



Touchline



TOM BAYLISS

The former Coventry star speaks to Touchline about the toughest period of his career and his Shrewsbury Town resurgence

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ASSESSMENT TRIALS

LFE's Assessment Trials provide a platform for apprentice footballers and first-year professionals released from clubs to showcase their talents.

Details for the 2023 assessment trials will be announced in due course, with the traditional north, midlands and south events going ahead as planned.

All games will be filmed, with full highlights and player package highlights published on our official YouTube channel and made available to players free of charge via LFE's Hudl Recruitment page. For more information on how to access and utilise your footage, visit www.lfe.org.uk/careers/hudl/



Professional Footballers' Association

The PFA's Education Team provide guidance and funding for educational and vocational courses that support personal development and transition towards a second career. PFA members can also receive support in attaining FA and UEFA qualifications, which are often mandatory requirements when applying for jobs in coaching and management within professional football.

For more information, visit thepfa.com/players/education

Careers

LFE learners can take advantage of employment opportunities thanks to LFE's partnerships with a variety of different organisations. Browse the range of exciting pathways at lfe.org.uk/careers

LFE Transition Officer

Academy players can seek information, advice and guidance regarding alternative options at any time from LFE's Transition Officer, Anthony Cato.

Contact him at acato@lfe.org.uk

Higher Education

All LFE apprentices can pursue a route to university in the UK or abroad if they achieve the required academic qualifications.

Download our informative guides to Higher Education or USA Scholarships at lfe.org.uk/touchline-downloads



THE ALUMNI PLAYER VOICE

In June 2021, LFE launched the Alumni Player Voice initiative to facilitate a safe and confidential space for past apprentices to talk about experiences, best practices, and areas for development regarding the transition support provided by clubs and wider organisations.

If you are an ex-apprentice and would like to contribute to our next session, contact PCT Support Officer, Ryan White (RWhite@lfe.org.uk) or LFE Communications (communications@lfe.org.uk).



GOAL OF THE MONTH

LFE's Goal of the Month competition recognises the best strikes from across the Academy Leagues. From individual moments of brilliance to excellent team goals, the season so far has been filled with memorable strikes. Here are the winners so far!

AUGUST



ZACK NELSON

The winner of August's Goal of the Month competition was Luton Town midfielder Zack Nelson, who's fantastic strike against AFC Wimbledon claimed 38% of the votes.

SEPTEMBER



RONALD SITHOLE

September's Goal of the Month award went to Gillingham's Ronald Sithole. The forward netted an outrageous halfway line goal versus Brentford, one which collected 39% of the votes.

OCTOBER



WILL HODGSON

It was Will Hodgson of Grimsby Town who picked up the Goal of the Month award for October. Hodgson curled in a brilliant free kick against Mansfield Town and was a worthy winner, picking up 36% of the votes.

NOVEMBER



FARIS KHAN

Doncaster Rovers' Faris Khan bagged the Goal of the Month award for November, racking up a whopping 679 votes (33%). Khan finished off a wonderfully worked team goal. The young Rovers worked the ball from back to front showing some impressive combination play, with Khan sliding the ball home to round off the move.

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ACADEMY LEAGUES

Round-Up



EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE NORTH EAST DIVISION

In the North East division, it's two local rivals battling it out at the top of the standings. **Lincoln City** and **Grimsey Town** are tied together at the summit with both sides on 19 points. Lincoln sits first thanks to a superior goal difference. The two Lincolnshire teams played out perhaps the most entertaining clash of the season back in August, with the Mariners running out 5-6 winners at Lincoln's Elite Performance Centre.

At the tail end of the division, **Rotherham United** are struggling to find their flow. The young Millers have achieved just a single point from their opening 10 games and have the poorest defensive record in the league. Rob Poulter will be hoping his side can begin to turn the ship sooner rather than later.

EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE NORTH WEST DIVISION

As we approach Christmas, it's **Fleetwood Town** who are setting the pace in the North West division. The young Fishermen sit five points clear of defending champions **Preston North End**, with the luxury of a game in hand. However, the Lilywhites recently beat the runaway leaders 3-1, a result which will give them a lot of confidence going into the second half of the season.

Preston have **Port Vale** and **Carlisle United** breathing down their necks, with the two sides just one and two points behind them respectively. It's pretty compact in the middle of the standings with just four points separating fifth placed **Accrington Stanley** and eighth placed **Bolton Wanderers**.

It's also very tight towards the bottom of the table. There are just three points separating **Stockport County** in ninth and **Salford City** in thirteenth place. **Walsall** sit bottom of the pile on just six points having conceded 36 goals in ten games. Ben King's Saddlers will be looking for a much-improved start to 2023.

EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE SOUTH EAST DIVISION

In the South East division, one team is stealing all the headlines and that team is **Luton Town**. The young Hatters are nine points clear of second placed **MK Dons**, having won nine of their first 10 matches. Alan McCormack's side have netted a whopping 43 goals so far this season and possess the best defensive record in the division, conceding just five times.

With the league title looking like Luton's already, it's going to be a scrap for second place. Two points separate four teams, with **MK Dons**, **Gillingham**, **AFC Wimbledon** and **Sutton United** making up the places below the runaway leaders. Sutton in fifth, are the only team to beat Luton this season, winning 1-0 at the back end of November.

The rest of the league table is also very congested, with sixth placed **Stevenage** just five points clear of bottom placed **Leyton Orient**.

EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE SOUTH WEST DIVISION

It's all to play for at the top of the South West division, with three sides out on their own battling it out for the top spot. Greg Miller's **Portsmouth** side are top of the pile heading into Christmas but might not be there for much longer. **Plymouth Argyle** are just a point behind them with a game in hand, whilst **AFC Bournemouth** in third are four points off the league leaders but with three games in hand. Alan Connell's young Cherries also boast the best defensive record in the league this season, conceding just seven goals.

In a league of just 10 teams, things were always bound to be tight and that's the way it's proving to be underneath the runaway top three, with just seven points separating fourth placed **Exeter City** and **Forest Green Rovers** at the foot of the table. Forest Green have failed to discover any rhythm yet this season, with their only win coming in mid-October as they defeated **Bristol Rovers** 2-0.

U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE NORTH

It's Tom Harban's **Barnsley** side who lead the way in the PDL North. The young Tykes have won five of their opening seven games and are the division's leading scorers with 19 goals. In the latest round of fixtures, Barnsley were triumphant over second placed **Burnley**. Their 3-4 away victory sent them three points clear of the Clarets at the summit. **Sheffield United** are tied on 13 points with Burnley, with Tony Philliskirk's side just edging the Blades narrowly on goal difference.

Below the top three, it's tight. **Peterborough United** are in fourth on 10 points, yet second bottom **Crewe Alexandra** are just three points off the Posh, making up for an exciting mid-table scramble.

Hull City are rooted to the foot of the table after a disappointing start to the season, losing their first six games. However, a 1-4 away win at Wigan in November saw them collect their first points of the campaign, a win that hopefully spells a change in fortune for the Tigers.

U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE SOUTH

Cardiff City are proving to be the pace setters in the PDL South so far. Long-standing U18s boss Matthew Bloxham has guided his young Blue Birds to an impressive start to the campaign, winning seven of their first eight matches, form that has provided them with a five-point gap between themselves and second placed **Millwall**.

One team to look out for though is **Charlton Athletic**. Danny Senda's side find themselves in third place, however they've played two fewer games than the two aforementioned teams above. If they were to win those two games in hand, they'd be level on points with the leaders **Cardiff**. The young Addicks also boast the best offensive and defensive records in the division, scoring 25 and conceding seven.

Bristol City are loitering at the bottom of the table, however, like Charlton at the opposite end of the table, they have two games in hand on most of the teams above them and a couple of wins could easily catapult them into mid-table.

U18 PREMIER LEAGUE NORTH

Sunderland lead the way in the PL North division. The young Black Cats started the season in fine form, winning their opening four matches before losing 5-3 at Leeds at the end of September. That loss didn't dent their confidence though, as they've stayed unbeaten since. **Liverpool** are breathing down their necks in second, just two points behind. Defending champions **Manchester City** have made a relatively slow start to the campaign, finding themselves eight points adrift of the league leaders.

Elsewhere in the division, it's extremely compact, with just three points separating **Leeds United** in fourth and **Everton** in eleventh. Bottom of the pile **Derby County** have struggled for form in the early knockings, however, having played four fewer games than **Blackburn Rovers** just ahead of them, a win or two could easily see them shoot up the table.

U18 PREMIER LEAGUE SOUTH

In the PL South, **West Ham United** are the team to beat. The Hammers have enjoyed an impeccable first half of the season, boasting a 100% record after nine matches. They've also scored the most goals (34) and conceded the fewest (13). They're sitting pretty at the summit; 12 points clear of second placed **Tottenham Hotspur**.

Like the PL North division, it's also very tight in the middle of the pack. Just two points separate **West Bromwich Albion** in fifth and second from bottom **Aston Villa**. **Leicester City** find themselves at the bottom of the table after a tricky first half of the campaign.

Making Up For Lost Time

For Shrewsbury Town's Tom Bayliss, his career to date has taken somewhat of a jagged trajectory.



Rewind to the summer of 2019, and the Coventry City Academy graduate was one of the hottest prospects rising through the EFL after bursting onto the scene with the Sky Blues.

On the back of an impressive maiden League One campaign at the Ricoh Arena in the 2018/19 season, Bayliss earned himself a big money move to the Championship in the shape of Preston North End. However, his move to Deepdale never really took off, starting just two league matches in three-years.

"It was so disappointing. It's the toughest thing to accept as a footballer when you're not playing games because that's all you want to do. It was so hard," Bayliss told LFE. "I felt that I was worthy of being at that level in the Championship and I wanted to test myself. Preston also paid a record fee for me and gave me the number seven shirt, which really signalled their intent and how much they wanted me at the time. But, in the end it didn't work out. I don't know whether that was through opportunities, moving away, I don't know what went wrong. I don't think I ever got a fair crack at it if I'm being honest.

"People would always ask me why I'm not playing, and I'd never have the answers which was frustrating. You'd like to be able to at least give a reason why. I'm getting all these questions from my friends, family, agent and former teammates, asking me what's going on and there was never an answer. I just kept my head down and worked hard and that at least gave me clarity of mind. But things happen for a reason, and I wouldn't change my experience at Preston because it's made me stronger, mentally stronger and it's made me appreciate playing football week in week out again."

