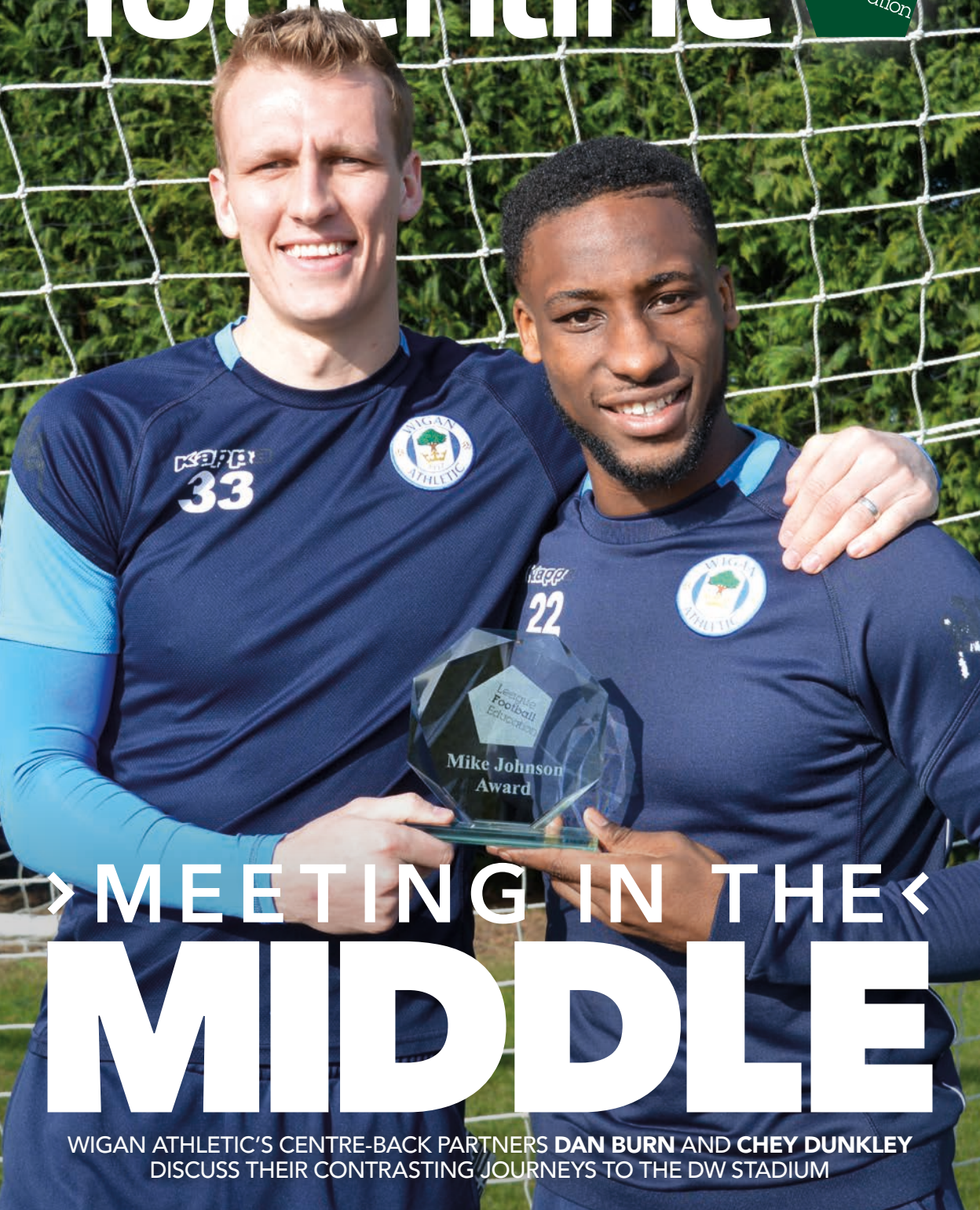


No. 35 / MAY 2018

Touchline

League
Football
Education



» MEETING IN THE « **MIDDLE**

WIGAN ATHLETIC'S CENTRE-BACK PARTNERS **DAN BURN** AND **CHEY DUNKLEY**
DISCUSS THEIR CONTRASTING JOURNEYS TO THE DW STADIUM

PLUS APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR • CLUBS IN THE COMMUNITY • LIFE SKILLS



TUESDAY 8TH MAY 2018
Bury FC,
Gigg Lane



WEDNESDAY 9TH MAY 2018
Nuneaton Town FC,
Liberty Way Stadium



THURSDAY 10TH MAY 2018
Woking FC,
Laithwaite Community Stadium

Assessment Trials 2018

Players have the chance to showcase their talents in front of scouts from professional clubs, non-league clubs and Universities in the UK and abroad at LFE's annual Assessment Trials.

The events are open to those who are coming to the end of their apprenticeship or the end of a first professional contract (Under 19 year) with the aim of helping players find a route back into the game at an appropriate level.

All games will be filmed and streamed via LFE's Youtube channel: <http://bit.ly/LFETrialsTV>
For more information, visit www.lfe.org.uk/trials2018



TUESDAY 1ST MAY 2018
Oxford United FC



WEDNESDAY 2ND MAY 2018
Leicester City FC



THURSDAY 3RD MAY 2018
Huddersfield Town FC

LFE Club Annual Meetings

LFE's annual Club Meetings will take place at Oxford, Leicester and Huddersfield.

The events provide the opportunity for clubs to share best practice and deliver updates on the apprenticeship in sporting excellence programme. Clubs can send up to four delegates on the day.

Pass4Soccer Trial

Pass4Soccer, LFE's official partner for helping former apprentices earn soccer scholarships in the USA, are hosting a trial game for players on Friday 11 May.

The event will take place at Walton Casuals FC, with a large selection of University soccer coaches searching for new recruits for their squads for next season.

For more information on how to register, give Pass4Soccer a call on 0191 229 5236.

Education Support Fund

The Education Support Fund deadline is fast approaching, with nearly 50 clubs still yet to submit a claim.

At the time of writing, 27 clubs have entered their proposal, with 15 of those claiming the full allocation of funding on offer to cover the cost of new IT equipment, such as video analysis software, iPads and Laptops.

Other potential purchases can include heart rate monitors, delivery of Life Skills sessions to support EPPP and activities providing evidence for the NVQ or BTEC.

Clubs have until 31 May to notify LFE of their intentions.

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



FA Youth Cup

The story so far...

From an October trip to Valley Parade to an April evening at the Emirates Stadium, Blackpool have enjoyed an unforgettable journey to the last four of the FA Youth Cup.



The young Seasiders recorded five away wins along the way to the semi-finals and overcame three Under-18 Premier League sides - West Ham United, Southampton and Blackburn Rovers.

Midfielder Dylan Sumner was an ever-present for the Tangerines. He told LFE: "Last year, we got knocked out by Bolton in the first round, so obviously it's a prestigious tournament and we wanted to get at least one stage further."

"In the first couple of rounds, we played Bradford and Doncaster, who we felt we should be beating, but after that we just thought that every win was a bonus. We knew that the Category One teams were going to be good because they've all got great facilities, but beating West Ham proved to us we can take on anyone and gave us a real boost."

A penalty shootout success against Southampton was followed by a 2-0 victory at Ipswich Town, setting up a clash with local rivals Blackburn, which ended 3-2 after two goals in the final three minutes from Will Dunne and Rowan Roache.

"All the way through the run, we just stuck together and made sure we kept our heads up," Sumner said. "We saw a few big names drop out early like Man City and United, so it made us probably believe a bit more that we could keep on progressing."

"Having beaten two Premier League Category One clubs, to then face Ipswich and Blackburn wasn't as daunting anymore because we'd already beaten teams who are higher than them."

A two-legged tie with Arsenal was next on the agenda for Pool, with Sumner netting a first-half equaliser - which was later voted LFE's Goal of the Month in March - while captain Ben Jacobson scored his third of the tournament as John Murphy's side took a 2-2 draw to the Emirates.

Sumner added: "They were expected to win, so it took the pressure off us and we could just go out, play with a bit of freedom and give our all. We went behind twice but didn't panic and took our chances."

"It was a great goal for me. I just remember being really focused and I think we were all just determined to make the most of the opportunity. To pick up a draw against Arsenal was unbelievable and we were absolutely buzzing."

Their dreams of a place in the final were shattered by a 5-0 defeat in the second leg, but Sumner still had fond memories of playing at Arsenal's 60,000-capacity stadium.

He said: "We got there a bit early so that we could walk around and get a few pictures and stuff. The game didn't go to plan but just to play in that stadium, on that pitch and in front of quite a few people was pretty special and an experience I won't forget."

Meanwhile, Birmingham City and defending champions Chelsea were the other semi-finalists, with the eight-time winners advancing to a seventh successive final after a 7-0 aggregate win.

In addition to Blackpool's success, two other EFL Youth Alliance academies produced some memorable moments to reach the latter stages of the competition.

In particular, Plymouth Argyle followed up their sensational victory over the superstars of Manchester City with another stunning display to down Burnley at Turf Moor, with second-year apprentice Billy Craske finding the net in the 93rd minute to send them through.

However, the fairytale ended in the fifth round at the hands of Fulham, who triumphed 3-1 in extra-time despite Klaidi Lolos giving Argyle a first-half advantage.

Bury were the other Youth Alliance outfit to progress deep into the tournament after Callum Hulme's strike helped them to see off Aston Villa in round four, although they also fell at the next hurdle following a 3-1 defeat to Steve Spooner's Birmingham.

Elsewhere, two apprentices are currently tied at the top of the goalscorers' chart as Dylan Florence (Dagenham & Redbridge) and George Lloyd (Cheltenham Town) remain neck and neck on eight goals alongside Chelsea's Under-17 World Cup winner Callum Hudson-Odoi, who will have the chance to claim an outright lead when he takes on Arsenal in the two-legged final.

