



Getting involved and making a difference

Damien Burke struggled to find a job on leaving school at 16. Six years on he was still unemployed, although he was running an after-school football club one day a week at a local primary school. Using this as an incentive to find a way into work, Damien got in touch with Active Planet, a local not-for-profit social enterprise organisation.

Damien expressed an interest in sports coaching with children and young people, especially on his estate, and after passing an interview he signed up to a ten-week Sports Coaching NEETS course (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Through the course Damien completed his Community Sports Leaders Award, FA Level One, FA Futsal Level One, First Aid, Child Protection Training and 100 hours

Millennium Volunteer Certificate. But it didn't stop there. Damien put his new found skills into action, firstly by volunteering to run a weekly session with 8-11 year olds and then working with Active Planet to obtain paid work.

This came in the form of identifying a need on the estate for an over 14's session. Damien was able to attract a considerable amount of unemployed young people to the weekly football session. Soon there were up to 30 hard to reach young people turning up every Tuesday, and many of them showed real promise.

"There was some clear talent amongst those turning up," Damien told h&f news. "I decided to channel their abilities into a team that I then entered into the regional finals of the 'Your Game' five-a-side competition." The

tournament was organised by the BBC and The Football Foundation, and held at The Linford Christie Stadium.

Going under the name Old Oak, the team took the tournament by storm, winning all their matches and qualifying for the National Finals in Manchester. "It was a great feeling," said Damien. "We had only been playing together for a short while, but we really proved ourselves to be a formidable outfit. I worked really hard to make sure all the players could be rounded up for the trip up north."

The team travelled to Manchester using a community transport bus, and again had a terrific run, winning all of their games except one, which they drew. While level on points, they ended up being pipped to the top spot by goal difference alone.

As the picture (above) shows, ex-QPR, Tottenham and Newcastle United star Les Ferdinand, turned up at the Old Oak Centre to present the team with their trophy and congratulate them on their achievement.

Taking athletics to the streets



Olympic gold medallists Linford Christie and Darren Campbell took athletics to the streets of Hammersmith & Fulham in a cutting edge project to seek out raw talent.

Commonwealth Avenue, in White City, became a running track for the afternoon, with races for about 100 young people aged under 13 to under 20 taking place. The event was open to all young people in the area. They raced each other over 60m for the chance to compete in a grand final in Manchester and win a one year kit contract with Reebok. Linford Christie, whose Nuff Respect company led the project, said, "We believe that sport can play a huge part in engaging young people."

Darren Campbell (left) and Linford Christie launch the event.

Rising star wins gold in Beijing



Jack Morrissey, a sixth former at Latymer Upper School, has won a Gold Medal at the Junior World Rowing Championships in Beijing. Jack was selected for the top boat, the coxless four, and helped them race to the finish line ahead of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, China and Bulgaria.

Speaking after the event, Latymer's rowing coach, Bobby Thatcher, said, "To be selected for this boat is a tremendous achievement – to win the gold medal against such strong competition is just wonderful and I am so very pleased for Jack."

"He has trained hard and thoroughly deserves this amazing success. I have no doubt he will go on to greater things in the coming years." Although Jack has already reached this pinnacle, because he is still only 17 he will also be eligible to compete in the Junior World Championships again next year.

"Rowing's a big part of my life," Jack told h&f news. "I've been doing it since I was 13 and want to continue to progress." Jack returned to Britain just in time to get his AS Level results, and having

achieved five A's, he is obviously managing to balance his schoolwork with his rowing very well.

"I'm just moving into the Upper Sixth for my final year at Latymer," explained Jack. "So I realise that I need to concentrate on my A levels. However, it will also mean that I will be Captain of Boats at Latymer in the next academic year, so it's an exciting time on both fronts."

Jack is studying for four A levels and has aspirations to go to Harvard University in America. In terms of his sporting aspirations, Jack is a little more cagey about where it might lead and if he could possibly be in contention for a place in the GB team in 2012 when the Olympics come to London. "It's still quite early to say whether I could reach that level," he said. "I'm obviously going to keep on rowing and competing, and if I keep winning things I suppose I might be in with a shout, but we'll have to wait and see."

Needless to say h&f news will be keeping a close eye on Jack's progress and he has promised to keep us informed of how he gets on in the future, so watch this space!