Following a loan spell at League One Champions Wigan Athletic last season, the 23-year-old terminated his contract with Preston and joined Shrewsbury Town on a two-year deal as he looked to reignite his stalling career.

"I felt like I needed to go out and play games again. I had a few years where I wasn't playing consistently, and as a footballer that's all you want to do. Shrewsbury came in for me and I went to meet the manager and his assistant, and it was positive. They were building a good squad and I felt it was the right time for me to move on from Preston and go and play football again. I'm just enjoying myself again. There's a good feel factor around the place and we've built quite a good squad for League One, everyone's optimistic.

"I feel like I'm almost making up for lost time. When you're not playing, you don't feel like you're part of a team and you feel frustrated about the situation and you feel like you shouldn't be there, so Shrewsbury just feels like a fresh start.





It feels like the Coventry days again, I'm enjoying my football, playing in front of big crowds and trying to show everyone what I can do. Those years behind me are gone now and it's time to just focus on the future with Shrewsbury."

Under the guidance of Steve Cotterill, the Leicester born midfielder has flourished so far in Shropshire and is thankful to his new manager for helping him rediscover his mojo.

"Some would say he's a bit old fashioned compared to other managers I've worked under. He's been around the game a long time; he's got bags of experience and he's been brilliant with me. He's reinstated trust and he's reinstated that confidence in my ability.

He's onto me a lot because he knows I can be an asset to the team and I think that's good because there's no time where you can be off it because he will tell you when you are, so he's been great with me and it's nice to be working under a manager that believes in your ability and has confidence in you.

"I think confidence comes hand in hand with playing football. I know the ability I've got, and I know how I can perform in League One, so it's just about being given the opportunity to go out there and prove it.

It's great to again be playing week in week out and I'm really enjoying my time at Shrewsbury."

Following an initial slow start to life at Montgomery Waters Meadow, Bayliss has enjoyed a rich vein of form in recent weeks, contributing with goals and assists on a regular basis.

"I took a little while to get going and I think that's normal after not playing every week for so long. There is training fitness and then there is match fitness. They're both completely different things. I'm a midfielder who wants to contribute with goals and assists and I think they've slowly accumulated over the last month or so.

"I feel like at this moment in time I've got a couple of people who I'd like to prove wrong and that comes from within and decisions that have happened in the past, but like I said you can't change the past, but you can determine your own future.

"You want to go out and win, play every week and contribute to your team. But also, the manager plays a huge part. He doesn't let me drop my levels and if I ever do, he tells me!

"I just want to play well for myself, the team and my family. Everything is now going in the right direction, but there is more to come. I just want to help the team as much as I can."

From the outside, expectations around Shrewsbury as a team aren't sky high. With one of the smallest squads in the league, a mid-table finish would be respectable.

However, after a solid opening few months of the campaign, Bayliss believes his side shouldn't write themselves off for a potential play off push.

"I think we've always been quietly confident. We've assembled a good squad, a tight knit squad. We had a good pre-season trip to Spain, and it was all about for me getting to know everyone. I already knew a few lads there already but it's a nice small squad, probably one of the smallest in the league and because of that we all get on well.

"There're no clicks and everyone wants to help everyone. The staff as well are great. They're always around asking how you are and seeing if they can help with anything. Everyone just wants to work hard and hopefully the results coincide with that.

"The morale is good; it's a good bunch of lads and we just want to finish as high as possible. I think we've got an outside chance of the play offs, but we just have to focus on the next game. I know it's a cliché, but you just don't know where it'll take you come the end of the season. There are obviously goals within the setup, but I think we'll keep that between ourselves for now.

As a result of Bayliss's impressive start to life at Shrewsbury, rumours of a possible return to the Championship have already begun to circulate, with several clubs having already shown supposed interest in the former Preston man. Despite this, Bayliss insists his focus is solely on Shrewsbury Town.

"In the here and now I just want to do well for the club I'm at. Shrewsbury have shown a lot of faith in me, and I want to repay that faith. However, I think any footballers' goal is to play at the highest level possible for their ability. Whether for me that's League One, or I get the chance to go up the leagues again, I don't know. But right now, I'm just really enjoying my football here at Shrewsbury and that's the only thing I'm thinking about."

“ Everything is now going in the right direction, but there is more to come. I just want to help the team as much as I can. ”



DEBUTANTS

As we approach the midway point of the season, clubs all over the EFL have been handing out debuts to young apprentices. Here is a selection of budding prospects who have made their first team bows this term.

Quaine Bartley

AFC Wimbledon

With Wimbledon losing 4-2 and chasing the game at Mansfield Town, striker Quaine Bartley was introduced late on. Bartley couldn't help salvage anything from the contest, however his debut day is one he will remember forever.



Fabio Jalo

Barnsley

Fabio Jalo is certainly one to keep an eye on. The Portuguese midfielder was signed from Benfica in 2020 and has received high praise from peers and fans alike for his fantastic performances in the Barnsley youth teams. The 2021/22 Academy Player of the Year was handed his senior debut in a Carabao Cup tie at Middlesbrough back in August. He's since appeared in League One for the Tykes.



Ashley Phillips and Adam Wharton

Blackburn Rovers

Young central defender Phillips was handed his debut by Rovers boss Jon Dahl Tomasson for the Lancashire sides Championship clash against West Brom at Ewood Park in August, however, Phillips' special day was unfortunately cut short when he had to be substituted through injury early into the second half. 18-year-old Adam Wharton also made his First Team bow for the Riversiders a fortnight later versus Stoke City.



Dylan Kadji

Bristol City

Kadji was awarded his First Team debut by Nigel Pearson in the second half of a 3-0 defeat at Birmingham City in October. The central midfielder was introduced in the 65th minute and enjoyed a steady start to life in the Championship.



Joel Tabiner and Charley Finney

Crewe Alexandra

The highly thought of Crewe Academy product Tabiner was handed his First Team debut off the bench in a 1-1 draw with Gillingham. The 18-year-old forward was given the final 20 minutes of proceedings to make an impression. Another Academy star Charlie Finney was awarded his first minutes in an Alexandra shirt a month prior, with a short cameo appearance away at Hartlepool.



Miles Leaburn

Charlton Athletic

The Charlton Athletic Academy graduate entered the field away to Accrington on the opening day of the campaign with 20 minutes remaining and the scores levelled. Leaburn almost enjoyed the perfect debut for his side when he rose highest in the 94th minute to head his team in-front, however, his goal was agonisingly cancelled out just two minutes later.



Sonny Cox

Exeter City

The young centre forward was thrown into the action late on as Exeter searched for an equaliser against Cheltenham Town in August. Despite Cox's efforts, his side couldn't locate the killer touch.



Finn O'Boyle

Harrogate Town

O'Boyle enjoyed a debut to remember against Morecambe in a Papa Johns Trophy tie back in October, scoring the equaliser in a 2-1 win for the Sulphurites.



Vaughn Covil

Hull City

The San Diego born Californian entered the fray as a late substitute in the Tigers' opening day triumph over Bristol City in July. Covil has since become a regular fixture in the Hull City match-day squad.



DEBUTANTS

Joseph Gbode

Gillingham

The Gillingham midfielder was rewarded with his First Team debut away at Wimbledon on the opening day of the season, coming on for the final eight minutes in the Gills' 2-0 defeat in Southwest London.



Finlay Cross-Adair

Preston North End

Young striker Finlay Cross-Adair was given a brief run out for his boyhood club in the closing stages of Preston's 0-2 home loss to Stoke City back in October. A much-deserved reward for his scintillating form in the youth teams.



Ronan Maher

Walsall

Ronan Maher was another young prospect whose maiden senior minutes arrived on the opening day, with the midfielder seeing out the final stages of Walsall's resounding 4-0 triumph over Hartlepool United.

Tyler Goodrham

Oxford United

Going into the final few minutes of Oxford's opening home match of the season against bitter rivals Cambridge, 18-year-old Tyler Goodrham was handed his professional debut for the U's, as Karl Robinson's side searched for the breakthrough. Less than a minute later, the deadlock was broken by the recently introduced Goodrham, scoring the winner with his first touch in Oxford United colours.



The 11



Nathaniel Wallace
Scunthorpe United

Described as a “model apprentice”, Nathaniel Wallace has been making strides both on and off the pitch since joining Scunthorpe’s apprenticeship programme in 2021. The winger made his home debut versus Gateshead in October, playing 75 minutes in a 3-1 win for the Iron. He also regularly trains with the first team.

Academically, Nathaniel is also making excellent progress. His BTEC Lead Tutor, Jessica Sharp said: “Nat has made excellent progress on his BTEC Diploma and is on course to achieve a DD overall grade, which is way beyond his original target. He applies himself very well in lessons and works hard to achieve the higher-grade criteria. He has shown great confidence this year and hugely improved his presentation skills. This is evident in his recent assessments, where he has applied himself to achieve the distinction grades. Every session is seen as an opportunity to develop himself further and improve.”



Taylor Anderson
Mansfield Town

Taylor Anderson’s story is an inspiring one. Over the last year, the right-back has overcome several battles away from the field of play. He suffered two serious injuries and these kept Taylor away from the game for long periods of time and contributed to a struggle with mental health, which also prolonged his recovery.

Since his personal and physical battles, Taylor has fought tooth and nail to get himself back to full fitness and has overcome his struggles in an admirable fashion.

Alongside his footballing progress, Taylor has enjoyed a lot of academic success too. Despite his time away from the game, he is well on course to complete his BTEC and SEP studies and has shown a keenness to achieve higher than his expected grades. Taylor also missed a large chunk of his Level 2 coaching qualification but has made the effort to complete this in his own time which is a testament to his character.



Finlay Cross-Adair
Preston North End

Finlay Cross-Adair has been ever present since starting his apprenticeship at Preston North End, both on and off the pitch. The striker played a vital role as a first-year scholar for the U19s last season as Nick Harrison’s side secured a league and cup double. This season, the 17-year-old has made his senior debut, coming on as a substitute vs Stoke City at Deepdale in October.

Academically, he has been described as “enthusiastic” and has completed 100% of his mandatory and overall SEP tasks. Despite missing some lessons due to first team commitments, Finlay has always caught up on his work and is on course to meet his target BTEC grade.



