



Touchline

PLUS

Javon Marquis

Billy Mitchell

Turing Trips

Charlie Miller



KIAN BEST

Preston's latest Academy graduate sits down with LFE to discuss his breakthrough campaign with the Lilywhites

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



In 2024 we celebrate our 20th anniversary - a fantastic opportunity to reflect on how our vision of empowering young people to reach their full potential has been realised during that time, and what the future holds for so many more of our apprentices and alumni.

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).

LFE ASSESSMENT TRIALS 2024

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

Details for the 2024 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/



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 FROM AUGUST ONWARDS...



FLETCHER HUBBARD AUGUST WINNER

Fletcher Hubbard of Stevenage was the winner of LFE's August competition. Hubbard's fantastic long-range strike versus Oxford United claimed a massive 778 votes (55%).



JOHN DUNLOP SEPTEMBER WINNER

Rochdale's John Dunlop picked up September's award for his brilliant long-range effort versus Morecambe, a goal that accumulated 1451 votes (38%).



KOBY MOTTOH NOVEMBER WINNER

Koby Mottoh of Portsmouth won LFE's November award after his pinpoint curled strike versus Plymouth Argyle. Koby's goal picked up 570 votes (47%).

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ACADEMY LEAGUES ROUND-UP



EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE NORTH EAST DIVISION

In the North East Youth Alliance, it's **Burton Albion** who are leading the way at the moment following a really positive start to the season. The young Brewers have recorded an impressive eight wins from their opening nine matches, with Keith Gilroy's sides' only loss coming in a 1-0 home defeat to **Mansfield Town** back in October.

Hartlepool United are in second place having enjoyed a much-improved season so far compared to last. Ian McGuckin's side finished second bottom in the 2022/23 campaign, picking up just 13 points across all of their 23 matches. The Pool U18s have already surpassed that point tally this season after 11 matches.

Towards the other end of the table North East Youth Alliance new boys **Notts County** have experienced a difficult start to the season, having picked up just four points from their opening nine games. However, three of those points came in the latest round of fixtures as they recorded an emphatic 5-1-win vs **Doncaster Rovers**. The Magpies will be hoping that result could prove to be a turning point in their season.

EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE NORTH WEST DIVISION

As the new year begins, it's **Preston North End** who are leading the way in the North West Youth Alliance with 33 points from 14 games, sitting two points ahead of second placed **Accrington Stanley**. The young Reds, however, have a game in hand on the Lilywhites. The top two will meet on the 17th of February in a fixture that will no doubt play a huge part in this season's title race.

It's not just a two-horse race though, with **Wrexham** and **Morecambe** sat close behind in third and fourth place respectively. Defending champions **Blackpool** have endured an indifferent start to the campaign, picking up just 14 points from their first ten matches. At the tail end of the division, it's also very tight, with just eight points separating **Carlisle** in 9th position and **Walsall** at the foot of the table.



EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE SOUTH EAST DIVISION

Luton Town won the South East Youth Alliance at a canter last season, and they've made an impressive start once again. The Hatters sit at the summit of the table having taken 32 points from their first 14 games. Alan McCormack's sides' defensive displays were well coveted last season, and their looking very solid in that department once again this year, conceding just eleven goals so far.

Breathing down their necks in second are **Stevenage** who sit six points behind last season's runaway champions. The Boro also have a game in hand on Luton. The two sides met just before the Christmas break, with Luton coming away with a narrow 2-1 victory at Stevenage's place. It's not just Luton and Stevenage gunning for Youth Alliance glory this season however, with both **Sutton United** and **AFC Wimbledon** nine and 11 points behind respectively, but both having played two games fewer.

At the other end of the division, it's also incredibly tight, with just six points between **Leyton Orient** in mid-table and **MK Dons** in last place.

EFL YOUTH ALLIANCE SOUTH WEST DIVISION

Last season's winners **Plymouth Argyle** are once again looking like the team to beat in the South West Youth Alliance. Argyle's main competition from the 2022/23 campaign in **AFC Bournemouth** have now left the division and moved into the PDL South, which appears to have given Plymouth even more confidence this time around. The Devon based side are top of the league again this year, sitting 11 points above second placed **Portsmouth** with a game in hand. **Swindon Town**, however, are enjoying a solid campaign so far and could be a surprise package when it comes to challenging for the title. Sean Wood's team are sitting well placed in fourth after accumulating 20 points from just 10 games, meaning they have three games in hand on league leaders Plymouth. The young Robins also boast the best defensive record this season, conceding just 13 goals so far.

At the rear end of the table, **Newport County** are enduring somewhat of a baffling campaign so far. The south Wales side have been rather impressive in attack, scoring 24 goals in 12 games, however, their defensive displays haven't quite been able to match that of their attackers, which has left them bottom of the division.



ACADEMY LEAGUES ROUND-UP



U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE NORTH

It's been a fantastic season so far for **Birmingham City** and a complete contrast from last year. Martin Olorenshaw's side finished second from bottom at the end of the 2022/23 campaign, however this season, they're flying high at the top of the table. The young Blues are five points clear of defending champions **Barnsley** in second and eight points clear of **Crewe** in third.

The aforementioned Barnsley are still looking strong and are well placed to mount a serious title assault in the second half of the campaign. The Tykes netted an incredible 78 goals in 27 games during the 2022/23 season, 30 more than the second highest scorers **Peterborough United**. Their potent attacking line has proved handy again this time around, leading the division's scoring charts once again.

Peterborough, however, have struggled to replicate the same kind of form that earned them a top three finish last season. The Posh have recorded just four points from their opening 14 games and will be looking for a much brighter start to 2024.

U18 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE SOUTH

Bristol City currently lead the way in the south division, having won 10 of their 14 games this season. The key to their success has been their super strong defensive unit, with the Robins conceding just 15 goals so far this season. They sit three points clear of second placed **Watford** who have also enjoyed a fruitful start to the campaign. The Hertfordshire side boast the best attacking numbers in the league, finding the net 38 times in 14 games.

It's been a real upturn in fortunes for Tom Cleverley's Hornets side after they finished the 2022/23 campaign bottom of the table. Both **Cardiff City** and **Charlton Athletic** can't be overlooked either. The Blue Birds are in third and nine points off the pace yet have three games in hand on the league leaders Bristol. As for Charlton, they trail Bristol by ten points but also have the luxury of three games in hand.

Throughout the rest of the table, it's looking very tight, with just five points the gap between **AFC Bournemouth** in fifth and **QPR** in eighth.



U18 PREMIER LEAGUE NORTH

It's **Manchester United** who are running away from the rest of the pack in the Premier League North division this season. Adam Lawrence was appointed as United's U18s boss in July 2023 and has since really taken them to new heights. The Red Devils have won all of their 11 matches so far this season and boast the best attacking (37 goals scored) and defensive (seven goals conceded) records in the league this season.

Last season's champions and city rivals **Manchester City** haven't quite got up to speed this time around and find themselves 11 points behind United in third, albeit with a game in hand. In and around the middle of the division, it's very tight, with just five points separating **Derby County** in fourth and **Nottingham Forest** in eighth.

At the bottom end of the table, **Everton** have struggled to make ground this year after finishing mid-table last season. The young Toffees find themselves bottom of the league having won just one of their ten games so far.

U18 PREMIER LEAGUE SOUTH

In the Premier League South division, it's **Tottenham Hotspur** who are leading the way after the turn of the year. Stuart Lewis's side have actually struggled defensively this season, conceding 27 goals in just 12 games, however, it's their potency in front of goal that has seen them fire up to the top of the table, finding the net on 38 occasions (most in the league).

In second and just two points behind with a game in hand it's last season's runaway champions, **West Ham United**. The young Hammers finished 18 points clear of second placed **Crystal Palace** at the end of the 2022/23 campaign and with their solid defensive unit coming to the fore again and their game in hand, there's no reason to believe Kevin Keen's side won't mount another very strong challenge for the title again. In third and well in the mix are **Chelsea**. The west London outfit have the second-best defensive record in the league and have found the net on just two fewer occasions than the leaders Tottenham (38). They sit just five points off the top, but with two games in hand.

At the foot of the table lie **Norwich City**, having picked up just three points from their opening ten matches. Manager Greg Crane will be hoping the new year breeds a positive upturn in results.



