

TOPBINS



Pictures by Lewis Mitchell / FAW

# WELCOME BACK

## **It's now the business end of the season across Wales**

Only a few more games to go in the JD leagues, we have a title winner in Tier 1 but still we await to see who will be crowned Kings of the North and South.

The final places available in the expanded Cymru Premier are also up for grabs. And of course we're not sure on the full relegation teams yet either so there is still plenty to play for.

Massive thanks to our contributors in this months edition. I know time is precious so taking the time to get involved means so much.

As always the magazine evolves as Welsh football and the type of content available evolves too. Not always easy to cover the teams or leagues you want but rest assured I am trying to sort. I am keen to have a good balance of league coverage but sometimes the news dictates.

For me personally, the last few weeks are going to be tense I can see but what a spectacle Welsh football has become. Exciting leagues, exciting football.

Enjoy the edition. Diolch,  
Dan



# TNS CROWNED 2025/26 JD CYMRU PREMIER CHAMPIONS

Pictures by Nik Mesney / FAW

## **The New Saints have once again been crowned champions of the JD Cymru Premier, securing the 2025/26 league title to continue their remarkable dominance of Welsh domestic football.**

The Oswestry based side confirmed the championship in early March after a dramatic late victory over Connah's Quay Nomads F.C., a result that mathematically put the title beyond the reach of the chasing pack.

It marks an 18th Welsh league title for The New Saints and extends their current run of dominance to five consecutive championships, underlining the remarkable consistency the club has produced over the past decade.

Once again, TNS have set the pace from the opening weeks of the campaign. Their combination of attacking quality, squad depth, and relentless ability to grind out results proved too much for the rest of the division.

While several clubs attempted to keep pace during the early stages of the season, the champions gradually pulled clear at the top of the table, showcasing the efficiency that has become synonymous with the club.

The triumph also comes in what is a significant transitional season for the league. The JD Cymru Premier will expand from 12 to 16 clubs in 2026/27, meaning the 2025/26 campaign will be remembered as the final title decided under the current format.

For TNS, however, the objective remains the same. Domestic success continues to provide the platform for European qualification, where the club will once again aim to make an impact on the continental stage.

With another championship secured and yet more silverware added to an already overflowing trophy cabinet, The New Saints continue to set the benchmark for success in Welsh football.





# BARRY LIFT NATHANIEL MG CUP AFTER EMOTIONAL VICTORY

**Barry Town United claimed the 2025/26 Nathaniel MG Cup with a 2–0 win over The New Saints F.C. at the DragonBet Stadium in Bridgend, with 657 supporters in attendance for the final.**

The decisive figure on the night was Ieuan Owen, whose two goals secured the trophy for the Linnets against the holders. The 19 year old struck just before the interval to give Barry the advantage, finishing from inside the box in the 43rd minute. With The New Saints pushing forward late on, Owen struck again in added time to seal the result and confirm Barry's cup triumph.

Barry's performance was built on organisation and resilience, limiting opportunities for the champions while remaining dangerous when moving forward. When chances arrived, they took them.

The success carries particular meaning for the club given the circumstances surrounding the squad in recent months. Both chairman Mark Barrett and midfielder Eliot Richards have been battling cancer, while captain Callum Sainty suffered the loss of his father earlier this year.

Director of Football Steve Jenkins said the victory meant far more than simply lifting a trophy, highlighting the unity within the club during a difficult period.

**“This group has been through a lot together recently and everyone has stuck together,” he said. “We’re incredibly proud to deliver something positive for the chairman and for the supporters who have backed us every week.”**



For Sainty, the final was a significant personal moment. The captain reached 250 appearances for Barry Town United on the night and spoke about the emotions surrounding the occasion.

He admitted the past few weeks had been tough, but said moments like this remind players why football can mean so much, adding that he believed his father would have been proud watching the team lift the trophy.

The victory marks Barry Town United's first major piece of silverware in more than two decades, another milestone in the club's recovery since their financial collapse in the early 2000s.

After rebuilding and re-establishing themselves in the JD Cymru Premier, the Linnets now have tangible success to show for their progress.





# WREXHAM MAKE HISTORY IN GENERO ADRAN WIN



Pictures by Sam Eaden & John Smith / FAW

WREXHAM UNITED

**Wrexham Women lifted the Genero Adran Trophy for the first time in their history after a dramatic penalty shootout victory over Cardiff City at Bangor City Stadium, in front of a record competition crowd of 1,374.**

The Red Dragons had reached the final with an emphatic 6-0 semi final win over Briton Ferry Llansawel, while Cardiff City booked their place with a 3-0 victory away at holders The New Saints, setting up a highly anticipated north versus south showdown.

The final itself lived up to expectations, producing an entertaining and high quality contest in which Cardiff twice took the lead, only for Wrexham to fight back on both occasions.

