**A Longwell Green Mentor’s Blog Edition One February 2016**

So, you’re reading this because you’re either a manager, coach, helper, player, parent, guardian, grandparent, brother, sister, friend……etc, etc, etc. Whichever one you are, you’re part of the Longwell Green Family, so welcome to our first blog and thanks for reading……Now, my challenge is to keep you reading and not scroll down to the more interesting picture below on your timeline. STOP, don’t look!!! I was only joking, my blog is better…honest! How many pictures of smiling cats can be interesting really ?????

My name is Nige Whittle and I am the Head Coach at our amazing club. I’m sure you’ve all heard my name, but over the next few months I want you to get to know the other mentors we have at the club. So we’ve agreed to write blogs to share what we’ve been up to. As head coach I drew the short straw and have to go first….so please bear with me as I have never done this before….ever

So, why write a blog? I hear you ask….well, we want our club to be the best…simple. How do we do that? By not just sitting back and doing what every other club does. We want to be different, lead the way and set new boundaries in grassroots football. But, we can only do that with your help.

Last year, we rolled out our club philosophy, have you seen it? If not, why not? If you’re new to the club and have joined this season, you’ll get a copy at this year’s presentation day. Our philosophy sets out what we believe in and the principles of our coaching philosophy. If you’re not trying to live and breathe the principles within our club philosophy then are you not at the right club? Have you read the news this week or watched sky sports? Grassroots football has made the headlines in a really bad way. Parents are arguing and abusing young adults or kids who are going out of their way to referee your son/daughters game…..Now, stop and think about that for a second……Really? Is that what we want for our club or any club for that matter? To abuse a young referee or to demonstrate aggressive behaviour because your child has lost a game of football is complete and total madness.

Luckily, we’re pretty good at our club and we have a very good reputation in the region for our discipline, so we should take great satisfaction in that, but I want more! I want us to stop being obsessed with winning the game and remember that less than 1% of grassroots players will ever become a professional football player. More importantly 50% of them will quit around the age of 16. When asked why they quit, the answer was “pressure from parents and coaches”. Guess, what happens next? They start playing again when they’re around 19-20, when asked why, the answer, “So I can enjoy the having a game with my mates and have a beer after the game”. Most kids and young adults play football to be with their mates…..not to play for Manchester United or Liverpool.

So, let them play. Take the shackles off. Release the pressure and stop living your dreams through your kids. Only when a flower is allowed to bloom will it reach the sun…

Anyhow, here’s what I have been up to in the last few weeks. On the 7th and 8th February I completed days 11 and 12 of the Youth Module. It’s taken me just under a year to complete the 3 modules, and I am now completing my 10 sessions to be assessed for the full Youth Certificate. I recommend anyone who coaches children to take these modules, they are so relevant and I am a better coach for taking them. Just let me or Paul Griffin know if you are interested and the club will help fund it for you.

As you may know, I coach our U9’s in the main. In the last few weeks, I have also been working with our U12 Boys. We started with a session on Counter Attacking and built the session around whole, part, whole which basically means a game to start with no interventions, followed by a coached session, and finally a controlled game at the end. This week we worked on creating space in midfield. The boys have been excellent and seemed to be enjoying it. They are an excellent team with some really talented individuals. Next week we will be working on timing the perfect forward run.

This week, I started working with the U13 Girls (White). As a club mentor my job is to support and encourage other coaches and managers to help improve the coaching we provide. I started by observing the session and between myself and the coaches, we came up with a few suggestions on how we could improve next week’s session. Over the next few weeks, we’ll work together and the end result will be the girls will benefit from improved coaching. If anyone would like any support or mentoring, please contact me and one of our mentors will come and help.

Some of you will also have seen me with my camera taking pictures of your sessions. We’re in the process of producing a club promotional video and I hope to have this ready to share by the end of March. Thanks to everyone who has supported this and agreed to take part.

Well that’s enough from me, Helen has just come home from work so it’s time to say hello. I hope you have found my first blog interesting, please feel free to feedback. Good or bad, ways to improve, we would really like to keep these going, but only if you are interested in reading them.

Happy Reading

Nige