JAVON MARQUIS



OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Sutton United apprentice Javon Marquis has already had to overcome obstacles during his short career so far. Being born with dyslexia and a speech impediment made certain aspects of his childhood and daily life more challenging than usual.

“When I was young, I never really knew anything about my condition but at school I always found it difficult in lessons and used to feel overwhelmed because I wouldn’t be able to understand things when everyone else around me would.” Javon told LFE, “I would feel scared because of my stammer and be wary of what people would say about me or if they’d laugh at me. I had one experience when I was younger when I was reading out to the class, and I couldn’t say a certain word and there were giggles coming from behind me. It made me nervous.”

Despite the difficulties he faced in certain social situations and at school, football was always Javon’s escapism. “Football was almost like an escape. I didn’t need to think about it, I’d just have fun. As I got older, I learnt to deal with my condition better and football really helped me do that. Off the field I was and still am quiet, but on the field I felt confident. Sport is a great way to almost relax. For someone like me with communication problems,

being around people every day makes you feel a lot more confident and comfortable. Football makes me feel stress-free and lets me just enjoy myself.”

After spending a few years at Millwall’s Academy, Javon left to sign a scholarship at Sutton United where he is now in his second year of his apprenticeship. “I signed for Sutton when I was 16. My first year was quite up and down but this year I feel more confident, and I feel like I bring a lot to the team. Even though I don’t say much off the field, I feel like I help people. For example, the younger kids coming up into their first year of the apprenticeship, I try and make them feel comfortable.”

Even though he’s only been with the south London club for a little under 18 months, the all action full-back credits the staff at Sutton for their role in his development both as a footballer and as a person. “The best thing about the people here (Sutton United) is that they don’t treat me any differently. Just because I have a stammer, they don’t feel the need to treat me in a different way to anyone else, but if there is something I don’t understand or I’m struggling with, they help me a lot.

“My leadership and communication has massively improved since I began my apprenticeship here. Like I said before I was really shy and I never wanted to speak out, but with the work that we do in class and the lessons and workshops that are put on for us, I really feel like I can be a leader and help others around me. These skills transfer onto the pitch as well because now I always want to try and help and motivate my teammates. My communication skills have improved massively too, and I take that out onto the pitch as well. ▶

“FOOTBALL WAS ALMOST LIKE AN ESCAPE. I DIDN’T NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT, I’D JUST HAVE FUN. AS I GOT OLDER, I LEARNT TO DEAL WITH MY CONDITION BETTER AND FOOTBALL REALLY HELPED ME DO THAT.”

“In football, especially on the pitch, everyone needs different treatment depending on their personality. Some people will need more of an arm round their shoulder, whereas others need yelling at sometimes to motivate them. It’s the same in the classroom. You need to understand how to approach different people and what will help make them focus. They’re definitely the two most valuable life skills I have improved during my time as an apprentice. I owe a lot to Sutton because they really help me. Compared to when I joined at 16, I feel so much more confident thanks to them. They’ve made me feel like I can be the leader in the team that I know I can be.”

Javon also praised the contribution that LFE have made towards his personal development and believes the transferrable skills that can be learnt in life skills workshops are vitally important. “They’re really important (LFE workshops) because I’ve learnt a lot about stuff that I didn’t know or have any idea about before. Football is a simple sport, but there’s so much that goes on off the pitch that contributes. The stuff we learn off the pitch, we try to implement into our daily lives. For example, learning about nutrition. Personally, when I started here, I wasn’t eating the best foods, the right foods but since learning about nutrition I know what I should be eating, what will help me improve my energy and performance. Since I’ve made changes, I’ve definitely noticed a difference on the pitch.”

Away from the Academy environment, Javon admits his parents play a huge role and detailed the biggest difference between the two of them. “My mum and dad are my biggest influences. It’s a case of good cop and bad cop. My dad can be hard on me, but I need that toughness at times as it keeps my levels and standards high, so when I’ve played a bad game, he will definitely let me know I’ve played a bad game! Whereas with my mum, if I’ve played badly, she will just encourage me and tell me not to stress.”

On the pitch, the 18-year-old hailed Watford’s Ken Sema as an inspiration of his. The Swedish winger also suffers from a stammer and was praised for an interview he did post-match back in February of last year and has since expressed his desire to act as a role model for those suffering from similar conditions. “I saw the interview (Ken Sema) and I thought he was very brave. For him to go out on a big channel for a big league like the Championship to express how he feels is really inspiring.



“COMPARED TO WHEN I JOINED AT 16, I FEEL SO MUCH MORE CONFIDENT THANKS TO THEM (SUTTON UNITED). THEY’VE MADE ME FEEL LIKE I CAN BE THE LEADER IN THE TEAM THAT I KNOW I CAN BE.”

“It makes you think if he can do it then I’m confident I can as well and others in a similar position. We shouldn’t be scared. The praise he received online and from the football community was nice to see and really filled me with confidence. Football is a family.”

In terms of who he looks up to as a right-back, Javon pin-pointed England and Manchester City defender Kyle Walker. “I love Walker. He’s who I look up to in my position. He’s such a rounded, overall player. Him and Reece James, because they can attack but they’re great defence, in one v ones, aerially, everything. I try to base my game off theirs because to be a full back in the modern era, you need to be good at everything.”

When discussing Sutton’s U18s relatively successful start to the campaign, Javon went on to highlight his own personal goals he is working towards.

“We’re doing well. We’re in the semi-finals of the cup, we’re fourth in the league and the whole team is performing well. My personal goals are to stay injury free and hopefully earn a pro contract at the end of my apprenticeship. Then if all goes to plan, maybe get loaned out somewhere to gain some experience of first team football. It’s really important to get that taste of senior football I think because the transition is a big one, especially physically, so the earlier you do it the more comfortable you’ll be if you get that chance at first team level. You won’t feel out of place, and you’ll know the importance of winning games, whereas with youth football it’s more about development and improving. I want to play at the highest level possible and for my country in the long term, but short time I just want to make sure I play in the football league. I just want to make sure I have a good career I can be proud of.” ■

Watford’s Ken Sema



DEBUTANTS

A selection of talented young apprentices who have made their first team debuts since the beginning of the 2023/24 campaign.

CHAMPIONSHIP

Romelle Donovan

Birmingham City

Local lad and first year apprentice Romelle Donovan was awarded his senior debut for the Blues by Wayne Rooney in their 0-2 home defeat to Hull City back in October, coming on for Oliver Burke in the 83rd minute.



Ephraim Yeboah, Joseph James and Jamie Knight-Lebel

Bristol City

The Robins are renowned for giving youth a chance and it's been no different so far this season. Ephraim Yeboah made his first team bow during August's Carabao Cup clash with Oxford United, with Jamie Knight-Lebel and Joseph James both making their senior bows in October versus Cardiff City and Ipswich Town respectively.



Kai Andrews

Coventry City

17-year-old Wales international Andrews was handed his first minutes in sky blue during Coventry's 3-0 thrashing of Middlesbrough back in August.



Law McCabe

Middlesbrough

Highly thought of attacking midfielder Law McCabe was handed his professional debut by Boro boss Michael Carrick during the closing stages of their 4-0 home win over Preston North End in November.



Souleymane Sidibe

Stoke City

The sixteen-year-old central midfielder, who also represents England at U17 level, was introduced in stoppage time of the Potters' opening day 4-1 win against Rotherham. Since his debut, Sidibe has appeared for Alex Neil's side on a further two occasions.



Rayan Kolli

QPR

First-year pro Rayan Kolli received his first taste of professional action for QPR during the Rs Carabao Cup defeat to Norwich back in August. Kolli then made his Championship debut three days later and is now a regular for Marti Cifuentes' side.

Glenn McConnell

Cambridge United
McConnell, who represents Ireland at youth level, earned his maiden senior outing for Cambridge in their second EFL Trophy group game away at rivals Peterborough United, coming on in the 65th minute.

**Baylee Dipepa and Liam Brazier**
Port Vale

Both Dipepa and Brazier were introduced during the second half of the Valiants 1-0 EFL Trophy group stage win against Crewe Alexandra at Vale Park.