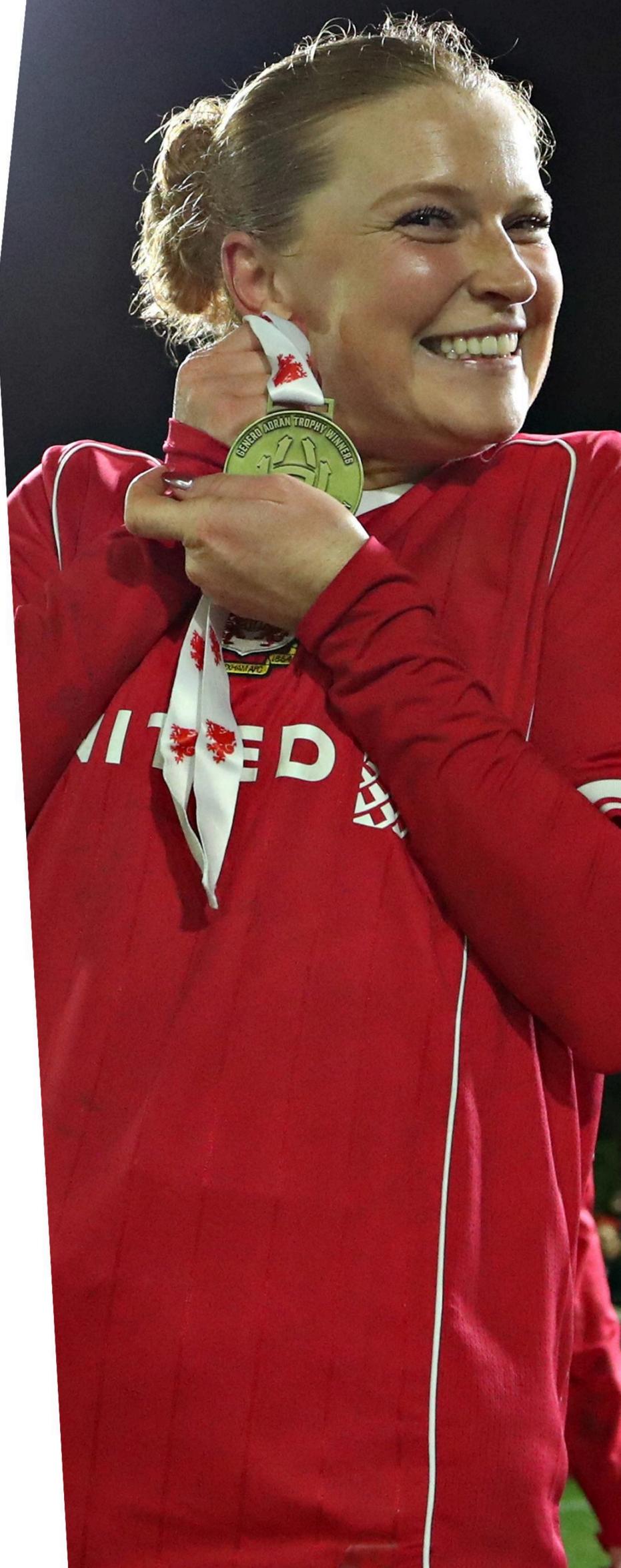
The Bluebirds struck early in the game and looked organised at the back, but Wrexham grew into the contest and found an equaliser through Ava Suckley, who produced an excellent finish from the edge of the area to bring the sides level.

Cardiff regained the advantage just before half time after reacting quickest to a rebound from a free kick that struck the crossbar, giving the south Wales side the advantage at the break.

Wrexham continued to push in the second half and were rewarded ten minutes from time when debutant Maria Francis Jones produced a superb first time strike into the top corner to send the final to penalties.

With neither side able to find a winner in normal time, the trophy was decided from the spot, where Wrexham held their nerve. Goalkeeper Liz Craven made key saves in the shootout before Faye Knox converted the decisive penalty to spark celebrations among the north Wales side.

The victory marks a landmark moment for Wrexham Women, securing the first major silverware in the club's history and highlighting the continued growth of the women's game in Wales, with the record crowd and quality of the final showing how far the domestic competitions have progressed in recent seasons.



# A CAREER BUILT ACROSS WELSH FOOTBALL

**Mark Connolly's career spans more than twenty years across the Welsh system, taking in major clubs, top flight football, and now coaching.**

Across all competitions he has recorded 460 appearances, 130 goals and 22 assists, with a major personal landmark inside those numbers: 100 goals in the Welsh Premier according to recognised data sources. It is a tally that places him among the more productive forwards of his era in the league.

He began his senior career at Bangor City in 2003 before moving to Rhyl in 2005, a five year spell that became one of the key anchors of his career. Connolly was a regular part of Rhyl's squads during a strong period for the club and accumulated a significant chunk of his Welsh Premier goals there.



A move to Chester followed in 2010, before he returned to the domestic game in January 2011 with Bala Town, adding further top flight seasons and more goals. In 2017 he rejoined Rhyl, then spent the 2018 to 2019 season with Llandudno, competing again in the Cymru Premier.

In 2019 he moved to Holywell Town, contributing to the clubs rise in the Cymru North before taking a career break in 2021. Connolly returned in July 2025 as assistant manager, working alongside Johnny Haseldin while also remaining available to play if required. This season he has made a handful of substitute appearances, including a decisive cameo in the 2-0 cup win over Penrhyncoch, where he came off the bench and assisted both goals.

From Bangor to Rhyl, Bala to Llandudno, and now Holywell, Connolly's record paints the picture of a long, consistent and productive career. 460 games, 130 goals, 22 assists, and 100 Welsh Premier goals sit behind him as he moves deeper into the coaching side of the game.

With that career behind him and a new chapter already underway at Halkyn Road, it felt like the right moment to sit down with Mark and get his perspective directly.

### **After more than twenty years in the Welsh game, what part of your career feels the most defining when you look back at it now?**

My most defining part of my career was probably when I joined Rhyl. I was just breaking through in Welsh football and being noticed for my hard work and free kicks.

### **You scored 100 goals in the Welsh Premier. When you think about that milestone, what does it represent to you as a player?**

The 100 goals is a massive achievement for me and I'm honoured to be in that elite club with some of the best players to have played Welsh football. My family was there that day and to do it in front of my kids was up there with all my achievements in the game.

## **You've played for Bangor City, Rhyl, Chester, Bala, Llandudno and Holywell. Which environment challenged you the most and why?**

The most challenging environment was probably at Llandudno the season I was there. We had changes in management, lads in and out and things were happening off the pitch which wasn't helping us so I'd say that season was very testing and probably helped me in my coach career.

## **What originally drew you to Holywell Town as a player, and what made you stay involved with the club beyond your playing spell?**

Johnny was the reason for me joining Holywell Town.

At the time I felt I had done all I could in my playing career, winning the league, Welsh cup, playing in all the European competitions. Johnny had pestered me for about a year and sold the club to me and what he had planned for the next couple of years and asked me to help him achieve this so that new challenge for me was got me to sign for Holywell and I've never looked back. Winning the Wrexham League as a player and the North League as a coach and the cup and now so close to getting the club to the Welsh Prem is why I have stayed with this great club.

