

Football Futures Blog – Spring 2018



Welcome to the Football Futures Blog, where our Young Leaders can showcase the fantastic work they have been doing to give themselves a platform for opportunity.

Ben Woodruff – Norfolk FA Youth Council Chairman & Tasburgh United SSE Wildcats Coordinator



What is the SSE Wildcats program?

The SSE Wildcats programme is an FA initiative and will provide girls aged 5-11 regular opportunities to play football. The programme offers organised sessions in a fun and engaging environment created exclusively for girls. More than 200 clubs were piloted across England in 2017 and the scheme is now being extended to more than 900 centres with 26,000 participants across the country.

SSE Wildcats Girls' Football sessions take place on a weekly basis, either after school or at weekends, and provide a safe environment where girls can try football for the first time. SSE and The FA hope the initiative will inspire participants to engage with football, meet new friends, develop fundamental skills, learn new things and create the foundation for a lifelong love of football.

What is the aim of the Wildcats program?

The initiative is in line with The FA's Gameplan for Growth, with the target of doubling female participation in the sport by 2020. The strategy for women's and girls' football at grassroots level includes initiatives alongside SSE Wildcats, such as FA Girls' Football Week.

The aim of the centre at Tasburgh United is to give girls in the local area a chance to try football in a supportive environment, rather than feeling that football isn't the game for them. In the long term

we would love to feed our participants into our current mini soccer teams or create a new girls team in the NWGFL for the girls to play for.

How did you prepare of the launch?

To prepare for the launch at Tasburgh we created an advertising campaign comprising of regular social media posts on both Facebook and Twitter, displaying posters around the local area and several primary school assemblies. I also attended a national Wildcats training day at St Georges Park in April to give me an insight on both the practical delivery and the administration side of an SSE Wildcats centre.

On the morning of our first session I went on BBC radio Norfolk to talk about our centre and discuss what Wildcats will do for the county which in turn will generate good interest in the delivery of the Wildcats program in Norfolk.

What is your long-term goal at the Tasburgh United Wildcats centre? Why?

The long-term goal for the Tasburgh United SSE Wildcats centre is to keep the centre running alongside the clubs training season annually to keep giving girls the chance to come and try football in a fun and safe environment.

As well as this we would like to give the girls the choice of either feeding into our current mini soccer teams, or into what will be a newly formed girls' team for them to play competitive football in a girl's league. I believe that by giving them the choice to stay in the Wildcats centre, or to go into one of our teams will help keep the girls enjoying football and keep them engaged in the sport for the future. Football is for all, and at Tasburgh that is exactly what we will be offering.

What support has been offered to run the centre?

We have received lots of support from both the Norfolk FA and the FA nationally comprising of CPD, funding and equipment to help run the centre in the best way possible. As a county we have a Hive group with all of Norfolk's Wildcats centres where we share best practice, which has given us plenty of ideas to push our centre forward. As well as this the girls love the resources we have been given, especially the new footballs and the sessions to put on.

As a centre we have also signed up for girls football week, where we have received additional Disney based resources such as session designs to help promote girls football even more.

We recently delivered our first session and it was a huge success! 20 girls turned up and from the feedback they all loved it! I can't wait to get more girls along and give them access to football, seeing them all enjoying the first session made all the work worthwhile, the SSE Wildcats program is amazing, and I know all girls that have been to a centre will agree with me!

[Click here to find out more information about SSE Wildcats Centres in Norfolk](#)



“My Experience at the IberCup”

How did you prepare for the IberCup?

For the IberCup Cascais 2018 in Portugal, I didn't do any special preparation. I have a weekly training programme which I follow, however; I upped the intensity for a month before the tournament to make sure I was in good physical condition. I also watched games from past tournaments at the IberCup to see what challenges I may face going into games and how I can enhance my performance if there was a language barrier with players.

What is the IberCup? Brief History? Where did the referees come from?

The IberCup Cascais is the Easter edition of the prestigious IberCup youth football tournament series. Taking place near Lisbon, Portugal, it promises to host an array of elite teams who will compete for first place across a range of age categories. Referees over the age of 16 can apply and are then selected for the tournament. There were 50 Referees from 18 different nations at this year's tournament.

The IberCup is currently one of the most important youth football tournaments worldwide. A week of competition, fantastic experiences, and extraordinary opportunities are in a competition that sees the participation of some of the TOP professional teams in the world. Famous teams like FC Porto, SL Benfica, Sporting Lisbon, FC Zenit, Liverpool FC, Atletico de Madrid, PSG, OL Lyon, OL Marseille, Sevilla FC and Chivas Guadalajara have competed over the years.

How did you communicate with players who couldn't speak fluent English?

This was always going to be a challenge coming into the tournament. Most of the players could understand and speak a basic level of English however speaking clearly and using effective words to players was crucial to get over the message you want to them. Body language was also very key and also hand gestures were the most important in my opinion.

What was the highlight of the tournament for you and why?

The problem with going to such a fantastic tournament and enjoying the week as much as I did, it will always be hard to pick out a highlight however I would say, getting my appointment to U9 Final between Málaga CF and FC Barcelona and leading the teams out at the Dramatico stadium on the Friday evening. It was nice to take in the occasion after walking the teams out and then listening to the National Anthems. It was a great game to be a part of and I was delighted to have been appointed a Final.

How did this tournament prepare you for the Paris World Games in a few months' time?

Every tournament will be different and I will face different challenges in every game in whatever country or at whatever tournament it is. However, I think having already refereed players who do not understand English will put me in good stead going into the Paris World Games in July which I'm really looking forward to.

[Click here to find more information about our FA Football Futures Programme!](#)