**Albert Wood, Keon Lewis-Burgess, Charlie Stirland, Josh Clark-Anderson and Chase Medwynter**
MK Dons

Five apprentices made their professional debuts during MK Dons' EFL Trophy win over Northampton Town in November. Albert Wood, Keon Lewis-Burgess, Charlie Stirland, Josh Clark-Anderson, and Chase Medwynter all featured in the 3-2 win in which the Dons' squad was made up almost entirely of current and former apprentices.

**Liam Humbles**
Salford City

Midfielder Liam Humbles made his start to life in professional football in Salford's EFL Trophy defeat at Bolton in September, replacing Luke Bolton for the final half an hour at the Toughsheet Community Arena.

Thomas King
Cheltenham Town

Young England U18s striker and first year apprentice Thomas King was rewarded with his first professional appearance in the closing stages of matchday 1 of the 2023/24 League One season in the Robins' clash with Shrewsbury Town.

**Harvey Watts**
Shrewsbury Town

Midfielder Harvey Watts made his first Shrewsbury Town appearance during their Carabao Cup defeat at Elland Road in August, entering the pitch with 18 minutes remaining.

**Miles Obodo and Fletcher Hubbard**

Swindon Town

Young striker and first year apprentice Miles Obodo made his senior bow for Swindon Town in September's 2-2 draw with Arsenal U21s in the opening group game of the EFL Trophy. He's since gone onto make a further three appearances for the first team. Second year scholar and August's LFE GOTM winner Fletcher Hubbard's first showing came the following month in an EFL Trophy fixture at Reading.

**Jacob Scott, Neo Dobson and Tom Cartwright**
Northampton Town

The Cobblers have a rich history of developing young talent and giving them a chance, with this season being no different. Jacob Scott, who is an inclusion in the latest LFE 'The 11', was handed his senior debut during Northampton's EFL Trophy clash with Oxford United in September. Neo Dobson made his debut later on in the month versus Chelsea U21s in the same competition, whilst Tom Cartwright made his first appearance in November against MK Dons, again in the EFL Trophy.

**Olly Sully**

Forest Green Rovers

Striker Olly Sully got his first taste of senior football in Forest Green's 3-0 EFL Trophy victory versus Shrewsbury Town in September, coming on for the final 20 minutes. Sully has since gone onto score his first goal in professional football during the Gloucestershire side's FA Cup 1st round draw at Scarborough, netting the equaliser in the 94th minute.

**McKeal Abdullah**

Mansfield Town

Mansfield striker McKeal Abdullah made his first professional appearance for the Stags during their 2-0 Carabao Cup win over Grimsby Town, playing out the final few minutes. Abdullah has made three more appearances since his debut.



THE 11

League Football Education has recognised eleven Under-18s footballers for their outstanding efforts on and off the pitch in the latest edition of 'The 11'. The accolade acknowledges performance on the pitch and in the classroom, as well as assessing other factors, including involvement in community or charity-based initiatives. 'The 11' for November 2023 is as follows:



JOE JOHNSON
LUTON TOWN

Joe Johnson has enjoyed a remarkable 2023 in which he has gone from being a first year playing for the Under-18s in the EFL Youth Alliance to being a regular on the bench for Luton's first team in the Premier League and getting called up by England's Under-18s. An attacking left-back from Totteridge in north London, Joe has excelled on the pitch with exciting displays for the U18s and U21s, leading to a first team call-up at the end of last season as Luton snatched the most unlikely of promotions. His improvement over the summer was such that Rob Edwards put him straight into his first team squad at only 17. Joe has also coped off the pitch where he is heading for the highest grades in his BTEC and is also doing well in A level Maths, while becoming a "hugely impressive and mature young man" according to his LFE Regional Officer, Gavin Willacy.



KEENAN GOUGH
CHARLTON ATHLETIC

Keenan Gough has been described as an "optimistic and well-mannered individual, who always comes in with a smile and a good attitude." He has completed all of his education tasks to the distinction standard, including two extended units, where he has shown the ability and discipline to work independently. He has completed his UEFA C Coaching Certificate, working with young Charlton academy players, putting on sessions six consecutive weeks in a row. He has also refereed three academy games as part of his referee course. In working with Charlton's U9-14 players across both disciplines, he is becoming a real role model for the young players. He has performed consistently well, being part of the U21 squad since the start of the season. He has played in all the U21 fixtures and developed in all areas of his game, showing leadership qualities too. "He is the true example of an aspiring young professional" said Gavin Willacy, Keenan's LFE Regional Officer.



MAKISE EVANS
LUTON TOWN

Makise Evans has thrived in 2023, having enjoyed extremely successful periods on and off the pitch. The 17-year-old striker from Hemel Hempstead ended last season by becoming Stevenage FC's youngest ever EFL appearance maker as he earned minutes in their promotion-winning campaign. While League One appearances have been harder to come by, Evans has trained regularly with the first team and gained more senior experiences with loan spells in non-League. Off the field, Makise has shown great maturity as a leading figure in the apprentice group, has coped with living away from home, and has stretched himself academically where he is on course to get the highest possible grades in his BTEC diploma.



RAEKWON NELSON
BRISTOL CITY

Raekwan Nelson has been described as a "polite, engaging, and positive individual" who has made excellent progress on his apprenticeship, especially since the start of his second year. His hard work on the pitch has resulted in him being offered a professional contract and has seen him being involved in first team match day squads in recent weeks. Having already completed functional skills in his first year, Raekwan continues to demonstrate role model behaviours and manage his time effectively to ensure he remains on track in his education in order to achieve his target grade despite the additional demands he faces. His attitude and progress has been rewarded recently by receiving Bristol City's Scholar of the Month Award for both September and October.



LENNY HOLDEN
LEYTON ORIENT

Leyton Orient's Lenny Holden has been described as an "exceptional apprentice." Off the pitch, Lenny is consistent in his work and regularly achieves distinctions in his BTEC Diploma. He's also working towards an A grade in his Maths A Level. On the pitch, the young goalkeeper showed immense resilience and mental strength during his first year when injuries kept him out of the fold. Fortunately, now, he's back playing every game and is well on his way to full fitness. Lenny's LFE Regional Officer, Simon Dwight said: "As an individual, Lenny is a highly skilled communicator. He leads the group he is in and considers his responses in conversations and workshops. I fully endorse his inclusion in the 11."

THE 11 CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



HARRISON CHAMBERLAIN COLCHESTER UNITED

Despite having only joined the LFE Apprenticeship Programme in the autumn of last year, Colchester goalkeeper Harrison Chamberlain has made rapid progress both on and off the pitch. Harrison missed the first couple of months of his first year but that hasn't deterred his development at all, swiftly catching up on his classroom work, whilst making a real impression on the grass. The young shot stopper has trained with the first team and has also made appearances for the U23s. Harrison has also been working on attaining a goalkeeping coaching qualification after attending a course ran by former LFE apprentice, Yilmaz Aksoy. On top of that, the 17-year-old has gained outstanding grades in his BTEC Diploma so far and is also progressing well with his extra-curricular Psychology A Level. He is said to have "impressed all staff with his maturity, attitude and determination, plus his ability to cope with major changes in his life going from sixth form in Kent to digs in Colchester."



LUCAS DAWSON HULL CITY

Hull City's Lucas Dawson has made a fantastic start to life as an apprentice, shining on and off the pitch. Lucas signed his scholarship originally as a midfielder back in July, however due to the way Hull's U18s play, he has now converted into a central striker and has made the transition a seamless one, banging in the goals on a regular basis. He's since been involved with the U21s.

Academically, Lucas has performed brilliantly, regularly producing high level work in his BTEC and SEP portfolio. The young striker has also been going the extra mile in his own time by doing some essential work within the local community. He and other apprentices have been engaging with local primary schools, supporting young people with their literacy and numeracy skills. Lucas has also been getting involved with coaching, teaming up with some of the academy coaches and helping out with the U9s/10s sessions.



FRANKIE BAKER MILLWALL

Frankie Baker has enjoyed a brilliant season so far. He has scored goals in the U18s, played games in the U21s and been outstanding. His coaches say it is pleasing to see the improvements he has made in his game and the confidence he is playing with and to think he would be in this position at this stage of his development is something that no one would have foreseen. His progress is said to be down to his mentality, hard work, and the time he has spent working on his game. He has been described as "selfless with his work ethic and contribution to the team." In his BTEC, Frankie is on track to complete. His attendance, behaviour and attitude is excellent according to his tutors. In SEP, Frankie has completed all units, video showcase and is at gateway awaiting his three assessments targeting distinction.



