

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

SKILLS FUND TO BOOST CLUBS

Young players will have the chance to increase their skills after The Football League secured additional funding of £3.4million for club Youth Development programmes.

The news follows discussions between The Football League and the Football Association about the allocation of FA income attributable to the professional game.

The extra funding will enable individual club schemes to be eligible for an annual grant of up to £180,000, with a proportion of the new money covering the cost of a dedicated skills coach at every club.

Football League Head of Player Development Graham Hawkins said: "The employment of a full-time skills coach at every club will make a real difference.

"We saw at the Olympics the success that can be achieved through increasing the levels of funding to the most talented young athletes.

"Hopefully we will see similarly talented individuals emerge through these Youth Development programmes who will go on to enjoy success of their own."

Funding had previously been £138,000 per year for each club. This had remained unchanged for a decade.

The raised level of funding will also give club Youth programmes the opportunity to appoint a dedicated administrator, allowing coaches more time to coach.

Clubs will be expected to set up Development Centres to reinforce the link between elite player development and their wider Community programmes.

This will ensure that the most talented youngsters are spotted as early as possible.

Clubs have already started to feel the benefit of the new funding with first quarter payments of £40,000 per club being made recently.

Additionally, plans are currently being finalised to allow payments to be made on a monthly, rather than quarterly, basis which is intended to improve cash flow within club Youth programmes.



THREE LIONS: Walcott, Richards and Hart have all impressed

LEAGUE'S KIDS HIT THE TOP

Youngsters trained at Football League clubs are now enjoying success with national teams at all levels.

More than 50 per cent of players called up for international fixtures this season were developed in full or in part by Football League clubs.

In the senior squad for the matches against Andorra and Croatia, 11 of the 23 players had a League background – including hat-trick hero Theo Walcott, who started his career at Swindon Town and then Southampton.

Stuart Pearce also called up a number of former Football League players for the Under-21s fixture against Portugal at Wembley.

These included Joe Hart and Micah Richards who started their professional careers at Shrewsbury Town and Oldham Athletic respectively.

In the younger England age groups the impact being made by League youngsters

is equally impressive.

Half of the recent Under-19 squads were schooled at Football League clubs and at Under-17s level 56 per cent had been on the books of League clubs.

The level of talent has not gone unnoticed. Almost 300 young players have moved on to Premier League clubs at schoolboy, apprentice and professional level.

In the Football League itself 600 young players have turned professional in the past four years and there are now over 8,500 young players on the books of Football League clubs.

Head of Player Development Graham Hawkins said: "Youth Development programmes at our clubs are the engine room for player production and the future of the game in this country.

"There is some extraordinary talent in our younger age groups which will certainly benefit English football in the coming years."



PLOTTING: Thelwell (right) with schoolboys' coach Tom Wheeldon

KEVIN: THINK FOR YOURSELF, LADS

There is change in the air at Wolverhampton Wanderers as the club's Academy manager Kevin Thelwell begins to integrate some revolutionary programmes.

Thelwell, who joined from Derby County, has already introduced a range of ideas to challenge the players and coaching staff.

His schemes focus on encouraging the players to take responsibility for their own development, which he believes is vital for success.

He said: "So far we have introduced a sports scientist to support each age group from the Under-9s to the Under-18s plus permanent access to ProZone.

"Strength and fitness are key factors in the modern game. The sport scientist will educate the players in nutrition and physical development, while ProZone will allow us to track their progress.

"This way of working is designed to hand more responsibility to the players and allow them to understand and control

their own development.

"When a player crosses the white line he has to be able to think for himself and make quick decisions.

"So if we introduce these elements into their daily schedule their match performances should benefit.

"From a coaching perspective we have also introduced a coach development plan that includes additional training opportunities. There is also a coach mentoring programme for all part-time staff."

Thelwell acknowledges that the foundations were already in place when he arrived at Molineux.

