

# WELCOME.

**Ben Smith** | Academy Manager



**We hope that everyone has settled back in to school and the routine of early mornings, school uniforms and homework!**

**F**or some, September is a month for new beginnings by starting a new school or entering GCSE exams year. With that in mind, this month's newsletter sees an introduction to new staff at the Academy and staff who have been here for a while but you don't know much about. Matty Mortimer who leads our Video Analysis is the first for our 'Spotlight On' section.

It was good to see so many of you attend our Induction evening for U9-U14 at Stadium MK earlier this month. We hope that the evening was informative and you understand that time at the Academy should be more than just football training. The Principles of being Humble, On Time and Prepared are important to our development off the pitch as much as it is on. There is more information on how this adds to the Player of the Month competition in the Player Care section of this month's newsletter.

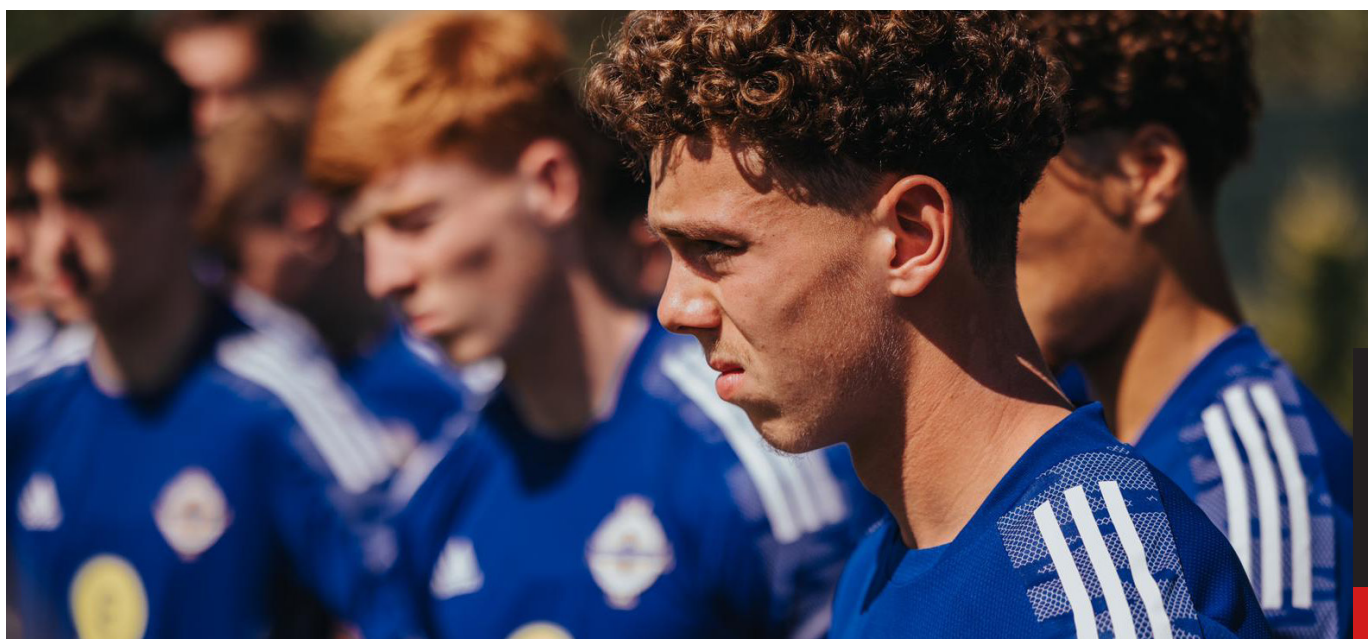
Finally, a reminder that if you have any boots or trainers still in good condition (and you haven't already passed down to younger siblings), that we are running a 'Kit Swap' initiative. We understand that many children

are going through rapid growth spurts (and the cost of footwear can be very expensive) so we are asking that any spare boots or trainers are donated for other players and families to benefit. If you do have anything to donate, please can you hand in to your age group coach. If you require footwear for your son, please get in touch with any Academy staff and we will try and support as best we can.