Ashley Phillips
Blackburn Rovers

Blackburn Rovers defender Ashley Phillips has enjoyed a breakthrough season at the Riversiders this term and has excelled in his performances. The 17-year-old is now a regular within the first team setup at Ewood Park and has made eight appearances already this season. He’s also represented England with the U19s.

Despite his on the pitch commitments and successes, Phillips hasn’t taken his eye off the ball in the classroom, maintaining his standards to the highest level with his education programme by keeping on track to achieve D*D*D* in his BTEC. Blackburn’s Head of Education Neil Chadwick said: “The fact that Ash is also thinking about his education beyond scholarship is testament to his attitude towards his personal development and lifelong learning.”



Lorent Talla
Queens Park Rangers

For Lorent Talla, the past year has saw him show tremendous strength to come back from adversity. The 17-year-old spent the whole of the 2021/22 season on the side-lines through injury but has come back fighting and more determined than ever. This season, Talla has featured in every single U18s game, as well as playing three times for the U21s.

Off the pitch, Talla is also excelling. He’s on track with his BTEC programme and consistently meets assignment deadlines to the best of his ability. QPR’s LFE Regional Officer, Simon Dwight said: “He shows signs of leadership, being a vocal apprentice to drive and encourage the rest of the group. He is showing positive signs of developing his own ‘winning formula.’”



Gatlin O'Donkor
Oxford United

Gatlin O'Donkor has been an outstanding performer both on and off the pitch this year and has cemented himself as a regular fixture in Karl Robinson’s Oxford United squad, making nine appearances in League One, scoring one and assisting one.

Gatlin’s performances on the pitch have been reflective of his work in the classroom. His tutor, Matt Jarvis said: “Gatlin left School with 3x GCSE’s and has successfully passed his Maths Functional Skills in his 1st Year to concentrate on getting an Extended Certificate that will require him to balance his studies with 1st Team commitments. Gatlin has transformed his attitude since School and is well on course to complete an Extended Certificate to a Pass level and complete his SEP in the New Year.”



Hamish Douglas
Rotherham United

Hamish Douglas has been at Rotherham United since he was 12 years old and has excelled in every age group since. The 17-year-old, who is captain of the youth team, has impressed higher ups at the New York Stadium on a regular basis and was on the bench in Rotherham’s 1-0 win over bitter rivals Sheffield United recently.

Academically, Hamish is continuing to progress and is on course to meet his target BTEC grade. James Mahoney added: “The standard of Hamish’s work is very good and his detail and description within his writing is of a good standard. In lesson Hamish’s behaviour, attitude, application and work-rate are all very good as he is ready to start every lesson and is always on task when he needs to be.”



Dan Murray
Portsmouth

Since relocating from London to Hampshire to sign for Portsmouth, Dan Murray has excelled both in footballing terms, and academical. Described as a “mature learner”, Daniel is said to possess excellent self-awareness and has shown that he can make professional decisions to aid his development on and off the pitch. The midfielder has been part of the senior squad on two occasions this season and regularly joins in with first team training sessions.

In the classroom, Dan is keen on receiving feedback in order to improve his work, with his passion for his BTEC and SEP courses said to be very evident.



Brandon Njoku
Cambridge United

Despite struggling with injuries, Brandon Njoku has had the opportunity to spend some time in and around the first team. However, it’s his attitude off the pitch which has caught the attention of his mentors and peers. The forward is said to have displayed a great attitude towards his studies and lifestyle, dedicated to living his life as a model professional.

Brandon’s tutor said: “Brandon has worked exceptionally hard this Half Term during his BTEC lessons, and on his assignments. Brandon has gone above and beyond to ensure the work he has produced is of excellent quality.”



Will Johnson
Fleetwood Town

According to his mentors, Will Johnson is a leading example both on and off the pitch. Johnson, who is captain of Fleetwood Town’s U18s, finished last season as their top scorer and has maintained his high standards this season too, scoring the winning goal in the Shrimps’ FA Youth Cup fixture at Stockport County recently, despite playing centre-back. Due to his impressive displays, Will has been rewarded with his first professional contract.

Away from the pitch, Will maintains his standards when it comes to his academic studies as well. Fleetwood’s LFE Regional Officer, Craig Skinner said: “Will is always proactive in organising his time to ensure his assignments are handed in on time and that his work is completed to the highest of standards.”



Nico Valentine
Ipswich Town

Second-year Ipswich Town apprentice Nico Valentine has made a real impression this term. Nico is working well on track towards his D*D*D* BTEC target grade, whilst managing his busy football schedule playing for the U18s, U21s and training with the first team. Having made his senior debut in October, Valentine signed a two-year professional contract.

First team Manager Kieran McKenna said: “Nico is a talented young player who has had some injury issues over the last few months, so I’m looking forward to seeing more of his development over the next months.”

FRATERNITE



JASON DAVIS AND BEN WHITE
ARE TWO FORMER LFE APPRENTICES
WHO ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS AT
BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION FC.
SINCE THEIR DAYS ON THE SOUTH
COAST, THE PAIR HAVE ENDURED
TWO VERY DIFFERENT CAREER PATHS.

Despite earning a professional contract at Brighton, Jason's dream of becoming a footballer was unfortunately ended due to injury. Ben on the other hand, has gone onto become a Premier League star, representing Arsenal and England. One thing, however, has allowed the two best friends to strive once again for a common goal – fashion.

The two former Albion players recently launched their own clothing line 'Fraternite', and Jason spoke to Touchline to discuss the brand, his and Ben's goals for the future and his time at the Amex Stadium.

What is Fraternite and where did the idea come from?

"It's something that me and Ben spoke about a while back. It's something we've always wanted to do," Jason told LFE. "Fashion is always something we've been into. Even when we were on a scholar wage, we thought we were fly. Me, Ben and all the boys would just go out shopping all the time. We always questioned things to do with fashion. At the time, skinny jeans were really in fashion, and we'd always just question little stuff like 'why are they not tighter here' and we just always wanted to start our own brand. People would come up to us in the street and ask what we were wearing, and we always felt that we were well dressed.

"It didn't actually come about until we moved to London about 18-months ago, when Ben signed for Arsenal, and I transitioned from being a Project Manager to becoming Ben's PA. Then we were just like 'lets just start this up.' Now, when I go to football on Tuesdays, there's a lot of ex pros there and we're all kind of in the same boat, all trying to start our own thing."

Who's Fraternite's target market?

"Luckily for me, I have a lot of footballers that can wear it and market the brand, but at the moment we're not going to do that, we want it to have its own legs first and it's gone really well. The brand hasn't got a specific market, we want it to be for everyone. For example, the other day, I went down to get a coffee near my new flat and some guy just told me he liked my fit, and I was wearing my own brand, so that's nice. I spoke to his mum shortly after and it turned out he was a young, up and coming rapper so I said I'd love to collab. We want to bring people up with us. We see it as a big movement, everyone together."

Have you always been passionate about fashion or is it something that you've developed an interest for as you've got older?

"I feel like fashion has always been our passion, even more than football at times! I think back in my football days, I almost took football for granted, but it's good to have something else you're passionate about."

What are your plans for Fraternite?

"We're quite lucky with the people we know. We've had people approach us even before starting asking us for look books. I've been trying to go to as many events as I can to show face, meet people and show them look books. We've had opportunities to get our stuff into stores already, in like a wholesale sense, but we're not too bothered about that right now. I personally, just want to see people wearing it, seeing it around would be amazing. We just want to inspire people really."

What does a day in the life of a fashion brand owner look like?

"It's a mixture! Obviously being a PA for Ben, that throws up different things to deal with. Like for example, last week, he rang me up and he was locked out the house! So, it could be little stuff like that, as well as commercial work etc. But in the gaps, for me, it's doing things like going to the studio, designing things, sending off orders and meeting with warehouses and suppliers to try and find new materials. It's all about networking."

Who do you look up to in the fashion world?

"George Heaton, he owns Represent. This guy has inspired me for a while. It's a northern brand and I think they started out whilst we were in school. They did a pop-up shop in London not long ago and me and my friend Dylan queued up at like 4am for a 10am opening which was an early start, but we were like two of the first 30 people to get in which was great. We managed to speak to him, which was the main thing, just to ask him questions and learn off him. I was wearing a mix of his stuff and my stuff, so even then people were questioning me about my jeans (which were Fraternite) and that was a great feeling."



What kind of challenges have you been faced with since launching the brand?

“The biggest one for me so far has been delays. We had everything ready for our first launch back in March, but because of Covid and stuff it got delayed, then there were more delays. We then set on a new date of September 27th, and everything was ready, but then that happened to fall right in the middle of me and Ben moving house, we didn't expect to move so quickly. We still launched, but we're still in the process of finding storage and posting orders. I wanted to make sure it was still a high-quality service. Clients shouldn't have delays on the products they get, so that was annoying.”

“Even finding manufacturers is hard, because we're trying to do it on a budget, we're not going crazy and when it comes to the manufacturers, a lot of them want a minimum order of say 300 of each product, in each colour. Thankfully we managed to get that down to 50, but that took some time to build up a trust with them.”

Have you learnt anything about yourself since venturing into the world of fashion?

“That's a deep one! You know what, coming out of football I was very lost, I had no idea what to do. I tried to carry on playing but doing my ACL twice, the doctors had to remove some of my hamstring tendon to make a new ligament in my knee. So as soon as I tried to sprint, my hamstring would just snap. So, then I had to come to terms with going into the outside world, not having a clue what I wanted to do, so me and my girlfriend at the time went travelling to I know it sounds cliché but 'find myself'. I came back and went into Project Management, but I knew I'd always wanted to give the fashion thing a go, so after I did, the thing I learnt was just push and do what you want to do, because there's no harm in trying. So, that's where I'm at now, just trying.”

Who's been your biggest help with launching the brand?

“I'd have to say Ben. He's always given me support; he's helped financially with it, and he's given me the opportunity to actually do it. Working with him every day, he's quite laid back about everything and chilled, so he gave me the chance to overlook the whole thing and manage it. He knows we've always wanted to do this, so yeah, Ben.”

“THE THING I LEARNT WAS JUST PUSH AND DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO, BECAUSE THERE'S NO HARM IN TRYING. “



Looking back at your time at Brighton, what memories do you have of that period in your life?

“I think at the time I almost took it for granted, but looking back at it now, I realise how good it was. It was just a laugh, but it was of course professional as well. You were going in every day, seeing your mates every day, playing football and learning. Just playing football for a living, it was great.”