He added: "The initiatives have only been successful because of the hard work put in place by the people who were here before I arrived. None of this would have been possible without them.

"Wolves has always had a fantastic reputation for Youth Development and now I know why!"

BOYS ARE BACK

Notts County have brought back their schoolboy training programme.

It was scrapped in 2005 to save money. Now, the new Centre of Excellence will be headed by ex-player Mick Leonard.

He said: "When the programme was cancelled it felt like the soul of the club had been ripped out.

"The chairman wants to see results in five years. I am confident it will only take two or three."

"Next year we will see the start of full-time

scholars. Unlike other clubs we can offer realistic opportunities of getting into the first team."

Leonard returns to the club after working with the New Zealand FA and at the Jebel Ali Resort in Dubai.

He added: "The weather might be different back here, but it is fantastic to return to Nottingham.

"I have a very close connection with this city and with Notts County and I'm really looking forward to the new challenge."

KIDS GO INTO THE REC LIKE A SHOT

After 16 years Aldershot Town are back in The Football League - and the club's new Centre of Excellence is the first step in ensuring they stay there.

From the moment they went back up the plans for the all-new Centre at the Recreation Ground sparked into action.

The Centre will welcome ten scholars this season with a further ten to be added by next season.

Shots' Youth Administrator Bob Green insists on strong foundations to underpin the club's future.

He said: "The Centre of Excellence will be key in producing a difference on the pitch for the younger lads at the club.

"We had to wait until we were back in The Football League before we could put this plan into action. But it has been in development for 12 months and the response has been immense. Before this project was launched we had no idea how much money was available but we are determined to do everything we can and to get it right.

"We wanted to be careful that we didn't end up wasting any money. We are taking it one step at a time and will build on the foundations each season."

Now the Shots and boss Garry Waddock are back in the League and there is a determination to hold on to their young superstars to cement their position.

Green added: "When we were in the Conference we produced a lot of good kids. Then bigger clubs in the area came along and signed them up.

"But now we have this Centre our efforts will be rewarded because the younger lads will want to stay."



WADDOCK: Waiting for new talent



HOME SWEET HOME: Dobson is looking for next generation of Burnley talent

DOBSON PUTS LID ON ANGER

Burnley's legendary midfielder Martin Dobson has arrived back at Turf Moor as Director of Youth.

Dobson made almost 500 appearances during two spells with the Clarets and collected five England caps.

And with stints at Bury, Everton and Bolton in his locker, Dobson brings bags of experience to the youth set-up.

He said: "It really feels like I have returned home. I am so excited to be back at Burnley.

"I first came to this club in 1967 and it gave me some fantastic experiences. It is right that I give something back.

"We will be focusing on respect - because I believe that football has lost its way, and it is vital that young players develop this quality.

"When I was younger respect was instilled in us. We would never do some of the things you see today.

"I don't want to lose the competitive edge of the game, but I want players to understand

that getting angry is not the best way of winning.

"You must remember that these boys are under a lot of pressure to get results. But I don't want them beating themselves up too much about mistakes.

"They have to enjoy their football because it will make them play better.

"My old manager Harry Potts always told us to play with a smile on your face and a chuckle in your boots. I will be passing that on."

Dobson's return may have only registered with the city's fathers and grandfathers but PR and Communications Manager Darren Bentley insists he's got the right man for the job.

He said: "It is great to have Martin back. He is such an icon here and we could not be happier.

"The team that we have running the youth set-up is now second to none and we are expecting big things in the future."

YANKEE RAMS

Derby County have signed up to a new partnership with American side Michigan Wolves-Hawks.

As part of the deal, County will provide financial and technical support to the Under-16 and Under-18 Wolves teams which currently play in the U.S. Development Academy.

The Americans will adopt the name Derby County Wolves and wear new specially-designed kit.

Derby County Club Chairman Andy Appleby said: "The rich history of the club has always been one of nurturing and developing talent at all levels.

