

# WELCOME.

**Ben Smith** | Academy Manager



**Welcome to the July edition of the Academy Newsletter. This month, the main focus of the Academy has been Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the Academy and the education provided for staff, players and families.**

**A**s you will notice with several of the articles contained in the newsletter, staff across the Club collaborate with outside organisations to provide a curriculum of events which, spread out over the season, give exposure to important issues both in our game and in life outside of football.

It's been a great summer of sport so far, with Wimbledon, the Ashes, Tour de France, British Grand Prix and The Open Golf Championship. These competitions have evolved EDI within their own sports and continue to develop. It was great to have British winners in the Wimbledon wheelchair Men's doubles with Alfie Hewitt and Gordon Reid winning their fifth doubles title and 18th Grand Slam! As well as a double home podium at Silverstone for the first time since 1998 with Lando Norris and Lewis Hamilton.

There's still plenty of sport to keep everyone occupied between now and the start of our football season. The Women's World Cup has begun with England's Lionesses one of the favourites to win the tournament.

Furthermore, the Netball World Cup and the IAAF World Athletic Championships should also keep you entertained over the next few weeks.

Having an understanding of EDI in a changing and accessible world, is incredibly important, especially for young people growing up in today's society. What we say (both verbally and online), how we act and how we behave can have lasting consequences. There have been several cases of young sports people behaving inappropriately before they were famous, only for the media to remind others of their past once they reach public attention.

So, it's important that our behaviours and actions on the pitch, in the changing room, from the side lines, at school and at home are considered and well-intended. We want our own players, families and guests at the Academy to always feel welcome and included. If you experience, hear or see anything that requires further attention, please notify a member of staff.

# COACHING.

**Stephen Payne** | Head of Academy Coaching

**Over the past month, members of the coaching department have achieved significant milestones that they and all those associated with their learning can be proud of.**

**F**irst, I'd like to congratulate **Miguel De'Souza** who completed his year-long FA Club Placement with us. As part of the FA's Coach inclusion and diversity plan, we are one of twenty professional clubs who create a coach placement for a person from historically underrepresented groups.

**Stuart Robertson** was in-situ and went on to achieve a part time coaching role within the girls coaching programme – achieving UEFA B accreditation along the way.

This year, Miguel has worked across various age groups collecting a variety of experiences and will now be starting a new role as a part time lead age group coach for the 2023/24 season.

These experiences were recently presented by Miguel at St Georges Park in front of representatives from the participating clubs and the FA. **Luke Read**, who worked very closely with Miguel was there on behalf of the club.

We are delighted to welcome Miguel into the team on a permanent basis and look forward to seeing him develop with us next season.

We are also excited to be part of the FA club programme for a third consecutive season. Applications are already in, and we are looking forward to working with Butch Fasal and the FA across the new season to develop another coach capable of operating in an academy setting.

Another strategy MK Dons are participating in to help address under representation in professional football has been the appointment of **Jacques Maghoma**.

Jacques is a former professional footballer who is now transitioning to professional coaching. He is currently enrolled on the Premier League Professional Player to Coach Scheme (PPCS) and recently completed his UEFA A licence.

Jacques predominantly passes his knowledge and expertise on to the scholarship group, taking regular sessions and facilitating individual development and reflective practices however during the 2023-24 season he will be spending more time with the Youth Development Phase each Mondays and the Foundation Phase each Saturday mornings.

Creating a diverse work force is very important at MK Dons in meeting the needs of a diverse and broad range of players in our academy system. As a minimum, we must reflect the city and people we represent through our workforce and playing squads. Through positive action initiatives such as those with the FA and Premier League we are demonstrating our commitment to ensuring our young players have coaches, physios, and support staff in positions of trust who are not only well qualified but also experienced and capable of meeting the needs of the children in our coaching programme.

Total Coaches <i>Including Volunteers</i>	From Under-represented Groups	Total Players (U9-U18)	From Under-represented Groups
22	10 (45.45%)	117	51 (43.59%)

# PLAYER CARE.

**Natascia Bernardi** | Head of Player Care

**Football is a sport where Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are important issues. The demand for a friendly and inclusive environment for all players, coaches, officials, and spectators grows as the sport develops.**

Last month, the Foundation and Youth Development players engaged in provocative and tough conversations on racism in football, moderated by the expert voice of **Troy Townsend** – Head of Player Engagement at Kick It Out.

Troy highlighted the impact that racism is having in the life of footballers and raised awareness on the use of language, words, music in social media and how this could impact the life of players in the future. He also shared the wider spectrum of discriminatory language and how to recognise and report it, even whilst playing the game. He ended the workshop speaking about 'allyship' and how to be an 'ally' within the game.

On Saturday 24th June representatives of our U18 Academy, together with Head Coach **John Bitting**, attended the 5th Anniversary of Hopeful Vessels.

Hopeful Vessels is a charity which was created when Milton Keynes resident Ella Oyortey and other mothers found themselves feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of caring for children with disabilities or exceptional needs. The charity started as an offer of help to complete claim forms and identify further support means.

It eventually developed into workshops, conferences and advice in dealing with early intervention strategies and diagnoses of autism and ADHD.



The work of Hopeful Vessels was expanded into Ghana following a visit made in 2018 and it is now supporting 60 families in Ghana.

Next month Hopeful Vessels' **Ella Oyortey** is set to visit Ghana. MK Dons SET will be supporting this trip with donated Football Kits for the families across the country to wear.

*"I cannot thank MK Dons enough. All the children in Ghana love football and I cannot wait to see them proudly wearing the colours of MK Dons. Hopefully they will become life-long supporters"* said Mrs Oyortey.

Well done to MK Dons U18s players for getting involved in the Milton Keynes Community and for the Schoolboys in understanding how to recognise and report discrimination.



# SPORTS SCIENCE & MEDICINE.

Caitlin O'Rilley | Academy Sports Science & Medicine Co-ordinator Senior Sports Therapist



**Our Scholarship players have recently returned for Pre-season. During their first few days, the players completed a range of testing following their return from the off-season break.**

**T**he player's worked incredibly hard across several days to collect various sets of data both on and off the pitch.

On the pitch, at U15+ we have collected Maximal Aerobic Speed scores, which allows us to establish the lowest running speed at which maximal oxygen uptake occurs (VO<sub>2</sub> MAX). This data can be used to help increase the specificity of Pre-season runs.

The players also completed the Yo-Yo test which is a Maximal Aerobic fitness test. This helps us review the endurance and recovery capacity of the players. In completing these pitch-based tests at U15+, we are also able to help demonstrate comparisons by position and highlight how performance alters by age group.

Off the pitch, the Scholars completed various tests including Concussion baseline screenings, MSK Screenings and Anthropometrics. This enables us to establish a player's "norm" and identify any

asymmetries. This supports injury rehabilitation as we are aware of player's previous scores and also allows us to implement preventative works to help decrease injury risk should any abnormalities be found.

We also completed gym-based testing, looking at strength and power production. This enables us to build player-specific programmes for them to work through throughout the season, focusing on key areas of their athletic development.

We will continue to complete Academy wide, age appropriate medical and performance testing throughout the season and hope that this information becomes useful as objective data during our player's development and reviews.

We are thankful for all the staff and player's hard work so far in completing the testing and look forward to seeing how scores improve across the season.