LFE is supported by:



Academy Leagues Round-Up



North East Division

It is a case of déjà vu in the North East division, with Mansfield Town almost certain to secure their third title in a row. The Stags boast the best offensive and defensive records in the league and are currently on a 13-game unbeaten run to open up an 11-point gap at the top.

Their only defeat of the season came in October against fifth-placed Oldham Athletic, but the Latics were blown away in the reverse fixture in April as Aiden Walker, Rhys Sarson, Keaton Ward and Nyle Blake all found the net in a 4-0 rout.

Meanwhile, Doncaster Rovers are the form team in the division, winning seven games in succession, including away victories against Rotherham United (1-0), Oldham (3-0), York City (0-2), Hartlepool United (6-3) and Grimsby Town (2-1).

North West Division

It is a straight shoot-out between Rochdale and 2015-16 champions Wigan Athletic for the North West title. Nick Chadwick's Wigan are averaging almost three goals a game, led by first-year striker Charlie Jolley (15).

The Latics have lost just one of their last 21 matches, although that defeat came against closest challengers Dale thanks to goals from Fabio Tavares and Neil Kuemo, who are on a run of 12 consecutive victories and are unbeaten since the reverse fixture back in September.

And the initiative was gifted to Rochdale when Athletic dropped two points in a 1-1 draw with Bury, meaning they hold a four-point advantage having played three games more.

Elsewhere, holders Blackpool have been unable to repeat their FA Youth Cup exploits as they currently languish third from bottom, although they do have multiple games in hand.

** Information correct as of 22nd April.*

Southern Merit League One

Exeter City are in a familiar position as they top the Southern Merit League One, maintaining the form that saw them lead the way in the South West regular season table.

The Grecians were almost unstoppable in April, cruising to comprehensive victories against Oxford United (3-0), Bristol Rovers (7-0) and Milton Keynes Dons (5-1), with first-year apprentice Jack Sparkes enjoying a sensational spell in front of goal, netting four against Rovers before notching three more a week later against the Dons.

Gillingham can claim top spot, though, sitting in second on goal difference having played a game less. The Gills have registered six wins and two draws since losing their opening Merit League One fixture 4-0 to the current leaders.

It has not been a successful final stretch for MK Dons, however, who won the South East regular season crown but have been unable to reproduce the required consistency, leaving them in mid-table.

Southern Merit League Two

It is tight at the top of Merit League Two, with Leyton Orient the current pacesetters, just a point ahead of Dagenham & Redbridge and Northampton Town.

The O's hit the front following a 4-0 triumph at Cheltenham Town, but will likely have to see off Northampton if they are to be crowned champions, with the two sides scheduled to face off at the end of April. Plymouth Argyle are also just about in touching distance having played less than the top three and a meeting with Orient at the start of May might well be a potential title decider.

Meanwhile, Dagenham have taken five points from a possible nine from their three title rivals, putting themselves in prime position to make a late charge with their two remaining opponents struggling at the foot of the table.

At the other end, Newport County were Merit League One champions 12 months ago, but are now rock bottom of the second tier after a haul of just two points from their opening seven fixtures.

U18 Professional Development League North

It appeared for a long period that nobody wanted to win the Northern section this season until Bolton Wanderers and Leeds United finally pulled away from the pack in the final few weeks.

Heading into the final round of fixtures, the young Trotters held the slender advantage of a solitary point after eight wins on the bounce before a 3-3 draw against Crewe Alexandra. Their success has largely been thanks to their terrific strike rate in front of goal having netted 84 times in 29 matches, with Luca Navarro (17), Dennis Politic (14) and Matthew Argent-Barnes (10) all reaching double figures.

In contrast, Leeds have conceded less than anyone else in the division and managed to book their place in the national play-offs with seven consecutive victories.

And the script could not have been written any better as the two teams went head-to-head in the final weekend of the regular season, with Leeds snatching a 1-0 away win to claim the Northern section bragging rights.

U18 Professional Development League South

Crystal Palace have been crowned Southern champions with a game to spare and will be joined in the national play-offs by Charlton Athletic, with midfielder Brendan Sarpong-Wiredu bagging five goals during four successive wins.

The Addicks have made a tremendous recovery after recording just two wins from their opening seven matches of the season. Sergei Baltacha's side have amassed 31 points from a possible 39 in 2018 to lift them into the national top four.

Cardiff City have produced a strong run of form in the final few months, helped by the goals of Sion Spence, who has racked up 22 to top the scoring charts, five ahead of Bolton's Navarro and Millwall's George Alexander.

U18 Premier League North

Derby County secured sixth place in the table, finishing top of the pile of the North section EFL clubs.

The Rams finished the season at a canter, defeating Newcastle United (3-1) and Wolverhampton Wanderers (5-3) thanks to five goals from first-year Morgan Whittaker, who netted a hat-trick against the Magpies.

Newcastle have produced some notable triumphs of their own this calendar year after initially starting the season without a win in 11 games. Their first league win came in January in a 5-2 win against Manchester City, ending their unbeaten home run that had lasted since May 2015, while the Geordies also beat Northern champions Manchester United, with second-year apprentice Elias Sorensen scoring in both victories.

Meanwhile, the season ended on a high for Wolves as they saw off fourth-placed Everton thanks to an Austin Samuels double.

U18 Premier League South

In a competitive Southern division, Fulham finished best of the bunch of EFL clubs and confirmed their place in seventh with a 4-0 win against Norwich City, with Timmy Abraham bagging a brace.

The Canaries are rooted to the bottom of the table, but pulled off a terrific 5-3 victory over Tottenham Hotspur in April as first-year apprentice Adam Idah scored a treble.

However, the division was dominated by the Premier League clubs, with runaway leaders Chelsea successfully defending the regional prize for a fourth successive season.



MEETING IN THE MIDDLE

Long before forming the meanest centre-half partnership in the EFL, Wigan Athletic's **Dan Burn** and **Chey Dunkley** shared a common desire to achieve in the classroom, as well as on the pitch.

Both players scooped LFE's annual Mike Johnson Award for producing the best NVQ portfolio among apprentices across the country, with Dunkley collecting the prize in 2010, while Burn took over the crown the following year.

Fast forward to the present day, the defensive duo have led the Latics to promotion from Sky Bet League One, as well as contributing significantly to a memorable FA Cup run.

However, their journeys to the DW Stadium could not have been more different.

For Burn, senior outings came quickly at financially strapped Darlington, making 14 appearances in total before earning a move to Europa League-bound Fulham in summer 2011.

He told LFE: "Darlington were going through tough times so I ended up in the first-team, probably due to a need rather than necessarily being ready, but it was a great experience."

"I remember making my debut in League Two, I think we got beat 5-0 by Torquay away with a nine-hour trip back and I was absolutely buzzing just to have made the pitch."

"I never thought I would get to a club like Fulham, it was a big jump from Darlington. My first day of training, I was a bit star-struck with all the players that were there. I went from living at home to moving in with a family down there and it was a bit strange having never been to London before."

Despite his spiralling success, Burn remained focused academically and ensured he had prepared for an alternative pathway, even piloting a new Performance Analysis qualification that offered 20 extra UCAS points.

The 25-year-old said: "It was just the thought process of doing anything I can to boost my points to get into the best University possible in case that's the route I'd end up going down."

"You look at the percentage of people who go on to have a long-term professional career and it's a fairly slim chance, so I think it is good that the education side of the apprenticeship is set up for the academy players."

"I applied to go to a University in America and I was very serious about going out there if I didn't get offered a pro contract. I know from the youth team I played in, there were two lads who did go over to America to do a scholarship there - one of them is working in Chicago."

"You look back now and see that the education really did help the lads who didn't get a pro to further their career. Most players that I turned professional with are out of the game now by the age of 25, so that just shows that you do need an alternative."

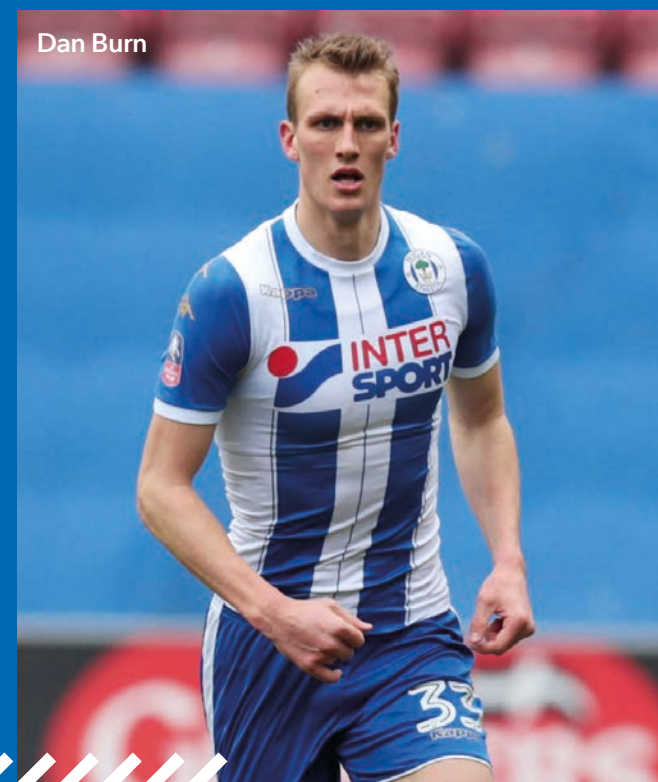
While Burn's rise to the Premier League meant he could put his alternative plans on hold, Dunkley embarked on a full-time degree course at Loughborough University in 2010 after being released by Crewe Alexandra.

I ALWAYS INTENDED ON CARRYING ON WITH FOOTBALL, WHETHER THAT WAS NON-LEAGUE OR SUNDAY LEAGUE WITH MY MATES, BECAUSE IT'S MY PASSION.

> CHEY DUNKLEY



Dan Burn



"It was a setback for me," said Dunkley. "But I always thought that you never know what's going to happen at the end of the apprenticeship, so it was important to make sure you've got a foundation away from football as well."