"Our agreement with the Wolves will help create a pipeline of talent to the benefit of

both clubs over the next few years."

The Wolves-Hawks soccer club was formed in 1974 - with boys playing under the Wolves name, and girls playing as the Hawks.

Since then they have won seven national championships and 22 regional championships.

Derby Chairman of Football Adam Pearson was pleased to announce the partnership.

He said: "The new alliance gives the club an opportunity to identify the American players who have the ability and desire to play within the UK professional game.

"We're confident that we can provide talented players with a direct route to playing football at a high level."

SCIENCE BEATS FLYING TEACUPS

Plate smashing and tea cup throwing at half-time?

Not at Scunthorpe United where graphs and statistics deliver the finer points of sports science technology.

Working in conjunction with Hull University, the League 1 outfit now uses a Heart Rate System monitor attached to every player from the first team to the Academy.

The ACTIVIO system relays the data directly to a touchline laptop that collates and displays statistics.

These are analysed by staff at half time and after the game.

The man behind the project is Assistant Youth Development Officer Guy Parkin. He said: "Thanks to Hull University, who have helped fund this project, we have been able to completely change the way we look at training.

"We can now create tailor-made fitness programmes for every player which has made them fitter and better footballers.

"There is no longer a need for traditional team talks because the data is projected onto the changing room walls for everyone to see.

"The kids love it. We can't process the information quick enough for them!

"They have really taken to the idea. It is another area of competition between the players."

And there is more space-age equipment on its way with a GPS system that will track the exact position and work rate of the players.

United are likely to become the only Football League club - along with Premier League Everton and Middlesbrough - to introduce the GPS performance-related system.

Parkin added: "The GPS system will allow us to analyse how far and for how long they are sprinting; how high they are jumping and at what intensity they are doing everything.

"We have three local sports science students who work three days a week at the club to help the players and manage the data.

"They code everything during games and training so all of the information is instantly available.

"We have realised the importance of sport science and our players also work with a sports psychologist.

"I think that this way of thinking is becoming more popular as other clubs become more aware of it.

"We are doing our best to get one step ahead of our rivals."

DALE TO SWELTER IN MALTA

Rochdale's Youth department has agreed a coaching partnership with Maltese side Paola Hibernians.

Centre of Excellence Manager Tony Ellis and Technical Skills Co-ordinator Mick Wild visited the Mediterranean island and finalised the deal with Hibernians' director Norman Buckle.

Ellis said: "The agreement came about after one of our lads went on holiday to Malta with his uncle – who is a semi-pro player out there – and joined in for a training session.

"Mick then got in touch with the club and we decided to fly out in the hope that we could reach an agreement to share some coaching ideas.

"We ran a few sessions and discussed the theory behind the drills that we had put into place.

"The Hibs coaches were really keen to learn about our methods and the sessions were extremely well received."

The Maltese side has strong English ties. In 1970 England and Blackpool legend Sir Stanley Matthews enjoyed a spell at the club, who play at the 8,000 capacity Hibernians Ground in the capital Valetta.

Ellis added: "There are some youngsters at Hibs who we'll be inviting over for a trial, and we'll be sending some of our boys out there to experience playing in unfamiliar conditions.

"We've also planned an Easter tournament for next year, where we are hoping to get some Maltese and Italian sides playing against some of our own boys.

"Hopefully both clubs will reap the rewards of the partnership over the coming seasons."



WILD IDEA: Mick with Hibs' kids



HE AIN'T HEAVY: He's my buddy



WAIST DEEP: Watford's Scholars and

BOOT CAMP BOYS MARINES' WATER

Watford Academy staff and players went to Lymptone in Devon for a series of tough exercises in mental and physical endurance from the Royal Marines.

The first and second year scholars lived liked Marines during the five-day camp – with just a locker for their gear and a hard bunk bed to sleep on.

When the exercises got under way, the youngsters encountered difficult terrain as they battled with the 'Smartie tube' tunnel

and a 'crocodile pit'.