## **Your cameo against Penrhynoch produced two assists in a cup win. Did that spark anything in you as a player again, or is your focus fully on the coaching side now?**

The gaffer has always been on my case to continue to playing but my body was telling me otherwise. But this year I caved and agreed to sign as a player. I've never seen Johnny so happy ha!

My cameo against Penrhynoch was to help the team. We had injuries, people away and suspensions so when I was asked to go on, I knew as a coach I understood where I could be effective in this game and that helped with assist for the goals that got us through to the next round.

I felt I could play again but on the Sunday morning my body told me to carry on coaching.

## **How would you describe the type of player you were in your prime, and is there a modern day footballer whose style is closest to your own?**

How would I describe the type of player I was in my time? I'm not too sure really. I'm sure some of my old teammates could tell you a few stories about me. I'd say I was hard working, loved a tackle, enjoyed getting involved in the tussles, and I was decent from a dead ball. I always left everything out on the pitch.

As for a modern day player who's similar, I'm not sure I could name one. I'll let others decide that one!

## **Looking back across your career, which games stand out the most to you and why do they stay with you?**

I say the game that stood out for me was Bala reaching European football in the play off final versus Port Talbot.

John Irves scoring in the last minute of extra time, what an experience that was and then flying out to Germany with the lads to celebrate. This is one of many memories I have. There are loads to pick from but loved every minute of it with all my team mates at each club.

## Having experienced several eras of the domestic game, what do you see as the biggest changes in Welsh football since you first broke through?

The changes over the years I've seen is a lot. The games developed from my playing career. Players are fitter, faster, not as physical but you can't really tackle anymore without a whistle being blown. After games recovery drinks, healthy food whereas we had a pint and a burger and be out until last orders.

It's helped the leagues develop but I still think theres more that the FAW can do to help teams develop into a bigger and better system.

## For anyone wanting to get involved in coaching, what advice would you give based on your own journey in the game?

Advice I'd give as a coach now is learn the trade first. It doesn't matter what you've done playing wise or where you've been. Listen to people who has been doing it for years, learn from them and be humble. This is how you learn your trade as a coach or manager. Being a coach is a lot harder than a player so be prepared to do the hard work and the rewards will be massive.



# FOUR CLUBS CONFIRMED AS PROMOTION RACE CONTINUES FOR FINAL CYMRU PREMIER PLACES

**Llandudno FC, Airbus UK Broughton, Cambrian United, and Trefelin BGC have now guaranteed their place in the promotion positions as the battle to join the expanded Cymru Premier enters its final weeks.**

With the league set to increase to 16 teams next season, three clubs from the Cymru North and three from the Cymru South will be promoted, and four of those six places can no longer change hands.

Llandudno have been the standout side in the north under manager Jordan Hadaway, winning 22 of their first 25 league matches and conceding just three goals at home during a dominant campaign that has seen them confirmed in the top three with games to spare.

They are joined by Airbus, who secured their place in the promotion positions following a huge 8–0 victory over Mold Alexandra, a result that ensured they can no longer be caught outside the top three.

In the south, both Cambrian United and Trefelin BGC have also confirmed their place in the promotion positions. Cambrian's recent victory over Trefelin secured their place in the top three and moved them back to the top of the Cymru South table for the time being.

Cambrian's consistency has been a key factor in their campaign, and thanks in large part to the goals of Liam Eason, they have not dropped out of the top two places all season.



Although those four clubs are guaranteed to finish in the promotion places, the race is still on for the final spot in each division, with around five games remaining for most of the sides involved.

In the Cymru North, the fight for third place remains tight. Holywell Town FC currently hold an 12 point lead over Newtown AFC, but Newtown have two games in hand, one of which will see the sides meet, meaning the race is still very much alive heading into the final weeks. Rhyl 1879 remain just behind and could still come into contention if results go their way.

Meanwhile in the Cymru South, the final promotion place is still to be decided, with Caerau Ely, Aberystwyth Town FC, Carmarthen Town AFC, and Ammanford AFC all still in contention heading into the closing weeks of the campaign.

Even once the final league positions are settled, promotion will still depend on FAW Tier 1 licensing, meaning clubs must meet the required off field criteria before their place in next season's Cymru Premier is officially confirmed.

With four clubs already safe and two places still to be decided, the closing run of fixtures promises a tense finish across both divisions.



Pictures by **Craig Thomas / FAW**

# INTERNATIONAL CALL UPS FOR WELSH LEAGUE PLAYERS

**International recognition for players in the Welsh domestic game continues, with several recent call ups involving players from both the Cymru Premier and the Cymru North.**

Haverfordwest County midfielder Panashe Makwiramiti has been named in the Zimbabwe senior squad for the upcoming Four Nations International Tournament, which will be held in Botswana later this month. Makwiramiti joined the Bluebirds in August from FC Twenty 11, a club based in Christchurch, New Zealand, and has made 24 appearances in all competitions this season.

Barry Town United midfielder Theo Wharton has also received international recognition after being included in the St. Kitts and Nevis squad for their upcoming friendly against Indonesia. Wharton has been a key figure for Barry this season and his selection adds to the growing list of players from the Cymru Premier earning senior international opportunities.

There was also a call up for Llanelli Town defender James Lester, who has been selected for the Trinidad & Tobago national squad ahead of their upcoming friendly against Bolivia. Lester joined Llanelli in September 2024 and has played 22 games in all competitions this season, becoming a regular since his arrival at Stebonheath Park.

Connah's Quay Nomads forward Abdi Sharif and Rhyl midfielder Mo Ali have both been included in the Somalia national squad for their Africa Cup of Nations qualifying preliminary round tie against Mauritius, meaning the recent selections have involved players from both the Cymru Premier and the Cymru North.

International call ups for players based in the Welsh domestic game remain uncommon, although there have been notable examples in recent years, including Alec Mudimu's Africa Cup of Nations selection while playing for Flint Town United.

The recent selections highlight the growing strength of the domestic game, with players from across the Welsh pyramid continuing to earn opportunities on the international stage.



