from professional clubs, non-league and universities in the UK and abroad.

They will kick off on 27 April in the North, followed by trials in the South on 2 May, and the Midlands on 3-4 May.

12 GAMES



4 VENUES



264 PLAYERS



250 SCOUTS



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

www.lfe.org.uk/trials2016





Academy Leagues Round-Up BY JACK WYLIE

North East Division

Reigning champions Mansfield have led the way in the North East section all season having conceded just six goals in 12 games.

But having kicked off the campaign with a seven-game unbeaten streak, The Stags have allowed closest rivals Notts County the chance to claim top spot by starting December with a 1-0 defeat to York City, their third loss in five.

Nyle Blake's brace had given Mansfield a 2-0 victory over County in November, but the Magpies responded in fine fashion with two successive wins to close-in on the leaders.

North West Division

It is an unfamiliar look at the top of the North West section as defending champions Wigan Athletic and last year's runners-up Bury trail in eighth and fourth, respectively.

Walsall have capitalised by setting the pace, largely due to a league-high nine clean sheets.

The Saddlers have gone eight games without defeat since suffering their only loss of the season to third-placed Accrington, who were also eight games unbeaten until falling to bottom side Wrexham at the beginning of November.

Stanley can move level with Walsall if they win both of their games in hand, while high-scoring Blackpool are also six points adrift with a game in hand on the leaders.

South East Division

The South East section is the place to go for goals and nobody has been as prolific as Leyton Orient striker Tristan Abrahams, who has already taken his goalscoring tally to 20.

The O's won the Championship Round at a canter last term and already appear to have the regular season title wrapped up with a 12-point cushion over second-placed Cambridge United, who have played a game more.

While Orient have dropped just four points from a possible 45 so far, the race for second is very much up for grabs, with two points separating Cambridge, Luton, Southend and Stevenage.

South West Division

It is tight at the top of the South West division as Exeter remain at the summit, but only on goal difference ahead of Bristol Rovers.

However, it is third-placed Portsmouth who have grabbed the initiative, sitting three points behind with several games in hand on the leading duo.

Pompey are on a four-game winning streak and gained the advantage over both of their rivals defeating Exeter 3-1 and Rovers 3-2, with Harvey Bradbury, the son of former Blues forward Lee, contributing three of the goals for Mikey Harris's team.

Meanwhile, holders Plymouth Argyle are suffering a dramatic fall from grace, slumping to second from bottom after four defeats in a row.

Professional Development League 2 North

Last year's Championship Round finalists Sheffield United were the team to beat in the Northern section until a 2-0 loss to Huddersfield Town allowed Crewe Alexandra the chance to claim top spot in the first week of December.

Alex duly obliged by beating bottom club Birmingham for their third consecutive victory, although they have played a game more than the Blades and third-placed Nottingham Forest.

2015-16 regular season winners Forest remain very much in the hunt just three points adrift and have featured in 6-3 and 6-5 thrillers against Bolton Wanderers and Crystal Palace, respectively.

Professional Development League 2 South

Charlton Athletic have hit their stride and are threatening to run away with the Southern section yet again following a run of 10 games unbeaten.

Coventry City are clinging on in pursuit of The Addicks, but have slipped eight points behind with two games in hand after a 4-1 reversal at the hands of the leaders at the end of October.

Last season's regular season table-toppers Watford have endured a difficult start and lie in a lowly seventh having lost nine of their 16 games - triple the amount they suffered in 29 matches last term.

Premier League North

Blackburn Rovers are keeping pace with their Premier League counterparts, climbing into third in the table behind both Manchester clubs.

Striker Dan Butterworth has been in fine form with seven goals for Rovers who by their own admission conceded ground after twice being reduced to ten men for long periods of their draws against Everton and Liverpool.

At the other end, Wolves are without a win in eight games and possess the division's leakiest defence but a 2-2 draw against Liverpool in November courtesy of a double from Jordan Allan suggested that they are capable of better.

Premier League South

Reading are the nearest challengers to title favourites Chelsea as they sit just one point behind the defending champions.

However, The Royals had been in front of their West London rivals until they relinquished the lead of the Southern section after two defeats in November, which included a 9-2 defeat to Norwich.

Bilal Kamal netted a hat-trick for the seventh-placed Canaries, who also produced an enthralling 5-4 win over the league leaders back in September.