ISAAC ALLEN LINCOLN CITY

Isaac Allan has "developed and grown into a very confident and capable young man during his time on the apprenticeship" said his LFE Regional Officer, Ian Tombs. "He is extremely independent, always driven, highly motivated and responsive to learn further to achieve the best he can both within and outside of the programme."

Isaac is said to continually strive to make further developments football wise and academically, as well as personally becoming a highly valued employee at Lincoln City, as reflected by working as hard as possible within all environments to achieve the highest quality possible in everything he commits too. He has been described as a "great professional and a role model to others."



EPHRAIM OSEI YEBOAH BRISTOL CITY

Ephraim Osei Yeboah continues to make good progress across all elements of his apprenticeship. He's been described as a "happy and bubbly character that always demonstrates a positive attitude." Ephraim's dedication and motivation has seen him already sign a professional contract and make eight first team appearances following his debut in August. Off the pitch, he has remained focused in his education, where he has already achieved his functional skills and is continuing to work well towards his BTEC target grade, despite additional demands and commitments His efforts have also been recognised by the club where he won Bristol City's Scholar of the Month Award for September, alongside teammate and fellow 11 inclusion, Raekwan Nelson.



JACOB SCOTT NORTHAMPTON TOWN

Jacob Scott has made excellent progress in his football and leadership abilities, growing in more confidence as a footballer which has positively impacted on his own performances. Further helped by him continually wanting to improve by performing additional sessions to further refine areas of his game, this has strengthened him in his playing position and overall football development.

Education wise, Jacob has made strong academic progress, helped by always being responsive to learn in all his education sessions so that he can continue to grasp a more thorough understanding of related topic content, therefore he continues to produce work that reflects the higher level of understanding, whilst maximising his learning potential to consistently work above his academic target grades.



BILLY MITCHELL

Millwall midfielder Billy Mitchell entered the academy environment at a later age than most, joining the Lions' youth set up at the age of 15. However, despite being a late bloomer in a sense, the all action middle man is now a regular for the Championship side.

"I joined Millwall when I was 15 years old, going straight into the U15s age group." Mitchell told LFE.

"I'd had a few trials at other clubs before that, but nothing had worked out. I played Sunday league football in the Kent leagues where I was from and also for the county. When I joined Millwall I was probably quite lucky to get a contract really and felt really lucky to be there, knowing that there were many players who were far better than I was, but I just stuck it out and progressed through the age groups. I was lucky enough to get a scholarship and the first year was pretty average, however, the second year they gave me the captaincy and began to excel with that extra responsibility."

Following a successful season as a second-year apprentice, Mitchell was awarded with his first team debut. "I made my debut on the last day of the Championship season away at Wigan – only for about 12 minutes! After that I was awarded a professional contract and slowly but surely integrated more and more into the first team."

"I was a lot more confident about getting a professional contract than my scholarship. My scholarship was a bigger deal for me because we had a lot of talented midfielders in the U16s at the time and to be honest I really wasn't sure that I was going to get one. Once I did, I just tried to use those two years to develop as much as possible and take on as much information.

Then with the pro contract, I felt relatively confident as not many of the other lads had made professional debuts at the time, but even so, just because you've made one first team appearance means absolutely nothing, the hard work starts then."

Following his initial taste of first team action, the 22-year-old admits the help he received from senior pros really excelled his integration into the squad. "I think different characters can find the integration aspect of going into the first team more or less difficult depending on how vocal they are or what kind of groups there are in the first team at the time for example. I was very lucky as there was a real solid group of senior players and also younger players who had also come through the ranks at the club like me, so they understood the pathway that I was on and really took me under their wing. However, some of the senior players that come to mind are Shaun Williams, Alex Pearce, Jed Wallace, Matt Smith etc. I always tried to make an effort to talk to them. Obviously as an 18-year-old, some of your team mates are going to be a lot older than you, therefore you don't really have much in common with them off the pitch. They've all got houses, cars, and wives, so it is hard to find common ground, but I do think senior players appreciate it when younger players make the effort to come and talk to them and ask questions. ▶

As well as the help he received from his fellow pros, Mitchell can't forget the role his family played in his development. "I'm lucky to have fantastic family support. They're all from the south London area so they were always able to take me to and from training, come to my games and I realise that some kids don't have that so that makes me feel very lucky. Talking, that is also really important. I'm lucky that I have friends and family that I can communicate with, people who have been with me on this journey, so they understand the process, the highs, and the lows and what goes on. I have a fantastically supportive girlfriend now who comes to pretty much every game home and away. She understands that I can be a little bit moody if we lose which isn't necessarily easy for her but yes, talking is important and being open and honest about how you are feeling. Also, taking time out from the game to do things you enjoy as we are more than just footballers. I love to play golf, research certain things that I'm interested in, watch YouTube, and get lost in different things, so I think having personal space and time away from football is really important as well."

Despite the love and support from family, friends, and colleagues, the midfielder says a certain level of self-belief and resilience is needed to become a success. "It is tricky. There are going to be some real highs, but also obviously some lows. Inevitably things are going to go wrong.

My first couple of games for Millwall under the old manager Neil Harris were pretty good but when I made my full debut at the Den against Newport County, I really didn't think I played all that well and all of a sudden you think 'oh no, have I blown it already?' and I was worried about what the fans might think. There's a lot going through your head but providing you have that self-belief and people can see that you are willing to work hard and improve then they will give you the benefit of the doubt and stick with you. That's the way I try and approach things."

Away from the pitch, Mitchell believes personal development is crucial to improving as an athlete and as a human being. "Personal development for me is trying to improve across the board. Whether that's as a footballer, your social skills, your fitness, appearance, relationships, everything. Just trying to be a complete individual is important in general. You can literally learn from any situation. As an example, it could be something as simple as going to a family party and you're standing there having to talk to your aunts and uncles which you don't share any common ground with really. It's the same as going into a first team environment where you don't have common ground with some of the older players, but you've still got to come together as you are team mates at the end of the day. Just being able to communicate with people is really important.

Just put yourself in uncomfortable situations. For example, you might get invited to go and play golf with some of the older first team players and it might be very daunting as you think that's four hours you've got to spend with people you aren't very close with yet, but just say yes, be a yes man. Put yourself in every scenario and do things you're uncomfortable doing and you'll soon realise it's not all that scary and you'll come out a much more developed person on the other side."

He also hailed LFE and the role they play in conjunction with football clubs. "LFE is a fantastic organisation, as is Millwall. In the afternoons as a scholar, we'd have a lot of specialists come in and talk to us about a range of things, from money management to social skills and life after football. All these things are so valuable, but you might not realise that at the time. Even I was someone who sat there and thought 'this is going to be valuable to me' but you struggle to see the value in it until you get a bit older. But just soak everything up because you will need those skills. Education is also so important. I'm lucky to have made it to where I am now but I know ex team mates who have been able to start up successful businesses after football thanks to the qualifications they got from doing their diplomas etc, so just apply yourself."

At the 2022 EFL Awards, Mitchell was awarded with the PFA Player in the Community Award for his excellent work giving back to his local area. "Your outside of football life is really important in helping you get to where you want to get to. Once you make it to first team level you're obviously in a very privileged position and I think it's important to help and give back to the people who have helped you get to where you are today. You can use the influence and power that you have in a positive way. It's really important to me to show people that Millwall is a good club because it's the club I grew up supporting and sometimes they can get a bad rep. When I won that award, not only was it great for our community trust, but it represents Millwall in a good light and that's important to me."

Billy isn't the only Mitchell in the family who has been picking up individual awards. His younger brother, Zach, who is coming through at Charlton, was named LFE League One Apprentice of the Season last year. "It makes me smile thinking about it because we both get on really well. He's had his own trials and tribulations this season. He's on loan at Colchester, he thought he was going to get a chance at Charlton, but it didn't quite materialise that way. ▶



FF

IT'S NOT ALWAYS THE BEST PLAYERS THAT GET TO PLAY PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL – IT'S THE ONES THAT CAN LEARN, ADAPT TO DIFFERENT SCENARIOS AND BE RELIABLE

FF



“They’ve had a change of manager as well, so he’s had to deal with that, but he’s started off really well at Colchester. He’s enjoying his football; he’s had to move away from home because the journey is quite long, so he’s got a whole bunch of new challenges. We stay in contact regularly and he’s actually better at checking in with me which is pretty bad as I’m the older brother!