# FLINT MOVE EVANS INTO MANAGER ROLE

**Flint Town United have confirmed a change in their management structure, with Steve Evans stepping into the role of first team manager while Lee Fowler moves into the position of head of football at the Essity Stadium.**

The move keeps a familiar setup in place behind the scenes but gives Evans the responsibility for first team matters as the Silkmen continue their fight to secure their Cymru Premier status. Flint currently sit third in the relegation group, ahead of both Cardiff Met and Bala Town, with the closing phase of the season still to play.

Evans is well known within the Welsh domestic game following a long playing career that included major success with The New Saints, as well as a spell with Wrexham. In 2008 he made history by becoming the first non league player since 1930 to be capped by Wales, highlighting the level he reached despite spending much of his career outside the full time system.

After retiring, he moved into coaching with TNS before taking his first managerial role at Colwyn Bay in 2022, guiding the Seagulls into the Cymru Premier the following season. Following their relegation, Evans joined Flint Town United as assistant manager, working alongside Fowler before now stepping into the main role.

Fowler remains a central figure at the club and will continue to oversee football operations in his new position as head of football. The former Wales Under 21 international has played a key part in Flint's recent progress since taking charge in 2022, leading the club back to the Cymru Premier after relegation and stabilising them at top flight level.

During his time in charge, Flint have re established themselves as a competitive side in the division and have also enjoyed a strong cup run, reaching the Welsh Cup final for the first time since 1954.

The restructuring suggests a shift in responsibilities rather than a change in direction, with Flint opting to keep experience and continuity in place as they look to finish the season strongly and retain their place in the Cymru Premier.





# LITTLE BRINGS DOWN THE CURTAIN ON PENYBONT CAREER

Pictures by Lewis Mitchell / FAW

**Former Mark Little has announced his retirement from football after leaving Penybont FC in January, bringing an end to a career that spanned more than 20 years in the professional game.**

The experienced right back arrived in the Cymru Premier during the latter stages of his career but quickly became part of one of the most successful periods in Penybont's history.

A fortnight before confirming his retirement, the Bridgend club announced that Little would be departing to pursue a new career opportunity away from the pitch. The 37 year old has now confirmed that his playing days are also over.

Across his career he made more than 550 senior appearances, winning promotions, lifting silverware and experiencing European football along the way.

### **A respected figure at Penybont**

Little joined Penybont in 2022 following a spell with Yeovil Town FC and brought with him a wealth of experience from the English Football League.

During his time in Bridgend he became part of a Penybont side that established itself as one of the leading teams in the Cymru Premier.

The club finished third and second in successive seasons during his spell, securing qualification for European competition on both occasions and raising the profile of the club within Welsh football.

Little also featured in Penybont's UEFA Europa Conference League campaigns, playing against FC Santa Coloma and FK Kauno Žalgiris during the qualifying rounds.

Across two spells with the club, Little made 88 appearances for Penybont, contributing one goal and three assists while providing leadership and experience to the squad.

His final appearance came on January 13 in a 1–1 draw with Cardiff Metropolitan University FC, where he appeared from the bench.

## “It’s time to call it a day”

Little confirmed his retirement in a message shared on his personal Instagram account.

“Right then. 20 years in the professional game. Even more since I could walk. It’s time to call it a day. Seven parent clubs, two loans and international call ups. 550 plus games. Three promotions. Two cup wins. Two European tours. One league title.

Carra said leave football before it leaves you. I think it’s packing its bags for me.

A massive thank you to the lot of ya. My little girl’s got some other plans for me now. Thanks again.”

## Career before Wales

Before arriving in the Cymru Premier, Little had already built a long career across the English Football League.

He began his professional journey with Wolverhampton Wanderers, progressing through the academy before gaining senior experience through loan spells with Chesterfield FC and Northampton Town FC.





He later established himself with Peterborough United, where he was part of the side that secured promotion from League One in the 2010/11 season via the play offs.

One of the highlights of his career came with Bristol City FC during the 2014/15 season.

Under manager Steve Cotterill, Bristol City stormed to the League One title while also lifting the Football League Trophy, completing a memorable double.

Little later went on to represent Bolton Wanderers, Preston North End, Ipswich Town, Bristol Rovers FC and Yeovil Town, building a career that included more than 500 senior appearances, with 344 of those coming in the second and third tiers of English football.

## **Leaving a mark in the Cymru Premier**

While the majority of his career was spent in the English leagues, Little's time in Wales saw him play a role in helping Penybont establish themselves among the leading clubs in the Cymru Premier.

His experience and professionalism proved valuable within the squad during a period that included strong league finishes and European qualification.

Now stepping away from the game, Little leaves behind a career that took him from academy football at Wolves to promotions, trophies and European nights with Penybont in the Cymru Premier.



# GRESFORD ATHLETIC'S TURNAROUND

Pictures by **Sam Eaden** / FAW

## Twelve months ago, the situation at Gresford Athletic was one of real uncertainty.

The club had been plunged into turmoil following a series of departures that effectively reset the entire structure. Long serving chairman Julian Davies stepped away after decades of involvement, while his successor Pete Goddard later resigned alongside fellow committee member Sam Spridgeon. At the same time, the entire first team management staff also departed, leaving the club facing an uncertain future both on and off the pitch.

At the time, the remaining committee members admitted they had been blindsided by the scale of the exits and were left trying to stabilise the club while ensuring fixtures could still be fulfilled. With just two wins from their opening twelve league games during that period, the situation looked bleak.

Fast forward to the current campaign and Gresford find themselves in a very different position.

The appointment of Dave Evans as first team manager at the end of November, alongside assistant Gaz Lloyd, marked the start of a new chapter for the Colliers. When the pair arrived, Gresford were sitting 15th in the Cymru North, just three points above the relegation zone, and in need of a lift

Since then, the team has shown clear improvement. A run of six wins, two draws and four defeats in the league has helped move Gresford away from immediate danger and restore confidence around the squad. Over those twelve matches, Gresford have been averaging close to one and a half points per game, a return that has pushed the side back towards mid table.