Under-18s Assistant Academy Manager Sean Dyche accompanied his players over the hills and valleys of Lymptone.

He said: "The endurance courses are mentally and physically demanding.

"On the first day the lads were thrown down an underwater tube. Physio Dave Orten and I joined in to experience just how tough it was.

"We were all wearing full army combat



TIME TO RELAX: Youth team get brief respite from gruelling regime



Coaches and young players ford stream



AQUA MARINE: Take a deep breath...

BOYS SURVIVE THE HARDEST CHALLENGE

gear, which gets very heavy when it's soaked through with rain and mud.

"And then to finish with a four-mile run back to the camp was really punishing!"

But that wasn't the end of the gruelling work-out. Next day the youngsters were up before dawn to prepare for another challenge.

Dyche added: "The Marines took us on their assault course in the morning and we ran time trials with the boys. The lads then

had to do various rope exercises and team-building drills.

"We found out a great deal about our young prospects during the week. It was interesting to see how they reacted to stress – because they'll need to get used to pressure if they're performing in front of 20,000 fans.

"It was a real test of character and a lot more than rolling around in the mud. We've already planned next year's trip!"



DOWN BUT NOT OUT: Hornets' kids endure tough military training

RUNNING UP DOSH FOR POSH

Athlete Paul Howell took part in the Great Eastern Run to raise money for Peterborough United's Centre of Excellence.

Howell, whose son Matt is a goalkeeper for the Posh Under-14 side, raised just over £300 for the youngsters.

He said: "I signed up for the run to get back on track with my fitness after having a lengthy break.

"But after speaking to Dave Robertson at the club we decided that it would be a good way of generating a bit of cash for the lads – as well as a good incentive for me."

Howell just missed out on his target of breaking the two hour mark, recording 2.06.53 for his debut half marathon.

He said: "I was training for four months before the run and doing up to 30 miles per week. But it was a hot day so I'm more than happy with my time."

Howell is already looking forward to next year's run.

He added: "It's going to be a regular fixture for me. I really enjoy the running and it is great to have a goal when I am training.

"And it's nice to be able to add a little to the club's coffers.

"I see the work that goes on behind the scenes at Peterborough and admire the dedicated staff and what they do.

"Matt is getting some great coaching from Dave and the team, so I'm really keen to help out however I can.

"I'm already looking at a few 10k runs this winter and am considering a full marathon over the next couple of years.

"And I'll definitely be donating any sponsorship money I receive into the Youth set-up at Peterborough."



CASH DASH: Howell and Robertson

ASLEEP ON JOB!

Sheffield United's Academy players are sleeping on the job!

Twelve bunk beds introduced last season have become a permanent feature at the training ground.

They are used during player down-time between double training sessions and there are enough bunks for 24 players.

Academy Manager Ron Reid said: "All the players benefited and used the bunks when we introduced them during the summer.

"Some training days are long and the players need a rest. We get them off their feet after lunch to relieve some stress.

"They can also read or listen to music as long as they are quiet and relaxed."

EUROPE LESSON

Southend United's youngsters gained vital experience as they came up against some of Europe's best clubs.

In Holland, the Under-14s played in the Vogido tournament alongside 10 teams including Ajax and PSV.

Academy coach Luke Hobbs says they learned plenty for the new season.

He said: "Our coaches were given a team to follow and analyse. We had to note their playing style, formation, facilities and warm-up methods.

"After the final game we interviewed the managers to find out more. This has been hugely beneficial for Southend.

"We can now introduce these new techniques into training and produce better results for all age groups."

FOREST PROVIDE UNITY FOR KIDS

Nottingham Forest are expanding the Unity project to include 12 to 16 year olds in the hope of recruiting talent for their Youth Development programme.

Unity has been using football to provide an escape from the drugs and violence problems facing older teens in the city.