What skills did you learn off the pitch that have helped in your new business venture?

“Discipline, for sure. You know, we had to be up at a certain time, be in college for a certain time. You also had to make sure you made your grades at college, because you couldn't get a professional contract without them. So, yeah, discipline is a big one. Now, I get up at the same time every day and get done what needs to be done and to the highest standard.”

After leaving Brighton, how hard was it for you to make that transition into the outside world?

“Like I said, I went travelling, because I did really struggle at first. Doing my ACL twice was tough. The first time I was 16 and I went to Germany for an operation and got it fixed. The second time I did it I was 20, and this time it was a full rupture. I tried to get back into it after, but I was just getting frustrated. They (Brighton) then spoke to me about halfway through the season and told me I could continue my physiotherapy, but they were going to pay up my contract at the end of the season. So, after that, it was just a case of trying to transition into normal work. I did try and continue a bit but kept getting injured. It was tough to accept. I feel like after I left, I just went into jobs because they were there, and it was something to do, something to keep my mind busy.”

What support did you receive after leaving Brighton?

“Initially I kind of took it upon myself to be honest with you and seeing as I was a professional when I left and not an apprentice, I wasn't specifically entitled to help from LFE, but they did provide me with help which was nice. I did go into personal training for a bit, and they helped me with that with the PFA, funding the course. They also put me in contact with people to help with my injury.”





“I’VE TORN ALMOST EVERY MUSCLE IN MY LEG, BUT THAT’S THE PAST NOW, YOU CAN’T DWELL ON THAT. IT’S ALL ABOUT WHAT’S NEXT NOW.”

Were you always totally driven on being a professional footballer, or were you realistic about your chances of making it?

“I wasn’t crazy about football. It’s the same with Ben. That’s why we both got on so well, because outside of football, we wouldn’t even watch it or speak about it, we’d just play Xbox or go to the gym!”

Was it hard to accept seeing friends go on to be successful, whilst your dream was ended due to injuries?

“I’ve never been like that to be honest. Like seeing Ben do so well, it’s great. I’m very close with his family. When we lived in Brighton, we’d never get stopped by people asking for pictures and stuff with Ben, but since he moved to Arsenal and we’ve moved to London, he gets stopped everywhere he goes when I’m with him, but to me he’s just Ben. He’s a role model to people and people idolise him and I think that’s great.”

Do you still have feelings of anger towards the way your career was cut short?

“I did, but I’m past that now. I did used to think back and wish I had done little things differently. Like I said earlier, I did take it for granted at times and there were things I could’ve done differently to give me a better chance, for example, extra work on my injuries, injury prevention. I needed to, I just kept getting injured. I’ve torn almost every muscle in my leg, but that’s the past now, you can’t dwell on that. It’s all about what’s next now.”

Are there similar challenges in the Academy environment to those that you’re faced with nowadays in business?

“Working on your resilience and perseverance. Also, meeting a lot of different people and personalities. Clashes of personalities. You must try and engage with these people and it’s the same in football, in the dressing room. There are different types of people, but you have to try and get on and work with these people. So, being able to communicate with different personalities.”





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YOUR REPUTATION

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

YOUR CAREER



ERASMUS+ TOUR 2022



Over the summer, fourteen EFL Academy squads took part in LFE's pre-season trips abroad, funded by Erasmus+.

Eight clubs visited Spain, whilst four headed to Italy and two to Holland. Over the two weeks, the apprentices were given the opportunity to face off with some of Europe's most prestigious Academy sides, train at fantastic facilities and enjoy several cultural visits and lessons.



"It's a great trip. It's great to be in a different environment to what we are normally used to, learning about different cultures, different styles of play. It's great and it's really going to help us when we get back home."

Ayo, Northampton Town



Spain



ERASMUS+ TOUR 2022



"The training sessions are interesting. There is a lot of information to take in and a lot to learn, but it's enjoyable."
Savy, Shrewsbury Town



"It's been really good; I like the style of the foreign coaches. Overall, it's been a great experience."
Dec, Shrewsbury Town



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Holland



ERASMUS+ TOUR 2022



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"I've personally really enjoyed it. The training sessions are good, a lot more technical and very specific to different aspects of the game."
Vlad, Shrewsbury Town



"It's been a good tour. It's all good experience for me and all the boys, it's given us a chance to get to know each-other better, have fun and play against good teams from different countries and learn different cultures and ways of playing is good. The atmosphere is great."
Finn, Northampton Town



Italy



ERASMUS+ TOUR 2022



"The intensity of the football out here is higher, they're much more technical on the ball. We've also learnt about the Spanish culture which has been good, and we've done things together as a group. The trip has brought us together."

Jacob, Salford City



ON THE MOVE

KALVIN PHILLIPS £45m

(Former Leeds United apprentice)
Leeds United > Manchester City

FLYNN DOWNES £12m

(Former Ipswich Town apprentice)
Swansea City > West Ham United

MORGAN GIBBS-WHITE £25m

(Former Wolves apprentice)
Wolves > Nottingham Forest

MARCUS TAVERNIER £10m

(Former Middlesbrough apprentice)
Middlesbrough > AFC Bournemouth

DJED SPENCE £20m

(Former Fulham apprentice)
Middlesbrough > Tottenham Hotspur

OMAR RICHARDS £10m

(Former Reading apprentice)
Bayern Munich > Nottingham Forest

The 2022 summer transfer window yet again saw several former LFE apprentices make some big money moves, both domestically and abroad.

Here is a selection of the biggest deals.

LEWIS O'BRIEN £9.4m

(Former Huddersfield Town apprentice)
Huddersfield Town > Nottingham Forest

ADEMOLA LOOKMAN UNDISCLOSED

(Former Charlton Athletic apprentice)
RB Leipzig > Atalanta

SCOTT TWINE £4m

(Former Swindon Town apprentice)
MK Dons > Burnley

OTHER MOVES THIS SUMMER

JOSH BOWLER
Blackpool > Nottingham Forest

STEVEN SESSEGNON
Fulham > Charlton Athletic

BRANDON THOMAS-ASANTE
Salford City > West Bromwich Albion

TOM BAYLISS
Preston North End > Shrewsbury Town

JACK CLARKE
Tottenham Hotspur > Sunderland

DAVID KASUMU
MK Dons > Huddersfield Town

JACK RUDONI
AFC Wimbledon > Huddersfield Town

SHAYDEN MORRIS
Fleetwood Town > Aberdeen

ALEX HUNT
Sheffield Wednesday > Grimsby Town





THE FOODIE FOOTBALLER

As a player, Marc Pugh enjoyed a hugely successful career, progressing through the English football pyramid with Eddie Howe's Bournemouth, going from League One, all the way to the Premier League.

Now, following his retirement in 2021, the 35-year-old has quickly found himself a new role within the game as a Nutritionist and Online Health Coach, working with young athletes to help mould them into the best possible versions of themselves, and maximise their sporting performance.

Marc has recently partnered with LFE to deliver Life Skills sessions to young apprentices throughout the EFL, and Touchline went to catch up with the Foodie Footballer himself...

So, Marc, tell us a bit about what you do?

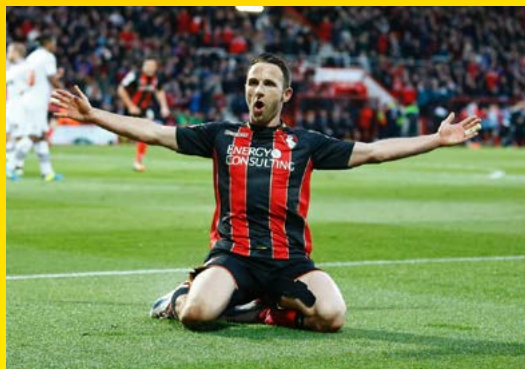
"I'll go into the football clubs, do a little presentation that focuses on nutrition. Some of the topics we cover are your proteins, your fats, your carbs and living a healthy lifestyle, which ties in really well with your mindset. If you've got a good mindset and you're living in the right routine, your nutrition is going to take care of itself., because with everything it's all about consistency and having good habits. So, we'll do the presentation with the apprentices, I'll then open the room up for any questions they have and then we'll go and do a practical session in the kitchen, and I think that hands on approach, the lads really enjoy it because they realise how easy it is to cook simple healthy meals. Lately we've been focusing on healthy pancakes because in my eyes it makes a great pre- and post-match meal, and a great snack. It ticks all the boxes with your macronutrients as well. I've had some good feedback and it's been really enjoyable."

Why did you choose to become a Sports Nutritionist in your post-football career?

"Later on in my career I made the decision I wanted to be a Health Coach. I wanted to educate people on how to become the healthiest versions of themselves, so when I was 26, I decided to do an 18-module diploma in Nutrition whilst I was still playing because I wanted to gain that extra edge.

"We got promoted to the Championship at the time with Bournemouth and the step up from League One to the Championship is a big jump, so I started fuelling properly for performance and recovery and started eating the right foods, sticking to whole foods and watching my hydration. My attention to detail was ridiculous. I went from running 10 or 11k to 13 or 14k in my games and it made a huge difference, just from being really regimented in what I ate. Since then, I'm just obsessed with what I put in my body.

"I then decided to set up '@TheFoodieFootballer' on Instagram at the age of 33 when I was still playing at QPR because I knew I wasn't getting any younger and I needed to think about life after football as well and a lot of people took to it, so I thought 'this is what I want to do.'"



After doing your Nutrition course, how long did it take for you to notice a difference in your performance?

“Not long. I remembered I really began to implement it at the start of a pre-season. In the off season, you can either go one way or the other, so I started getting fit and building myself back up for pre-season by making sure I ate well in my time off because sometimes you have a little bit of a blow out, but I thought ‘no, I’m going to be really strict and fuel myself well’ and I went into pre-season feeling brilliant, absolutely amazing. Usually, you’ll get the odd knock or two, but I wasn’t picking up any injuries, wasn’t feeling as sore and then went into the season running so much further, my highest speed was better and wasn’t as sore after gym sessions. I just felt so much better.”

How much do you enjoy delivering your Life Skills programme to the apprentices?

“I absolutely love it. I love helping other people. When I get a message from someone saying ‘I tried one of your recipes and it really helped me’ it’s like scoring a goal, you get a real buzz off it. It’s just nice to give something back and I know how important it is. Looking back, I wish I began educating myself on Nutrition when I was a little bit younger, then maybe I’d of climbed the ladder a little bit faster than I did. I didn’t get to the Championship until I was 26-years-old, so yeah it made a huge difference to me, and I want to give them the education that they deserve so they can take their game to the next level.”

