

Finlay Elliott

Following a successful season for Highnam Primary School in Year 5, I was nominated for the GPSFA trials ahead of the 2010/11 season. Playing short, small-sided games with a focus on team work and enjoyment, the trials were an experience which I enjoyed greatly.

The coaches were friendly and keen to give everyone as much opportunity to impress as possible.

A few days after the final trial, I sat nervously awaiting the post, and was very pleased when I discovered that I was going to be playing for the Gloucester 'B' Team for the next year. However it was not until the team meeting at Robinswood School that I really understood how brilliant this opportunity was. Games versus teams across the country and tours of Bassetlaw, London and North Tyneside were not what I had expected.

Before we could get our feet to a football though, we had to engage in a team building day in the Forest of Dean where deep-level caving was followed by cycling and kwik-cricket. The team enjoyed the day and it was a good opportunity to begin to make some new friends. Another day together for pre-season training really began to build some bonds between the team as we established our playing style. This training was put to good use as we beat Telford 3-1 in our first game.

Overall our season was extremely successful, losing only four games, despite playing strong 'A' team sides such as Bristol and Wolverhampton. We finished the year with a very pleasing 17 wins and 8 draws. This was a good boost for the coaching team which had only formed at the beginning of the season.

Our first tour was a single-night trip to Bassetlaw where we played Bassetlaw and Derby. The floodlit game versus Bassetlaw in torrential rain is a game which I will never forget. As part of the tour we also went to watch Derby County win 4-0 at the 33,000 capacity Pride Park. Walking around the pitch before the game was a brilliant and unique experience, despite getting booed by the crowd once they heard that we had beaten Derby Schools 2-0 that morning!

My most memorable game came soon after our first tour and was a fixture versus a strong Bristol outfit on a 3G pitch at Clifton College. We played some of our best football all season to come away with a 2-0 win. Their team seemed much more physical than us, however I enjoyed this challenge as a centre-back and was extremely happy when we finished the game with a clean sheet and a win.



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A three-day tour of London was another highlight as we won two, drew one and engaged in a tour of Stamford Bridge as well as watching Oxford United Vs Hereford United at the Kassam Stadium. A few weeks later we also competed in the South West stage of the English Schools 7-a-side tournament, which was a testing change from our usual 11-a-side games. We struggled to adapt and failed to progress from our group, however it was a great chance to challenge ourselves in a slightly different footballing environment.

Due to players representing their school at an English Schools tournament, I was lucky enough to tour Plymouth with the 'A' team. We won one game and lost the other, but I thoroughly enjoyed playing within a different team. We enjoyed excursions such as swimming and bowling which gave me a chance to socialise with the 'A' team and get to know them better.

As the end of the season loomed, we took a five-hour train journey to Newcastle for our North Tyneside Tour. Many of us had never been on a train before and so this was an experience in itself. Once again we were unbeaten on tour and enjoyed a number of activities including swimming and a tour of the Stadium of Light. On all of our tours we were given 'DREAM' marks by the coaches, who assessed: our diary entries, which we wrote each evening; our rooms, which were inspected regularly; our ability to eat all of our meals; our general attitude; and finally our performance in the match that day. Returning from North Tyneside I was proud to have gained the most marks during our 4-day trip.

Reflecting on the season, I loved playing football across the country and felt privileged to be doing so for Gloucester. The match day set up at Longlevens is unmatched in Primary Schools' football; with match day programmes complete with player profiles each week, changing rooms with your kit hanging ready for you, and food awaiting you after the game. Playing for Gloucester Schools makes you feel special as a football player at a very young age. The people surrounding you also add to the experience, with encouraging and knowledgeable coaches, and players from across the city, each with their own personality. Whilst my football may have improved dramatically during my time at Gloucester Schools, the opportunity certainly did much more for me as a person as I gained confidence and social skills. This was particularly useful once I entered secondary school the following year, as I was more accustomed to meeting new people and trying new things.

Five years on, I have now experienced the Gloucester Schools set-up as a player, and also as a supporter of my two younger brothers who also played for the 'B' team. After playing football at a district level and rugby at county level since primary school, I can confidently say that the Gloucester Primary Schools' organisation is unmatched in terms of the opportunity it provides to improve at sport and also as a person. I still keep in contact with a number of my team mates and have recently played for Gloucester Rugby alongside two of them.

Harry Elliott

My first experiences of GPSFA were when I used to watch my older brother play. I loved the Professional approach to football at Longlevens and wanted to experience what it was like to play football there. Two years later I was lucky enough to have trials for GPSFA. When I was selected I was so happy and quickly made friends on our team building trip to The Forest of Dean. We went cycling in the forest where we got lost and ended up cycling for ages!

We had a great start to the season on the pitch winning our first ten games and had a successful tour to Bassetlaw. Our tour to London was fantastic, we visited Wembley Stadium, went bowling and played adventure golf. The football was also good drawing one game and winning the other 9-1. However, the highlight of the season was definitely our tour to Jersey. We went to the beach, went swimming, visited a lighthouse, went to a water park, played crazy golf and went shopping in town. The standard of football at the Jersey festival was very impressive and we weren't too disappointed coming away with 2 wins and 4 losses. Also I was so happy to be Gloucester's joint top scorer at the festival.

Other highlights of the season include; being the first team for every player to score, including the goalkeeper, the countless times we stopped off at the motorway services on the way back from away games and the fun minibus journeys.

The experience was brilliant and I would recommend it to anyone else who gets the opportunity. I enjoyed everything about it, and I felt very privileged to have the opportunity.



Jasper Elliott

When I was little I often went to watch my older brothers play for GPSFA, so when I found out that I had been picked for the B team I was extremely excited and relieved. I knew how much my brothers enjoyed their seasons and I wanted to follow in their footsteps.



Our first team get-together was in the Forest of Dean. We went deep level caving(60 meters down!), cycling and played cricket. I think everyone made friends straightaway and we had some hilarious moments when H thought he was going to die, S kept complaining of concussion and when we had a four man/bike pile up.

Our football season got off to a good start too. We won our opening game on the hallowed turf of Longlevens against Potters Bar 3-1. I remember how fantastic it felt running out on to the pitch on that first day to represent Gloucester City.

Throughout the season we had ups and downs on the pitch. My 'ups' include scoring a goal in our first match, winning the quarter-finals of the Shires Cup on penalties, winning the league, and finally beating the brilliant Erdington and Saltley in our last game of the season. The 'downs', our results in Jersey and losing to West Kent in the Shires Cup semis.

Off the pitch I don't think we had any disappointments. There were so many great things that we did; a stadium tour in Wembley, crazy golf in Bexley, 2p nudgers in Torquay, Aqua Splash in Jersey, and of course all the motorway services we stopped at on our journeys. The whole experience has been amazing. I really don't know how the coaches put up with us all, or how we put up with the coaches (and their dreadful banter)!