"From the start of my apprenticeship, I wanted to do the 18-unit course, rather than the 12-unit one, because it provided more chance to go to a better University. This meant doing more work in my own time to complete those extra six units, so I think that did help me and prepare me to work independently, which is obviously a key part of learning at University level."

"Because I'd done so well with my education, I was able to go to Loughborough. So although being released was a setback, it was actually positive because I was able to continue with my education with a Sports & Exercise Science degree."

Dunkley combined full-time education with part-time football, joining Hednesford Town in the seventh tier of the English game. Two years later, his playing career was moving in the right direction as Conference Premier club Kidderminster Harriers came calling. >>

"I always intended on carrying on with football, whether that was non-league or Sunday league with my mates, because it's my passion," he said.

"When Kidderminster came in, I was back into full-time football. At that point, I just saw it as an opportunity because I was only one step away from the league, so it reignited a flame for football."

With his playing career finally on an upward trajectory, it would have been easy for Dunkley to turn his back on higher education. But having already studied for two years, he was determined to complete his degree.

The 26-year-old continued: "I'd done two years of a full-time course at Loughborough and still had one year left, so I decided to take a year out when I moved to Kidderminster, just to get back into the routine of full-time football and getting used to it again. Then I went part-time at Loughborough to complete my degree the year after.

"I could have taken a foundation degree for doing two years but I wanted to finish it. I had to do a lot of work at home with my dissertation, so it was a big challenge to combine that with full-time football, but I managed to get through it.

"I found the work helped me to switch off from football. The second season at Kiddy wasn't going as well as it did the previous year, so it was useful to be able to put football to one side and focus on work. I enjoyed it because there were a lot of disciplines

within the degree, like physiotherapy, nutrition, coaching and various other modules, that were directly related to football."

After graduating in 2014, football became the sole priority for the Wolverhampton-born defender. In the meantime, Burn had already enjoyed two successful loan spells at Yeovil Town and Birmingham City before returning to the Cottagers, playing nine times in the top flight, including a 2-2 draw against David Moyes' Manchester United at Old Trafford.

He added: "I feel like I've had some good moments in my career and I've been very lucky and hopefully there's a lot more still to come. I probably didn't appreciate some of them at the time but it's nice to look back on."

Another of those moments was scoring the winner for Yeovil in the League One play-off final at Wembley in May 2013. However, the bubble burst for Burn a year later when he suffered relegation from the Premier League with Fulham. After two seasons in the Sky Bet Championship, he left Craven Cottage for Wigan, who then dropped to League One in his first campaign at the club.

"Football as a career is very up and down," he said. "Pretty much every season I've either been fighting for promotion or fighting to stay in the league. I've enjoyed all of it, even the relegations to an extent, because you realise how lucky you are just to be playing."

I KNOW FROM THE YOUTH TEAM I PLAYED IN, THERE WERE TWO LADS WHO DID GO OVER TO AMERICA TO DO A SCHOLARSHIP THERE... YOU LOOK BACK NOW AND SEE THAT THE EDUCATION REALLY DID HELP THE LADS WHO DIDN'T GET A PRO TO FURTHER THEIR CAREER.

› DAN BURN



Dunkley continued to experience his own ups and downs at Oxford United, having finally worked his way back up to the EFL in January 2015 when an initial loan spell was made permanent. Two visits to Wembley and automatic promotion from Sky Bet League Two were soon on Dunkley's ever-growing list of achievements.

"Like Dan, I've also scored at Wembley. It was at the wrong end, but they all count," he joked, referring to his own goal in the 2016 EFL Trophy final defeat to Barnsley.

"When I got my move to Oxford, I felt like that was one of my biggest achievements in football because I'd made it back into the league.

"There are so many players who were released or even after getting a one-year pro deal, who are now out of the game. It's very hard to get back up so it was a real sense of accomplishment to get back to league football."

After seven years of grinding for every opportunity, Dunkley was at last a man in demand and had the luxury of choosing his next step, joining Burn and the Latics on a free transfer last summer after running his contract out at the Kassam Stadium.

And the two Mike Johnson Award winners have proved to be the perfect pairing, combining to keep 26 clean sheets as a partnership in all competitions so far.

Dunkley said: "It takes time but it's been good to have a settled line-up at the back and so we've been able to learn each other's game more quickly because we've played together consistently.

"I can read when he's going to mark someone or when he's going to drop off so it's developed over time. You pride yourself as a defender on keeping clean sheets, so to have one of the best defensive records in the country is great."

The double act have been influential in Wigan's promotion push, as well as their run to the quarter-finals of the FA Cup, which included an unforgettable 1-0 victory against a Manchester City side boasting the likes of Sergio Agüero, Leroy Sané and David Silva.



Having both won Sky Bet League One Player of the Month awards this season, Burn and Dunkley are showing there's more than one route to becoming an established professional footballer.

Dunkley offered some advice to the current crop of apprentices. He said: "They've got to put 100 per cent into everything they do. Obviously, the main objective is to become a footballer, so the bulk of their time has to be spent working to achieve that, but they've got to live like a professional off the pitch and part of that is showing maturity in every environment, which for academy players includes the classroom.

"It's easy to go through the motions but it's also easy to regret that and I think if you looked back you'd think that you should've done more because it can be a great platform to help you move into any career you want to.

"I'm now left with a degree and obviously you don't know what's round the corner but I can always use that degree to move into a different career and it gives me plenty of options to pursue."

Burn, who has also been named in the EFL League One Team of the Year, added: "I didn't even realise Chey hadn't got a pro and yet look where he is now, so it just goes to prove if you've got the endeavour and motivation to go out and get what you want, with anything and any career you want, you can get there.

"The good thing for Chey is that he's got his degree already, so at the very least, if football doesn't work out for him in the long-term, he's always got that qualification which will help him massively.

"If you're not getting a pro and you're in League Two, it's so easy to fall out of the game. When I was a scholar, Newcastle were in the Championship and I think a lot of them lads probably didn't take LFE as seriously as they should have because they thought they'll filter down the leagues if they don't make it at Newcastle, but that doesn't necessarily happen.

"I think it's something players need to take very seriously because they'll go one day being a scholar, or a professional, and the next day they're not and it's hard to make that transition if you've not prepared for it." □

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Ryan Sessegnon

 FULHAM

Even for the standards Ryan Sessegnon has set over the past two seasons, scooping five prizes at the EFL Awards was an astonishing and historic achievement.

The 17-year-old sensation was named in the EFL Club Developed XI and Football Manager Team of the Season, while also being crowned LFE Championship Apprentice of the Year, EA Sports Young Player of the Season and Sky Bet Championship Player of the Season.

And yet, the Fulham starlet remained incredibly humble despite his unprecedented success.

"It's an honour to win all the awards I have done," Sessegnon said. "It's a great achievement. It was such an incredible feeling for me to be picking up these awards.

"It was such a special moment for me and it really shows how well we have been playing this season. Hopefully we can continue in the same way until the end. It's a credit to the team and the way we've played this season. We've played an attractive brand of football which has helped me in the way I like to play.

"As a young player you want to experience these things. You want to always continue to learn and improve and for me to go there yesterday and witness what I had achieved was truly amazing.

"It's nice to win both the Apprentice of the Year and Player of the Year in the same season. I am so proud to receive all these awards but especially the Championship Player of the Season. I never would have imagined I would win that award.

"Both Tom Cairney and Ruben Neves are superb players so it just shows how well we have been playing this season. Ever since I came in on my debut I've just wanted to learn and keep improving. I just try to get better day by day."



SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP SHORTLIST

Alex Hunt Sheffield Wednesday

Midfielder Hunt has received a stream of recognition since the start of 2018, signing his first professional contract, being named in LFE's 'The 11', winning an LFE Goal of the Month award and earning a promotion to train with the Owls first-team.

"He has been captain of the Under-18s this year and a great example to the boys in the dressing room, you need characters like Alex," PDP coach Ben Wilkinson told LFE. "He has driven this team and is becoming ever more involved with the Under-23s, which is great to see."

Danny Loader Reading

England youth international Loader became a World Cup winner in October as part of the Under-17 squad that triumphed in India, scoring twice against Iraq in a 4-0 win during the group stage.

The 17-year-old striker has been prolific in the Under-23s and was handed his senior debut back in August, featuring during extra-time of Reading's 3-1 Carabao Cup victory over Millwall, while also travelling with the first-team for training camps in the Netherlands and Spain this season.

The left-back turned left-winger burst onto the scene at the start of his first year as an apprentice, becoming the first player born in the year 2000 to score in the Championship in August 2016, a week before collecting his GCSE results.

He registered 30 first-team appearances in his debut season, leading to a place in the PFA Championship Team of the Year before taking his exploits onto the international stage, winning the UEFA European Under-19 Championships with England and ending the competition as joint-top scorer.

Sessegnon reportedly attracted the attention of the top teams in the Premier League and was the subject of a £25million bid from Tottenham Hotspur, but he elected to stay at Craven Cottage, penning his first professional contract in June before starring in their bid to reach the top flight.

He said: "I have been at the club since the age of eight. It has been a dream of mine to play in the Premier League with Fulham. We are so very close I just want to get over the line now.

"We are so close, I just want to continue that and hopefully we can push into the Premier League. Hopefully we can do it automatic, but if not then we will do our best in the play-offs.

"I just want to carry on the way I have been going. Whenever success does come I just enjoy it for a moment but then put it to the side and focus on the main objective. The main objective for me now is to get us to the Premier League."

The England Under-21 international, who only turns 18 in May, is into double figures in front of goal this season and scored a hat-trick on his 50th senior appearance against Sheffield United in November.

Yet more individual recognition came his way after becoming the first ever player outside the Premier League to be shortlisted for the PFA Young Player of the Year award, lining up against Harry Kane (Tottenham Hotspur), Ederson (Manchester City), Marcus Rashford (Manchester United), Raheem Sterling (Manchester City) and winner Leroy Sane (Manchester City).