That progress has come despite losing top scorer Jake Roberts, who departed during the winter transfer window to join Airbus UK Broughton. Roberts had been a key attacking outlet for the side, scoring 10 goals in 18 appearances before his departure.

During that run of form, Gresford climbed as high as ninth in the table, but at the time of writing they sit 12th in the Cymru North, now eight points clear of bottom club Ruthin Town, who were previously managed by Evans before his move to the Colliers.

The turnaround has steadied the season and provided a platform for the club to build on after a turbulent period in its recent history.

With Gresford now showing signs of stability and momentum, we spoke to manager Dave Evans and assistant manager Gaz Lloyd about the challenge of taking over mid season, the progress made so far, and the work still to be done as the club looks ahead to the future.



## **When you arrived at the end of November the club was sitting 15th and only three points above the relegation places. What were your first impressions when you walked into the role?**

If I'm honest, the first thing I saw was a quality group that probably lacked a bit of belief. Results hadn't gone their way and when that happens confidence drops quickly. But at the same time I also saw a group of honest lads who wanted to work.

Behind the scenes the Club had been changed from top to bottom and lacked a bit of Tier 2 experience, but the willingness to work and evident from the moment we arrived. Graeme Sutcliffe and Matty Williams have been working their way through everything and my thought was, that with a bit of organisation and a bit of confidence we could move ourselves away from that area of the table in the Cymru North.

## **Coming in mid season can be difficult when you inherit another manager's squad. What were the first things you wanted to address with the group?**

The first thing to mention is that Eddie had left behind a great squad, and I know from experience the performances can be good but results may not go your way, so biggest message was clarity.

Players need to know what's expected of them. We simplified a few things in and out of possession and tried to make us harder to play against first and foremost. I also wanted standards to improve — training, discipline, the little details. Once the lads understood what we were trying to do you could see them buying into it quite quickly. We appointed Johnno as captain and he has led his troops well. However, the best thing that happened was an early defeat against Buckley where we were able to learn a lot about each other quickly and since that defeat we haven't really looked back.

## **From the outside it looked like a challenging moment for the club. What convinced you that this was the right opportunity to take on?**

I like a challenge if I'm being honest and when the opportunity came up here it just felt like the right fit. I know the level, I know the league, and I felt there was enough in the squad to turn things around. Sometimes you've got to back yourself as a manager and I felt this was a club where we could make a difference. I was disappointed to leave Ruthin and really enjoyed my time there, but I loved working in this league and felt I still had lots to offer and prove.

## **Since taking over the team has picked up six wins, two draws and three defeats in the league. How pleased are you with the progress made in a relatively short space of time?**

I'm pleased, but I'm not getting carried away. The lads deserve credit because they've worked extremely hard. Six wins from eleven games in this league is not easy because the Cymru North is very competitive. What I'm most pleased about is the attitude and the way the group have responded. But we know there's still plenty of work to do. Three clean sheets in our last three games is also hugely pleasing.

## **What do you feel has changed most within the squad since you came in?**

Probably belief and togetherness. When results start going your way you can feel the atmosphere change around the place. The lads have started trusting each other more on the pitch and they're putting the work in for each other. Once you get that spirit in a group it can take you a long way.

## **Losing your main goalscorer during the winter window can disrupt a team. How did you adapt as a group after that departure?**

It wasn't just our goal scorer, Gresford's talisman and Club Captain Josh Griffiths and Iwan Roberts all moved on. Of course, losing goals is never ideal, but football is about adapting. Rather than relying on one player we asked the whole group to contribute more. Midfielders stepping in (Johno scored 3 in his first 4 games), wide players chipping in (Both Sam's and Tom), defenders from set pieces. The lads responded really well to that and it's made us a bit more unpredictable going forward. Jake Roberts is an outstanding player and welcome back at any time but we were blessed with great attacking options, and we took a calculated gamble after seeing Haci in training. The feeling was he could play a more central role, and he's proved that with Team of the Week and Player of the Month nominations.

## **What qualities do you look for in players at this level?**

First and foremost honesty and work rate. At this level if you haven't got that you'll struggle. I also look for players who want to improve and who understand they're representing the football club every time they step onto the pitch. Talent is important of course, but attitude and character are massive for me.

## **How important is the relationship between manager and assistant when you come into a club mid season?**

It's huge. When you arrive mid-season things move quickly — games come thick and fast. You need people around you that you trust and who can support the work you're trying to do. A good assistant will challenge you as well. Gaz has been outstanding and with the support of Tryfan and Azzy the players have a constant feed of information. We've also been lucky to have young Jack and Ryan helping out.



# DICKINSON STEPS DOWN AT FLINT MOUNTAIN

**Liam Dickinson has stepped down as manager of Flint Mountain FC, bringing an end to his spell in charge of the Cymru North side after a difficult run of results.**

Mountain had not won a game all season when Dickinson replaced Andrew Ruscoe last September, but performances quickly improved under the former striker, with the club picking up important wins to move away from the bottom of the table.

The 32 year old is a UEFA B Licence coach and was brought in with the aim of bringing a calm approach, fresh ideas and youthful ambition to Tier 2 management. Former General Manager Jamie Welsh explained at the time that Dickinson had been on the club's radar since the summer, and that the opportunity to appoint him came sooner than expected.

However, a run of five defeats in their last six matches has left the side sitting second from bottom in the 16 team Cymru North table, leading to Dickinson's departure.

During his time in charge, Mountain played 20 league games, winning eight, drawing one and losing 11. The highlight of his spell came during a strong run in January and February, when the side recorded three consecutive wins against Mold Alexandra FC, Denbigh Town FC and Buckley Town FC.

One of the standout results of the season was a 3-2 victory away at CPD Y Rhyl 1879 in November, a result that showed the progress made after a difficult start to the campaign.

The club have yet to confirm who will take charge for the remainder of the season.





# RIVALS SET FOR HISTORIC WELSH CUP FINAL



## The 2025/26 JD Welsh Cup Final is set and it will carry a distinctly North Wales flavour as Flint Town United and Caernarfon Town booked their place in the showpiece with contrasting semi final victories.