The Debutants

BY GAVIN WILLACY

Since the last edition of Touchline even more apprentices have made their first team bow and while there are simply too many to chronicle in full, we've decided to run the rule over a selection of players who have tasted senior action.



Ephron Mason-Clark
Barnet

1 Mason-Clark made his first team debut when he played the last half hour of the 5-0 hammering by Norwich in the Checktrade Trophy in October and was soon making his EFL debut. By late November he was starting in the senior team's win over Notts County at The Hive.

Having been converted from youth team winger to first team striker, Peckham-based Ephron has used his pace and trickery to fine effect in Barnet's development team over the past year to earn his call-up at the age of 17, gaining praise from his manager on the Channel 5, EFL programme.



Josh Koroma and Sam Dalby
Leyton Orient

2 3 After several appearances as a substitute, forward Koroma, from Peckham, made his first start in the Os' EFL Trophy win over Stevenage in August - a game in which first year scholar Sam Dalby made his debut.

For striker Dalby it came just five days after receiving his GCSE results in which he received 10 A* and A grades - including Russian!

Having made his debut at 16, local lad Dalby was on the bench for several more games during autumn, where was joined by second year apprentice Henry Ochieng - a central midfielder from Chigwell - who came on for his debut in the Checktrade Trophy against Brighton at the Amex Stadium in November.

That game also saw second year apprentices Koroma start on the wing and Myles Judd come on at full-back. Judd has also made his EFL debut for the League Two strugglers, now managed by former youth team boss Andy Edwards.



Ricky German
Chesterfield

4 Ricky made his EFL debut in the last minute of the League One win over Northampton in September and has not looked back. By the end of November, the striker had clocked up nine appearances in all competitions, with a first league start under his belt, too.

Ricky only joined the Spireites in July 2015 after impressing on trial following several seasons with Reading and has taken his chance in Derbyshire.



Darren Oldaker
Gillingham

5 Having been an unused substitute for half of last season's League One fixtures, Oldaker finally got on the pitch earlier this season as a late sub in the Gill's heavy defeat at leaders Scunthorpe. Better was to follow on his first start, when he also registered his first senior goal in a narrow EFL Trophy defeat to Luton.

He was joined on the hour mark by fellow Under-18s forward Brad Stevenson from Canterbury, who came on for his debut. Oldaker, known to everyone at Gills as DJ, impressed boss Justin Edinburgh sufficiently to start the next two league games. He had clocked up seven first team appearances by the end of November and got his second goal in the Checktrade Trophy win at West Brom.