# COACHING.

**Stephen Payne** | Head of Academy Coaching



**Second year scholar Phoenix Scholtz has been up with the first team since pre-season after impressing in performances in both training and games. This opportunity allowed Phoenix to join the first team on their pre-season tour to Germany and then making his debut off the bench in the first game of the season vs Wrexham.**

Phoenix went away with the Northern Ireland U19s earlier this month to Italy for a week of training and a game v Italy U19s. This is what he has to say on his experience after returning from Italy and returning to MK Dons. Phoenix also picked up the Player of the Match award in the teams 3-2 loss.

"Firstly I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to represent Northern Ireland again and feel immense pride whenever I wear the shirt. I have learnt a lot over the short spell being in Italy, one thing being adapting to different environments as well as being asked to play in a different system.

A typical day looked like breakfast at 9.00, then training at 11-12:30, followed by lunch and another training session at 16:30-18.00.

A challenge I faced was going into the game with a new bunch of teammates in a new system under hot conditions.

The trip has motivated me to be even better and work even harder so I can go back and support Northern Ireland in the upcoming camps."



# MIXED AGE GROUP TOURNAMENT.

**Due to our fixture being cancelled at the weekend, the fixture was replaced by a training session. But this was not any normal training session.**

**N**ormally on a training day age groups train within their own age groups, however this time round all players in the U9, U10, U11 and U12 trained together. The session started off with ball manipulation, which was quickly followed by 'Striker School'.

Players had a variety of different finishes to explore, from one touch finish, shift and shoot, and finishing from crosses. The main outcome being for players to explore different ways to strike the ball but also a chance to develop individual techniques such as 1v1 dribbling, crossing or receiving on the half turn. During the 'Striker school', players were mixed within age groups, to allow for younger players to learn off other or the older players to be an older 'brother' and teach younger peers.

What followed was the highlight of the day which was our mix age group tournament. Players were responsible for refereeing the game, substitutions, team tactics, formations, as well as delivering the score to coaches. Bonus goals were also included if players scored during a 'power play', with some questionable music choices from the coaches signalled the start of the power play. If players replicated a type of finish or completed a task



while the music was playing, goals were doubled or even tripled. During the tournament, more than good football was played. U12s were acting as big brothers by making them feel part of the tournament and tying their shoe-laces!! The younger players were also telling the older players it's their time to be sub and demonstrating some of the Competencies from last months newsletter.

The day finished with the team of Kaizer, Jack, Sam, Pharrell, Josh, Zach and Jesse coming out on top to lift the Inaugural Foundation Phase Mixed Age Group Tournament Cup (IFPMAGTC for short)!!!!

# PLAYER CARE.

Christian Loftus | Head of Player Care

Hi, I'm Christian and have recently joined the MK Dons Academy as Head of Player Care. Football has always been a big part of my life, and as I have grown through my teenage years and into adulthood, realised just how important it is to develop away from the pitch too.



**M**y previous roles have varied in experience from helping young people to enhance their communication skills and understand conflict through mediation with family members, to developing employability skills for young people that have left education to progress in their careers.

I also have a background in coaching football and want to use my experience within, and away from football, to implement a Player Care programme that will allow young people to flourish in all aspects of their lives and equip them with the tools to continue their individual journey successfully.

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I realised just how important it is to develop away from the pitch too.

This will be done by exposing them to a wide range of opportunities and learning that will complement their football education.

I am studying for a degree in Psychology and hope to use what I learn to better understand the young people we support, though of course, the most important learning will come from the relationships we build between the staff, parents and young people along the way. I look forward to working with the players and invite parents to speak with me over the course of the season, whether that be through parent voice, or a chat on a training evening should you wish.

## PFA VISIT.

**H**opefully you all had the opportunity to meet Brent Freeman from the PFA Youth Advisory Service this month. The presentations are designed to support you and your children throughout your journey at the Club so we hope the session was helpful. If you didn't get a chance to note down the details, they're listed below;

Phone **0161 236 0575**  
Email **youthadvisory@thepfa.com**  
Website **PFA.com**

## PLAYER OF THE MONTH.

**E**ach month we will be asking for players, parents and carers to share examples of when you have seen or demonstrated any of our Principles or Competencies at school, home or with friends and family. Each age group will have a Player of the Month and one of these will go on to win Academy Player of the Month.

