

GPSFA



The History & Development of Gloucester Primary Schools' F.A.

Keith Steadman traces the History & Development of Gloucester PSFA from its humble beginnings in 1957/58 to the present day

FOUNDED
1958

Longlevens Junior School

Home pitch
Hallowed turf

GPSFA 4-0 Cheltenham

First game
D.Mace x3, R.Wallace x1

1000+ games

59 Seasons

... and counting

The Gloucester Primary Schools' Football Association (GPSFA) was formed as a separate association at a meeting held on Friday 10 January 1958, although not all 16 members were in favour of the independent running of primary and secondary schools' football. In that first season the total income was just £24-9s-6d (£24.47), the bulk of which was a 15 Guinea (£15.75) grant from Gloucester City FC Supporters Club, so it is rather fitting that many ex-GPSFA boys have gone on to play with distinction for the City club including Tom Webb, the appearance record holder.

Prior to 1958 there had been an annual fixture with local rivals Cheltenham which continued for another 16 years before a break of 2 seasons, Gloucester just edging those early encounters by 8 wins to 6, with 2 draws. The first GPSFA game was played on 29th March 1958 on the Market Street pitch

in Cheltenham which was notoriously small, even for primary school games. The result was a 4-0 win for Gloucester with a hat-trick for D. Mace of London Road School, while the other goal was scored by R.Wallace of Coney Hill. In Gloucester, the Sutgrove playing field (now Ribston Hall), Coney Hill and Elmbridge Schools were often used as venues, each one being considerably larger than Market Street. Within a couple of seasons the search was on for more opponents and South Gloucestershire were entertained for the first time in 1959/60, the Bristol boys being beaten 3-2. In those very early days the AGM of the Association discussed at length the cost of hiring a coach to Bristol, so 50-odd years on little has changed. In 1961/62 Dursley joined the fixture list and that same season the City boys played out their first drawn game; inevitably the opponents were Cheltenham.

The two fixtures against Cheltenham and Dursley continued until 1968/69 when Stroud and Thornbury were added to the schedule. By this season Dursley had been on the wrong end of double figure scorelines on no fewer than 4 occasions. In one of those games Andy Coburn (later to become Chairman of Forest Green Rovers FC) of St.Peter's scored 6 goals and ironically 27 years later his son Jeremy played and scored against Gloucester for Dursley. During the sixties the team was selected from boys nominated by their schools; usually 11 were chosen with 3 reserves selected from on average 9 different schools, some of which, like London Road and Lower Tuffley, no longer exist. The 1968/69 season was obviously a highlight because all 5 games were won with 29 goals scored and only 5 conceded. This was the only season

prior to 1986/87 that 5 games were played; usually it was only 3 or 4.

Press reports of games varied considerably, but quite often the team photograph found its way into The Citizen, although the boys' names were not always printed in the early accounts. Goal scorers were often referred to by their surnames only, though initials were sometimes used, and it took until the mid-eighties to learn that boys had first names as well.

In the early seventies the County Championship became established with Severnside, Cheltenham and Stroud forming the opposition, Dursley having temporarily retired from the fray. In the latter part of the decade Tewkesbury began to appear in the Championships and Dursley re-emerged, but the last game with Severnside was played in

1974/75. In that year's Schools' KO Cup Final Robinswood defeated a Churchdown side containing Guy Whittingham who went on to score many goals in the Premiership for Sheffield Wednesday, but interestingly he did not play in the City team.

The early eighties brought the goal scoring prowess of Dean Enon of Robinswood who scored all 6 goals against Tewkesbury in 1980/81 and followed it up by scoring all 4 goals for his school in the KO Cup Final that year. It was also the first time that a Gloucester school had reached the finals of the English Schools' FA six-a-side competition and it was Martyn Ellis who led out the Harewood team captained by Neil Willerton at Wembley Stadium on that historic day.



At the beginning of the 1986/87 season it was decided that GPSFA would enter the Witney Cup and commence playing teams from outside the County. The first opponents from across the border were Mid Oxfordshire, the start of a rivalry with Mid Oxon which lasted many years. The season ended with a defeat by Reading in the semi-final of the Witney Cup and the Gloucester goalkeeper displaying his clear ball handling skills that day was the future England Rugby Union international Phil Greening, while in midfield was a promising young player called Neil Mustoe

later to become an England Youth international and a professional with Manchester United, Wigan Athletic, Cambridge United and latterly Gloucester City.