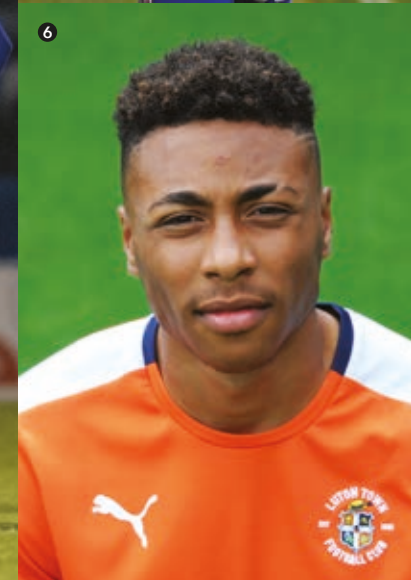
Akin Famewo
Luton Town

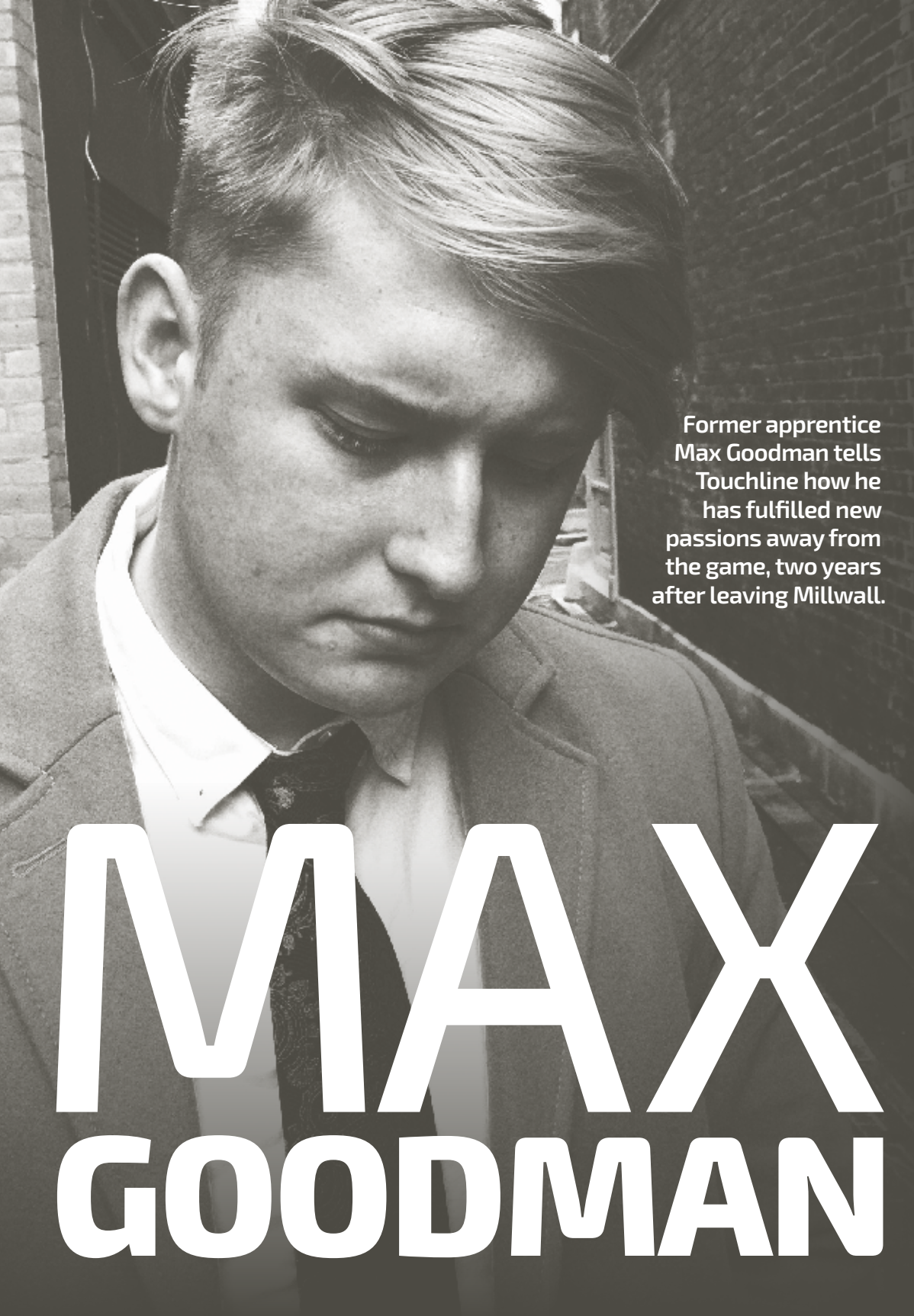
6 Centre-back Famewo was the second member of the successful Hatters Under-18 team to be called up to the first team, making his debut in the last few minutes of the League Two win over Newport at Kenilworth Road back in August. He follows midfielder Tyreeq Bakinson, who has become a first team regular, and they have since been joined by several other youth-teammates who have made their debuts in Luton's EFL Trophy run. Famewo, from Beeston, made his first EFL start against Hartlepool and had clocked up five appearances before his 18th birthday in November.



Tyrrique Hyde
Dagenham & Redbridge

7 There are better situations to make your debut than coming on when you are 5-0 down at home, however midfielder Hyde was delighted to make his bow for the Daggers against Gateshead in November. Hyde then played 90 minutes in the FA Cup at Halifax - a game in which fellow second year apprentice Joe White made his debut as a late sub. The duo were both in action two days later in the FA Youth Cup thriller at Luton, going out 4-3 after extra time. Hyde, son of former Watford and Burnley midfielder Micah - who is now the club's academy manager - retained his place in John Still's squad as the Daggers attempt to bounce straight back into the EFL.





Former apprentice Max Goodman tells Touchline how he has fulfilled new passions away from the game, two years after leaving Millwall.

MAX GOODMAN

Two years ago I was a second year apprentice at a Championship club, Millwall. Some of my team-mates were in the first team and I was playing in goal for the youth team. Yet I had fallen out of love with football. I didn't want to do it anymore and loved music more. Now that's what I do, with a passion.

