



English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

A message from the Chairman

REMINDERS AND USEFUL DATES

ESFA AGM 9th July

ESFA U11 Primary Finals at CBS Arena Coventry- Friday 6th May

ESFA National Finals at Stoke City FC- Sunday 8th May to Saturday 14th May

PlayStation Schools' Cup National Finals at West Bromwich Albion FC- Monday 23rd May to Thursday 26 May

I start this edition of membership matters reflecting on another completed season of Bob Docherty and Centenary Shield competitions. Although neither finished quite as we would have wished, it has been an honour and genuine pleasure to spend time with the incredible young people who have represented our association on the international stage. It has also been a valuable experience to visit other associations and to share in the mutual learning that takes place at such times. I must also recognise the work, willingness and passion shown by all at Spennymoor Town FC, Eastleigh FC and Newcastle University who hosted our games on home soil, making them such special occasions for our players and their families. As always, huge amounts of work goes on behind the scenes from council colleagues, ESFA staff and the wider schools' football family to make these events what they are and I would like to publicly acknowledge the tireless work and organisation of Owen Aiston, Alan Johnson and Gavin Rusling who organised our home internationals and tournaments this season.

It would be remiss of me to finish this section without recognising and celebrating the amazing contributions that have been made over the last five and six years respectively by Richy Alderson (U18 Team Manager) and Tony Harris (U18 Sports Therapist) who both retired from their positions following the final game of the season in Wales; our association along with all the young people with whom you have worked are indebted to your expertise, professionalism and selfless work over this time. You have been incredible, thank you!

Looking forward, there is still so much to be excited about before this season closes. Our U15 international squad will play Scotland Schools' FA on May 15th in an invitational game to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the lifting of the ban on women playing football. The game will take place at the same Ravenscraig Stadium that the first game after the ban (also Scotland v England) was played in. It promises to be a very special and memorable occasion and one that we are delighted and humbled to be taking part in.

The national schools' competition finals are imminent with venues such as Coventry City FC, Stoke City FC and West Bromwich Albion FC having been secured to ensure the players involved have a fitting and memorable climax to their successful seasons. As with the international programme, so much hard work goes on throughout the season and none more-so than in the coming weeks and I would like to recognise the contribution of the ESFA office staff and those in our competitions sub-committee in particular; thank you!

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A message from the Chairman (Continued)

Since the last edition of Membership Matters, I hope you will agree that we have continued to work with increased consultation and collaboration with membership and that this has resulted in a better understanding from everyone. My commitment to continue this remains and I sincerely hope this results in improved outcomes for all.

I would like to close this edition's address by returning to our international players and reflecting on the way in which they have represented themselves, their families, the ESFA and their country during their time with us. To a person they have been the best ambassadors we could have hoped for. I spoke to them all at the respective shirt presentations to outline the ethos and values of our association and the expectations placed upon them. I talked of them carrying the reputation of so many people and how their conduct and behaviour was at least as important off the field as it was on the field. They have risen to this responsibility impeccably wherever they have been and I wish them all every success in their futures regardless of what path they take.

Particular examples include the respect and manners shown, as standard, to staff and residents in hotels; the girls' squad sitting interspersed in the hotel with their new friends from the Northern Ireland Schools' FA squad to watch the senior Northern Ireland versus Lionesses game and the manner with which they talked with interest and pride to all who enquired about their squad and the ESFA; the way the boys celebrated with fans young and old on the pitch at Spennymoor Town FC after the impressive display and result against Scotland and also how they inspired and interacted with the children of Durham Johnson School where they trained prior to their game.

There are so many other examples I could talk of but whether international player; county, district or school player; representative football or national competition; early rounds or finals, this is the standard we expect of our young people and the standard set by our international squads could not have been better. They have been a real example not only to young people and football but to wider society as a whole.

Mark Hignett,
ESFA Chairman 2021/22

Safeguarding Awareness for Parents & Carers

Following the publication of the FA Safeguarding Strategy, 'Building an ever-safer culture', they are finalising launch plans to launch their online Safeguarding Awareness for Parents & Carers course.

This new course will be free and will take up to 30 minutes to complete. The course will officially launch on National Children's Day UK on Sunday 15th May.



ESFA Spotlight On

Lloyd Wilson – Governance Manager



Hello all,

I have been involved in football for around 12 years since commencing my journey as a referee, where I have progressed from grassroots to the senior game in addition to having been elected to a variety of different roles within the referees' association management/ executive committee. This included the prestigious positions of President and Vice President, both of which were a real honour to accept. I was also appointed as a Referee Coach, which involved working with many new recruits over the years to help enhance the recruitment and retention strategy – often difficult in this area of football.