But now the scheme is targeting the younger age group who will benefit from a new venue currently under construction that will contain facilities for all ages.

The club's Academy manager Nick Marshall is thrilled that the joint project with South Nottingham College is proving popular.

He said: "We have had a good response



SAFE HANDS: Pennock in goal during his time at Farnborough Town

TONY IS A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS

Swansea City's former first team goalkeeping coach Tony Pennock has taken over as Head of Youth.

The 37-year-old former stopper replaces David Moss who left the club last season.

Pennock played in The Football League with Wigan Athletic and Yeovil Town. He also played non-league for Farnborough Town and for the Wales semi-professional national side.

And after leaving his most recent post at the Welsh Football Trust he believes that his earlier experiences at Swansea

will prove extremely valuable.

He said: "I spent three years here as the goalkeeping coach so I already know everybody. I understand the way things work and people know me which will make it easier.

"This feels like my club and I am so happy to be back and working at Swansea. It is a big area and we have plenty of good players.

"There is a major competitor in Cardiff City just down the road. What we have to do is try and get players to want to play for Swansea City. That is my main priority."



MARSHALL: Serching for talent



HEADS! : The Plymouth panto cow makes a dash for it at Home Park

PLYMOUTH ARE CREAMING IT IN

Plymouth Argyle's Academy is already reaping the benefits of its partnership with Langan Farm.

Since the end of last season sales of the sponsor's ice cream at the ground have brought in approximately £1,500 for the Pilgrims' Youth department.

The Academy receives a percentage from the sale of each tub of ice cream on match days.

This has provided cash for Argyle to buy new bibs, balls and training gear to keep their young stars fully equipped.

And sponsors Langan have also come up with Kick The Cow, a fun competition for fans at half-time.

A pantomime cow (pictured) dodges, ducks and dives along the halfway line as three fans pelt its backside with footballs.

Three strikes from one lucky fan secures a years supply of 'Pilgrims Passion', the apple

crumble flavoured ice cream created just for the club.

Head of Communications Rick Cowdery admits that there have been some eye-watering moments with Kick The Cow.

He said: "This is a great way of raising money for the club and is hugely successful.

"The first time we did it was for the final home game of last season when the managing directors of Langan Farm dressed up as the cow.

"Unfortunately, one of them was hit where no man wants to be hit.

"He collapsed on the pitch and was rolling around. It brought a tear to the eye!

"But regardless of the fun everyone has had, we have managed to raise some much needed cash.

"The Academy will reap the rewards over the coming seasons, which will hopefully pave the way for the club's success."

BARRY'S UP FROM DOWN UNDER...

Barry Knowles is back at Chester City as Youth Team Coach.

The ex-Wigan defender returns to the club after a successful five week trial at the end of last season.

During the summer, Knowles spent time Down Under studying rugby league.

He said: "The visit to Australia was really eye-opening and I learnt a great deal.

"Players down there are so physically fit it is unbelievable to watch what they can do.

"It is all about touch, quality and thinking on the pitch. You can take skills from any sport and apply them to your own.

"At Chester the plan is to bring in some new techniques and also maintain the good work that the coaches are already doing."

Youth Team Manager Mark Newman is thrilled to have Knowles on board.

He said: "Barry is a super operator and has a wealth of experience to bring to this club."

RUDKIN ENJOYS GALWAY CUP WIN

Leicester City's Academy returned from their tour of Ireland as winners of the Umbro Galway Cup.

The young Foxes progressed from their Elite group with wins over Fulham, Sheffield United and MSK Zilna of Slovakia before beating Leeds in the semi-final.

Goals from Ellis Tebutt and Jacob Joyce were enough for City to beat an Irish XI 2-0 in the final.

Academy boss Jon Rudkin believes the experience will benefit all the players and coaches on the tour.

He said: "The tournament allowed the staff to assess how our young lads work together on and off the pitch.

"There were a lot of good performances throughout the tournament and the feedback I have received has been very encouraging.