In 1987/88 the Southern Counties Cup was entered for the first time and the fixture list grew to 16 games including the first visit by the then Welsh Under 11 Champions Deeside, the game ending in a 3-3 draw. The next season saw the creation of the Cotswold League which featured encounters with many regular opponents and ended with the runners-up spot being

secured. A share in the Gloucestershire County Championship made for a successful season. The year also saw the formation of the B team so that more players could be given an opportunity to play representative football, the first game resulting in a defeat by Solihull B.

The 1989/90 season saw the fixture list rise to 39 games with the Cotswold League title coming to the city for the first time and the County Championship being won outright, though sadly the last of the 33 games with Cheltenham was played

during this campaign. 1989/90 also saw the first visit to the Jersey Primary Schools' Festival of Football and at the end of the week first place was achieved with a 2-0 win over Thurrock. Two members of that side were Wayne Thomas and Matthew Gregg, each of whom went on to play for a number of football league clubs. Wayne is to date GPSFA's only million pound player, while Matthew is the only ex-player to appear in the Champions League (for Bohemians of Ireland).

The next season saw a staggering 46 games played, a figure which was largely due to reaching both the Southern Counties and Witney Cup finals. The former was won for the first time with victory over High Wycombe, but only after needing 3 games to get past Oxford City in the semi-finals. This highly successful

side lost only 4 games and acquired a considerable amount of silverware over the course of the season. The games with Deeside brought Shayne Bradley (Southampton, Mansfield Town and Chesterfield) and Michael Owen (Liverpool, Newcastle Utd. and Manchester Utd.) into opposition and who would have guessed that 4 seasons later they would form a striking partnership for England Schools' U15s. By now the B team fixture list had risen to 17 games and the B team version of the County Championship had been won.

The 1991/92 season saw both sides retain their respective County titles with 100% records. There then followed a season of triumphs on the field with the A team winning the Cotswold League and the Southern Counties Cup Final against Newham 3-2 on a memorable night

at Palmer Park in Reading. This win was truly remarkable because the Newham goalscorer Amos Foyewa was a relative giant (much taller than his strike partner, one Jermain Defoe) when compared to the Gloucester side and Kevin Rogers, the scorer of the winning goal, went through most of the day having forgotten not only his boots, but also that the final was being played on that day at all! The B team retained its County title, were runners-up in the Cotswold B League and embarked on their first tour of Devon and Cornwall.

In 1993/94 the A team took the BP Mid-West League title for the first time. The year that followed was one of highs and lows; it took until well into November to achieve a first win but later in the season saw a spell of 8 consecutive victories. The Southern Counties Cup Final



was reached again (going down 0-1 to Gravesham), third place was secured in Jersey and there was a rare win over Flintshire, the new name for old rivals Deeside. The B team won the full County title and entered the Webster Shield league for the first time. By now the length of the fixture list had stabilised, with the A team playing between 30 and 35 games and the B team contesting about 10 fewer, but their opposition included a growing number of A sides.

1995/96 was another year of triumphs and near misses. It was the

year that Jade Johnson-Manley became the first girl to play for the A side. The BP Mid-West and Cotswold League titles were won and the annual visit to the Jersey Festival ended with the team in first place out of an entry of 16. Both major Cup semi-finals were also reached. The B team continued its steady progress in the Webster Shield and the County title was retained once more.

The 1996/97 season saw the B team lift the Webster Shield title for the first time, retain the County Cup and venture to the North East to

take part in the North Tyneside Festival of Football, returning with 3 wins over associations who numbered amongst their old boys, Alan Shearer and Bryan Robson. The A team finished their season strongly with runners-up spots in both their leagues and a last game win at powerful Manchester.

1997/98 saw the fortieth anniversary of the formation of the association and events included a dinner attended by over 100 guests, including the principal speaker Bobby Gould, the then Wales Team Manager. On the field the A side

saved its best results for the Jersey Festival and the B team remained unbeaten at the North Tyneside Festival.

The 1998/99 season saw the A team put together a run of 17 wins interrupted only by a goalless draw at St.Albans. This run helped towards a highly successful campaign and in most competitions the team ended up in the number two slot. The B squad regained the Webster Shield with what proved to be a free scoring side.

1999/2000 brought us the Millenium Dome and a season of change. Only Year Six pupils could play eleven-a-side district football, so the association formed an Under Ten squad to play seven-a-side games in addition to retaining the two Under 11 sides. All the inter school leagues and cups became seven-a-side

competitions. A Girls' District side was formed for the first time along with girls' inter-school leagues and cups, though this did not stop girls from also representing their schools in the established competitions. The District A and B sides again produced outstanding performances at the end of season festivals, while the B team retained the Webster Shield following a great performance and eventual 3-2 win against Bristol.