Have you always been passionate about food?

“I think almost everyone loves food (laughs), but I always relied on other people to provide food for me at the time. My wife, she was doing all the cooking until I started educating myself, then I realised how important it was to not just know about food but understand what oils you were cooking with, the amount of fats, carbs and protein I was getting. I couldn’t boil an egg until I was 26, but then I started improvising and getting involved in the kitchen because we had two children at the time, so I needed to help in some way in the kitchen because my wife was doing everything else. I eventually found it was my way of switching off because football is full on. If you’ve had a bad game, you don’t want to beat yourself up about it and likewise, if you’ve had a good game you don’t want to get too ahead of yourself. I just really grew to love it.”

How are your Life Skills sessions received by the apprentices?

“When I’ve done practical sessions especially, I’ll get pictures through from some of the lads that evening telling me they’ve made the pancakes and that they’ve really enjoyed them and they’re all surprised because we weren’t using flour, we weren’t using sugar, no butter, all these unhealthy ingredients. It shows how amazing pancakes can taste using things like oats, bananas, natural sugars and maple syrup. Just creating healthy, nutritious meals that are going to help fuel your performance and recovery. I’ve had some really nice feedback, it’s been engaging, I’ve had lots of questions after the sessions. The lads buzz off the practical, they really do.”

How crucial is it for the apprentices to get into good habits early?

“It’s massive in terms of longevity especially. With them, I focus on fuelling for the season, not just for one performance. It’s easy to put a load of sugar in your body to get through a game, but you must think about the knock-on effects. As I always say: ‘a healthy athlete makes a great athlete.’

“You look at the old school players for example, those in the 70’s and 80’s, they come out of the game and because they’ve not lived the right lifestyle, they just put lots of weight on. However, the modern-day players now, they’re really lean, strong and playing for longer and longer. Just look at the likes of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Cristiano Ronaldo, they treat their body and what they put in it like an actual job, so it’s important that I drill it into the lads and explain that if they want to have a long and successful career without loads of injuries, what we put in our body is massively important. Improve the small percentages daily, whether that’s your nutrition, whether it’s your sleep and you’ll see a big difference.”

What does a good nutrition plan look like for a footballer?

“Well, I don’t claim to know everything (laughs), and everyone is different, but for instance on a day off for example I’d reduce your carbs, increase protein intake and healthy fats. I’d focus on getting a good source of protein such as eggs, avocado, mushrooms, tomatoes. Just try to keep the carbs relatively low, because if you’re having a rest day you won’t be as active, so you don’t need to be loading up on the carbs.”

“Then on a game day or training day, you should be ramping up your carbs. For example, brown sourdough bread, wholemeal pasta and things like honey to top it all up. I try to not focus on too much protein on game days because it can lead to feeling a bit bloated. So, for me, the closer it got to a match, I’d slowly reduce the amount of protein I was taking in, but at the same time really start loading up on the carbs.”

How important is nutrition for recovery?

“So important. Back in the day when I was a little bit younger, I’d celebrate a game with a takeaway after, something like a Chinese but the inflammation won’t go away. After a match or training we have this inflammation sat in our body and if we have an unhealthy takeaway, we’ll still have it the next day. Then, on Sunday, we might have a Sunday roast and then on Monday it gets to training time and we’re still suffering with a lot of DOMS (Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness) and then there might be another match on Tuesday and you suffer for it.”

“But, if you’re having a good nutritious meal within two hours after the game full of healthy sources of proteins and fats, loads of fibres, vitamins and minerals then your recovery rate can improve up to 150%, which is a huge difference. However, it’s not just your nutrition that aids recovery, it’s your sleep, yoga, hydration... all these things.”

How rewarding is it seeing your work benefit others?

“It’s very rewarding. When I was playing, I was doing it for myself, my family and teammates, but with this, I’m meeting people that I have never met before and making a difference in their lives. Some people I work with on my coaching app, even when they send me a message and tell me they’ve dropped a bit of body fat, I get a real buzz off it. It’s the same with my sessions. If I can help just one or two people in that room, then amazing. If I can help more, even better! I do genuinely just love it and it doesn’t feel like a job at all.”





LIFE SKILLS

JOE THOMPSON



LFE's Life Skills Programme recently provided Morecambe FC's apprentices with the opportunity to engage in a Darkness & Light Resilience Talk with former Rochdale footballer Joe Thompson.

Joe moved from Bath to Manchester and was signed to Manchester United's Academy at the age of nine and stayed at the club until being released at sixteen-years-old.

Joe did not let this set back diminish his dream of becoming a professional footballer, as Rochdale FC recognised his footballing ability and determination and signed him as an Apprentice Professional. Joe further backed up the club's decision to sign him as he went on to win the EFL Apprentice of the Year Award. Joe's footballing journey also saw him play for Tranmere Rovers and Bury before returning to Rochdale where he finished his career.

Joe experienced high points during his football career which brought fantastic memories, but also saw him deal with life adversities, including a battle for his life. Joe is now a public speaker, presenter for MUTV, BBC Co-commentator and delivers his adversity & resilience sessions for LFE and Football Academies. In 2019, Joe received the Tom Finney Award in recognition of his work and contributions to football.

Scholars listened intently as Joe described the adversity and challenges he faced when growing up, which included being released from Manchester United's Academy at sixteen. Joe described his determination to successfully achieve his ambition of becoming a professional footballer. He then went on to describe and illustrate how, at just twenty-three years old, he was diagnosed with a rare form of blood cancer and the treatment he underwent. Joe discussed the personal, family and professional tolls he endured and his happiness at going into remission and his subsequent return to playing. Joe's return to football was to be curtailed again as his cancer returned for a second time. Joe retired from the game he loved at just twenty-nine years old as the intense treatment his body had endured meant he was no longer able to perform to the demands of the professional game.

A Morecambe Scholar said: "Joe's story was emotional and so realistic to what can happen in football and life. From the story, we realised that things could change very quickly which can leave huge issues to deal with. We discovered that being a high performer and footballer is not just about footballing ability but also our mental and psychological application.

Listening to Joe's diagnosis and recovery puts life in perspective and showed how he got himself back on track after his adversity. He also does not take things for granted and was grateful for his family. Joe conveyed a message of never giving up and being strong in adversity.

Joe also encouraged us to think about others and how they might be feeling and to offer support if needed. Joe encouraged us to practice goal setting and continually look to self-develop to support our future careers and lives."

Morecambe Football Club Head of Education, Gary Kelly, said: "Joe delivered a top-quality presentation which detailed how he dealt with setbacks in his football career, coped with severe adversity in life and how he has successfully risen above the challenges he has faced throughout his life so far. It was a great example for the scholars of overcoming adversity and how goal setting, focus and determination can be used in order to achieve goals and create lifelong memories."

Joe's story provided scholars with a perspective that should drive them on to achieve to the best of their abilities. Joe asked the scholars to recognise that life and their careers can change at any moment and not to take the opportunities they have for granted. Scholars are always encouraged to realise what a great opportunity they have with all aspects of their Apprenticeship programme and to make the most of it to forge their own successful careers and lives.

We constantly refer to a key aspect that Joe discussed in his presentation which supports players mental health and psychological application. "If you can look at yourself in the mirror and say you have given everything you have, it can provide you with a great inner satisfaction of having given your best no matter how things turn out."

The activity is part of the players Life Skills programme which supports scholars' careers and personal development. The activities can also provide players with a toolkit which can support their resilience and application to succeed, which they can draw on in times of adversity. The reality that a career in football can be short lived and that alternative career pathways need to be planned for are essential for players to understand.

ENGLAND WORLD CUP SQUAD FORMER LEARNERS



With the Qatar 2022 World Cup currently being played out, LFE take a look at the 10 former LFE apprentices who made Gareth Southgate's 26-man squad.

Aaron Ramsdale

Ramsdale was a product of the well renowned Sheffield United Academy and stayed with the Blades until 2017 before heading to the south coast to join Bournemouth. The Stoke born shot-stopper spent three-years with the Cherries, and then returned to Bramall Lane with Sheffield United back in the Premier League. However, Chris Wilder's side were relegated and Ramsdale joined Arsenal for a fee in the region of £30m. Since his switch to the Emirates, Ramsdale has established himself as one of the league's best goalkeepers, with his Gunners side sitting five points clear at the summit.

Harry Maguire

Another product of the Sheffield United Academy, Maguire has become an integral part of Gareth Southgate's plans. The Manchester United captain is the Three Lions' highest scoring defender in history and has always delivered when called upon by his country. He was named in the Euro 2020 Team of the Tournament.

John Stones

John Stones is another one of Southgate's key men having represented England on 59 occasions prior to the World Cup. The Barnsley Academy graduate has earned himself a stellar career since his days at Oakwell as a teenager, winning four Premier League titles with Manchester City since.

Luke Shaw

Luke Shaw came through the ranks at Southampton's highly thought of youth setup and made his debut for the Saints in the Championship, before gaining promotion to the Premier League. Then, at 18-years-old, he became the most expensive teenager in football history at the time when he signed for Manchester United for £27m. Shaw scored for England in their eventual loss on penalties to Italy in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.

Jordan Henderson

Jordan Henderson is representing England at his fifth major tournament since making his Three Lions debut back in 2011. The Liverpool captain progressed through the ranks at his boyhood club Sunderland before moving to Merseyside in the summer of 2011.

Ben White

Ben White has enjoyed a remarkable rise to prominence in recent years. Ben graduated through the Brighton youth system before various loan moves to the likes of Newport County and Leeds United. In the summer of 2021, White signed for Arsenal for a whopping £50m and has since gone onto become a superstar in North London.

Jude Bellingham

At just 19-years of age, Jude Bellingham has already become a world star and is now already appearing at his second major tournament for the Three Lions. Bellingham didn't even get the chance to finish his apprenticeship at Birmingham City before being snapped up by German giants Borussia Dortmund and has since established himself as one of Europe's brightest young talents.

Kalvin Phillips

Kalvin Phillips was included in Southgate's squad despite having only played 59 minutes of competitive action this season prior to the World Cup, such is his importance to the England team. Phillips enjoyed a fairy-tale rise through the Leeds United Academy, before going onto play a key role in Marcelo Bielsa's Leeds side who achieved promotion back to the Premier League in 2020 following a 16-year absence. Due to his standout performances for the Whites in recent seasons, Phillips was rewarded with a £45m move to Manchester City in the summer.