Across the two semi finals, 3,665 supporters were in attendance, underlining the continued appeal of the Welsh Cup and the strong backing clubs receive at this stage of the competition.

This season's competition also produced memorable runs from clubs lower down the pyramid. Trearddur Bay reached the quarter finals while Bangor City 1876, competing in Tier 3, went one step further by reaching the semi finals, echoing Holywell Town's notable run to the last four in 2014.

One tie delivered a ruthless attacking display. The other was a tense, hard fought battle. Together they set the stage for a final packed with narrative, history and travelling support from the north heading south for the occasion.

## Flint power past Bangor

Flint Town United produced the standout performance of the semi final stage with a commanding 5-1 victory over Bangor City 1876.

The Silkmen were relentless once they found their rhythm, showing the attacking quality that has made them such a dangerous side this season. Bangor began the match with energy and intent, but Flint's cutting edge in the final third quickly began to tell.

As the game wore on, Flint's movement and pace stretched the Bangor defence repeatedly. Chances turned into goals and the gap between the sides widened, with the Silkmen finishing the tie in emphatic fashion.

By the final whistle there was no doubt about who deserved their place in the final. Flint had delivered a statement performance and underlined their ambitions of lifting one of Welsh football's most historic trophies.

Bangor's cup run also attracted strong support, with attendances of 462, 857, 1,376, 2,814 and 1,604 recorded across their ties during the competition.



## Caernarfon edge out Rhyl

The second semi final offered a very different contest as Caernarfon Town were pushed all the way by Rhyl 1879 before securing a 2-1 victory.

Rhyl approached the occasion with belief and intensity, refusing to be overawed by the challenge of facing a Cymru Premier side. The Lilywhites created problems and ensured the tie remained competitive throughout.

Caernarfon's experience at the higher level ultimately proved decisive. They managed the big moments better and took their chances when they arrived, giving themselves a narrow advantage heading into the closing stages.

Rhyl pushed hard for an equaliser but the Cofis stood firm defensively to seal their place in the final, ending an impressive cup run for the Cymru North side.

## A final steeped in history

This year's final carries significant historical importance for both clubs.

For Caernarfon Town, reaching the Welsh Cup Final marks a first in the club's history. Despite decades competing across the Welsh pyramid and producing memorable cup runs, the Cofis had never previously reached the final until now.

Flint Town United, meanwhile, are returning to the final for the first time in more than seventy years. Their last appearance came in 1953/54, when they defeated Chester 2-0 at the Racecourse Ground in Wrexham to lift the trophy.

The Silkmen now have the opportunity to claim their first Welsh Cup since that historic victory.





# PROCTOR READY FOR THE NEXT STEP AFTER PROMOTION

**Llandudno's return to the Cymru Premier has been one of the stories of the season, with a strong and consistent squad delivering promotion in impressive fashion.**

Among those to play a role in the campaign is forward Dylan Proctor, who joined the club during the season and has made an impact both in the league and in cup competitions at the Go Goodwins Stadium.

Proctor arrived at the club after previously playing for Rhyl, where he enjoyed an outstanding season in the Ardal North West, scoring 28 goals in 24 games. After featuring once for Rhyl in the Cymru North following their promotion, the forward made the move to Llandudno and has since contributed across multiple competitions.

Since joining the club, Proctor has largely been used as an impact option from the bench, starting eight matches while also making a number of substitute appearances. Across the season he has scored four goals in 22 league appearances, while also making his mark in the cup competitions with three goals in two matches in the JD Welsh Cup and two goals in four games in the Nathaniel MG Cup.

With Llandudno celebrating a dominant season that has seen them secure promotion to the top flight, Proctor spoke to Top Bins about his move to the club, the success of the squad, and the challenge that awaits in the Cymru Premier.



## **Llandudno have enjoyed an outstanding season. From inside the dressing room, what do you think has been the biggest factor behind the team's success?**

Look, inside this Llandudno dressing room has been the best dressing room I've ever been a part of, and it's credit to everyone involved. From the fans, players, coaching staff and committee. The atmosphere around the not only the lads but the club is a really positive one to be amongst. I would say the success comes from the camaraderie of the coaching staff, players and all involved in the club. It's a tight knit family who would run through a brick wall and more to get three points, and not only that, but how we push each other to get the best out of us each other in everything we do, whether that be training, games, lads coming back from injuries or even in life.

## **Last season you scored 28 goals in 24 games in the Ardal North West while with Rhyl. How important was that season for you personally and did it help build the confidence you've carried into this campaign?**

Last season at Rhyl was the best individual form I've ever been in, scoring all types of different goals from all around the pitch. But I'd like to mention all last year's title winning squad as well, because without them, it would've never been the way it panned out to be. It was certainly a massive season for me in regard to confidence for sure, because before I signed for Rhyl, I was bouncing between clubs and was on the edge of quitting football and moving back to Australia. So I will forever be grateful to Pez and the club for trusting an unknown kid from out of no where.

Last season's form has certainly made me feel a lot more confident in my ability and my mentality has only grown stronger since joining Llandudno FC and I continue to surprise myself every time I find the drive to be better and become the best version of myself for the lads and the club.

But in my opinion, players have to have routines in order to get the best out of themselves and get themselves switched on and ready.

## **You began this season with Rhyl before making the move to Llandudno. How did that transfer come about?**

It was bizarre really. After such a great season, I was enjoying my football and felt at home with Rhyl. There were a few strange things that took place, very strict deadlines to re-sign, I had been very transparent that there had been interest elsewhere in both England and Wales and had to review my options, next I found out I had been released via a post that the club had made on social media. Clearly there had been serious miscommunication from the club as they asked me if I would sign again just a day later under terms and conditions that in my eyes were not right for me but I wanted to do right for the club's supporters.

Roll on couple months and I completed pre season feeling the sharpest I've ever felt. My brother Calum was then released alongside a number of lads that had worked so hard last season to get Rhyl promoted. I stood up for all the lads including my brother but was shot down in flames and management believed I could no longer be at this club. I was devastated but I knew there would be interest from other clubs.