The 2000/01 season saw both the A and B squads sharing the titles of their respective league competitions. Both sides were free scoring with the B's having a long unbeaten run in mid-season. The A's, having lost 9 of their first 16 games, then went on to lose only 3 more times during the second half of the season and were rewarded with fourth place at the Jersey

Festival. This was the year that the Girls' representative squad entered competitive football for the first time by joining the Staffordshire League (the nearest to Gloucester!) and finished as runners-up. Grace McCatty completed a unique treble by making representative appearances for all three squads. Grace has since twice played in the Womens' FA Cup Final, while it was also pleasing to see several old boys making the headlines for Football League clubs over the course of the campaign. At the end of the season, Bob Owen and Lin Harvey completed 500 games in charge of the A Squad, a milestone which represents, amongst other things, considerable commitment which was mirrored by all the players on the field.

Season 2001/02, the forty-fifth of the association, saw 5



representative squads take to the field. The A Squad finished joint winners of their League and came out on top at the Jersey Festival following a skilful and strong week-long performance. Just one defeat in their final dozen games pointed to a side with both stamina and determination. The B Squad now had a formidable fixture list which included 3 strong A squads in the North Tyneside Festival and their results did them credit in such company. Girls' football continued to develop with skill levels rising noticeably and their season culminated with the A Team

winning the Staffordshire League title.

2002/03 saw the A and B Squads play a total of 70 games, an indication of a successful season. The A team won the Cotswold League, were semi-finalists in the Witney Cup and in mid-May in the driving rain at Clarence Park defeated St. Albans 2-1 in the final of the Southern Counties Cup. The B team had their second longest season, achieving the runners-up spot in both their leagues and produced another fine performance at the North Tyneside Festival. The

Girls' Squad competed in the Mowbray-Staley Shield / Staffordshire League.

Both the A and B squads found goals hard to come by during the 2003/04 campaign. The A side conceded a little over a goal a game, so most matches proved to be very tight encounters including 4 games against Orpington from Kent. Third place was achieved in a very competitive Cotswold League which now featured most of the stronger associations in the west. The B Squad just missed out on sharing the County title and did

manage to share 10 goals with South Birmingham in what can best be described as 'one of those games'.

The 2004/05 season saw both the A and B squads scoring at an average of over 3 goals a game. The A side reached the final of the Southern Counties Cup and won all their games at the Jersey Festival to secure top spot. Both squads won their respective Cotswold Leagues and the B team also won the Webster Shield by beating Bristol B 1-0 in the Play-off Final. The Mowbray-Staley Shield and the Staffordshire League were won by the Girls' Squad. In the ESFA Six-a-Side competitions for individual schools, the association provided both the boys' and girls' Gloucestershire County Champions, as Kingsholm and Hardwicke each won their respective titles to

complete a season which can best be summed up as strength in depth at all levels. Whilst in Jersey, Brian Stait saw the one thousandth A/B game played under his Chairmanship, and he had watched the vast majority of them.

In 2005/06 we saw both Squads have very enjoyable seasons both on and off the field. The A side followed an excellent time at the Jersey Festival by winning the Witney Cup at the Association's twentieth attempt, thanks to a 4-1 final win over Solihull. The B Squad hit the top of the Cotswold B Team League at the end of the season and followed this by retaining the Webster Shield after a 2-1 win over their South Gloucestershire counterparts. Both finals were exciting encounters on large pitches and on each occasion the Gloucester side came out after half

time and just got stronger and stronger as the game went on.

2006/07 was a very successful fiftieth season for the independent Gloucester Primary Schools' FA. The association had its first dedicated set of changing rooms following the summer transformation of part of a storage building at Longlevens, while the Cotswold League A and B team titles were won. In the cups the A Side reached the final of Southern Counties Cup, losing by the only goal to Wandsworth. The B side lost by the odd goal in five to Sutton Coldfield in the Webster Shield play-off and took a half share in the County Cup following a 1-1 draw with South Gloucestershire. On the individual front Zack Kotwica scored an incredible 66 goals for the A side over the course of the campaign's 35 games.