And despite being one of the most in-demand footballers on the planet, Sessegnon has continued to put in extra hours to complete his BTEC qualification.

Academy Head of Education Sean Cullen hailed Sessegnon's dedication to his education.

He said: "One memory that sticks in the mind with Ryan is when he made his League debut on a Tuesday night away at Leeds United. He played 90 minutes and then didn't get back until gone 2:30am.

"We weren't expecting him in the next day but it was one of his first games with the first-team and he didn't know any different. He ended up being the first one in class that morning. That pretty much sums up Ryan.

"It's always difficult for a player involved in the first-team but whether he's been with them or away with England he's always kept up with his work and now he's close to completing his BTEC and has stayed on top of his functional skills."

SKY BET LEAGUE ONE WINNER

Anthony Hartigan



AFC WIMBLEDON

AFC Wimbledon may have endured a tough season fighting for survival in Sky Bet League One, but the emergence of second-year apprentice Anthony Hartigan has been a shining light.

The 18-year-old was introduced into the first-team in August in the first round of the Carabao Cup and was handed his Sky Bet League One debut 11 days later at Fleetwood Town.

A maiden senior goal in the Checkatrade Trophy capped off a sensational first month in the professional game for Hartigan and Dons manager Neal Ardley admitted it was evident from the off that the midfielder has the right mentality to succeed.

He said: "Sometimes players don't want to earn it and they have an opinion of where they are in the grand scheme of things, but with Anthony Hartigan the most refreshing thing about him is that he is not like that."

"He appreciates that he has to prove to be better than people already around the squad. Anthony's ability to want to learn is phenomenal. In terms of mentality and desire, he has got it."

Hartigan has appeared in the first-team on 16 occasions in all competitions, including a brief cameo at Wembley Stadium in the FA Cup against Tottenham Hotspur in January.

And his success has not been limited to just on the pitch, with Academy manager Jeremy Sauer highlighting Hartigan's excellent application to the education side of the apprenticeship.

"Anthony's a very humble person," said Sauer. "He's been a perfect student. Because he's such a good footballer and such an unassuming character with strong focus, the first-team players and the management have really taken to him very quickly."

"What's so pleasing with Anthony is that he's put his education first. That allows us then as an academy to show that the two are associated and that you can't do one without the other, so for that reason as a benchmark, he's fantastic."

Meanwhile, Hartigan added: "I've played a lot of games for someone my age. I've been put into pressure situations and that shows that the manager trusts me."

"I finished a lot of my college work two months ago. As part of our scholarship, we do a BTEC Level 3 in Sport. This covers a lot of things, including how to prepare for games and how the body works. It all helps when you move up to first-team football."

"Football does end at some point, even if you have a long career in the game. If I'm lucky enough to have a career in football, I still have to be prepared to do something else. You have to take yourself out of your comfort zone by expressing yourself and extending the knowledge you have."



SKY BET LEAGUE ONE SHORTLIST

Lewis Freestone Peterborough United

The young left-back signed his first professional contract just five weeks into the first year of his apprenticeship, but has always maintained focus on his education despite entering the first-team fold so quickly, as well as spending time out on loan at Cambridge City, St Albans City and Guiseley.

Having played four times at the end of the 2016-17 campaign, Freestone has returned to the Posh senior side in recent weeks under new manager Steve Evans.

Dru Yearwood Southend United

Yearwood has established himself as a regular in Southend's first-team, particularly since the managerial appointment of Chris Powell in January, amassing over 20 league appearances this season and winning the club's Player of the Month award in February and March.

Powell said: "He's a remarkable young talent and he caught my eye immediately. I'm very pleased he's in my team at our club and we should all be very proud of Dru Yearwood and the way he conducts himself on and off the pitch."

SKY BET LEAGUE TWO WINNER

Ben Wilmot



STEVENAGE

It is not often a League Two apprentice becomes one of the most sought after teenagers in the country, but Stevenage defender Ben Wilmot is certainly an exception to the norm.

The 18-year-old has enjoyed an outstanding 12 months, starting with the signature of his first professional contract this time last year. A senior debut in the Checkatrade Trophy followed before Wilmot was named in LFE's 'The 11' in October, which celebrates exceptional performance on and off the pitch.

Stevenage Head of Coaching Stephen Payne hailed the second-year apprentice's attitude towards all facets of the apprenticeship, with his footballing exploits coming alongside tremendous success academically, achieving high grades on the NVQ Level 3 Diploma and BTEC Level 3 in Sport (Performance and Excellence).

"Ben has demonstrated the same maturity and composure in all his performances, whether that be in a classroom, on a football pitch or in a training ground," he said. "Naturally, that's led to him being a regular for the first-team as an Under-18, which is unheard of for most in League Two."

"When people talk about Ben Wilmot, they don't talk about a boy, they talk about a young man. He's just taken on hurdle after hurdle and just effortlessly seems to be bounding over them."

The teenage starlet has established himself in the first-team since the turn of the year, making his Sky Bet League Two bow against Morecambe a week after contributing to a clean sheet in the FA Cup third round against Sky Bet Championship outfit Reading.

Wilmot has featured 15 times in total, with Stevenage reportedly demanding a seven-figure sum to prise him away from Broadhall Way.

The highly-rated defender said: "Playing at centre-half, I come up against the big No.9 who doesn't care how old you are and who will do anything to score a goal, so you've got to make sure you can hold yourself and hold your own in this league."

"I've been given the opportunity and I've got to make sure now that I stay in. Enjoying it as much as I am, I don't want to lose my position."

Wilmot also received international recognition with a call-up to the England Under-19s squad in March, appearing as a late substitute against Latvia before playing the full 90 minutes of a 2-0 defeat to Macedonia.

He added: "My call-up for the England Under-19s was unbelievable and it was the first time I'd played international football, so it was a real honour to play for my country and hopefully I get the opportunity to do that again."

"I want to play at all levels, including seniors, so if I keep working hard I'll see where it takes me."



SKY BET LEAGUE TWO SHORTLIST

George Lloyd Cheltenham Town

Striker Lloyd is close to registering 40 goals for the season in all competitions, a tally that encouraged Cheltenham to pin him down to a two-and-a-half year deal in December.

The 18-year-old, who has been a nominee in LFE's 'The 11' in the past, has appeared off the bench on a handful of occasions in the league since the turn of the year.

Manager Gary Johnson said: "George has done well and he is a real pro off the pitch as well. You don't get any problems from him."

Jordan Ponticelli Coventry City

A prolific season in the Under-18s in 2016-17 earned the teenage striker a professional contract just six months into his apprenticeship. Ponticelli has progressed into the first-team during his second year, featuring in the Carabao Cup against Blackburn Rovers before scoring his first senior goal in the Checkatrade Trophy at Walsall.

Although most have come from the bench, the Sky Blues teenager is now into double figures for league appearances.

Cambridge United second-year apprentice Sam Squire has been knocking on the door of the first-team this season after featuring in pre-season matches against Royston and Norwich City last summer.

However, it is off the pitch where the 17-year-old has gone above and beyond, finalising his Extended Diploma early and attaining Distinction grades across all of his units, setting him up for a triple distinction star grade overall.

Since completing his BTEC, Squire has conducted volunteer work with the Cambridge United Charitable Trust, working with them on a mental health and well-being program that is being delivered in schools local to the club.

Here, he talks to LFE about his ongoing commitment to spreading awareness of mental illness as he strives to help those in need.

Working hard on your education gives you a platform for consistent commitment that you can then take into your approach as a player. The stuff off the pitch like your education, how you are as a person, how you speak to people, how you present yourself, I think you take all that onto the pitch subconsciously and that's how you develop as a player.

I find things interesting related to sports psychology and sport science and in my first year, I was doing a lot of travelling, so I just wanted to use my time a bit more efficiently and effectively by reading books and developing my mental state that can then enhance my game on the pitch. Being involved in football, you've got to be ready to tackle setbacks and make sure you push through them and that's when your mental strength comes into action.

SAM SQUIRE



A few years back I experienced hands on what mental health can do to a family member and you think 'how could I have noticed this and how could I have helped', so that really spurred me on to get involved with the Cambridge United Community Trust. If I can help even one person, whether it be a child or an adult, to just open up about their negative mental thoughts that can really affect your life, that's my motivation. I've been working in schools, doing talks in assemblies and talks at the community trust centre.

I'm in a video presentation that the kids watch and when I go into the schools it's just really nice to see how the children take it in. It's really nice to get some positive feedback and also to listen to some of the children speak out about how important mental health is to them and what it means and how they can develop themselves to become better people in and out of school.

I probably don't think about it at the time because it's something I'm so passionate about and it comes very naturally, but talking to people you don't know and standing in front of a group of 100 children or doing talks for the club's fanbase can be out of some people's comfort zone. It's those sort of things that develop your character, which you can use as building blocks to becoming the person you want to be and improve you on the pitch.

When you see kids that love the game and love the club and they're taking a real interest in what you're passionate about and what you're trying to provide them, it's really nice to see. My goal is just to help one person's life and if I can improve their way of thinking and have a positive effect on one person, then that's my job complete really.

I'm also planning to get involved with other projects that the Trust deliver. They cover so many other areas like Dementia and cafes that open up for the elderly to meet to make sure they're not stuck on their own. On the pitch, they're setting up football sessions for the blind, people who are deaf and people with autism and other disabilities, so there are loads of different things that are happening with the Trust and it will continue to grow.

It's quite heart-warming when you see you've affected someone's life in a positive way and I don't think you can ever experience a better feeling than that, so whether it's getting involved with your local community or any other volunteer work, whatever you're passionate about, just try to make a difference and you'll definitely notice the benefits for yourself and the cause you're promoting.

We recently had our first 'Time to Talk' Mental Health Awareness Evening, with speakers from a number of local organisations like The Cambridge Samaritans. It was great to be surrounded by so many inspirational people, whether that be the people speaking or people in the audience.