It got to the point where I was enjoying football less and less. I didn't like doing it every day or the stress that came with it. At the beginning of the second year in pre-season I had the weirdest feeling of 'this just isn't going to happen for me'. But I felt I couldn't leave as I would have been a year behind everyone else at school. I stuck it out for months but was really struggling.

It didn't feel right to carry on. In the end I stopped training and playing but carried on going to college. I was actually better in the classroom than I was on the pitch. I enjoyed the BTEC and was good at it - I got Distinction Merit in the end - but I didn't want to study sport.

Going to gigs was initially my release from football. Instead of watching football on a freezing Tuesday night I could be chilling at a gig by, say, The Libertines. Then I started blogging about music, having been encouraged by my regional officer, Gavin Willacy to write about what I loved. I told him I wanted to work in the music business as a writer or an A&R man. He said to just start writing, get stuff online and see what I could do.

After a while I felt I was just writing the same thing over and over and that I could get my personality over better and do more, on radio. So I decided to start my own show. I've always loved listening to presenters like Chris Moyles and Danny Baker and I'd love to follow them.

I started a podcast called Max's Mumbles, playing all my favourite music and new bands I'd found out about. Then I realised that I was just talking to myself too much and not playing enough music. So I changed it to an online radio show, every Tuesday night on Twitter. That way I'm limited to an hour and have to be more disciplined with the links between songs. I've found I can fit in more in two minutes than when there was no limit on the podcast.

Most of my mates listened to the show at first but then stopped because they felt they didn't need to support me anymore. So now I'm building my audience again. I think I'm ready to step up to being a proper presenter on the radio soon. I still use a lot of notes and can't rely on just remembering everything I want to say but hopefully I don't sound too scripted on the show.

My main job as a social media manager with a mobile TV company has given me some contacts and I'm starting to build a network. I've only just turned 20 so it's early days but I'm doing what I love. I still follow football and Millwall. My brother Jake is playing for Braintree in the National League and I'm buzzing for the boys in my year who are now in Millwall's first team: Fred Onyedina, Alfie Pavey, Jamie Philpott. My mate Kris Twardek has just made his debut too. That's brilliant for them.

When I went to the My Future Today event that LFE put on. The day focussed on pursuing other passions and interests alongside football. It was about wider development. I wasn't doing that but realised it was exactly what I needed to do.

I can't sing but I have written some songs for others and I might start playing the guitar again. I haven't played since I broke my hand on my first day at Millwall! Now I'm even writing poetry. That's my new thing. I came across John Cooper Clarke and like what he does. Like him, my poetry comes from natural sources like my friends, parties that I've been to. I've started performing them online and want to see if I can do ten minutes live before bands play, or hook up with a fashion brand to help their promotions. Poetry is the main outlet for my creativity now. I've even written one about my apprenticeship, called 'Different Voices'.

Different Voices by Max Goodman

They all watched me as I fall to pieces,
Position is dropped but the future increases,
Half the things I tried to say wouldn't get through,
I needed to be free but closer to you

And whoever said that I was gonna make it,
It's been eight years I know how to fake it,
I made a few mistakes and some stranger choices,
All the same opinion but from different voices

I should of tried harder in the first place,
All I wanted was some more of your space,
I didn't really know if or when to take it,
This was my life but you knew how to break it

Working six days a week for a poxy two bob,
Might as well get a dead end day job,
I know you won't even remember my name,
Ten years from now it'll all be the same

You know me I'm bound to complain,
Passing the blame during the game,
Same s*** different day,
Asylum encounters, they thought I was insane

After a long double session,
and the social depression,
Lack of expression,
For a lifelong profession

Everything's changed,
Routine's rearranged,
No words exchanged,
Everything's changed

I made a few mistakes and some stranger choices,
All the same opinion but from different voices



Listen to Max's music show on Twitter via @MaxsMumble and his podcasts at alternativeinsight.co.uk

2016 A YEAR IN PICTURES

JANUARY - MARCH ▶

Sheffield Wednesday's George Hirst bagged a brace on his first start for England U17s against Germany.



UEFA Youth League: After defeating Stade Reims, Torino and Dynamo Kiev, Middlesbrough lost a tight game at eventual finalists Paris Saint-Germain, in the last 16.