2007/08 saw the season start with the new catering facilities in use at Longlevens. The A Squad reached the final of the Witney Cup, losing 1-2 to Solihull and were narrowly beaten into second place in the Cotswold League. The B Squad were a free scoring side equalling the then highest number of goals scored in a season and in 3 games fewer than the 2002/03 team. They retained their Cotswold B title and narrowly lost out on a place in the Webster Shield Final. Good performances were also seen from the Under-10 and Girls' Squads. Dinglewell became only the second

Gloucester school to reach the National Finals of an ESFA competition. They were the runners-up in the Large Schools' 7-a-sides, losing 1-2 to a school from Mansfield in the final at the new Wembley Stadium.

In 2008/09 the A Squad completed a 40 game season with only 4 losses and scored 179 goals, with Edjida Mbunga contributing 63. The Southern Counties Cup was won for a record fourth time, the Berkshire League by winning every game and the Cotswold League without losing a game. One of the highlights of the

season was playing the Liverpool FC Academy on Merseyside. The B Squad enjoyed a successful season which culminated in the winning of the Webster Shield after extra time and penalties in a game against a strong Sutton Coldfield side. In the ESFA Inter District 7-a-side competition the B Squad reached the South-West Finals and were unbeaten in 7 games including winning the County title. The Development and Girls' Squads continued to expand their fixture lists, the Girls finishing with an impressive away win at Newbury. For the second year running a

Gloucester school side reached Wembley in the Primary Schools' 7-a-side competition. In the eventual final, Harewood defeated Manor Farm Community Junior School from Hertfordshire 3-1 to become the first-ever Gloucester school to be crowned national champions.

The 2009/10 season saw the coldest winter spell for many years and the narrow avoidance of more than one travel difficulty. The A Squad reached the Witney Cup Final, losing 1-5 to South Gloucestershire. Mid-table positions were secured in both the Cotswold and Berkshire Leagues, while the B Squad achieved an association first by playing two games in the Republic of Ireland. With fewer B Teams operating around the country, the majority of their games were played against A Squads and many good performances were seen against

some strong opposition. Rob Lloyd and Stuart White stood down at the end of the season after eight years of guiding the B Squad through 217 games and enjoying an overall winning record. The Girls' and Under 10 Squads continued to thrive with the latter having a very challenging fixture list.

Season 2010/11 saw both the A and B teams have very similar playing records in percentage terms and both averaged just over three goals a game. The A squad scored 104 goals and recorded strong finishes in both the Cotswold and Berkshire Leagues. During the Jersey Festival they faced a Gloucester first, the Haka, performed by the Western Bay of Plenty side from New Zealand. With a new management team comprising Messrs Wixey, Lewis, Harris and Best, the B Squad scored a record 88 goals in losing

only 4 of their 29 fixtures (17 against A teams) and again reached the ESFA Inter District 7-a-side South-West Regional Finals. After several very close encounters they finished runners-up in both the Midland Challenge and Geoff Richards Memorial Trophies. The Girls' and Under 10 Squads again had successful seasons with several close encounters.

2011/12, and the A team shared the Berkshire League title and went down narrowly to the hosts in the First Place play-off in the Jersey Festival. The Witney Cup Final saw a narrow 1-2 defeat by Chiltern and South Bucks at Thatcham Town, while together with the B Team a share in the Cotswold League title was secured. The B side itself played a record 32 games (20 against A teams) and remained unbeaten for the second year running against



fellow B squads. A second undefeated season in the Geoff Richards Memorial Trophy League saw the side lift the title for the first time and an unbeaten trip to the North Tyneside Festival was another notable achievement. The Girls' and Under 10 Development Squads continued to thrive with each side recording just a single loss on their results list.

2012/13 was the last season of eleven-a-side games at district level. The A Team made its first visit to the North Tyneside Festival and, as with much of their season, they

were involved in three close games. They scored in all 35 games played and finished runner-up in the Cotswold League, third in the Berkshire League and were semi-finalists in the Southern Counties Cup. The B team scored a record 91 goals in 30 outings and took second place in the Geoff Richards Memorial Trophy League, together with a share of the County Cup. At the North Tyneside Festival all three games were won with clean sheets. The Under 10 Development Squad finished their season strongly, being unbeaten after Christmas. It was five wins out of six for the Girls'

Squad which brought a fitting close to the four-year tenure of manager Tom Brunsdon. The season also saw Gloucester school Elmbridge reach the national finals of the Primary Schools' 7-a-side competition which were held at The Hive, Barnet. In the National Final they lost 1-2 to Edmund Waller Primary School from Lewisham.