“But I’m exceptionally proud of him. I’d like to think I give him some wisdom as I’m four years older than him and football is a very kind of niche industry. Whenever he needs advice, I always tell him he can come to me, but he’s doing great so far. I also value his opinions because he’s got a very level head and sometimes when I’m not feeling so great about football, he’s one of the few people that gets it, so we’ve got a great relationship.”

With Billy and his brother both coming through the ranks at their respective clubs, the LFE graduate urges current apprentices to grasp every opportunity.

“You have to realise what an opportunity you have. Be as adaptable and mouldable as you possibly can be because from what I’ve seen personally, it’s not always the best players that get to play professional football – it’s the ones that can learn, adapt to different scenarios and be reliable.

These are characteristics that aren’t spoke about enough. Everyone will talk about how good someone is with the ball in one-on-ones for example, or how good someone is at heading and all that’s important and you have to develop those skills with your coaches, but the skills I’ve just mentioned there are equal to technical skills, if not serve a greater importance.”

Looking ahead to the rest of his career, Mitchell has aspirations of playing at the highest level and is focused on becoming the best version of himself both on and off the field. “I want to have a career that spans until my mid 30’s hopefully. I want to play at the highest level, whether that be with Millwall or elsewhere. I’ve had a good start to my career, and I’ve been lucky enough to play under a manager and fans that believe in me.

I’ve played a lot of games but there is plenty more that I want to achieve. I’m nowhere near where I want to be at the moment, but I have got time to work on it, so I think surrounding myself with the right people is really important and hopefully I can keep making progress on the field and off it in the next few years.” ■



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**For football.
For life.**

THE 2023 SUMMER TRANSFER WINDOW SAW A WHOLE HOST OF TRANSFERS INVOLVING FORMER LFE APPRENTICES. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE DEALS...

ON THE MOVE

JUDE BELLINGHAM

Former Birmingham City apprentice

£88.5M  ▶ 

WILFRIED ZAHA

Former Crystal Palace apprentice

FREE  ▶ 

JAMES MADDISON

Former Coventry City apprentice

£40M  ▶ 

BEN BRERETON DIAZ

Former Nottingham Forest apprentice

FREE  ▶ 

JAMES WARD-PROWSE

Former Southampton apprentice

£30M  ▶ 

DJED SPENCE

Former Middlesbrough apprentice

LOAN  ▶ 

ALEX SCOTT

Former Bristol City apprentice

£25M  ▶ 

MAX AARONS

Former Norwich City apprentice

UNDISCLOSED  ▶ 

JORDAN HENDERSON

Former Sunderland apprentice

£12M  ▶ 

JOBE BELLINGHAM

Current apprentice

UNDISCLOSED  ▶ 

DEMARAI GRAY

Former Birmingham City apprentice

£8M  ▶ 

TODD CANTWELL

Former Norwich City apprentice

UNDISCLOSED  ▶ 

ASHLEY PHILLIPS

Former Blackburn Rovers apprentice

£2M  ▶ 



MASTERCHEF PORT VALE



In October, five apprentices from Port Vale's U18s squad went head-to-head in an in-house MasterChef competition at Vale Park.

Each group were given a certain dish to make, with step-by-step instructions provided.

For Ben Lomax and Dan Mahaffy, it was charred corn, feta, and spicy king prawn conchiglie. Callum Besford and Braden Webb on the next team were tasked with a creamy pesto and pea pasta, whilst due to odd numbers, Aaron Davies was in a team of one and the goalkeeper's allocated dish was sweet and smoky BBQ fajitas.

After retrieving all of their required ingredients and getting their prep done, all three groups got to work as they attempted to perfect their dishes.

Despite being tasked with perhaps the most straightforward of dishes, Callum and Braden made a lightning quick start to their creamy pesto and pea pasta, settling into the kitchen environment very quickly and had their finished product underneath the hot pass in no time.

On the other side of the kitchen, Ben and Dan started a little slowly but soon got into their groove and had their charred corn, feta, and king prawn conchiglie looking restaurant standard by the end of play.

Despite being on his own, Aaron showed no signs of being left behind by the others and cracked on with his BBQ fajitas in a calm and measured fashion, with his finished dish looking every bit the part.

After all the hard work in the kitchen was done, each group presented their dishes to four club staff who tasted and scored their food out of 30.

Once all dishes were tried and tested, it was time to announce the winner and with an overall score of 23/30, Aaron took the MasterChef crown with his BBQ fajitas being a real hit with the judges.

Matthew Meredith, Head of Education at Port Vale discussed the importance of the in-house competition... "It was a fantastic event, which allowed for the lads to develop a key life skill in practising their cooking skills under the supervision of our head chef Barry Connolly. At Port Vale academy we pride ourselves on facilitating opportunities to learn outside the classroom."

Tutor Robert Hare added: "These dishes can be used in host family accommodation and given to the chef at the football club to help improve the diet of these young footballers."

LIFE SKILLS

GANGS PREVENTION WORKSHOP



Back in September, a series of three hard-hitting and impactful workshops were delivered to Huddersfield Town apprentices by James Riley of Get Away n Get Safe, known as “The Gangs Man” on Twitter.

GANGS was set up by James after working within the Criminal Justice System for over 18 years as a Probation Officer, specialising in Urban Street Gangs and Organised Crime Groups. As a result, the GANGS programme was established, and its mission is simple: “To educate, inspire and empower young people to take control of their future by rejecting the gang lifestyle”.

The workshops looked at how young people get drawn into gang culture, become involved in criminal exploitation and the effect it has on their own futures and the impact on their families.

There was a very clear message about the law of ‘joint enterprise’ and the dangers and consequences of ‘bystander’ involvement.

Head of Player Care at Huddersfield Town FC, Adam Powell said: “The Academy run a “Life Skills” programme for all Academy players and this workshop has provided players and staff with real life scenarios of the consequences of making poor decisions and following the wrong path. James’ delivery was engaging and impactful and well received by the group.

“Academy players are role models and ambassadors for the club and community, so it is important that our young players have an understanding of the dangers involved and they are well placed to positively influence the young people who they interact with as their football careers progress.”

Head of Safeguarding Karen Crosland added: “We are delighted to support any initiatives which highlight the dangers of gang involvement and knife and gun crime in our communities and this piece of work delivered by James and WYP Prevention Initiative and Knife Crime Awareness Project is one of a number of pieces of work which our club and foundation are involved in”.

Following the GANGs workshops, a follow up meeting was arranged with West Yorkshire Police who delivered a powerful message to the U19 players around the Prevention Initiative. The objective of the session was to promote diversion away from gun and knife crime; the pitfalls of being associated to crime and gang related violence and the devastation being associated with gangs can cause to their futures, families, and communities.

““““

IT WAS QUITE HARD HITTING AND CERTAINLY MAKES YOU THINK.

““““

JUST MAKES YOU REALISE THAT FOLLOWING THE CROWD CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES EVEN IF YOU HAVEN’T ACTUALLY DONE ANYTHING.

““““

IT CAN BE HARD TO WALK AWAY BUT MADE ME REALISE THAT IT’S IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE YOU’VE GOT THE RIGHT PEOPLE AROUND YOU AND THAT YOU QUESTION PEOPLES INTENTIONS - NOT EVERYONE IS YOUR FRIEND.

THE BEST OF TIMES

FOR KIAN BEST, THE 2023-24 CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN A MEMORABLE ONE SO FAR. FROM SIGNING HIS FIRST PROFESSIONAL CONTRACT AT HIS BOYHOOD CLUB PRESTON NORTH END, TO SCORING HIS FIRST GOAL FOR HIS COUNTRY, IT'S BEEN ONE OF MILESTONES AND CONSTANT LEARNING. THE 18-YEAR-OLD RECENTLY SAT DOWN WITH LFE TO DISCUSS HIS CAREER TO DATE.

How did you get into football?