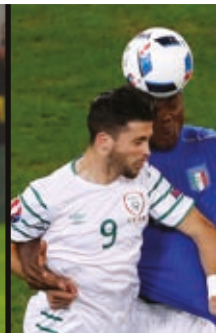
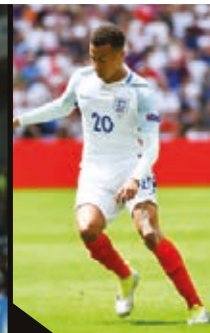


APRIL - JUNE ▶



Blackburn Rovers reached the FA Youth Cup semi-final for the third time in six years before losing to eventual winners Chelsea.

Here Joe Rankin and Lewis Mansell carry the fight to the Londoners.



Former LFE apprentices represented the home nations in Euro 2016.



Lincoln City apprentices took time out of training to deliver a reading workshop at a local primary school.



Prize guys: Ademola Lookman, James Bree and Ben Godfrey collected divisional Apprentice of the Year Awards.



Assessment Trials

Over 250 players participated in LFE's end of season trials in front of scouts from all levels of the game.

JULY - SEPTEMBER ▶

Bristol City, Oxford Utd and Reading jetted across to Madrid with their U18s. Meanwhile Accrington, Blackpool, Blackburn, Ipswich and Shrewsbury made a similar journey to The Netherlands on LFE's pre-season tour.



Big Money moves were the norm with deals involving former apprentices totalling over £80million.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER ▶



Fulham starlet Ryan Sessegnon became the youngest scorer in Championship history. The 16-year-old netted in the Cottagers 2-2 draw with Cardiff.



LFE supported If U Care Share's 'Inside Out' campaign on a worldwide Suicide Prevention Day.

The Academy Leagues got underway in early August.

The FA Youth Cup starts in earnest for EFL clubs. The competition can deliver heartbreak and jubilation in equal measure.



It's the same in the senior competition as a Curzon Ashton squad featuring 8 former apprentices lose a 3 goal lead to AFC Wimbledon in the FA Cup. Seven former apprentices were in the Don's ranks, with former Leeds strikers Dom Poleon and Tom Elliott contributing 3 goals in their thrilling comeback.

GRAFT

It is a cold and wet December morning in Rotherham and Jovanni Sterling is eager to get out and “work hard” at training.

The 17-year-old central defender though is instead catching-up with Touchline to talk about his recent exposure on BBC Radio 1 extra. As a rapper.

Hard work is a prerequisite for those entering the music or football industry. Sterling is doing both. The video of his ‘Man Like’ track has already ratcheted up to 50,000 views on YouTube.

A player by day, an aspiring rap artist in whatever other time he has spare, Sterling is making a name for himself on and off the pitch and has already cut a number of tracks. It’s probably fitting then that his stage name away from football is ‘Graft’.

“The name is simple, literally I work hard in most things so ‘Graft’ was obvious,” he says.

“I rap about things going on my life or things that happen there’s no motive other than that really. It’s a release away from football, maybe you could say it’s a coping mechanism because it gives me a good feeling but I don’t take as much notice or take myself as seriously with music as football. Football is more intense, much more intense.”

“It was a hobby that I did in my spare time, I probably started 3 or 4 years ago and all of my friends do it so I just continued with it.”

Sterling joined Rotherham at the start of this season from Leeds and stressed that he is enjoying his football in his new surroundings.

“It’s been going really well over at Rotherham,” he said.

“I really enjoy it here and feel like I have a lot to offer. I’m quite vocal on the pitch and I think communication and leadership skills are qualities that you need in football and that coaches look at.

“I have some of those qualities but the coaches here are helping me to work on my good points but also the weaknesses in my game to make me better. We get to train with the first team a lot and I want to make an impression on the coaches at that level.”

It has helped that his team-mates have taken to the new boy and offered their dressing room support, though Sterling is quick to point out that when asked which industry he wants to work in, he has a clear preference.

“The lads here are supportive, they always ask me about what I’m doing and when I’m putting new music together,” he continued.

“It can be difficult to find the time to record now I’m at Rotherham because I travel further to get in to work so that makes a difference to what I can and can’t do. I find time on Sunday’s though to put the videos together and it’s something I really enjoy doing.

“I still get nerves before games and think about football and that sort of stuff. When people say, ‘do you want to be a musician or a footballer?’ I always say football one hundred per cent but who knows what’ll happen in the future.”



Tom Williams



Former Tranmere apprentice Tom Williams is developing a set of new goals with Chester-based financial advisers Innes Reid, joining the firm’s training programme in financial services.