The 2013/14 season saw nine-a-side games at district level with smaller pitches and goals. Both A and B teams took part in the Jersey Festival with the A team reaching the first place play-off. Two wins on

the last day of the season by the A team secured the Cotswold League title for Gloucester. The B team started the season with ten straight victories and went on to win the Geoff Richards Memorial Trophy League for the second time. They also played a record 34 games and scored over a hundred goals for the first time, Tyler Maden and Bradley Bevan each hitting the 30 goal mark. The Girls' Squad won all eight of its fixtures, scoring 70 goals and conceding only 6, while the Under 10 Development Squad lost their first game and then went on to win their remaining six fixtures.

In 2014/15 the runners-up position was secured in the Cotswold League. The B team played a record 37 games and won a share of the new Cotswold Challenge Shield. The A team reached the Southern Counties Cup Final where they were

narrowly beaten by Portsmouth by the odd goal in nine. Goal difference was enough to see the team miss out on the runners-up spot in the Berkshire League. The Girls' Squad completed a second unbeaten season to make it 20 wins on the trot with 139 goals scored. Kiannah Hawkins-Sheere with 33 goals in 12 games headed the scoring charts. Again the Under 10 Development Squad lost only one of their 7 games and averaged over 5 goals a game. The four sides between them played 94 games which allowed nearly 50 players to experience representative football.

In 2015/16, the city A Squad finished runners up in the Cotswold League, achieved fourth place at the Jersey Festival, won the EW Trophy and shared the GS Cup. Finlay Jenner (Dinglewell) netted 44 times to establish himself as the squad's all-

time third highest goalscorer. The B Side won the Geoff Richards League for the third time and also lifted the Cotswold Challenge Shield. Max Weatherley (Dinglewell) hit 27 goals, the first time the season's highest scorer from both squads attended the same school. Both A & B teams reached the semi finals of the Shires Cup. The Girls' Squad took part in their first 'tour', while they and the Development Side each continued to flourish to complete yet another successful and hugely enjoyable all-round GPSFA season.



These latter seasons have seen the teams travel by aircraft, coach, ferry, car, train, minibus and underground train and for many, a number of these were new and exciting experiences. Add to this the exploring of caves, off-road cycling visits to top football grounds/matches, many new places visited and the making of new friends; clearly a GPSFA season has come a long way since the biennial trip to Cheltenham.

Through a season individual skills improve and those individuals become a team. Gloucester sides are renowned for having a great team spirit and their ability to develop as teams through the year, both on and off the field. To adequately measure this is impossible, but you only have to watch the performances each year at the Jersey and North Tyneside Easter Festivals to see the individual and team advances made since the start of the various seasons. The all-round reputation of Gloucester teams at the Festivals is exceptionally high and reflects well

on all those involved.

Over the last 58 seasons the City representative side has principally had five managers / management teams; Frank Stephenson (8 seasons), Don Bewley (15), Rob Morris (4), Bob Owen / Lin Harvey (21) with assistance from Martyn Ellis, Stuart Eckford and Kevin Howie and Bob Owen / Steve Wilson (10), with Paul Basford having joined the team in 2013. The 2013/14 campaign was number 31 for Bob Owen which is over half of the association's 58 seasons and a current total of 990 games as until

manager.

Ken Blackburn completed 10 years in charge of the B team, while his original partner Andy Hainsworth was at the joint helm for 5 years. The coaching team of Rob Lloyd and Stuart White completed eight seasons with the B side. Jason Brentley/Paul Wixey/Stuart Ratcliffe and Ann Hanson/Tom Brunsdon have over the last decade taken the lead in looking after the Under 10 and Girls' Squads respectively. Brian Stait was Chairman of the Association for a total of 24 years and remained its elder statesman amongst the best at this level in the country. Overall the stature of the Association has never been higher within Primary Schools' football nationally, but above all it is about providing enjoyment and opportunities for so many youngsters, who in turn regularly

until his death in 2013. This continuity and dedication has contributed greatly towards the very sound performances given by the sides over the years. The B side management of Messrs. Wixey and Harris, with assistance from Matt Best and Lewis Cook in the first three seasons, must be congratulated on their first five seasons and no doubt there will be many more given the above track records.

The GPSFA is fortunate to have nearly twenty people regularly involved in ensuring that its activities continue to be successful. This strength in depth is the envy of many other associations, but above all it helps in providing an organised and high level football experience for many primary school children, while the facilities and the quality of the pitch at Longlevens now put it

amongst the best at this level in the country. Overall the stature of the Association has never been higher within Primary Schools' football nationally, but above all it is about providing enjoyment and opportunities for so many youngsters, who in turn regularly become tremendous ambassadors for the City of Gloucester.

Written by The Chairman
Keith Steadman