There's a woman called Ruth Fox who plays for Cambridge United Women's team. She spoke about her battle with depression and attempted suicide and it's been ongoing until very recently, like six months ago. It's just amazing to see how someone can transform their whole life and change such a traumatic time into a positive within the space of a few months.

Someone else in the audience towards the end of the night talked about how her son had committed suicide and no one knew he was dealing with any issues. He appeared to be fine but obviously he was hiding his demons. It's just about trying to keep spreading awareness. Someone may seem as their normal self but obviously you can't read someone's mind.

When I first started my apprenticeship, I said to myself 'I don't want to have any regrets' and I feel I've made the most of every opportunity that's come my way, so I know that whatever happens, there will be a pathway somewhere for me to go. I'd ideally like that path to involve football in some way but if it's not, I know I'll still have a route to go down that I'm passionate about and give me the drive to be successful.

I've become more mature, I've recognised how important mentality is in football and in becoming the best person you can be, and I think that's what the apprenticeship has made me realise. The fact that I've been offered a one-year extension to my contract means I can continue and because I'm not at college any more, I'm hoping to do even more from the start of next season.



GILLINGHAM IN SRI LANKA

Three Gillingham apprentices embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Sri Lanka last September to support the club's official charity 'Take Heart Mercy Mission', which aims to save the lives of children with life-threatening heart defects.

The organisation is affiliated with the Gills as a result of the Elliott Scally Trust, which was founded by club Chairman Paul Scally after his son passed away due to a condition caused by heart disease in July 2003.

Medics from the Evelina London Children's Hospital volunteer to take their expertise to the Karapitiya Teaching Hospital in Galle, where they have operated on over 250 desperately ill children over the past 13 years, as well as providing training for the local doctors and nurses and fundraising for additional equipment to improve the quality of service made available within the hospital.

Gills Under-18 trio Jack Tucker, Theo White and Henry Woods were given the opportunity to join the mission to offer their own support to the Sri Lankan community.

Academy manager Mark Patterson told LFE: "Over the last few years, coaching staff from the football club have gone out into the local community to deliver coaching sessions to boys and girls at the local schools, running side-by-side with the medical staff who are in the hospitals.

"The Chairman asked me if it would be beneficial to take the apprentices. As soon as he offered that, I said it would be a great experience for them because they can see how other people have to live.

"We know the Sri Lankan economy isn't as fruitful as in England, particularly after being hit by the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. They haven't got the same level of opportunities or facilities or equipment as English kids do, so it was just a great experience for them to go and work in an environment that they otherwise might never get to."

Having made the 16-hour trip to the Subcontinent, the second-year apprentices - whose names were pulled out of a hat in a random draw - delivered sessions to hundreds of local children across the 10 days.

Patterson continued: "It wasn't easy for them because they had decent sized groups and the facilities weren't brilliant, but it was great for them to experience coaching in a different environment and you've got to adapt.

"One day when they were setting up the goals, one of the local cows was chewing at the back of the net. At another venue, you wouldn't have let your dog walk across it in case they cut their feet. It was terrible, there was glass and stones and yet the kids just didn't care, they just got on with it. So it was certainly an eye-opener for the lads, but they acquitted themselves really well.

"We met a lot of people out there and the overriding response was that they'd conducted themselves professionally, they were very mature and they showed themselves and Gillingham Football Club in a positive light, which was really pleasing. They were really good role models for the club."

The trip was not solely focused on coaching, however, with the players able to explore the local area, while they also visited the hospital to observe the amazing work of the medics at first hand, even sitting in on one of the operations.

"It was fantastic to see how professional they were and how they engaged with the local community and staff," Patterson said. "They were talking to the doctors and nurses and it was really good to stand back and watch them interact with everybody.

"They conducted themselves brilliantly and I think the experience of coaching and going to the hospital and seeing the open heart surgery performed on a young child has had an impact on them. I'm sure it will have given them memories that will live with them for a lifetime."

Jack Tucker

I'd never been somewhere like Sri Lanka before, so I wasn't really sure what to expect. We were based in quite a poor area so we took over a lot of equipment like shirts and footballs and they were really appreciative of that.

Some of the kids had boots five sizes too big for them and some had none at all, so we were able to provide them with boots that we'd got together from local charities back in the UK.

We had just completed our Level 2 Coaching qualification, so it was good to go out there and put that into practice. It definitely helped with different drills and techniques and also how we would approach the kids as there was obviously a language barrier.

The other aspect of the trip was seeing the work of the doctors out there. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go in to watch the open heart surgery at first, but when you get in there you can't take your eyes off it. It was a surreal experience to see a young child with his chest open and his heart on show right in front of your eyes and I'll never get to see that again, so it was a breath-taking experience really.

They said they've carried out over 200 heart surgeries since the club started going out to Sri Lanka, so it is great work that they're doing out there and it was unbelievable to watch them in action. They were so focused on the job but at the same time they seemed so calm. They just seemed like a proper unit and trusted each other completely in what they were doing, which I guess is something we can relate to back home playing football.



Credit Kent Pro Images



Credit Kent Pro Images

Theo White

I didn't expect the trip to be as fulfilling as it ended up being. It was crazy to see the conditions that they have to deal with as they're still trying to rebuild the surrounding area after the big Tsunami a number of years ago.

We had the opportunity to go to the hospital a couple of times and we watched an open heart surgery, which was definitely not for the faint-hearted but still an amazing experience. The work the charity do is fantastic. The team of doctors are amazing and it was great to see how close the bond was between the coaches and doctors. They save lives at the end of the day, which is incredible.

As for the coaching, we couldn't do very detailed drills because it was too difficult for them to understand, but it was good to be put in that situation where you're dealing with kids and trying to keep them entertained while teaching them some skills.

It's made me so much more confident because I don't think I would ever have pushed myself to do that sort of thing, but I think once you're out there, you're communicating all the time with different people and that opportunity to practice and mixing with a different environment definitely builds your confidence and ability.

I learned how much more capable I am at certain things and it's made me realise that the more things you get involved with, the more experiences you have and can learn from and it's probably the best thing I've done.

Henry Woods

It was a fantastic experience to go out there and mix with a completely different community. It's not just given me amazing memories, it's also really developed me as a person.

Before going out there I was probably quite shy, but the trip really developed me as a person, having to approach people that I've not met before like the doctors and nurses and children that we were coaching. The coaching also helped my communication skills and improved my confidence. It has actually made me consider a future career in coaching if football doesn't work out or I have to retire.

Obviously, you're representing the club and we were always wearing the kit, so with that comes responsibility to behave in the correct manner and taking that to a completely new environment was a great experience.

Seeing the doctors in action was another incredible experience. Watching the surgery, it didn't seem like a real person. It was mind-blowing to see what they are doing out there, I think it's amazing. We saw the positive impact that the coaching sessions are doing for the community and then it was amazing to see the other aspect of the charity, which is to save the lives of the children.

It definitely gave me time to realise how much I want to succeed in football and when I came back it really helped me to kick on because I realised how lucky I am to be in this position.



Credit Kent Pro Images



DON'T CLOSE THE DOOR ON YOUR CAREER



You can be tested at any time and at any place,
including a match, training or your home.

Refusing to take a drug test is a breach of The FA Anti-Doping
Regulations and will likely lead to a **four year ban** from football.

For more information please visit www.thefa.com/anti-doping



LOUGHBOROUGH
SPORT

Loughborough
University



PERFORMANCE FOOTBALL

SPORTS UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR 2017

The Times and Sunday Times
good university guide 2017

BEST SPORTING
UNIVERSITY IN
THE WORLD

*QS world university rankings
by subject 2018

Loughborough University offers a
unique environment to develop in sport
whilst gaining a prestigious degree.




Loughborough Students Football Club
currently competes in:

- MFL
- FA Cup
- FA Vase
- Northern Premier Division (British
Universities and Colleges Sport)

Many graduates have progressed
into the football industry as either
players or supporting staff, including:

- George Williams
BSc Sports Science with
Management (2011-2015). Right
Back for MK Dons.
- Matt Reeves
BSc Sports Science 2006-2009
Head of Fitness and Conditioning
at Leicester City
Premier League and U20s World
Cup winner.



   @LboroSport

www.loughboroughsport.com/football

For more info contact M.Stock@lboro.ac.uk



The Sheffield Wednesday fan joined his boyhood club at the age of seven in the hope of one day representing the first-team. A decade later, Hunt is on the verge of turning that dream into a reality having signed his first professional contract, keeping him at Hillsborough until the summer of 2020.

The 17-year-old has established himself as an influential member of the Under-18s side, nearing double figures in front of goal this season, including a terrific free-kick to inspire the Owls to a 3-1 win against bitter rivals Sheffield United in January.

The midfielder credits his impressive displays to a willingness to make vital sacrifices, which have earned him a promotion into the Under-23s, as well as the chance to train with the senior squad in recent weeks since the appointment of manager Jos Luhukay.

"I've been coming in working hard every day since I started my apprenticeship," Hunt told LFE. "I've had to forget about what my mates are doing on a weekend and get my head down in order to ultimately become a professional footballer and hopefully get in that first-team."

"You've still got to have friends and switch off from football and you make friends at the club as well that you obviously have a relationship with off the pitch, but you've got to do things that won't negatively affect your career."

"You've got to sacrifice those Friday nights out and make sure you eat the right things all the time because you've got games at the weekend. You've just got to try to be as professional as you can and I've tried to do that by knuckling down, staying behind and doing extra work in training and just making those sacrifices that are necessary to make it to the top."

Hunt's success has not been limited to the playing aspect of the apprenticeship, excelling in the classroom by completing his NVQ and FA Level 2 Coaching qualification, as well as staying on track to achieve D*D*D* on the Extended Diploma, leading to a selection in LFE's 'The 11' and a nomination for the LFE Championship Apprentice of the Year, which celebrate outstanding performance as a player and student.