We appreciate that everyone's achievements will be different and handing in homework on time all week is as much of an accomplishment as gaining top grades to some. Therefore, please notify your coach of all of your successes.

## SPORTS SCIENCE AND MEDICINE .

**M**y name is Toby, I started working at MK Dons last month as a strength and conditioning coach. My role is really exciting here as I get to have contact time and coach most age group within the Academy, delivering a pathway physical performance programme and helping to develop each individual. The other part of my role is working with the first team on a daily basis.

I have already had the opportunity to meet and coach most age groups and players. I'm really looking forward to helping and developing each player through their academy journey in any way I can.





# SAFEGUARDING.

**Danuta Brophy** | Head of Education and Safeguarding



**Resilience, self-confidence and focus are crucial in enabling our young people to keep themselves safe. Resilience is key in providing young people with the ability to cope with hardship and difficulties.**

**C**arl Folke (2016) Defines resilience as “having the capacity to persist in the face of change, to continue to develop with ever changing environments”.

During my first month at the Academy, I have had to opportunity to deliver various sessions with the scholars which have highlighted Health and Safety and Safeguarding. The content delivered in these sessions link back to our competency programme and have a large focus on resilience and self-awareness.

Our sessions aim to provide young players with the skills and knowledge required to understand what to do when they have a cause for concern. Our scholars have entered a new and exciting stage of their lives. They will find themselves in situations which they aren't used to and will meet lots of new people. It is important that they know where they can seek help from if it is ever required.

It was fantastic to see how engaged the scholars were despite some topics pushing them to discuss points out of their comfort zones. These topics covered harassment, poor practice, abuse, staying safe online,

radicalisation and extremism. I'm pleased to say that the scholars really absorbed the important messages given.

EPIC Risk Management also hosted a workshop with our scholars at MK College on 13th of September. Scott Davies engaged the scholars by sharing his personal experiences and struggles with his gambling addiction during his time as a professional footballer. Scott was very honest with the young players and spotlighted football's relationship with gambling. Scott identified how his addiction affected his relationships and wellbeing. The scholars were able to discuss why athletes are at a higher risk of gambling harm and the impact this can have on the people and team around them.

I look forward to supporting all of our young people in educating themselves further on what it means to be safe. Below are some contact details that might be of support should you or anyone you know need them.

# SPOTLIGHT ON.

**Matty Mortimer** | Video Analysis



**I joined the Academy in early 2019 where I gained my first experience of working in football and analysis whilst studying in my final year at University of Bedfordshire on a Sports Science and Coaching degree. In my first year I was tasked with filming schoolboy fixtures and analysing YDP fixtures.**

I was then promoted to Under 18s in the following season as I began studying a Masters Degree in Performance Analysis at the University of Worcester.

This gave me great experience and access to working with the Scholars throughout the season. Following a restructure to the Academy during COVID, I was given the opportunity to lead the Academy Analysis provision across all age groups and oversee the programme delivery.

In November 2020, I joined the High Performance Department of FIFA as a Football Analyst. The High Performance Department aims at levelling the playing field in football around the world by improving performance through the use of analysis. On a day to day, I am responsible for collecting and analysing Individual Player Data (across the Men's and Women's competitions) which is then used for content creation and is accessible for the Nations/Clubs to utilise in training or feedback. Most recently, we have completed the delivery of the Men's and Women's World Cup in live environments where we were able to collect the data as the match was being played.

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I gained my first experience of working in football and analysis whilst studying in my final year at University of Bedfordshire on a Sports Science and Coaching degree.

In the Academy this year, the Players will have a continuation of their Analysis Programmes across all Phases with the addition of Workshops which will aim at upskilling their existing analysis skills and learning new ways to review and engage with video. We will also be running Moment of the Month this season so please get submitting your clips to your Phase Lead or Tag myself in them on VEO!

I am extremely grateful for the support the club and academy staff have given me throughout the years as I manage both roles. If anyone would like to know about career paths into analysis or have any questions about my work, please feel free to reach out to me.