

## **SUSSEX COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LTD.**

### **Introducing JAMES WESTLAKE – new member of staff**

Ever since an early age I have always loved to football. For a number of years now I have been looking to develop my footballing career both on and off of the pitch.

I was born in Crawley, attending Warden Park School in Cuckfield before moving on to The College of Richard Collyer in Horsham. From an early age my Dad took me to see Charlton Athletic playing in the premiership. As they were a fairly local team I decided to support them, getting a season ticket for a number of seasons, seeing them hit the heights of the premiership and hitting the lows of relegation.



I started playing football as soon as I was able to, playing for my local side Maidenbower Colts. From an early age football was all that I thought about, in my free time I would be up my local field practising my skills, or smashing the ball against fences. I loved to go on football courses that were set up around the county and when I was nine, attending a “Football Football Football” course, I was asked to go to south London for a trial at Millwall Football Academy. After having a six week trial at Millwall I was offered a place at the academy which I was over the moon to accept. I stayed at the club for four years, from the age of nine till I was thirteen years of age. After playing and enjoying four successful years with Millwall, I was released from the academy as they felt that my size was against me. Moving on from Millwall I decided to join Oakwood for a season where I one Players Player award after just one season. As I went to school at Warden Park many of my friends played for Burgess Hill, so after a season at Oakwood I decided that I would move to Burgess Hill where I am currently playing my football to date. Now playing senior football I have progressed right through Burgess Hill ranks making my first team debut at 16 years of age and having played against the likes of Wycombe Wanderers in the FA Youth Cup. This then rewarded me with being selected to represent Sussex Under 18s in which I earned 10 caps in total.

Through out my short career I have played most of my football on the right hand side of midfield, sometimes playing on the other wing.

Having played football at school and at college my whole life has been very football orientated. My first year of college was one of the most successful years for me winning the Sussex Play Off Final and the Sussex Colleges Cup, in which I scored one of the goals to clinch the trophy. In my second year of college I was appointed First Team Captain, giving me all sorts of responsibilities that I had never been given before. Unfortunately, my second year wasn't as successful as the first but we did manage to reach the Sussex Play Off Final being narrowly beaten 2-1.

When at school I based my subjects around Physical Education, getting an A at GCSE level. I then decided that I wanted to go to The College of Richard Collyer in Horsham where I studied Physical Education, Leisure Studies, Sports BTEC and Travel Destinations for two years.

When I was at college I had to start looking for what I was going to do after I finish college. I wasn't keen on the idea of going to university so I started to have a look around for any jobs that were going. After having looked around for a job I couldn't find anything so I decided to apply for university. One evening I was looking through the Sussex County website and saw a position available, so I decided to apply for the position as it looked like a really good opportunity for me but I was expecting not to get anywhere as I hadn't much experience and being at a fairly young age. After applying for the job I got a letter back asking me if I would attend an interview for the position advertised. Of course I accepted and attended the interview. Being my first ever interview I was very nervous but it seemed to go really well and was pleased how it all went. I left the interview with my head held high but still was pretty negative about getting the job. The following week I was going to Majorca on a college trip, when I received a call while on the coach from the airport to the hotel. The call was from Ken Benham offering me the position General Administrator at Sussex County FA. As I was in Majorca Ken told me to give him a call back when I got back in to UK to let him know my decision, so when I got home I told him that I would accept offer.

While being at college I manage to get a day-release every Wednesday so that I could go to the office get used to how things worked, and learnt some roles that I would have to be looking after when I would start full time work. I really enjoyed this as I got used to people who I would be working with and got a general idea of what I would be dealing with.

I was delighted to be offered the job and have loved working with the Sussex County FA every since I started my day-release from college, it was a really good opportunity and appreciate everything the Sussex County FA have done for me so far.