"I just try to do my best, whether that's on or off the pitch," he continued. "I've tried to get my education completed as quickly as possible and get the best grades that I can. It just takes the weight off your shoulders by taking the focus off football."

IT HAS BEEN A SPECIAL START TO 2018 FOR SECOND-YEAR APPRENTICE ALEX HUNT.

ALEX



“ I BELIEVE THE WAY YOU PERFORM ACADEMICALLY REFLECTS YOUR PERFORMANCE ON THE PITCH. ”

HUNT

"I didn't just want to do the bare minimum, I want to do as much as possible to become a professional footballer and I think working hard off the pitch sets the tone to work hard on it as well."

"I believe the way you perform academically reflects your performance on the pitch. If I'm messing around in the classroom, that doesn't reflect the attitude required to become a professional. I try to be a leader on the pitch and I think the best way to develop that is to be a leader off the pitch as well and set a good example in the classroom."

"You've also got to think about after football and be honest with yourself that it's not going to last forever. The Extended Diploma gives you more qualifications, which is obviously very important to have and can hopefully open up a lot of opportunities in the future."

Hunt's desire to be a leader came to the fore during the Christmas period when the youth team captain organised the group to take part in a 'Cash for Kids' charity bag packing day, raising close to £500 in an afternoon.

He said: "You see the first-team going into Bluebell Wood Hospice and St Luke's Hospice and give their time to kids who are less fortunate and I don't see why

we can't do that either, so we organised a day raising money for Cash for Kids."

"It's just a nice thing for the team to do, to get the group together and push people maybe a bit out of their comfort zone as well, which will hopefully build their character as well as obviously helping to fundraise for the charity."

To cap off an incredible period of success, the Sheffield-born teenager won LFE's Goal of the Month award for January thanks to a long-range screamer in an 8-0 win against Hull City, receiving significant support from the Wednesday faithful to claim 52 per cent of the votes.

Hunt added: "I've done a few in training like that but never had the audacity to try it in a game so I just thought 'we're a few goals up, I'm going to hit this' and luckily I struck it sweetly and it went in the top corner."

"Sheffield Wednesday is a massive club and we've got loads of fans who are very passionate about the team and for the website to put it online and the fans to see it and show their support to me means a lot, particularly being a Wednesday fan myself."

Life Skills: HEART4MORE



Under-18s and Under-23s players at Bradford City boosted their awareness of cardiac health during an LFE Life Skills session delivered by Tobi Alabi, founder of the Heart4More Foundation.

The former Millwall apprentice featured on the Lions' first-team pre-season tour at the start of the second year of his apprenticeship back in July 2011 and signed a professional contract the following year before enjoying a spell in Sweden with Ljungskille SK.

Alabi soon returned to the UK to play non-league football, but his playing career was abruptly ended at the age of 19 in October 2013 after collapsing on the pitch while playing for Metropolitan Police due to a five-minute-long cardiac arrest.

Six months later, Alabi required resuscitation and had a pacemaker implanted into his chest after his heart stopped three times, leading to the diagnosis of a mild case of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Since then, the 24-year-old has set up and developed his foundation into a respected charity, providing inspiring workshops to Academy players across the country.

Alabi told LFE: "The session teaches the boys about general cardiac health and football-related cardiac health, so we're talking about identifying signs and symptoms associated with having a potential heart problem or someone that's going into cardiac arrest.

"We also show the boys how to perform CPR and how to use a defibrillator. Every club that we visit for the first time, we realise just how little the boys know about these issues and also how little they know about the skills that can save a life."

In addition to increasing knowledge of cardiac health, Alabi uses his workshops to trigger reflection of life without football and encourages the players to remain focused on their education to give them the best chance of success once their playing days are over, whenever that may be.

"It's my opportunity to give them a bit of advice as someone who's been in that position and someone who can now no longer play the game of football," he said.

"It's just for them to hear it from an unfamiliar mouth to say that the opportunity is massive and it's one that shouldn't be taken for granted because whether you play for 15 years or 15 months, the career's a short one and something has to come after it."



First-year professional Callum Gunner reinforced Alabi's message to work hard in the classroom alongside dedication on the pitch, in order to prepare for every eventuality.

The 19-year-old added: "The session is massively important because it can save lives, whether that be in football or on the street and I think it's something that everyone should be made aware of.

"Listening to Tobi's story and how much he said to treasure the moment of what we've got, that's made me realise what we've got even more. It's obviously unfortunate for him to have his opportunity cut short but we're still here and we've got to make the most of it.

"As daunting as it is and as much as you want to focus solely on football, you've got to have an alternative option in place and stories like Tobi highlight how short a career can be."

Second-year apprentice George Sykes-Kenworthy also hailed the importance of the seminar and believes he now has the invaluable tools to save a life.

The teenage goalkeeper said: "I think it was really beneficial for all the players involved. It's something new and something a lot of us weren't aware of, but

now we've had the session it's been really helpful.

"This is really important, not just for football but for life in general because if you're out and about and see someone down on the floor and unresponsive, obviously you want to go over and help and this sort of session really is helpful to prepare for that."

The Heart4More workshop is one of many provided by LFE's Life Skills programme, which is now open to players from Under-9 level up to the Under-23s, covering topics like social media, addiction, sexual and mental health.

Alabi said: "I think LFE does a really good job. Ever since I was a scholar, I've been familiar with LFE and I also think it's very forward-thinking to support an initiative like the foundation.

"I think the fact that LFE has introduced the tiered programme from younger age groups up to the Under-23s is of massive importance because not everybody in the schoolboy age is going to get to the youth team to be able to experience the workshops being provided.

"Having the foresight to see it's worth investing in the schoolboys and giving them life skills is fantastic."



UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING
SPORT



Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence

Football scholarships

- Funding up to £4,000 per annum
- Highly qualified and experienced coaching staff
- Support includes: strength and conditioning, sports science and physiotherapy
- Opportunity to combine near full-time football with academic degree studies

Visit stir.ac.uk/1fp for more information.

David Bond, Head of Performance Sport:

✉ david.bond@stir.ac.uk

☎ +44 (0)1786 466910

BE THE DIFFERENCE

Life Skills: **ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE**

LFE's Life Skills programme provided apprentices at Aston Villa with the opportunity to hear the incredible road to recovery of Charlie Fogarty MBE during his 'Anything is Possible' workshop.

The 21-year-old was a former academy player at West Bromwich Albion and Birmingham City until he suffered severe injuries after being hit by a car at the age of 15.

Fogarty was in a coma for six months before spending a further 10 months in rehab, learning to walk, talk, eat and drink again and has gone on to use his experiences to inspire apprentice players across the country.

"I try to deliver the message to never give up, but I suppose the underlying message is that anything is possible," he told LFE. "I was very ill but I believe I've done well to come out of it and now I'm making big strides."

"There was a good number in this room today and if just one of them is inspired, then I will know I've done my job. I want to inspire everyone - millions has been my goal ever since I came out of hospital - but even just one at a time, I'll slowly get there."

Fogarty's recovery has been nothing short of remarkable, defying the odds to return to playing action, representing Northern Ireland in the Cerebral Palsy World Cup last September and becoming the player-manager of the Solihull Moors Open Age Disability team, which he founded as an 18-year-old. Local recognition has come Fogarty's way since he began spreading his inspiring story, with a Sports Solihull Disabled Sportsman of the Year award, as well as the High Sheriff County award for Inspiring Others having been nominated by the Lord Mayor of Solihull. And his services to young people were rewarded on a national scale when he was appointed an MBE in the New Year's Honours list.

He continued: "You never know what's round the corner, so it's vitally important that while they're still in the education programme, they do see the academic side of the apprenticeship through, because if they get released and no other clubs want to have a look at them, they're going to have to fall back on that."

"I don't know what's going on with them personally but hopefully, after hearing my story, it hits home to them." That message was evidently ringing in the ears of first-year apprentice Jack Birch. The 17-year-old said:



"It was quite sad listening to Charlie's story, with the potential he had before the accident and I guess it just makes you aware that it could happen to anybody."

"It reinforces that you need to keep working hard at school because you don't know what's going to happen, whether you're staying in football or having to look into getting another job."

Defender Jake Walker echoed those thoughts. He added: "The thing I noticed was that he has a lot of hope. He's in recovery, he's struggling, but he's got hope that he'll get better and is determined to play football again."

"It just makes you think that anything could happen to me in the future, so you've got to work hard and take every opportunity that you can. You've got to work hard every day and not take anything for granted so you have no regrets in the future."

"Charlie's had his struggles and got back on his feet through his own determination, so if he can do it then we have no excuse to work just as hard."

CLUBS IN THE COMMUNITY

LEEDS UNITED

Leeds United have made the most of the club's stature to make a positive impact in the local community by sending apprentices out to Primrose Lane Primary School as part of a reading and literacy initiative.

The young players have made regular visits to the school for reading sessions with Year 2 pupils, aiming to assist in improving their ability to read and write.

Head of Academy Education & Welfare Katie Slee told LFE: "The education and welfare department here at Leeds United supports the lifelong learning and social development of all Academy players.

"The opportunity to work alongside young children provides our youth players with valuable experience and enables them to enhance their communication skills.

"It is recognised that engaging in regular reading improves sentence structure and vocabulary, creating more articulate and socially confident individuals. As a result, we are continually looking for new ways of promoting reading at the Leeds United Academy.

"Primrose Lane Primary School have been supportive of this new initiative and have welcomed our Under-18 squad into their school once a month since the start of the season."

Lara Bailey, Deputy Head and Year 2 teacher, expressed positive feedback regarding the scheme.

"The children really engage with reading with the students from the Leeds United Academy, they look forward to them coming and enjoy sharing their books," said Bailey.