Not even 24 hours later, I received a message from Jordan Hadaway and had to look twice at the name, because I knew Llandudno were serious promotion contenders. I recall a very good conversation with Jordan and I knew from the conversation we had, it was a no brainer to sign for him. His ambition, the club's ambition and the man he is at such a young age drew my attention straight to the club, and it's the best footballing decision I have made

## **Rhyl have also enjoyed a strong season and reached the Welsh Cup semi finals. Have you been keeping an eye on how your former teammates have been getting on?**

Even though the way I was treated by management left a sour taste, the boys that played at Rhyl were tops. Every now and again I'll keep an eye on how they are doing but my focus has been on my responsibilities and form at Llandudno. I still chat and get along with Archie Jones, Billy Holmes, Jason Faulkes, Morgan Murray and Paul Fleming until he moved onto Prestatyn FC. So it's nice to catch up with the lads every now and again.

Like I said my full focus and attention has been on my season with Llandudno.

## **How quickly did you feel settled once you arrived at Llandudno?**

It was almost instant to be honest. The minute I walked into the dressing room at full time when they'd just beat Flint Mountain 4-0 at home. Jordan took me into the dressing room and introduced me to the lads and immediately felt I had made the right decision.

## **From a player's perspective, what is it about this Llandudno side that has made them so difficult for opponents to play against?**

It would have to be our defensive record on paper, but many other factors like how we press teams aggressively for 90 minutes, individuals on the pitch that can pick games up and control them, fire power off the bench and our never die attitude is what causes opposition so many problems.

Like I said earlier, we have a really strong, competitive squad and i think it's so important to have all kinds of different types of players starting or coming on to impact the result.

## **Who has been your biggest inspiration in the dressing room? And who have you connected with well since joining Llandudno?**

Obviously everyone drives everyone to be the best the possibly can to impact on the teams performance, but two individuals stick out the most and it's Anthony Stephens and Mark Cadwallader. Obviously ain't being the skipper knows me well enough now to know what he needs to do to get the best out of me and it's really helped. And Caddy is just the perfect role model for any young forward out there and it's a privilege to be able to share a dressing room with him. His past and current season speaks for itself, so it's been a no brainer to plug into his experience and tune into what he has to say because he is always checking up on me and constantly giving me advice to ensure I'm ready for what is to come.

In regard to getting along with players, I get along with everyone even from the minute I walked through the door. But I would have to say I'd be very close with Aidan Higgins, John Cooper and Joe Faux.

## **What was the feeling like in the dressing room when promotion was secured?**

Obviously we were all buzzing when we found out that promotion had been achieved. We sang our song like we do every week and within a very short time our focus was on the next game. Yes, hearing that promotion to the Cymru Premier league was mathematically guaranteed was great, but with the players, coaching staff and the clubs board, we know our main focus is to win it all and finish at the top of the table.



**You have started eight matches this season but have also been used from the bench quite a lot. As a player, how do you approach that role and stay ready to make an impact when called upon?**

Benched or a starter for me obviously isn't my choice, but it is important whenever I do come on I help the team, that's why I am here. I approach every game the exact same whether I'm starting on the bench or in the eleven. On the bench, you always have to be switched on ready to be called upon when needed. And although the majority of my appearance has come from the bench, I believe I've made a positive impact in 90% of those, whether it be goals, assists or even coming on out of position.

In my mind, I'm always ready for any sort of call up. My first league start was up top as a 9, but then my next few starts against Mold twice and Buckley were as a right wing back. So for me where I play doesn't bother me and doesn't throw me off guard in any sort of way, as long as we collectively achieve 3 points at the end of 90 minutes I'm happy.

We have a really good squad and everything is so competitive amongst each other. From 5 a sides, fitting into the 16 for match days, and even in social events that involve a ping pong table. Everyone wants to win and wants the best out of each other.

**Since joining the club you've scored in the league as well as in both the Welsh Cup and Nathaniel MG Cup. How pleasing has it been to contribute across the different competitions?**

It's been good to be able to contribute throughout this season with some important goals and assists this season. Although I have contributed, I do feel I could have contributed a lot more to this season. I'll always be my own worst critic and I always have been, but this isn't important. I'd rather we collect three points than me score or assist, obviously it's good for a forwards confidence, but goals and assists come naturally and I've always been able to find the back of the net. I always look to contribute the best I can, but sometimes it doesn't work and you have to work even harder to make sure the next time you're called upon, you're ready to contribute.