James Maddison

Leicester City's James Maddison earned a late but a very much deserved inclusion in Southgate's squad. The Coventry City Academy graduate has been in stellar form for the Foxes this season and has recorded 32 goal involvements since the start of the 2021/22 Premier League season.

Callum Wilson

Callum Wilson is another player who forced his way into Southgate's plans late on thanks to a fantastic start to the season under Eddie Howe at Newcastle United. Like Maddison, Wilson is a product of Coventry City's Academy and has forged a very respectable Premier League career since making his debut with Bournemouth back in 2015.

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE IN THE COMMUNITY

A group of Plymouth Argyle U18's have recently been going above and beyond to help out in their community by donating food to a local food bank and taking part in some litter picking at a local park.

The young Pilgrims visited Plymouth Foodbank in Stonehouse and donated goods funded by an internal pool, which was collected between the players.

Academy Manager Phil Stokes said: "Wednesday would normally be the players' college day, but there was another event on, so they decided to use the day extremely wisely, and practically, to do some good, and give back to the community.

"I'm very proud of them. It is a tremendous gesture.

"We are not just developing footballers at Home Park; we are developing good human beings. They are a group of well-rounded young men, who have shown an attitude we can all admire.

"Emma Potter has come in recently as our Head of Player Care, and we develop a life skills programme that teaches our young players around a number of different areas to help their development off the field.

"Central Park, around Home Park, is our home, and they have shown some pride in that. And they have shown generosity and a community spirit to want to help others.

A lot of focus – understandably – is on these players and their performances on the pitch, but what they do off it is just as important.

"I am just as proud of them for this as I would be for any of them making their first-team debut."

Under-18s Manager Darren Way added: "We had a meeting, and the players had a separate meeting, about how the culture is looking, and is there anything we can do to improve it?

"To my surprise, they went litter picking. They used their own money to buy food for the local community. That shows a huge amount of respect. What a good way to say thanks to the local community and to give back. Fair play!"



The Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM) is an award-winning charity with a social purpose to inform, educate, and safeguard young people against gaming and gambling harms.

As a new Life Skills Programme option for academies this season, YGAM has been busy visiting clubs across the EFL delivering a workshop called 'Gaming: A Healthy Balance'.

One of the clubs to recently welcome YGAM's support was Forest Green Rovers as part of an enrichment programme taking place over the October half-term. The week, focused on for the U9-U16 academy players, was shaped with a combination of life skills, alongside football training, which included sessions delivered by the club's apprentices, forming part of their UEFA C coaching qualification.

YGAM provided workshops to the foundation and youth development phases to explore the concept of gaming and how it can feature as a healthy balance in everyday life. Education Manager and expert Ryan Phillips from YGAM was on hand to take the young people through a learning journey which included the history of consoles, popular games and personal experiences of gaming.

Most importantly, the workshop covered the risks associated with gaming such as inappropriate content, age ratings and the psychological techniques used by technology companies to profit financially from users. There were heaps of discussion around time management, routines, beliefs and the emotions attached to the life of a gamer. It was clear that the aim of the workshop was to highlight both the potential positives and negatives of gaming, to help young people consider and arrive at what will be a healthy balance for them as an individual.

Simon Williams (Life Skills Manager, League Football Education): "There was more time spent with hands up in the air than with hands down, the children were desperate to ask questions and share their gaming experiences with everyone in the room. Forest Green have built an open culture and that as an example in itself shows that these young people want a space to talk about gaming and it was insightful to hear their thoughts on the good and bad. I always leave these workshops enthused and motivated to make sure more can be available for the younger academy players because you can feel the energy and impact of connecting them with experts on the things they are using in everyday life. It also shows that the club understands there is more going on for a young person than football, and that they are giving them wider opportunities to be safe and happy."

Chris Courtney (Head of Academy Player Care, Forest Green Rovers): "It was great to have Ryan from YGAM with our U12-U16s. The workshop was engaging and thought-provoking, with players sharing their knowledge and experiences regarding gaming and highlighting some potential risks. These workshops filled part of an action-packed day for our schoolboy players during their school holidays, which as a Category 3 Academy, we find is a great time to invite our players up to the stadium to take part in a variety of life skills and personal development workshops in addition to some time on the pitch. A huge thank you to Simon and the LFE for providing us with the opportunity to bring in a number of knowledgeable individuals that provide great variety to our programme".



LFE Apprentices Journey

1 Offer of an Apprenticeship – LFE welcomes you to the two-year Apprenticeship Programme.

2 Apprentice Support – LFE Regional Officers provide ongoing support to apprentices. They conduct one-to-one progress reviews at regular intervals throughout the apprenticeship programme and offer advice and guidance on a range of areas. The PFA also support apprentices with contractual assistance, accident insurance, player management and representation and post-18 education grants, as well as providing an online safety net.

3 Initial Assessment - An Initial Assessment is carried out with every player that starts the apprenticeship programme to establish academic ability. This is undertaken with parents/guardians, club staff, college staff and regional officers. Apprentices will be expected to provide their GCSE results to their regional officer. All apprentices will undertake an online bksb assessment as part of the Initial Assessment process.

4 Induction - An Induction will take place at the start of the apprenticeship programme. LFE provides each club with a set of standard induction units that includes Safeguarding, Apprenticeship Programme, Employment Rights & Responsibilities, Rules & Regulations, Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Drugs Awareness, Well-being.

5 Football Player Development - Apprentices will follow their club's specific coaching programme and philosophy over the next two years. Training is likely to include work on technical and tactical skills, physical conditioning and psychology. Apprentices will be evaluated on technical ability, teamwork, character and physical condition.

6 Education Programme - The educational programme has been specifically designed for elite athletes and is geared towards nationally recognised qualifications. The educational programme will consist of the following elements: Sporting Excellence Professional (Level 3), BTEC Sporting Excellence and Performance (Level 3), Functional Skills (Level 2), Certificate in Coaching (UEFA C). There are three BTEC qualification sizes: BTEC National Extended Certificate | 360 Guided Learning Hours (equivalent to 1 A-Level), BTEC National Diploma | 720 Guided Learning Hours (equivalent to 2 A-Levels), BTEC National Extended Diploma | 1080 Guided Learning Hours (equivalent to 3 A-Levels).

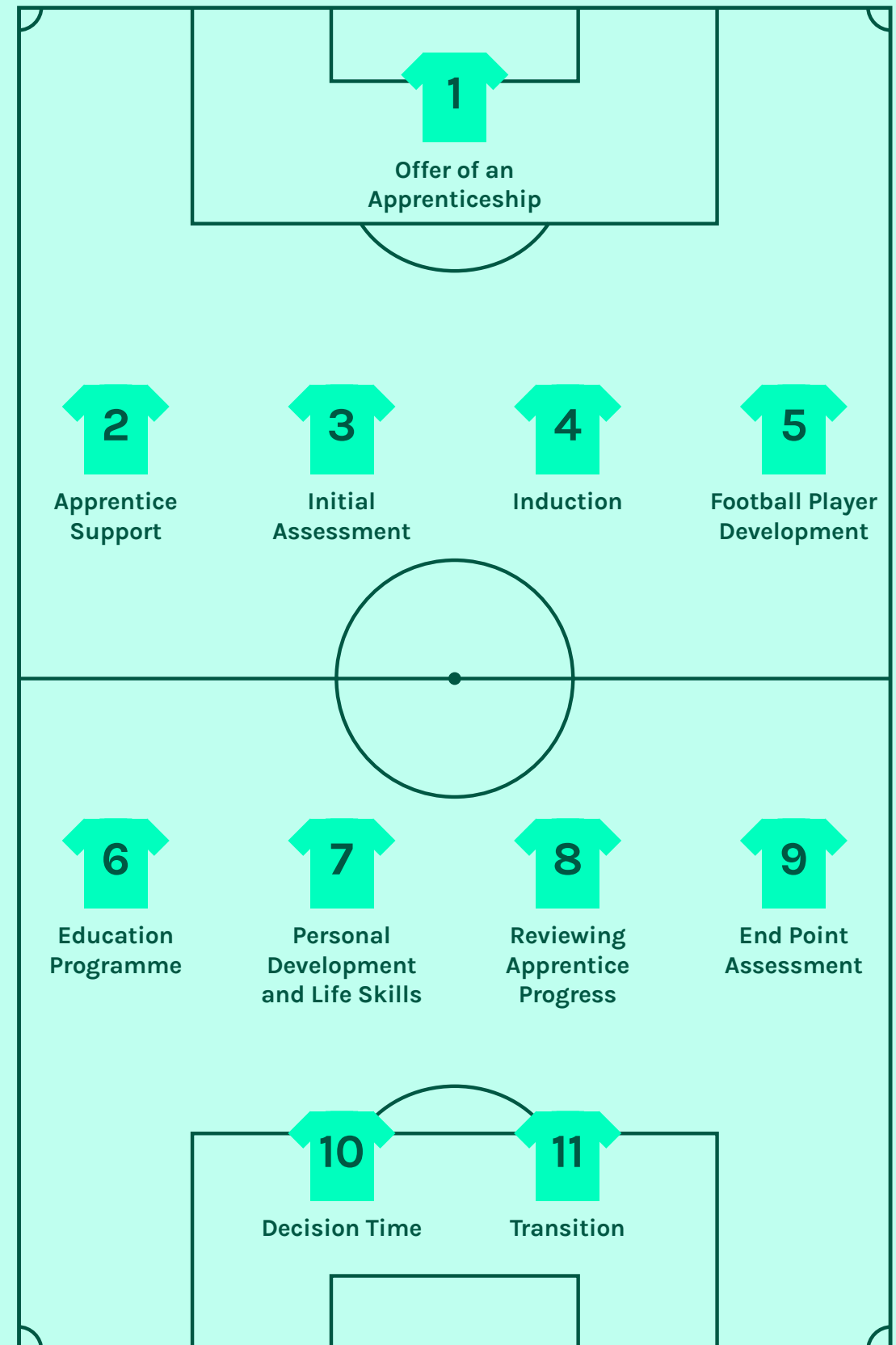
7 Personal Development and Life Skills - League Football Education provide information, advice and guidance for personal development. Through face-to-face delivery and resources, apprentices receive opportunities to support their performance, well-being, and transition. LFE's Personal Development Model provides a framework for club staff and apprentices to understand the supportive outcomes and process for wider development. While LFE's Life Skills programme aims to raise awareness and empower apprentices with knowledge and skills to deal with the demands of football and life.