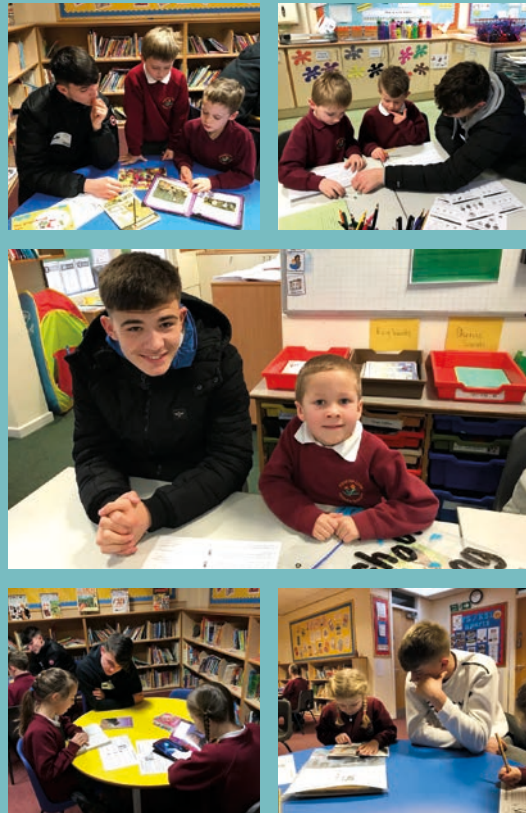
"It is lovely to listen to the conversations that they are having with each other, too."

Second-year apprentices Bobby Kamwa and Sammy Amissah both spoke highly of the opportunity to engage with the local community.

Kamwa said: "It's a good chance for us to work on our communication skills while giving back to the community and helping the kids improve their reading skills, so it benefits everyone involved.

"It took a bit of time to get used to it but the more time we've spent with them, the easier it's become and the better they've got.

"It's been a good opportunity to switch off from football for a bit as well. Being a full-time footballer, sometimes you need to give your mind a rest and remove some of the stress that comes with trying to push forward towards the first-team.



"If you look at all the first-team players, they're always in the community and meeting different people, so this gives us a chance to practice that and prepare to hopefully make that step up and join them."

Amissah added: "I wasn't particularly confident when I first started because I wasn't sure how good I would be at helping the kids and you want to make a good impact on them, but after going in a few times, I began to build a good relationship with my reader and we started to notice improvements.

"It's very rewarding to see them get better and hopefully they will think I've made a positive difference.

"When you become a professional footballer, you are a role model for a lot of young people and I think that takes a while to get used to, so to be able to practice this now is great and will really benefit us if we get to make it as professionals."

ROCHDALE

Rochdale's second-year apprentices have been integrating with the local community as part of their Fitness Testing for Sport and Exercise unit on the BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Sport.

The Dale youngsters performed health screenings on students with severe learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) at Bury College, conducting activities such as taking blood pressure, recording heart rate and measuring BMI.

Rehan Sultan, Lecturer in Sports Studies and Learning Improvement Leader, told LFE: "Our SLDD students are studying a healthy living unit as part of their course, so it made sense to merge that together with the fitness testing unit.

"We got the apprentices to do the health screening and in return the SLDD students got lots of detailed information about their own health, as the lads then provided recommendations for them moving forward."

In addition to aiding their education, the collaboration is designed for the Rochdale teenagers to "mix with different types of people, not just able-bodied students," something Sultan believes will boost their holistic development.

He said: "When they leave, some of the boys won't get a professional contract and they need to go into the workplace and demonstrate that they can communicate with different types of people, whether that's face-to-face, over the phone or whatever that may be.

"They need to understand that they're very lucky to be young, healthy and able-bodied and other people are a lot more disadvantaged than them, so they need to learn to respect, tolerate and work with other people."

Sultan expressed his delight at the reaction he saw from the players.

"The boys performed outstandingly well, they were really good and communicated really well," he continued. "The teachers in that department were so impressed with them.

"They know how to be professional in that environment around other people. When they're walking around campus and talking to other staff, they do that with respect and when they do these types of assessments with other students, they all step up.

"You can see that although they're only 17 or 18-years-old, when you actually give them a task to do where they have to work with members of the community or other people



who they don't know, they can really demonstrate that they are excellent communicators.

"They've got confidence, they know what they're talking about, they can safely administer tests, they can work with people, they can analyse data and give feedback to people, so they're going to be leaving here quite skilled."

Under-18s midfielder Elliott Murray and captain Joe Renner were both keen to highlight the benefits of the initiative in improving their progression as people and as players.

Renner said: "I think it has definitely improved my communication skills. With them having learning difficulties, communicating in the right way and being able to clearly show them how to perform activities was vital for some of them.

"I think that then helps to improve leadership skills on the pitch because being able to organise and direct people and communicate those instructions properly is a huge part of the game.

"I think it's vital to see different branches of society because it develops yourself as a person, but also helps out others at the same time. I think it's really important."

Meanwhile, Murray added: "It keeps us grounded and gets us out of our group which can become a bit of a comfort zone. They didn't see us as footballers; they saw us as normal students at the college like everybody else.

"It was pretty inspiring to be honest - they don't let their learning difficulties stop them at all. It's easy to take everything for granted and sometimes you feel like you're going through a hard time, but the way they're so positive just puts everything into perspective."

JOSH READ

When Josh Read accepted the offer of a professional contract in the summer of 2015, a soccer scholarship across the North Atlantic Ocean would have been very low on the list of likely outcomes, if at all, for the former Exeter City apprentice.

However, having been released six months later, the 6ft 5in defender immediately recalled information he had received during his apprenticeship about playing and studying abroad and was soon embarking on an entirely new career path.

"I got offered a three-month deal at the end of my apprenticeship and then I got an extension of another three months before being released," he told LFE.

"Before I signed my pro, I had many discussions with my parents about what else I can do. The opportunities available in America and Canada and even England, with going to University or playing in the lower leagues, were all an option.

"The fact that I was thinking about it before those six months as a pro then made my thought process a lot clearer once I was released and I had some sort of vision about where I could go next."

Two years later, Read is thriving on and off the pitch in his new home in Nova Scotia, Canada, studying Human Kinetics at St Francis Xavier University, while also representing the soccer team, for whom he played a starring role to be named a First Team All-Star in the 2017 Atlantic University Sport League.

IT'S SOMETHING THAT YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND UNTIL YOU TAKE THE LEAP



He said: "When the coach of St Francis Xavier came to Exeter in the first year of my apprenticeship, he talked to us and explained the situation that there was an opportunity to go and play in America or Canada and that was the first time it got brought to my attention really.

"It really opened my eyes to the opportunities and experiences that could go beyond England. The thing that attracted me the most was a whole new lifestyle and experience. For me, it was the unknown.

"I could play here in England and play part-time and still chase the dream and it was something that I did really want to do, but the fact that I could go and start fresh after what had been a disappointing situation in being released was what really tipped me towards moving abroad."

The 21-year-old admits he initially felt uncertain about the prospect of adapting to life 2,750 miles from home, but now has ambitions to gain citizenship and remain in Canada following the completion of his degree.

Read added: "I'd never been to the country before, never seen the University, never met the people, I'd only met the coach when he came to Exeter, so it was a big step, but it's something that you will never understand until you take the leap and do it.

"It's been brilliant and it's weird because I look back and think 'how could I have felt like that' because I'm so comfortable and really enjoy what I'm doing, so it's really hard to look back and think I was worried about going.

"But the transition is just a natural process. You're put in a situation where you have to just get on with it and all of a sudden you're surrounded by amazing people and you never look back.

"I think for young players now they have the dream of being a footballer and there's no other thought process, but if you can open up their eyes early enough that it's not the be-all and end-all to play for the club that you're at and there are hundreds of clubs all over the world that play football now, I think that's only a good thing."

P4S
SCHOLARSHIPS



USA SOCCER SCHOLARSHIPS

ASSISTING PLAYERS SINCE 2002

APPLY NOW!

- ▶ Scholarships cover up to 100% of tuition, accommodation and food
- ▶ Graduates have signed in MLS & English Football League
- ▶ Train / play in a full time professional environment
- ▶ Play in front of large crowds
- ▶ University degree with minimal / no student debt
- ▶ Officially recommended by LFE



PASS4SOCCER.COM

MO ADAMS

Two-and-a-half years ago, **Mo Adams** was released after completing his apprenticeship at Derby County.

Fast forward to the present and he has at last realised his dream of becoming a professional footballer after being drafted by Major League Soccer club Chicago Fire in January.

"Ever since I could walk it's been a dream of mine to be a professional soccer player," Adams told the club website. "I had some interviews (with Chicago) and met with the coaching staff and there was some good interest there and I could sense something happening.

"When you're sitting down, waiting to hear your name called, you don't know what to expect. It's a bit of a sigh of relief to finally be able to call myself a professional soccer player but it kind of shows all the sacrifice and hard work I put in finally paid off.

"I'm pleased it's this team and I'm very excited for the opportunity to be able to play with some unbelievable players and it's just a dream come true for me."

The 21-year-old almost took a very different path, however, when he looked set to sign for Blackburn Rovers following a successful period on trial in 2015, only for a long-term ankle injury to scupper his hopes.

Undeterred, Adams turned his attention to America, seeking a scholarship at Syracuse University, where he played football alongside studying for a Business Management degree.

The defensive-midfielder excelled in his new home, being named to the All-Atlantic Coast Conference freshman team and third team All-ACC in his freshman year.

Adams continued to progress on the pitch in his Sophomore year, serving as a team captain as well as being named to the All-ACC second team before declaring for the 2018 draft by signing a contract with Generation Adidas, a joint program between the MLS and Adidas.

And the Fire traded up to the tenth pick to select Adams, meaning he will team up with a number of established internationals, most notably former Manchester United and Bayern Munich World Cup winner Bastian Schweinsteiger.

Adams said: "Bastian Schweinsteiger has been my idol growing up and now he's my team-mate, so it's going to be something that will shock me for a while, but I'll get used to it.

"To be around those players, I'm looking to learn from each and every one of them every day, I'm all ears.