Central defender Williams, who joined Tranmere Rovers at the age of 11, completed his football apprenticeship with the club in June. He then secured a new position by August, when he joined Innes Reid, who offer independent financial advice and are Chartered Financial Planners – a status only awarded to firms with a ‘commitment to developing and maintaining the knowledge and capability of their people’.

The organisation’s managing director, Mark Reidford, was delighted to recruit Williams and said:

“I could tell straight away that his time in professional football had provided Tom with a strong set of life skills and a maturity beyond his years.”

“We want him to transfer those skills to the office environment where Innes Reid has offered him the chance to follow a structured programme of development, with a clear career path”.

Williams added: “I joined Innes Reid in August and it has been

a great work environment to come in to. Mark gave me a great opportunity and I couldn’t turn it down. The training gives me the chance to look at all aspects of the business and how it works. But obviously the aim is to become a financial adviser with the clear career path which has been marked out.”

Williams is also continuing to play football. He has joined Welsh Premier League side Llandudno FC who this year qualified to play in the Europa League, and is currently on loan at Denbigh Town in the Huws Gray Alliance until the end of the year to pick up some experience of senior football.

However, he is relishing the opportunity he has been given to develop a promising career as a financial adviser with the potential of a bright future ahead.

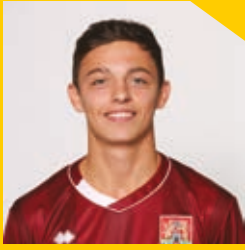
He added: “My focus is on the finance industry with Innes Reid. I have been given a great opportunity here with a chance of progressing thanks to the training on offer.”



HE FOCUS

BY STEVEN SUTCLIFFE

It's that time of year when UCAS deadlines come to the fore for a number of apprentices considering Higher Education in the future. So we've caught up with a couple of current undergraduate students, who were apprentices 6 months ago to find out how they're taking to Uni life.



Name:
Tom Carroll

Now:
Nottingham Trent University

Subject:
BA Hons Business Management

Former Club:
Northampton Town



Carroll, then a budding midfielder at Northampton realised that University, rather than a professional contract would follow his time as an apprentice.

Two serious knee injuries during his first year as an apprentice had got him thinking. When more surgery was required in pre-season of his second year he came to the "realisation" that a professional contract might be beyond him. It was far from ideal but certainly not all doom and gloom.

Carroll had already thought about studying at University. It was something he fancied, the surgeon's knife had just brought his timetable forward.

"University was something I always wanted to do," Carroll said.

"The injuries just cemented a definite course of action. I knew it would be tough for me at Northampton so I put the wheels in motion with a number of universities, contacting them and talking to them about their courses, facilities and my own interests.

"At the same time (early last season) I was speaking to other students at college, team-mates and other people that I knew that had gone to University to sound them out about things I wanted to know.

"I went through UCAS and put my application in on time but I'd done all the groundwork months earlier."

Carroll made submissions to four universities but decided on Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and a BA Hons in Business Management, after visiting the city and holding further talks with admissions tutors and Alessandro Barcherini, the Head of Football at NTU.

"The quality of the course and location were the two biggest considerations," he continued. "A good football structure was helpful but the main thing was the quality of the course.

"I thought 'yeh this is the right fit for me.' It's a good university, a good course and location wise it's perfect. I wanted to do Business because it's quite flexible and there's a placement year as part of this course."

So, three months in to student life are there any regrets?

"I've really enjoyed it to be honest," he said. "I wasn't absolutely shocked when Northampton let me go, so I didn't need to spend a lot of time coming to terms with that decision. I knew it was coming. In many ways I was able to relax. I went to Greece, Portugal and Dubai over the summer, previously I'd have been training.

"I researched Nottingham before I arrived and came a few weeks early to do some training with the University team so that also gave me chance to explore.

"It's the first time I've lived away from home so initially there's an adjustment to be made. It's a little strange but you get used to it, get into a routine and then things become easier.

"It's the same with the academic work. You do a college course while you're an apprentice and that helps you get through the door and onto the course. Once you're on it the bar raises and you need to understand and adjust quickly.



Name:
Aidan Chappell-Smith

Now:
Swansea University

Subject:
MEng Environmental Engineering

Former Club:
Northampton Town



When he rejected the advances of American Universities, Aidan Chappell-Smith decided on something a bit closer to home, though, by his own admission it is still a huge leap into the unknown.

After all, not too many apprentices will have finished last season and then pursued a route towards a career in environmental engineering and renewable energy, just months later.