The irony of the story is, I really started my footballing journey not being hugely interested in football, with much of the motivation coming from my father. The issue partly being my ability with the ball at my foot was - well, interesting at best – mistimed tackles, miskicks and various other poor skills were often on show! My father played at a good level and was much more passionate than I was to get involved in the game, so after years of encouragement from him, I commenced my journey as a referee, often asking myself 'what on earth am I thinking'? I started out as a grassroots referee and very quickly was promoted to the senior game of which I am extremely grateful for. I have been appointed to a variety of finals, international tournaments, international schools' games, and national schools' finals along with being a regular in the SPFL. Still to this day, I surprise myself that I have progressed to category 1 status, not because I have had disastrous performances but because I never started out with any specific goal in mind other than to keep fit and enjoy it. Reaching category 1 always seemed like something so unachievable. However, as time has gone on, refereeing has become a massive part of my life. I have made sacrifices to ensure I am available for games, kept up with fitness demands, scrutinised and reflected on my performance and kept abreast of the ever-developing changes to the game, particularly with the introduction of Video Assistant Referee (VAR).

In addition to my refereeing career, I have successfully completed undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. I have also worked in the field of Further Education and Social Care, where I gained invaluable experience - primarily in the field of safeguarding and the importance around working with partners to ensure robust assessment and positive outcomes. All skills that I believe will help me in my new role as Governance Manager with the ESFA. I am also keen to progress a refereeing strategy, with the invaluable support of Sarah Kearney, our PR, Marketing & Communications Manager.

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ESFA Spotlight On (Continued)

Furthermore, I have arranged to meet with our PGMOL partners discuss how we can utilise their organisation and the country's top officials, to show why officiating in Schools' Football undoubtedly contributes to experiences as a match official, thus increasing prospects of promotion. I am also keen to support the organisation's vision and efforts in ensuring that Schools' Football plays its part in football as a whole, irrespective of background or indeed identity. I hope to be able to work closely with our Council Members and membership to help continue to build culture within the sport we love.

I am excited to learn more about the administrative side of football and of course, to help Andrea and the team continue to drive the ESFA forward with new ideas and ambitions.

I look forward to meeting you all at some point in the future.

Gavin Rusling - Council Member for the South West



As we come to the end of the season, it is a time to reflect on what has been my second year as a member of Council. Following 25 years of involvement at school, district and county level within Dorset, I was honoured to be approached and asked to consider becoming a member of the ESFA Council. With the backing of several colleagues who were willing to step up to support the infrastructure within Dorset, I felt confident that the time was right to play a role in supporting the ESFA in their mission to deliver as many opportunities, to as many young people as possible through football.

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ESFA Spotlight On (Continued)

As well as attending main council meetings, I have been involved in two committees, those being Representative and the newly formed Governance Committee. The return of the International programme has taken me around the South West to assist with the trials process for both the U18 Boys and the U15 Girls squads and it was a real pleasure to see some of those players who started back in the Autumn at the first phase in the region, make it all the way to the final squads and earn their caps.

With one of the Internationals being hosted at Eastleigh FC, it was my role as the local Council member to become the event organiser. Over the past 6 months, I have worked with the IPC, Eastleigh FC, the Republic of Ireland Schools FA and our sponsors, as well as staff members from Head Office to help deliver an experience that the players from both sides would remember and value. To see over 100 people from a range of backgrounds in the hospitality lounge pre-match, and then to hear the buzz of over 1000 spectators in the ground and end the night with the cap presentation for the England squad, was an evening I will not forget in a hurry.

I have also worked closely with my fellow Council colleagues from the South West in helping deliver competitions for county representative teams, alongside the coordination of a successful Primary Finals day in early April.

As we move towards the 2022-23 academic year, I am looking forward to using my experiences from this season to support those hosting Internationals. I am also looking to ensure the Representative committee works to support all those playing representative football at County and District level as well as International, with a particular focus on developing the opportunities for girls at District level. I am in little doubt that the role of the Governance Committee will also grow and I am determined that our links with key external agencies are maintained and enhanced where possible. This will be a real challenge as we lose some very experienced members from Council this summer.

National finals at Stoke City

Thank you to those of you who have used your social media channels to help publicise our national finals. Please could I ask that any shots of Stoke City's ground avoid publication of their main sponsor, which is as betting company and not therefore suitable for promoting to our audiences.





ESFA National Finals

ESFA National final season kicks off on Friday 6th May with the ESFA U11 Primary Finals taking place at the CBS Arena in Coventry. Details of this event can be found [here](#).

We then host the ESFA Champions Cup Finals, the U16-U18 Schools' Cup competitions and the ESFA Super League at Stoke City FC from Sunday 8th May to Saturday 14th May. All the information on these events, including a fixture schedule and ticket links can be found [here](#).

The PlayStation Schools' Cup finals will be taking place at West Bromwich Albion FC from Saturday 23rd May to Thursday 26th May. More details on this event can be found [here](#).

If any District or County secretaries would like to attend any national final events, entry is free and no ticket is required for entry. Unfortunately, we cannot offer hospitality to county and district personnel for this season's ESFA national finals.



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