"It provides us with a good indicator for the season, and will help when we decide on scholarships."

3 CLUBS TACKLE UNITED!

Three clubs' Under-18 sides spent an extended day of coaching at Manchester United's training ground.

Crewe Alexandra, Oldham Athletic and Stockport County joined a squad of Manchester United youngsters at Carrington.

The round-robin day used match situations to develop training methods and to coach the players.

Every team played each other once and the games were paused to allow the coaches to perfect the players' positioning.

Crewe Under-18s manager Neil Critchley said that the chance to learn new techniques was too good to pass up.

He said: "Going to Carrington was a fantastic opportunity. Just to be in that environment was so beneficial for the youngsters.

"We played each side once in three 40 minute full 11-a-side games.

"As a result of the day, and the games played, there was no need for a full pre-season programme.

"The players had the opportunity to develop their match fitness and improve their on-pitch awareness.

"The games were used as training exercises. The four managers got together to plan the day and then debriefed the players at the end.

"I know Paul McGuinness, the Under-18 manager at United through the Youth league. We value the opportunity to go there.

"Hopefully we will get many more opportunities to continue to learn from Manchester United and develop our Academy players."



GANNON: On the hunt for coaches

COUNTY COACH SEARCH

Stockport County are searching for B-licence coaches to join their Academy set-up.

Under FA licencing regulations each club must have one Level Three coach per age group at Centres of Excellence.

But the League 1 club is struggling to find coaches with the required badges.

Centre of Excellence manager Mick Wiblin admits the club is now getting desperate for coaches who can provide future talent for manager Jim Gannon's first team.

Wiblin said: "We have been searching for months. Ever since the end of last season the hunt has been on for new qualified coaches.

"We have advertised with the Lancashire and Cheshire FAs but still nobody has come to us with the right badges.

"We are getting a bit thin on the ground now, so hopefully some applicants will come along soon."

CRAIG IS ALL FOR THE 4x4

Some of Walsall's youngest players have been treated to innovative training methods thanks to two top coaches.

FA coach Pete Sturgess and ex-Walsall Academy coach Craig Dean spent six days with the Under-9s and Under-11s.

Dean left the Saddlers this summer to join ex-Walsall boss Richard Money at Newcastle United's academy.

The duo introduced a new coaching technique – the 4x4 system – which uses smaller numbers to increase participation.

Training is split down into groups of four of to allow a more personal coaching approach and increased time on the ball.

And Walsall's Youth Development Officer Bill Jones said: "It was fantastic to have Craig and Pete's experience.

"We picked up so much from them and the lads responded brilliantly.

"In traditional training it is impossible for everyone to have the ball at once.

"But under this system there are lots more balls involved so there is always something to do.

"It means that the kids are moving all the time and ultimately play more football which is a massive positive for them.

"Both the coaches and the players learnt new skills and techniques through seminars based on tactics and training methods."

And with the huge success of the training Jones would love to see the pair return and insists the door is always open.

He added: "We have left Pete and Craig with an open invitation to come back when ever they want. Hopefully that will be in the near future."



GIFT: Some of the kit to be sent

KIT FOR KENYA

Staff and players at Chesterfield's Centre of Excellence have lent their support to footie mad kids in Africa.

Shirts, boots and footballs from the club have been donated to the Kits for Kenya appeal, which is co-ordinated by local couple Richard and Chris Street.

The kits were sent to Mombasa, the second largest city in Kenya.

Chris said: "The youngsters in Kenya absolutely love football. Now they will be able to play with proper equipment.

"We want to sincerely thank everyone at the club for making so many young people happy."

+ CONTACT US +

To look at the work and ideals of The Football League Trust please go to: www.fltrust.co.uk

If your club wants to shout about its Youth Development initiatives please contact:

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A publication of
The Football League

Designed and Edited by
Paul Ridley Limited

www.paulridleyltd.com

Printed by The Marstan Press

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