"As far as I can remember I started kicking a football as soon as I could walk really. It was mainly my dad who got me into it as he loved football, then when I was six or seven, I joined a team called Ribbleton where my dad was the assistant coach. I did two years there and then seven of us actually got scouted for clubs as we had gone two years unbeaten. I'm actually still playing now in the Preston first team with someone I played with at Ribbleton."

Was being a footballer always your goal?

"Yes. Growing up through school I always wanted to be a footballer. You know a teacher would ask what I wanted to be and when I said, 'a footballer' they'd laugh but that's all I ever wanted to be really."

You almost gave up at one stage, why and who convinced you to carry on?

"I just remember I used to get angry really quickly and if I couldn't do something I'd think of giving up too easily, but my dad and the other coach at Ribbleton sat me down and explained to me that I had a really good chance and just convinced me to carry on." ▶



YOU'VE JUST GOT TO STAY LEVEL HEADED AND BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, THAT'S THE MAIN THING

After joining Preston, how did you find that transition from grassroots football to academy football?

"I kind of struggled at the start. I was quite shy growing up, so I didn't really like meeting new people. A few coaches helped me come out of my shell and I managed to get through it, but it was a really tough transition."

You progressed through the ranks and got your scholarship. How big of a moment was that for you?

"It was a really good feeling and I felt like I deserved it. I was the last person to get offered one in the group. A few got offered theirs the year before and a few during the middle of the season but I was the last one, so me and my dad were sat down thinking about other clubs and trials because they were leaving it so late but luckily, I stayed, got one and I'm glad."

What was your experience of your apprenticeship, both on and off the pitch?

"It was good. It helped me grow up a lot. Especially at the start as I'd gone from training just a couple of times a week to being in full-time and some days you wouldn't be getting home till like 5pm because of education so it was tough at the beginning. I also didn't play that much in my first year so that was hard, but I enjoyed it because we had a good group of lads, so it was really good."

You were part of a really successful U19s squad between 2021 and 2023, what made that particular team so special?

"I think it's because we were so close as a group and were all really good friends that got on well. We'd all come through the academy from a very young age together, knew each other really well and just naturally stuck together."

You were rewarded with your first professional contract in July, how special was that?

"It was a really special moment. I had all my family there with me signing it but the main thing that I took from it was being reminded that I wasn't finished yet and this is just the start. I can't just relax because I'm now a professional because I haven't made it yet, so just keep working hard."

You then make your debut on the opening day of the Championship campaign. Describe that feeling?

"Amazing. I'd been playing in pre-season quite a lot because we had a few injuries and then towards the back end of pre-season I started the final two games and I remember my dad saying to me that he thought I had a good chance of starting that first league game. Then about two days before the match the gaffer pulled me at the start of training, and I knew what was coming. He told me I was going to be starting and told me he wanted to tell me early, so I had more chance of preparing. Then walking out away at Bristol City and I just remember it being really loud because it was obviously the first game of the season and one of the lads came up to me and said, 'this is what it's all about' and I got goosebumps, but as soon as the whistle went, I was alright."

Did you feel a big difference between youth football and senior football, specifically at Championship level?

"It wasn't as big as I expected because I was in a team full of senior pros, and I was the only young lad, so they just talked me through the whole game really. I just listened to them talking me through the game, but you naturally play better when you play with better players, so it was good."



It's been a breakthrough season for you since then, how does it feel now you're settled in the first team environment?

"It's been really good. The manager has trusted me a lot and I've played quite a few games which I've really enjoyed, but there was a patch where I was out of the team for six weeks or so which I found tough, but I've managed to get myself back in the team recently and I've done well."

Is there a bit of advice that the manager has given you that's stuck with you throughout the season?

"He told me 'It's the quality that gets you into the dressing room, but it's the attitude that keeps you there.' We've had quite a few young lads come up and train with the first team and play a few games, but they've been washed back away so he said it's important to keep grounded and level headed."

You represent England at U19 level and recently scored your first goal. How proud do you feel when pulling on your country's shirt?

"It's really good. I was on standby for the first camp of the season and then the second camp I wasn't around the first team squad, so I knew I probably wasn't going to get in, but when I got myself back in the team the gaffer gave me a call and said 'England have just rung, we're really proud of you. Go and represent the club, you're going to Marbella to play three games for England' so that was great. The gaffer actually flew out to watch one of the games as well."

Looking to the future, what are your goals within the game?

"This season I just really want to play as many games as I can in the Championship and get my name out there. In the long term, I want to play in the Premier League and represent England at senior level."

What will help you achieve those goals?

"I think it's important to stay at the same level. Don't get too high when things are going well, but don't get too low when things aren't going great which can happen a lot in football. You've just got to stay level headed and believe in yourself, that's the main thing." ■

BORO YOUNGSTER PICKS UP BLACK HISTORY YOUTH AWARD

Middlesbrough's George Grant has been honoured with the Sports Person Award in the 2023 Black History Youth Awards for his fantastic work on and off the field.

The award was presented by Taste of Africa, a north-east charity that highlights and celebrates the works of African people within the region.

George, who is a central defender for Boro's U18s, joined the club's Academy during the 2021/22 campaign after spending the rest of his youth football career at grassroots level. He's now an important part of the U18s at Middlesbrough and has also represented Jamaica's U22s on two occasions so far.

After winning the award, George said: "It was a surprise to win but it means a lot. This shows how far I've come both as an athlete and a person. I really appreciate the recognition.

"It also shows how far we've come as a people, not just with my award but the other awards too. We've all overcome our struggles and I think that's important to recognise with other people of colour."

Middlesbrough's Head of Education Barry Dawson added: "George has come into the group and immediately hit the ground running with some standout performances for the U18s. His determination to do well on the pitch has been equally matched by his level of effort and application in the classroom.

"The whole academy staff group have been really pleased with George and they are delighted he has won this award."



Mansfield Town apprentices and staff recently hosted a fun filled coffee and cake morning at their RH Academy training base, welcoming residents from Oaklands and Corner House, two local homes that promote independent living for adults with learning disabilities.

Stags Welcome Local Residents to RH Academy

The event kicked off with a morning of meaningful chat and engagement between apprentices, staff and visitors.

This was then followed by an afternoon of enjoyable football activities on the 3G pitch, with the residents also having the opportunity to tour the Academy facilities and even have some fun in the gym.

Reflecting on the day, a staff member from Corner House said: "Corner House would like to thank Mansfield Town scholars and all the staff at Mansfield for the fabulous time we had at the RH Academy.

"Our residents have praised the scholars for making it such a fun session and having photos with them. The scholars really interacted with the residents and to watch that was heart-warming. The effort and dedication was evident and how well everyone engaged just shows how much work went into organising the event."

An Oaklands staff member also said: "I personally thought it was really moving to see the scholars interacting and encouraging our residents on the pitch. They all really enjoyed themselves. A couple of them are looking forward to their call up for the match on Saturday!"

A parent of one of the attendees added: "Matty's been great bless him. Happy, funny and cheeky. It's lovely to see him like this. He visited family at the weekend which he always loves and so do they. They've all seen the outing to RH Academy and the video of Matty and they were touched by it all.

"It stirred up lots of happy memories and conversations between us over the weekend which was lovely."



TURING TRIPS 2023

TURING SCHEME
 The UK's global programme to study and work abroad

Last Summer, three EFL Academy squads took part in LFE's pre-season trips abroad, funded by the Turing Scheme.

Grimsby Town and Millwall visited Italy, whilst Sheffield Wednesday jetted out to Spain. Over the course of their trips, apprentices faced off against some of Italy and Spain's strongest Academy sides, trained at excellent facilities and enjoyed several cultural visits and lessons.



CHARLIE EDINBURGH HOSTS CARDIAC AWARENESS WORKSHOP AT LEYTON ORIENT FC

The Justin Edinburgh 3 Foundation (JE3 Foundation) visited Leyton Orient Football Club last week, with Charlie Edinburgh, the foundation's CEO and son of the late Justin Edinburgh, delivering a session to the U18s squad in the O's very own Justin Edinburgh Stand at Brisbane Road.

During the session the apprentices learnt a wide range of vital life skills such as detecting a heart attack or cardiac arrest, the difference between the two, how to correctly perform CPR and use a defibrillator.