"I had always thought when I left school that I wanted to do some sort of engineering and by the time I left Cardiff I had an idea of which branch," Chappell Smith said.

"There's obviously different areas of engineering that I could've gone into but I enjoyed looking at renewable sources, tidal energy and this interested me most.

"I never solely thought of relying on football. My parents drilled the importance of, doing well at school and having other strings to my bow into me. I always looked at other aspects of life because I wanted as many options as possible."

UCAS was the easy part. With his sister already studying a different branch of engineering, the chance to study and develop skills that are in short supply appeared obvious. Living at home to cut costs down also seemed a sensible option and persuaded him to resist several offers from the States.

"I'm not 100 per cent sure where this will take me at the moment but I'm looking at things like working within tidal and renewable energy, which really interests me. My sister does Engineering at University so I'd spoken to her and some of the Lecturers here about courses and the opportunities that open up in specific areas of engineering."

"I had a lot of offers from American Universities but while they covered my tuition fees I would've still had to pay for accommodation and that was quite expensive.

"This will take me four years, so a little longer than normal because I had a BTEC. I'm doing a foundation year to start and then it's the usual three years from there."

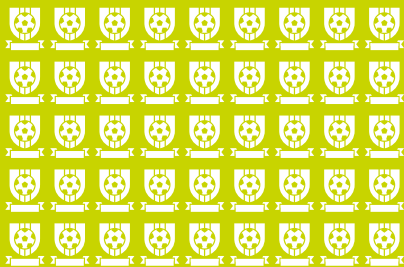
"The first two years are a lot of Maths and Science, there's no project work yet. We've done basic maths, stuff like, simultaneous equations, trigonometry, resolving forces on inclined planes, pulleys and mechanics and motion - things like that.

"It's difficult but I've really enjoyed it. I've not done Maths or Science at A Level so it's been a case of catching-up. I've already had to pass a Maths exam this term, which I did and I've found that it's started to get easier."



Life Skills Number Crunch

45 Clubs involved in My Future Today sessions during 2016-17.



300

The number of players to have taken part in workshops with The Sporting Chance Clinic to date. Led by former Manchester City, Sunderland and Northern Ireland midfielder Jeff Whitley, the seminars cover the effects of alcohol, gambling and drugs.



200

Over 200 players have discovered if they are risks or role models on social media so far this season

12

Players at a dozen clubs have discovered, 'Anything is Possible' after working with Charlie Fogarty



100

Life Skills sessions between pre-season and Christmas



700

Apprentices will work on personal development through MFT this term.



2 Dynamic duo Troy Townsend & Paul Mortimer do their thing for Kick It Out.

10

Different Life Skills options include finance and money management with Barclays, emotional well-being, cardiac health, trained brain and sexual health and respectful relationships.



OUR MAN DOWN UNDER



Former Bradford apprentice and LFE employee **Jonjo O'Hara** tells Touchline his story.

My tale is probably typical of many apprentices. I was a local lad, who joined Bradford when I was 7 working my way through the junior age groups and finally earning an apprenticeship at 16.

There were dramatic changes to the club during that period, when I first went there, it was in the Premier League and buzzing. The first-team included the likes of Dan Petrescu, Stan Collymore, Benito Carbone and Dave Wetherall - who became my youth team coach - all were top players.

By the end of my time at Valley Parade, the club was in League Two. That said, I enjoyed it particularly the switch to full-time training after leaving school, working with Dave, seeing and training with the Professionals at the club on a day-to-day basis.

I was made captain of the youth team in the second year of my apprenticeship. Was I close to being offered a professional deal? Maybe. Would I have got one in better times for the club? It's hard to say but I was told I wasn't far away.

Yet like many of my teammates it was a fine line and I was the wrong side of it. Suddenly I had to explore other opportunities and understand what qualities I had that would be attractive to others. Why hadn't I given this more consideration earlier? It would've helped massively.

I was fortunate though, Pat Lally at The Professional Footballers' Association (who also has a role at LFE) and other staff at LFE and Bradford were on hand to advise and support me. The academic work I'd done through my time at Bradford and the skills I'd developed as a footballer, and not just technical things you see on a pitch, but other talents, were also attractive to others.

All of a sudden I was off to the University of Bath. Bath with its fantastic academic reputation, on a deal that was even sweeter, as I saw it because they provided a football training programme and matches at a semi-pro level alongside study.