"When you get an opportunity to do what you love for a job and a living it's an opportunity you have to grab."



FLYING THE FLAG

A significant number of apprentices past and present were selected to play for their country at various levels during the international break in March.

Almost 50 current apprentices received recognition from Under-17 to Under-21 level, with Republic of Ireland the most heavily represented after naming 17 players, shortly followed by England (13).

Among the long list of former apprentices donning their national colours, six players earned their first seniors caps. Here, LFE takes a look at those debutants.



ENGLAND
James Tarkowski
& Lewis Cook

Tarkowski has come a long way since his days as an apprentice at Oldham Athletic. After an impressive season with Europa League candidates Burnley, the central defender was handed his first international cap at any level, playing 90 minutes against Italy at Wembley. Despite conceding a dubious late penalty, the 25-year-old produced an assured display that will have done his World Cup chances no harm.

Former Leeds United apprentice Cook lifted the Under-20 World Cup last June and will be hoping his 20-minute cameo against the Azzurri is a sign of being in Gareth Southgate's plans for the senior tournament this summer. The 2015 LFE Championship Apprentice of the Year won his grandad a whopping £17,000 after placing a £500 bet four years ago that the 21-year-old midfielder would appear for the Three Lions before his 26th birthday.



NORTHERN IRELAND
Jamal Lewis

Twenty-year-old Lewis has emerged as a regular for Norwich City's first-team since his debut against Brentford in December. The left-back was rewarded with a promotion into Northern Ireland's senior squad having previously represented the country at Under-19 and Under-21 level. Michael O'Neill's side beat South Korea 2-1 at Windsor Park, with Lewis playing for the full 90 minutes.



SCOTLAND
Oli McBurnie

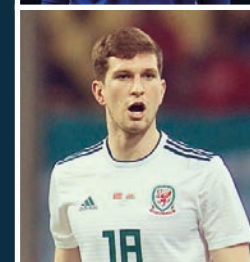
Striker McBurnie earned his first senior call-up after a sensational run of form on loan at Sky Bet Championship club Barnsley, winning the division's Player of the Month award in February having scored four goals in five appearances. The former Bradford City apprentice played for 77 minutes in a 1-0 defeat to Costa Rica before adding a second cap to his tally four days later, coming off the bench in the latter stages of a victory in Hungary.



WALES
Chris Mepham
& Billy Bodin

Brentford academy graduate Mepham only established himself in the Bees' first-team towards the end of December, but his impressive performances encouraged Ryan Giggs to name the centre-back in his first squad as Wales manager. The 20-year-old was able to celebrate his debut in style, appearing for the last 20 minutes of a 6-0 win against China.

Former Swindon Town apprentice Bodin amassed over 40 international appearances at youth level, including 21 outings for the Under-21s. However, the 26-year-old has had to bide his time for a full cap, finally receiving a call-up following a January move to Preston North End. Bodin was introduced as a 67th-minute substitute against Uruguay but could not inspire a comeback as the Welsh suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat to Luis Suarez, Edinson Cavani and co in the China Cup final.





SWEDEN

PLAYER PLACEMENT

LFE's Player Placement programme continues to provide past apprentices with the opportunity to carve their way back into full-time football during a three-month stay in Sweden.

Since 2015, over 40 per cent of players have been offered professional deals at the end of their initial placement period. Now, twelve more are currently experiencing the Scandinavian culture while striving to continue their playing career.

Former Stevenage apprentice Zak Guerfi has been with Division 2 outfit Bodens BK since February. Here, the 19-year-old discusses his time abroad so far.

Since being released by Stevenage, I've been at a few non-league clubs, but it was a complete culture shock for me and very different to what I was used to. I've done a bit of coaching here and there to pick up a bit of money on the side as well, but my goal was always to get back into football full-time.

I stayed in touch with my Regional Officer, Gavin Willacy, after I got released and I spoke to him about how I was struggling with non-league and I didn't really know what to do next, so he mentioned to me that the Sweden player placement was coming up.

I'm staying in a really small town called Boden - it's about two hours away from Finland. When I arrived, I got picked up from the airport and taken to my apartment and then the Sporting Director took us out to dinner that night and showed us around. It's been really straightforward. I get picked up for training every day, I've got a gym membership that's only a 15-minute walk away from the apartment and the town centre's about the same distance away, so it's ideal.

The thing I struggled with at the start was cooking because I'm used to my mum cooking for me back home. The first day I was here, I tried to prepare a chicken breast and completely undercooked it and had to throw the whole thing away! Now I'm making three meals a day, so that's something I've definitely picked up from being out here. It helped as well that I'm in an apartment with Jack Serrant-Green, who came out here through LFE four years ago, so he knows exactly what this process is like and he's helped me a lot, so it's been quite easy to adapt.

I have to admit, I questioned the standard on my way out here because it's the fourth tier in Sweden, but I was on the bench for the first game after I'd got out here and I remember thinking 'I'm going to be sitting on the bench for three months!' They're really good players here. The culture of football is much more suited to the way I like to play - they pass it, they work hard and the main thing that stood out for me is

that everyone is so humble and kind. In England, I'm used to hearing managers scream from the sideline, but it's not like that at all here. Everyone's really calm. The standard of football is really good, the standard of training is great and I feel I've already become a better player.

Every eight weeks, the club put on a coaching session for the local kids at schools in the community. A couple of us went to a Bodens soccer camp a few weeks back, we did a shooting drill with them and stuff like that and then handed out some prizes and gifts at the end, so it was a great experience and the kids really enjoyed it.

I've picked up quite a lot of the language too. When I came out here I didn't have a clue what anyone was saying, but now I feel like I can have a conversation and make sense of what they're saying.

I remember speaking to a few boys that got released from Stevenage a few years back and came on this trip via LFE and they said if you don't get a pro contract, make sure you take up the opportunity in Sweden. Now I'm in their position and I would absolutely advise anyone who gets released to come out here and do it because the worst thing that can happen is you play full-time football for three months and then have to go back to England, which then gives you a better chance of finding somewhere back home because you've developed your game in Sweden. Then the best case scenario is that you stay out here and get a full-time contract at the end of it, so it's definitely worth it. It's obviously more than just a football experience as well, so you're not just improving your game, you're also developing a lot of life skills that will help moving forward, whether that's in football or not.

If I'm honest, I felt like I'd come to a dead-end with football in England, so coming here has completely rejuvenated me. I'm quite positive that I'll be staying until the end of the season, so it really has helped me massively and put me back on track and it's exciting to see where this could take me now.

ÖSTERSUNDS FK

Three former apprentices enjoyed an incredible run to the last 32 of the UEFA Europa League with Swedish club Östersunds FK.

Jamie Hopcutt (York City), Doug Bergqvist (Aldershot Town) and Curtis Edwards (Middlesbrough) defied the odds to not only qualify for the group stage, but then progress to the knockout stages having finished second in a group consisting of Athletic Bilbao, Hertha Berlin and FC Zorya Luhansk, setting up a meeting with Arsenal.

Midfielder Edwards featured in all 180 minutes of the contest, while Bergqvist and Hopcutt were introduced off the bench in the first leg as the Gunners cruised to a 3-0 victory.

Hopcutt, who arrived in 2012 via LFE's Player Placement programme when the club were in Sweden's third tier, was added to the starting line-up for the return tie at the Emirates Stadium, where ÖFK produced a sensational performance to win 2-1 against Arsene Wenger's superstars.





What's your next move?

Study Sport & Exercise at Teesside University.

Courses include:

- > BSc (Hons) Physical Activity, Exercise and Health
- > BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise (Applied Sport Science)
- > BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise (Coaching Science)
- > FdSc Sport and Fitness
- > FdSc Sports Coaching and Exercise
- > BA (Hons) Sports Management and Marketing
- > BSc (Hons) Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation

UNDERGRADUATE OPEN DAY Saturday 16 June
Book now at tees.ac.uk/opendays



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM
@LFEonline



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER
@LFEonline

Derby County Academy @dcfcacademy
Superb session on sexual health
@dcfcacademy @dcfcofficial
@LFEonline with Colin Avery and NHS
team 🍌 Informative and educational
#footballeducation #HealthMatters




LFE @LFEonline
Former @SUFC_tweets apprentice
Elliott Whitehouse breaks the
deadlock in the @ChecktradeTrophy
final, becoming the first ever
@LincolnCity_FC player to
score at @wembleystadium
#ChecktradeTrophyFinal

Sky Bet Championship @SkyBetChamp
The @LFEonline Apprentice of the Year
nominees in the @SkyBetChamp. 🌟
#EFLAwards >> <http://po.st/Awards18>



Heybridge Swifts @OfficialSwifts
Congratulations @tobystevenson03
on your award from the @LFEonline
for being an outstanding scholar at
@leytonorientfc - Not to mention a
big part of @OfficialSwifts

BBC Sport @BBCSport
It's not just Ostersunds FK - Swedish
clubs big and small are helping a
stream of EFL rejects keep their
footballing dreams alive.

Read about football's last chance
saloon <https://bbc.in/2G9bWtc>

EFL @EFL
#EFLAwards: Shortlists revealed

What #EFL clubs, managers and
players will be recognised at this years
awards?

Find out here >> <http://po.st/Awards18>

LFE @LFEonline
LFE Apprentice of the Year
winners 2018:
🏆 @SkyBetChamp @RyanSessegnon (@FulhamFC)
🏆 @SkyBetLeagueOne @anthartigan (@AFCWimbledon)
🏆 @SkyBetLeagueTwo @BenWilmot33 (@StevenageFC)





THE PFA SAFETY NET

AN INNOVATIVE ONLINE SUPPORT SERVICE TO HELP YOUNG PLAYERS DEAL WITH THE PRESSURES OF PLAYING ACADEMY FOOTBALL.

HOW TO REGISTER

STEP 1: Go to thepfa-safetynet.com.

STEP 2: Click on 'Register' to create an account.

STEP 3: Access confidential advice, support and animated material.