Speaking after the session, Charlie Edinburgh said: "It means such a huge amount to myself, everybody connected with the charity and my family to be here and deliver it to the boys. They're a fantastic group and I really feel they have taken away something valuable today that hopefully they never need to use, but they're better equipped now for the future if they do see somebody in cardiac arrest as they have the skills and the know-how of what to do in that situation."

Leyton Orient Under 18s Goalkeeper and Captain, Lenny Holden, added: "We feel really lucky to have had Charlie come in and speak to us and teach us the steps of CPR. It was really valuable for the lads to learn about, and we know it can happen to anyone."

The Justin Edinburgh foundation are campaigning for 'Justin's Law' to legally mandate Automated External Defibrillators in all health and sports facilities in the UK. 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen each year – defibrillators save lives.



 **JUSTIN EDINBURGH
3 FOUNDATION**

To read more, visit je3foundation.com

CHARLIE MILLER

Growing up, like many, Charlie Miller's dream was to be a professional footballer and play at the highest level. However, after suffering the disappointment of being let go by Plymouth Argyle at the end of his scholarship in 2021, Charlie is now determined to help others achieve their dreams through the power of social media.

The former Argyle midfielder sat down with LFE to discuss his career to date and his plans moving forward...

Tell us a bit about your upbringing and how you got into football?

"I grew up in Australia. I'm from England but we moved out to Australia when I was quite young. I had just a normal Aussie childhood if you like, even though I was the odd one out at school as all the other pupils were into rugby and Australian Football League, and I was very much into soccer as they call it out there! I did try my hand at the sports they play such as cricket, Aussie rules etc but I just carried on with my football. My dad was from a footballing background, so I was always brought up that way really."

What was football like over in Australia compared to back home in England?

"It's getting a lot bigger now than it was a few years back when I lived there. A lot of British, Irish, and Welsh people emigrate out there so a lot of my coaches were ex-professionals from within the British game."

It's more of a relaxed environment in Australia but the level of coaching for me was still really high. The funding though is a different story. I played at the best club in my area with the best coaches, but you still have to pay to play even in the academies out there. You have to put your hand in your pocket and fork out a couple thousand dollars to even get going."

You then moved back to the UK and signed for Plymouth Argyle. How did that come about?

"It certainly wasn't a straightforward road; it wasn't a smooth sail. I actually went to 20 different professional clubs in the UK, from Blackburn to Leeds to Swansea and even Man United before eventually signing at Plymouth. There were many different experiences and setbacks along the journey, but I'm grateful for all of them. Those pitfalls and failures along the way help you learn to develop as a footballer, but more importantly as a person. It felt more chilled out and laid back when I arrived in Devon. I felt a lot of similarities between Plymouth and where I lived back in Australia on the Gold Coast, in terms of the culture... definitely not the weather!" ▶





A LOT OF PEOPLE REACH OUT TO ME ON A DAILY BASIS WHICH MAKES ME REALISE THE LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES THAT I'VE LEARNT AND BEEN THROUGH CAN HELP OTHERS.



How did you find the transition moving back to the UK and entering the academy environment?

"Anyone going into the academy system goes in with a certain set of beliefs on what they hope to achieve depending on how they've been brought up and conditioned. I very much went into it with the mindset of 'no friends in football'. For me, I wasn't used to the culture because I had been living in Australia and wasn't used to the cut throat industry that English football is, so it took some time to fully adjust to the world I was living in. My first year was very good, but my second year was a bit different. There were a lot of off the field factors that hindered my development and progress on it. I could see certain things happening towards the end which made it obvious what was coming (not getting a professional contract), but looking back at my time there, I'm so grateful for all the experiences. I'm a big believer in embracing these experiences, whether positive or negative."

How did you cope with the disappointment of getting released?

"Some people have this denial that something isn't happening, but I was very much focused on getting back on track and working. I had an agent at the time, and he suggested I go to a few clubs or maybe try the non-league route. I ended up going up to Scotland for a trial but quickly picked up a serious injury which was unfortunate. I think it's important for people to stay positive in these types of situations. If you look at your experiences in life as another challenge to overcome or another lesson and gain the value out of a failure to then go and

succeed, then you'll always find that right path with the right mentality. But if you look at these failures and take it as 'I'm not good enough' then you'll take that same mindset to the next chapter."

Are you still playing now?

"I stopped playing football a few weeks ago actually. I'm not sure whether this is for the time being or for good. I'm very much in a transition stage of my life, looking back at my experiences and finding an inner peace with it all. I've been on this kind of soul-searching journey of letting go of the footballer identity. When you reach a certain level of success and ultimately then don't achieve what you set out to, such as becoming a football player, it takes you on a rollercoaster. Every footballer will experience this, whether they reach the heights of the Premier League for example and stop playing at 35 or stop at 18, they'll question who they are in life after football."

You've accumulated a large following on social media through sharing your own experiences and trying to help others. How does it feel to know you're having a positive effect on other people?

"It amazes me the reach I've got through just being open and showing who I am. I started my social media journey when I was originally going through being let go by Plymouth and it amazes me how many people are going through a similar experience and can relate to me. A lot of people reach out to me on a daily basis which makes me realise the lessons and experiences that I've learnt and been through can help others."

Your new platform 'Elevate Beyond' is launching soon. What do you aim to achieve with it?

"It's a platform where footballers/sportspeople can go to improve their mindset and habits etc. I've now done a rebranding which isn't publicised yet, but the Elevate Beyond programme will be coming soon. My brother and I recently held a course which was called 'Elevate Your Life'. It was an eight-week course which focused on sportspeople improving their mindset, their recovery techniques, how to handle difficult contributing factors, that sort of stuff. 20 people enrolled and it went really well. In terms of where I see Elevate Beyond going now I've done the rebranding, is that I want to combine the experiences that footballers go through such as confidence, setbacks, self-worth, with the mind and body connection, whether they're still playing and looking to progress further, or have just been released from a club and help them understand their feelings and possibly transition into a different career. Personally, I see myself impacting people on a large scale, being on stage and having an impact on people's lives by sharing my techniques and experiences."

What advice would you give to a current apprentice?

"Take some time to get away from the world you're in. Observe your feelings, observe why you're feeling happy or why you're feeling down. Everything in life is impermanent, so enjoy every process you go through and appreciate them at the time. Just take some time out of your day and be still. Don't over analyse everything and stress about things that are coming." ■



YOUNG TERRIERS VISIT TO HUDDERSFIELD FIRE STATION



Huddersfield Town's U19s were invited down to Huddersfield Fire Station in November for an intervention and awareness day in which they enjoyed a mixture of classroom and practical activities.

The Town youngsters kicked off the morning with an introduction session where they were made aware of what was in store for the day. This was followed by a presentation in which staff displayed a range of damning statistics and information, particularly around the subject of RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions).

After a period of classroom learning, the apprentices got suited and booted into their fire service gear and were given a tour of a fire engine, shown different pieces of equipment, and made aware of their purpose(s).

A brake test followed. This involves a stationary vehicle and a flashing sign. When the sign flashes, the driver is required to hit the brakes as sharply as possible. The driver is then given a time score based off their reaction speed. This test is designed to reiterate how far a vehicle can still travel after hitting the brakes and how reaction speed and awareness can determine the impact of a road collision.

Post lunch, it was out onto the forecourt for some outdoor activities. The U19s were shown the water hoses and were handed the task of unravelling the hoses and then winding them back up. The hoses were then turned on and it was time for some target practice.

The last activity of the day was rescue cutting, with the apprentices using the rescue cutters to dismantle pieces of old cars. This method is regularly used by fire fighters when seeking to rescue people trapped in vehicles following an RTC.



SSSSH!

You are not allowed to pass **inside information on to someone else which they then use for betting.**

Inside information is something that you know due to your position in the game and which is not publicly available, such as information about an injury, team selection or transfer news.

If you are approached by someone with a view to providing inside information for betting, you must call The FA's Integrity Unit on 0208 795 9640 or email them at Integrity@TheFA.com. Players may also contact The PFA on 0161 236 0575.

To view The FA's Rules and Regulations, visit TheFA.com

In October and November, two groups of coaches from EFL clubs jetted out to Spain for the LFE Coaches Trips.

Over the course of both weeks in Madrid and Asturias region respectively, the coaches enjoyed a whole host of eye-opening experiences, from overseeing training sessions at various elite football clubs and academies, to watching LaLiga and Champions League matches.