What an opportunity then. It was also a chance for me to develop as a person. I was living away from home for the first time and facing new demands, things like cooking, cleaning, ironing, managing my money, all new challenges that gave me greater independence.

I was still playing football, captaining the side to win the British National Universities Championship in 2012 but had done so much more before I graduated.



Where next?

The world's a big place and I fancied a change. So it was off to California to travel up and down the west coast of the USA. The 450-mile stretch of Pacific Coast Highway between San Francisco and Los Angeles is one of America's most iconic road trips. Get the windows down or better still drive a convertible and you can feel the breeze bellow straight into your face, it's a perfect-postcard panorama with amazing stop-off spots at places like Monterey or Pismo Beach.

I found work, coaching at soccer camps (yes enhancing more skills) and Las Vegas was within driving distance!

Next stop LFE

Returning to the UK I joined LFE in a role that enabled me to pass on my experience and knowledge to apprentices after being in the same situation years earlier. It was rewarding, however, I was also practising what I preached to many of those players. I didn't want to stop learning or developing my skills, so I also took on a Master's in Sports Business, which has come in more than useful.

Off to OZ

Australia was appealing. It's popular with lots of young people from the UK and I was no exception - attracted by a different lifestyle and new travelling and employment opportunities.



I boarded a flight from Manchester and spent two months travelling South East Asia along the way!

My plan was admittedly vague but I knew that I could find temporary work and play football in the sun. Melbourne, my chosen destination, has lived up to expectations. It's modern, thriving and cosmopolitan. I'm also a stone's throw from the beach.

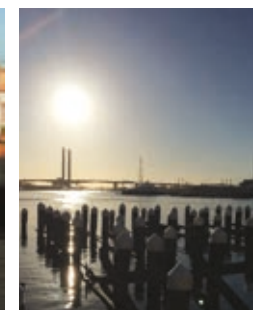
Football has continued, I was made captain of Banyule City and alongside five other former apprentices, like me, from England, I helped the club get promoted to the The Victorian State League Division 1 in my first season (the fourth tier, over here).

More importantly though, I've been sponsored to stay in the country permanently and work in recruitment at Infront Sports.

My clients include the Australian PFA, the Australian Cricketers' Association and other sports associations. Am I happy? Very!

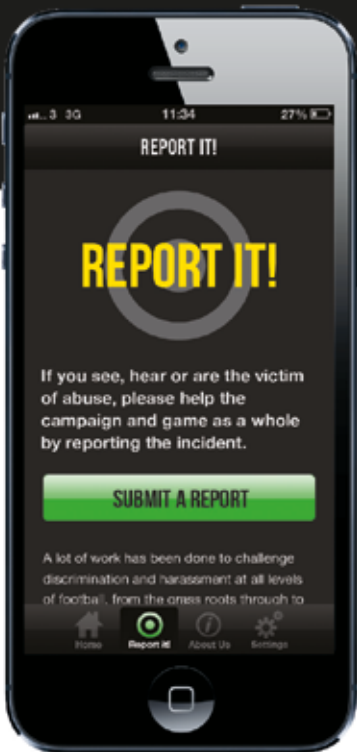
In terms of what's next, I've absolutely no idea. I intend to stay here for the foreseeable future. My job is engaging, football is good, rates of pay seem higher and the weather and lifestyle are a huge plus.

It's been a journey full of options and opportunities that I'd encourage others to explore.





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Derby County Academy @dcfcacademy
 Inspirational afternoon @dcfcacademy @dcfcofficial with Charlie Fogarty @LFEonline Life firmly in perspective! #anythingispossible

LFE @LFEonline
 TEAM NEWS: #bfc starting XI and subs



LFE @LFEonline
 We're at Molineux today to deliver our MFT session to @OfficialWolves and @BCFC academy squads.



LFE @LFEonline
 More images from our #lifeskills session with @ShrimpsOfficial U18s delivered by @kickitout. The group was on good form:



Blackpool Sixth @BlackpoolSixth
 Thank you Simon Williams of @LFEonline for supporting our #bethemiracle campaign! #leaguefootball #LFE



LFE @LFEonline
 Take a look at our opportunities board, we're adding football specific roles all the time <http://www.lfe.org.uk/progression/recruitment/>

AFTA Thought @AFTA_Thought
 Today we are back working with the League Football Education @LFEonline delivering a 'My Future Today' (MFT) workshop at the @QPRCA



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