8 Reviewing Apprentice Progress - Apprentice reviews are conducted with LFE Regional Officers and are recorded on an e-learning platform. This process is to ensure that all apprentices can fulfil their true potential. Reviews take place at regular intervals throughout the apprenticeship. LFE celebrates the academic, football and wider achievements of apprentices throughout the two-year programme. Nominations for 'The 11' and 'LFE Apprentice of the Year' are largely based on information gathered from the review process.

9 End Point Assessment - Towards the end of the Sporting Excellence Professional Apprenticeship Standard, apprentices will be required to complete an End Point Assessment which consists of a knowledge test, a practical observation and a professional interview supported by a portfolio of evidence.

10 Decision Time - In the second half of year two of the apprenticeship, clubs will reach a decision on which apprentices they wish to offer professional contracts to. Whatever the decision, it is crucial that apprentices continue with both their football and education to give them the best possible chance to succeed at the end of their apprenticeship.

11 Transition - League Football Education defines 'Transition' as the ability to deal with and move through life challenges, including career pathways in and out of football. LFE is fully committed to supporting that journey, offering transition information through a qualified Transition Officer, USA Scholarships, Erasmus, Assessment Trials, Higher Education and signposting other career opportunities.



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TONY ADAMS MBE

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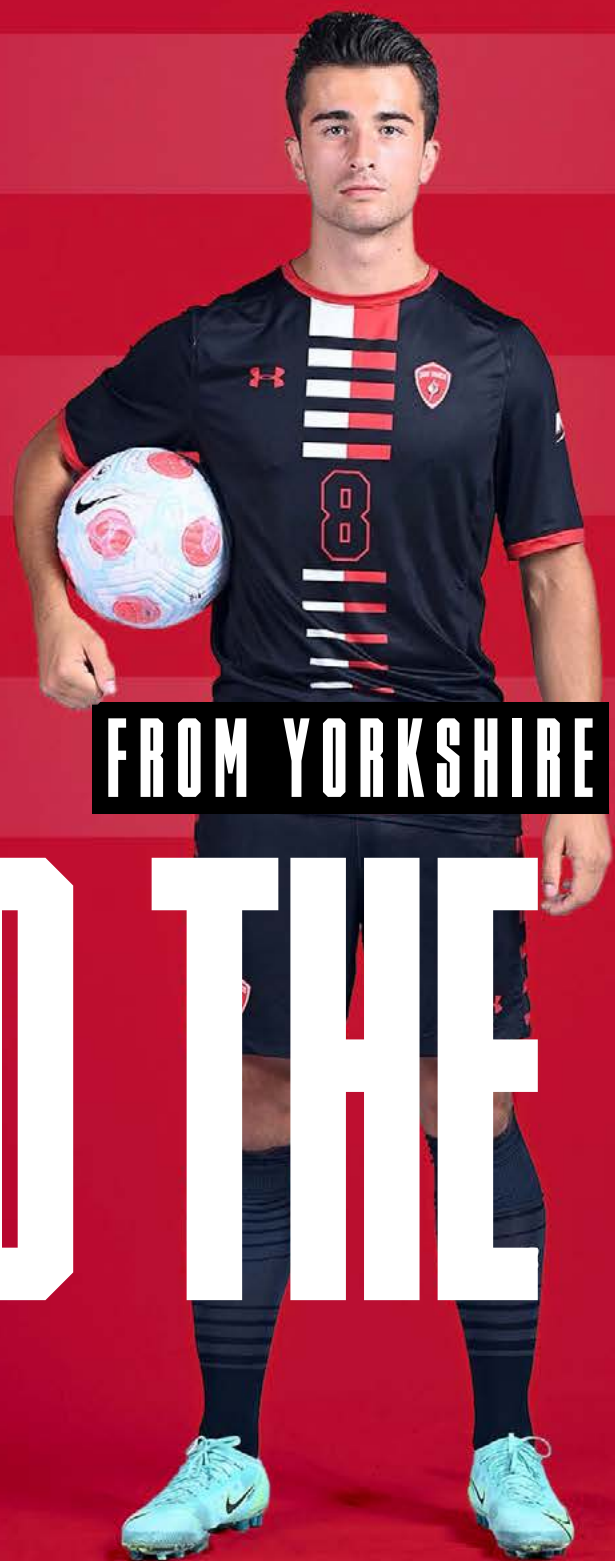
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FROM YORKSHIRE

TO THE US

At the end of the 2020/21 season, **Maximus Rigby** was released from Leeds United's Academy. Max had been at the Yorkshire club since the age of nine and was hoping to seal a professional deal at the conclusion of his scholarship. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and other circumstances, his dream was cut short.

For many young footballers, being let go can feel like the end of the world. Instead for Max, he saw it as an opportunity to explore a different avenue. After receiving offers from various EFL clubs, the 19-year-old was presented with the chance to head state side in the shape of a US Soccer Scholarship through FirstPoint USA and after weighing up his options, the midfielder made the decision to cross the Atlantic and open a new chapter.

LFE spoke to Max to find out how he was getting on over in the US.

WHERE ARE YOU STUDYING IN THE US, AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

"I'm in my sophomore year, I've just finished my second fall. I'm in Pennsylvania, studying at St. Francis university, it's a private catholic school about an hour east of Pittsburgh. I'm currently planning on majoring in Business Marketing, I'm pretty sure that's what I want to do. I love social media, business, marketing... it's a big part of what my family does. So, I'm sure I'll pursue that."

WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE US BEEN LIKE SO FAR?

"To summarize, my experience so far has been life changing. I know you hear all the stuff of people saying university are the best years of your life, but it genuinely has been such an eye opener. All my life, since I started at Leeds United at the age of nine, it's been tunnel vision. For those nine years, it was football, football, football. Especially when you get to the scholarship years and you're trying to get a professional deal, you're not thinking about anything else other than getting that contract and then I wasn't able to get one for whatever reason.

Then, when you go to the US, you have education, you have football (or soccer) and you have a social aspect and it's just like 'wow', there is so much more to life out there. Don't get me wrong it's been so difficult to get used to, new country, new people, the schedule is just mental. Last year I was ill like five times just because it was so hectic! But other than that, it's just been amazing. It's something that I would recommend. Since I got here, it's just been fantastic."

SOMETIMES THERE IS A RELUCTANCE FROM APPRENTICES TO LOOK INTO THE US ROUTE, MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO THINKING OF CHOOSING THE US ROUTE?

"I was the only lad in my year group to go (to the US) and the reaction I got from the other lads was: 'oh my, I couldn't do the schoolwork' and it is a lot of work, but for me, the way I was brought up, I've always looked at education as being a massive back up. You know how the football industry works, you could get an injury and one minute you could be in and one minute you could be out, so education, regardless of how much work there is, it's just part of life and you should invest in it because it could provide you with a job, it looks good on your CV. Not only that, as much as I had no idea what I was walking into, if you can get through the first tough semester and adapt to the change, it's great. The US schooling system is definitely different, but it favours the students. I know back home you study all year long to take one exam at the end of the year. But here, you have multiple exams, so it's little bits at different times and you're more likely to get a better grade. It's really not as bad as people make out if you put your mind to it."

WHAT'S THE UNIVERSITY CULTURE LIKE OVER THERE?

"It's really good. The American culture from what I've experienced is very welcoming, they ask a lot of questions. It's almost like I'm an alien really. Obviously how we do things back home is completely different, but it's also the same industry, we just do things differently but they're very accepting of it, very interested. It's perfect because you can make friends easily, it's the perfect chemistry building culture."

HAS THERE BEEN ANYTHING THAT HAS TOOK YOU BY SURPRISE SINCE MOVING?

"Well, all my life I've lived at home, so to make the change was tough, I'm surprised I even did it myself, but there was something inside of me that told me it was a good thing to do. It's like starting your life over again. I went into my dorm room and there was nothing there being an international, not even any bedsheets, no nothing! You don't know anyone, you don't know the campus, so I think that in itself was the hardest part. If you're not mentally strong enough to get through that first stage, then it would be difficult. I was thinking at first 'oh my goodness is this really what I want to do?', you sort of question yourself, it was really overwhelming but once you get past that stage, everything opens up and it's like 'wow', the benefits completely override leaving home."

YOU'VE JUST COMPLETED YOUR ROOKIE YEAR AND YOU MADE THE NORTHEAST CONFERENCE ROOKIE TEAM OF THE YEAR. SO, FROM A FOOTBALL PERSPECTIVE YOU'VE SETTLED IN QUICKLY, HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE US COLLEGE FOOTBALL WITH FOOTBALL IN THE UK ACADEMY SYSTEM?

"It's very different, in ways that are difficult to describe. There is a lot of good players out here for sure. In the NEC (Northeast Conference) right now, there are so many international guys with high-level backgrounds, really good level players. But one thing that's different is the style. Football is competitive everywhere, but, in the conference, we have eight games and it's super competitive and that really effects the style. One goal is almost it, it's really down to the neck. It's tough, it takes time to get used to, certainly getting into a new team."

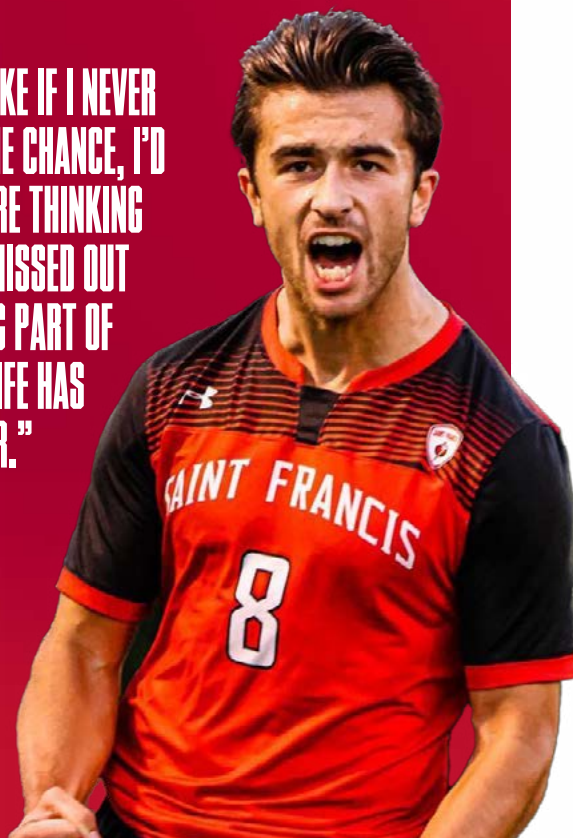
HOW NICE WAS IT TO GET INTO THE ROOKIE TEAM OF THE YEAR?