Here is a taste of what went on...

2023

ASTURIAS

The week in the Asturias region of northern Spain offered a platform to exchange everything Player Care with the Spanish FA, UK colleagues and staff of their respective Spanish football clubs. I would highly recommend this experience to further develop knowledge of the Spanish system and to share and exchange good practice amongst colleagues and staff.

Natalie Wood, Shrewsbury Town FC

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LFE COACHES TRIP

My trip to Spain was a holistic experience that combined my love for football with a genuine immersion into local culture. The connections I forged with football professionals and the people I met will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on both my personal and professional life.

Endrit Shehu, Salford City FC



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LFE COACHES TRIP

The experience was really insightful not only from gaining a wider understanding of the development of players within Spain, but also to network and build new relationships with peers we went with. It challenged some of my previous views on the game and player development but was also really useful for how we coach, recruit, and aim to play within the academy system in the UK.

Kieran Squire, Walsall FC



October's coaches trip to Madrid was an unforgettable experience for me. We were so lucky to witness so much of what Spanish football has to offer. As well as the coach education department of Real Federacion de Futbol de Madrid, we were privileged enough to gain exclusive access to the training grounds and academies of Real Vallecano, CF Fuenlabrada, Agrupacion Deportiva Alcorcon, and Real Madrid.

Kieran Squire, Walsall FC



The trip was really intriguing. All the clubs were very friendly and welcoming, with each one giving us a fantastic insight into how they work. From a personal perspective, I really enjoyed it with a group of people who were really easy to be around. It was an excellent trip, and I would love to do it again.

Andy Holdsworth, Sheffield Wednesday FC

LFE

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ATHLETE ANGEL X LFE PLAYER CARE EVENT



In November, Athlete Angel, in conjunction with LFE, hosted a morning of talks and networking for Player Care staff from football clubs all across the country.

The event, which took place in London, kicked off with some coffee and networking amongst the 70+ attendees. An introduction to the day ahead from Cathy Wood, founder of Athlete Angel, and Simon Williams, LFE's Life Skills Manager, shortly followed.

There were a whole host of topics on the agenda, with guest speakers from numerous organisations present.

- **Cathy Wood** – Social media fraud and how to prevent it
- **Darren Green** (EFL Regional Safeguarding Officer) – Data harvesting and blackmail
- **Cecil Jee Thomas** (Arsenal Fan TV Presenter) – Building an online presence
- **Monica Bhogal** (Director of the Schools Consent Project) – Sexual consent and the law: helping players understand their rights and responsibilities
- **Meta** (Facebook) – Instagram updates and tools

The event rounded off with lunch and some time for more networking.

100% of attendees said their understanding of the online world had improved as a result of attending, while the same figure provided an overall rating of excellent.

Speaking after the event, co-host and LFE Life Skills Manager, Simon Williams said: "The intention was to help player care staff to connect with an evolving area which is a big part of all our lives and a big thanks goes to Cathy Wood from Athlete Angel for making it happen. The style of TED talks flowed well, whereby the speakers spent no more than 20 minutes providing new knowledge on different aspects and my aim was for the attendees to take actionable information back to the academy. Beyond this, from the very start of the day there was a really good feeling about the space, it was probably too loud if anything and there was a lot of networking taking place, the energy and intimate feeling has been fed back and I'm still receiving messages now."



Good opportunity to listen to key information and services which can be implemented in clubs.

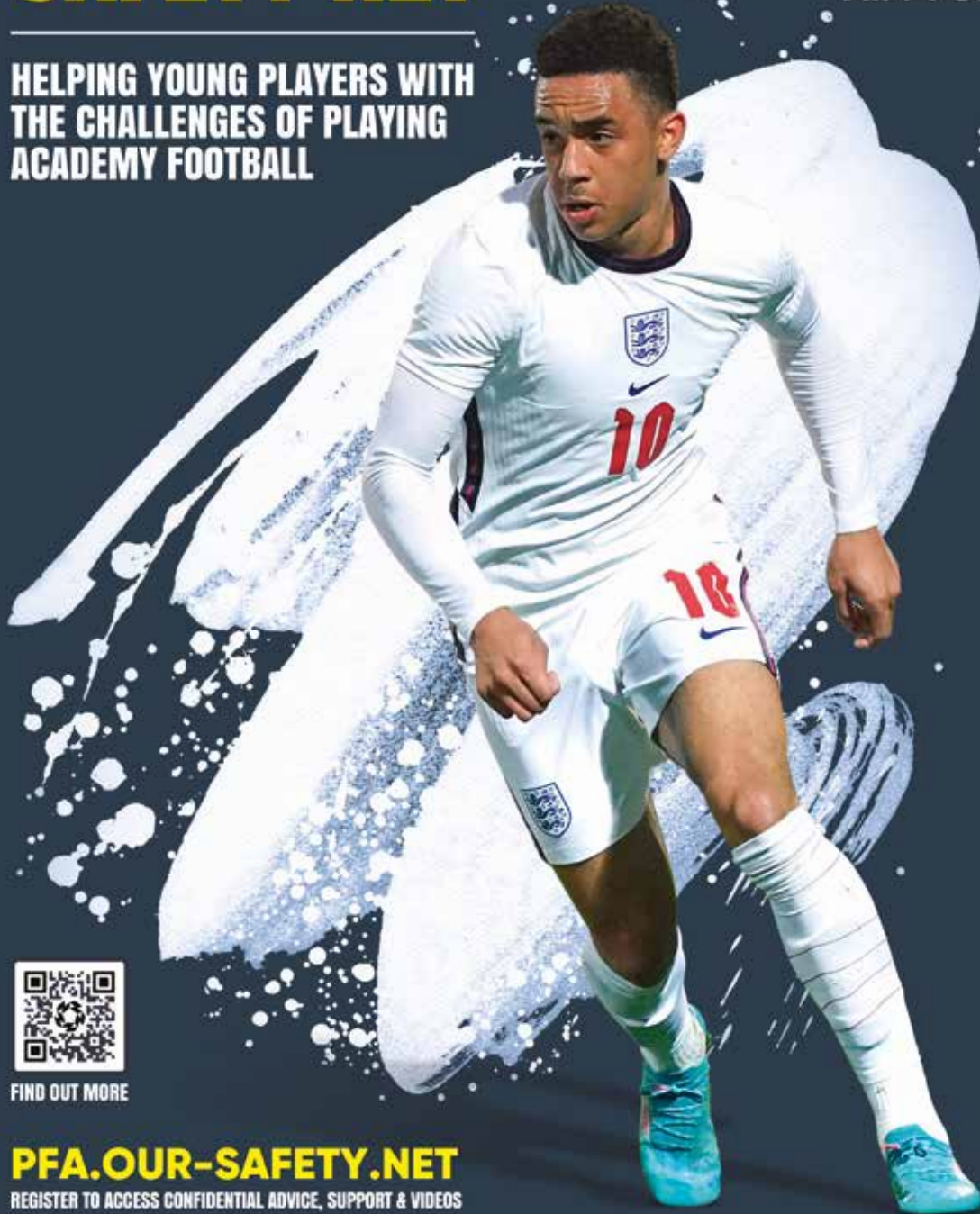
Very beneficial and lots to take back.



I can now go back and speak to my players/scholars and staff around these areas to better educate them.

THE PFA SAFETY NET

HELPING YOUNG PLAYERS WITH THE CHALLENGES OF PLAYING ACADEMY FOOTBALL



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2,191 followers

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2,312 following
7,593 followers



League Football Education @LFEonline
LFE is proud to support @StonewallUK's #RainbowLaces campaign in their 10th anniversary year and will keep up the support for @EFL academies and inclusion in sport 🌈
#RainbowLaces #KeepItUp

BCFC Foundation @BCFCCommunity
It is great to see our 2nd year-extended group working hard in their applied coaching lesson! 🏆
@LFEonline

Justin Edinburgh 3 Foundation @JE3Foundation
A very special @je3foundation CPR and Defibrillator workshop today with @leytonorientfc Under-18s as part of @lfeonline
Full story over at <http://je3foundation.com>
👏❤️ #JustinsLaw #ForTheMemories #JE3Foundation

Cameron Walsh



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