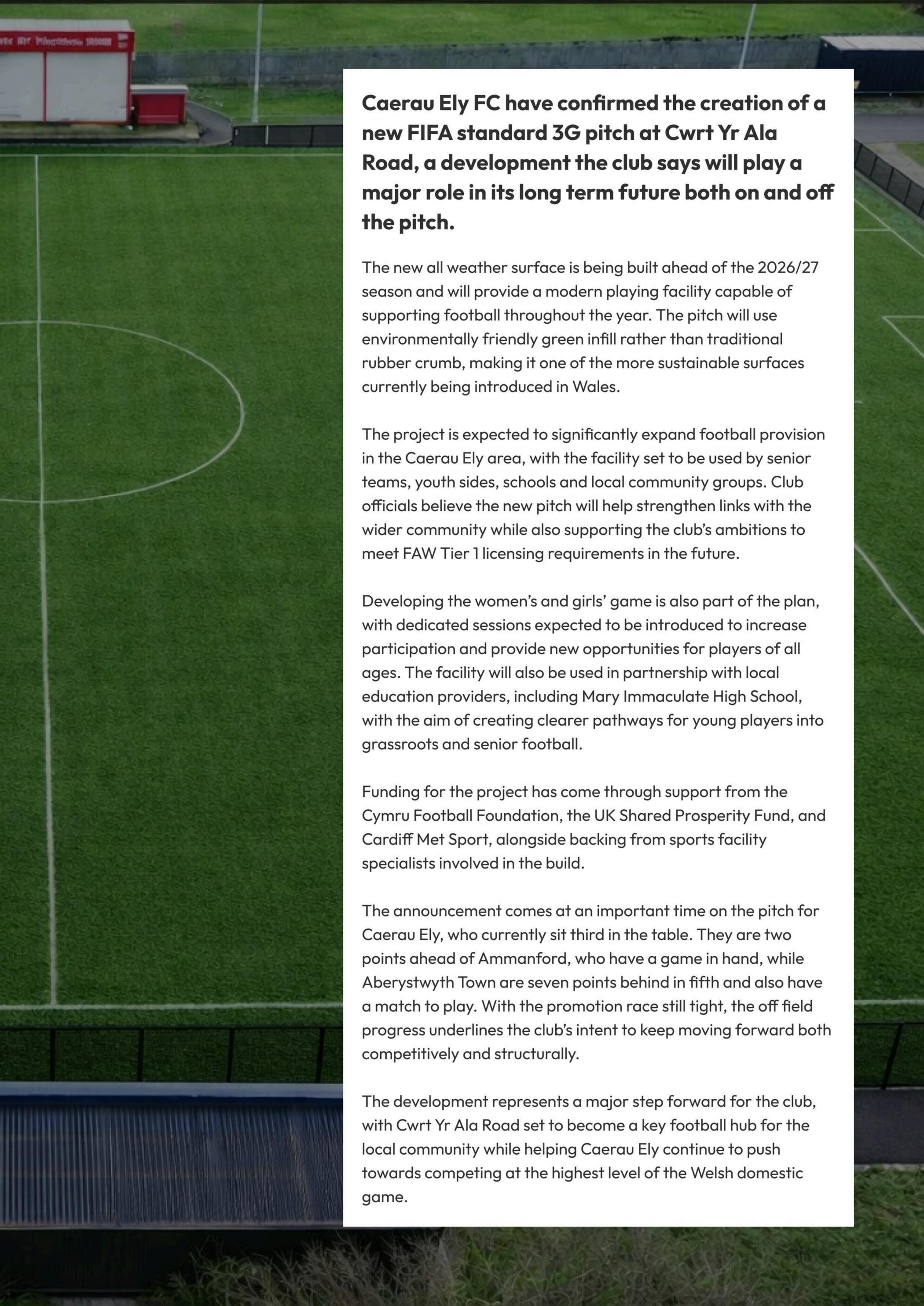
**Finally, with the club heading into the Cymru Premier next season, how exciting is it for the players to test themselves at that level?**

It's really exciting to have the opportunity to play in the top level of Welsh football. It's my second promotion in two years so it's an even bigger step for me personally. As for the lads, I'm sure there are many that are super excited to get started in the Cymru Premier league, and we also lads that have played at that level before and even in Europe. So it'll be interesting to see what we bring to the league, but I don't fear anything about going up. Only things I see is more opportunities and more exposure for the lads and the club, so it'll be an exciting to see what the 2026/27 season has to offer.



# CAERAU ELY UNVEIL NEW 3G FACILITY AT CWRT YR ALA ROAD





**Caerau Ely FC have confirmed the creation of a new FIFA standard 3G pitch at Cwrt Yr Ala Road, a development the club says will play a major role in its long term future both on and off the pitch.**

The new all weather surface is being built ahead of the 2026/27 season and will provide a modern playing facility capable of supporting football throughout the year. The pitch will use environmentally friendly green infill rather than traditional rubber crumb, making it one of the more sustainable surfaces currently being introduced in Wales.

The project is expected to significantly expand football provision in the Caerau Ely area, with the facility set to be used by senior teams, youth sides, schools and local community groups. Club officials believe the new pitch will help strengthen links with the wider community while also supporting the club's ambitions to meet FAW Tier 1 licensing requirements in the future.

Developing the women's and girls' game is also part of the plan, with dedicated sessions expected to be introduced to increase participation and provide new opportunities for players of all ages. The facility will also be used in partnership with local education providers, including Mary Immaculate High School, with the aim of creating clearer pathways for young players into grassroots and senior football.

Funding for the project has come through support from the Cymru Football Foundation, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and Cardiff Met Sport, alongside backing from sports facility specialists involved in the build.

The announcement comes at an important time on the pitch for Caerau Ely, who currently sit third in the table. They are two points ahead of Ammanford, who have a game in hand, while Aberystwyth Town are seven points behind in fifth and also have a match to play. With the promotion race still tight, the off field progress underlines the club's intent to keep moving forward both competitively and structurally.

The development represents a major step forward for the club, with Cwrt Yr Ala Road set to become a key football hub for the local community while helping Caerau Ely continue to push towards competing at the highest level of the Welsh domestic game.

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# CLARKE BRINGS EXPERIENCE TO CARDIFF MET SETUP

**Cardiff Metropolitan University added valuable experience to their squad with the arrival of former Football League defender James Clarke, who joined the Archers in early 2026 in a player coach role.**

Clarke made more than 400 senior appearances during a long career in the English professional game, featuring for Oxford United, Salisbury City, Woking, Bristol Rovers, Walsall and Newport County, where he captained the side and became a key figure at Rodney Parade.

The centre back built a reputation as a strong, reliable defender and brings leadership to a Cardiff Met squad that regularly blends younger players with experienced recruits.

His dual role as player coach fits the club's long established model, with the Archers continuing to show they can compete in the JD Cymru Premier with a unique structure built around development and experience.

# PHOTOS OF WELSH FOOTBALL

# Dan Whitehead



**Llandudno vs Holywell Town**



**Gresford Athletic vs Llandudno**



**Guilsfield vs Llandudno**

# Perry Dobbins



**Morrison Town v Pure Swansea**



**Morrison Town v Pure Swansea**

# Perry Dobbins



Pure Swansea v Taffs Well



Pure Swansea v Taffs Well

# Trevor Jones



**Buckley Town vs Denbigh Town**



**Buckley Town vs Denbigh Town**



**Buckley Town vs Denbigh Town**