"It was cool. It was a tough season, but I played all the games, the coaches were really nice and put a lot of belief in me. I got some good statistics, so to get that on top of another year of education was fantastic."

FIRST POINT USA ARE LFE'S RECOMMENDED US CONSULTANCY AGENCY, HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS WITH THEM?

"Like you say, First Point are affiliated with LFE, therefore were working with Leeds at the time, so Leeds put me in contact with First Point. Firstly, they put me through a few interviews, asked me what my preferences were, position and get a highlight reel together and they do the initial step all for you. They send the reel out to teams and their dashboard is brilliant. You get to see who is viewing you, if you're on their watchlist, it's fantastic how they do it. They're basically the middleman and it's so helpful having someone there to guide you. Even now they're still in touch with me and helped me get involved with the summer league, so if you need anything they're always there."

"I FEEL LIKE IF I NEVER TOOK THE CHANCE, I'D SIT THERE THINKING THAT I MISSED OUT ON A BIG PART OF WHAT LIFE HAS TO OFFER."



YOU MENTIONED THE SUMMER LEAGUE, HOW WAS THAT?

"That was interesting. The summer league is completely different, away from university. I stayed over in Iowa during the summer and played for a top team out there. Well, I didn't actually play any games, but it was a great experience. There was a couple of English lads in the team, one who was also at Leeds. It was a real eye opener, and it was good to do that in my freshman year because you get to understand how the summer league works, meet different players and find out their journeys, it's all so interesting."

IS THE SUMMER LEAGUE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO CONTINUE DOING?

"Yes, definitely. My dad made a good point. He said as I've only got a few years out here, I've got to drip it out for everything it has to offer, so 100%."

WHAT ARE YOUR ULTIMATE ASPIRATIONS?

"As much as I want long-term goals, I like to take every day as it comes, one step at a time. This year I had an aim to score more goals than I did last year, which I couldn't do, so I'll put a real emphasis on that one especially as I'm heading into my junior senior year. It's crazy to think how different I will feel from freshman to senior year. Already I feel so much more confident with the system, the football, so I'll really try and achieve a lot on the pitch over the next two years. Academically, I always try to get the best grades possible. Whatever the subject is, I just aim to do my best."

IT DIDN'T END HOW YOU'D HAVE WANTED IT TO AT LEEDS UNITED, BUT HOW DID THAT EXPERIENCE HELP PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW?

"I was at Leeds for eight or nine years, so when you're at a place for so long, it really does mould you into who you are. I think a lot of my discipline and organisation comes from my time there. Everyday you've got to be on time, you've got to be professional, you don't give up, that sort of mentality. Here, I've had to get used to a new environment, new teachers, new coaches, everything is so dynamic. So, I think the disciplinary aspect of it all (at Leeds) really helped me. The academy at Leeds, it's definitely been a big part of my life, for sure."



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT GOING TO THE US?

"I would just say ride the first few weeks basically. I'll be honest, they're rough, but just give it a try. I feel like if I never took the chance, I'd sit there thinking that I missed out on a big part of what life has to offer. I feel like in England especially, there is such a rush to become a professional footballer but as you can see there are so many examples of guys who are over 25, 26 still making it to the World Cup, so I think coming to the US, it provides education, gives you a social life which I never had being an academy player and you still get to play football at an extremely high level. So, if you're unsure, try it anyway. You can leave whenever you want really, so you would be stupid not to try it."

LIFE SKILLS

KNIFE CRIME WORKSHOP

Back in October, Rochdale AFC's academy players had the opportunity to experience a powerful life skills workshop on the prevention of knife crime.

Head of Academy Safeguarding Roy Thickett, who is a knife crime specialist for Greater Manchester Police, delivered the session to the club's u9-u18 academy players along with Kelly Brown, mother of knife crime victim Rhamero West.

Rhamero was just 16 when he tragically fell victim to knife crime in Manchester last September. His mother Kelly, has since been heavily involved in campaigning for knife crime prevention, working together with charities and the police force to speak out and warn young people about the dangers of carrying a knife.

Jack Pritchard, Head of Academy Education at Rochdale AFC, was present at the workshop and told LFE how "the silence in the room explained just how much of an impact Kelly's story had on the youth team.

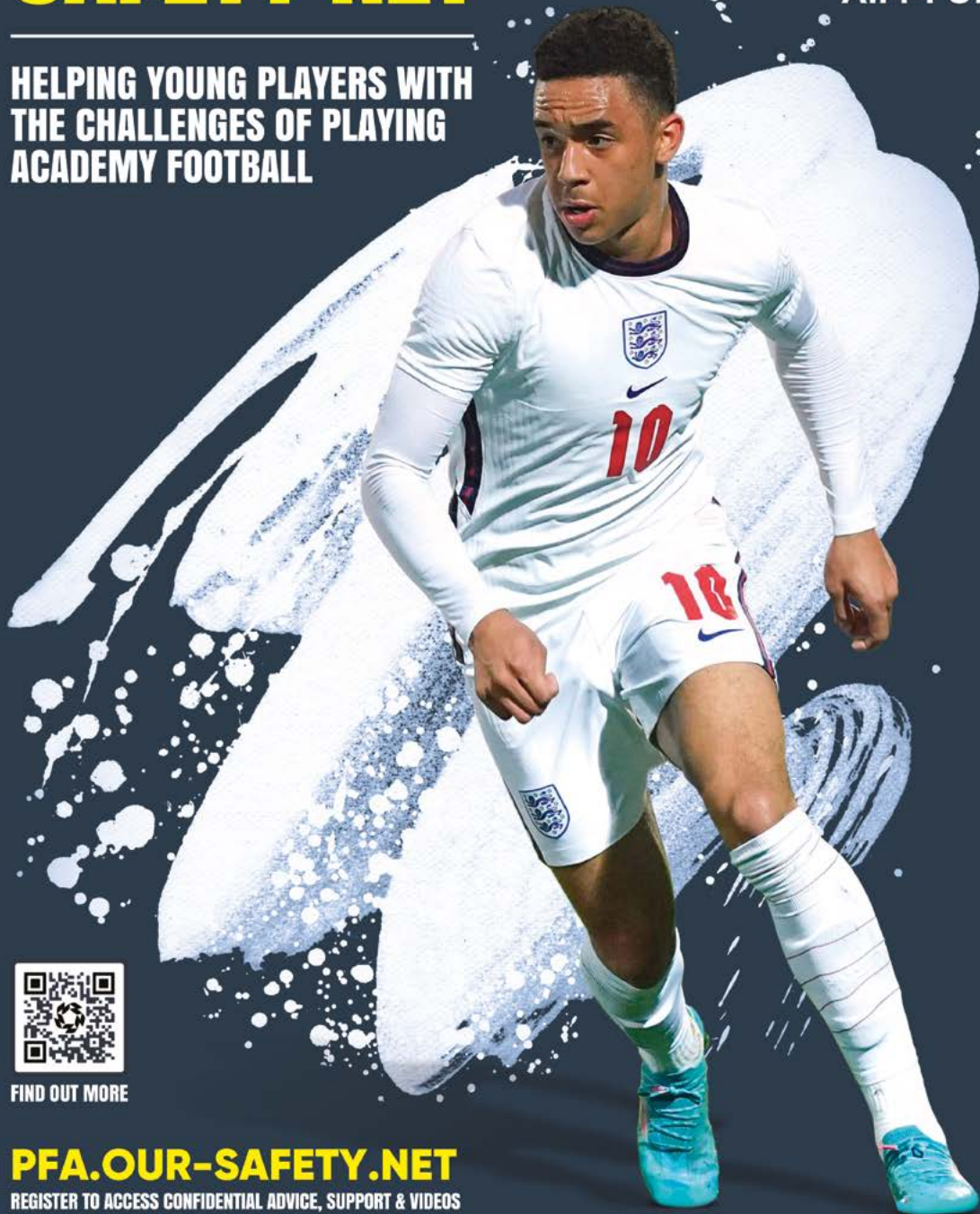
"This unique opportunity has enabled us at Rochdale Football Club to deliver a crucial life skills event to the most vulnerable audience of knife crime in Greater Manchester."

One academy player at Rochdale said: "It was an interesting and powerful message which highlighted the problems and consequences of knife crime. It was good to hear from Kelly and her personal experience of knife crime which shows how real it is. It makes me feel like I am a role model for my community to make a positive change."

Another added: "It was a hard-hitting workshop that made me realise how real this problem is, especially in our area, and the massive impact knife crime is and continues to have throughout the community."

THE PFA SAFETY NET

HELPING YOUNG PLAYERS WITH THE CHALLENGES OF PLAYING ACADEMY FOOTBALL



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Northampton Town Academy @NTFC_Academy
The hard work never stops for our U18s! Tonight, the 1st years, as well as @ntfc Sport Scientist Ash Adebayo and Analyst Liam Jefferson, are at Academy training, coaching the U13/14s as part of their UEFA C Licence course run through the @PFA great work guys! #ntfc @LFEonline

League Football Education @LFEonline
Forest Green Rovers' U9-U16 Academy players were visited by YGAM over the half-term, with the youngsters taking part in workshops that covered the risks associated with gaming and how it can feature as a healthy balance in everyday life.

Read more <https://www.lfe.org.uk/news/forest-green-youngsters-enjoy-engaging-ygam-workshop/>

Michelle Evans @missmiche_evans
Enjoyed meeting the @NewportCounty Academy lads & their Head of Education @torquay3jay today to talk all things @firstpointusa scholarships 🇬🇧🏆 #opportunities #pathway @LFEonline

Switch the Play Foundation @Switch_the_Play
We really enjoyed our session at @officialstfc last night. Thanks to the players for their fantastic efforts we hope you learnt something from exploring building your legacy.

Thank you @lfeonline for the support with these sessions.

KICK
IT
OUT