

EALING UNITED FC
Manager of the Season 2023/24
Ashley - U13 White

Why I Took The Role?

I was offered the opportunity to take on the role as the manager of the team this season. The reason I jumped at the opportunity was for a couple of reasons. Firstly my sons play for the team, so it's a great excuse to get more involved with their sports. Secondly i love grassroots football and I see sports as being a huge part of life, if you build in a dedicated and disciplined routine to sport from an early stage in life it can really set you up for success in many other aspects - i wanted to play my part in this for such a great bunch of lads who play for the team. Thirdly, I run a busy business which can take up alot of my time and can be stressful. Managing the team enables me to focus on something away from work, i can't say it's less stressful but it's incredibly rewarding!

A look back on the season, where we started to where it ended

Last season the team came top of the division 1 which meant they were promoted to the Premier League Division of the U13s Middlesex league. We started the season losing a couple of key players and gaining some new players who didn't have previous experience in the team, to add to this the step up into the higher division was a huge one, the skill, strength and ability of the teams in the PL was much higher then the previous one, we were facing teams like Brentford and Queens Park as well as others who were incredible. We suffered huge losses, 10-0, 13-0 at times. We lost the first 10 consecutive games!

Now for many players at the age of U13 their heads would have dropped, they may have lost interest and given up. Not this team, I made sure I approached the management with discipline along with positivity, we collectively reviewed our strengths and weaknesses and adjusted our formation and positions. Slowly, game after game we were improving and I knew the team felt they could step it up. I made sure I put out a team sheet before every game so the players could see where they were playing and visualise the formation. I made sure after every game I sent out a report so the team could see where they did well and what could be improved, I think this is really important.

The team entered into the U13 Middlesex Cup which contained all the teams in the Premier League Division. Ealing United ended up beating all the other teams, they had a seven game winning streak! The team that was previously beaten every game managed to become a dominant force! This gave the team confidence, it taught the players a huge lesson... Never Give Up! I can't take credit for this, it's all down to the players, that's what's amazing about this team, they just don't give up!

What made the season special for me?

Obviously the way the season ended was incredible, seeing the players grinning from ear to ear as they came off the pitch, them knowing what they had achieved. Another very important thing, if not the most important is the way the parents are, this team has the most amazing parents. They get right behind the team, they turn up and positively cheer and encourage the players, when I put out the weekly fixture within hours all parents reply with their players availability. Positive parents = positive players.

At the end of the season I was presented with Manager Of The Season, this was such a nice gesture from the club, totally unexpected. What was really special for me was that the parents and players presented me with a gift. The gift was an England shirt and a beautiful book. The book contained a message from every player, each saying the most incredible things. They thanked me for taking the team, pushing them and encouraging them. That's what it's all about, that makes standing on the sidelines in the cold, wet, win or loss all worth it. Bring on next season! COME ON EUFC!

Ashley