

## Five minutes of your time, please – with Dermot Drummy

Five Minutes of Your Time Please is a series of interviews with people from different areas and eras within the game. This one features Dermot Drummy, a former Wealdstone Player of The Year, Cab Driver and now U21 Development Squad Manager at Chelsea FC.

**Dermot Drummy; Reserve Team Manager (now called the U21 Development Squad) at Chelsea. Your career started as a Youth at Arsenal before you slipped into Non-League and eventually Wealdstone...**

There's no doubt about it. At Arsenal as a youth player I failed – a failed pro! I didn't do enough or perhaps believe enough when I was a player there and that ultimately was my downfall.

When I left I went into the non-league game and when I joined Wealdstone I was working as a Cab Driver. I had 'done the knowledge' whilst at Hendon and Enfield and got my 'Black Cab' License.

I'd had a really good time at Hendon and got on really well with everyone at the club, and the fans loved me, then I had a couple of good years at Enfield too with Ted Hardy and Eddie McLusky. These were



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people with a great passion for non-league, then I got a call from Hally – Brian Hall – who wanted me to join Wealdstone as a sweeper! I'd always looked from the outside at Wealdstone and seen how involved the people were in the club. By now they were playing at Vicarage Road and the money he offered was good so I signed.

Playing at Watford brought back memories of Arsenal, it was such a good surface to play on. Unfortunately every club that visited thought so too and raised their game! It took a while to win

the fans over, but I'll never forget when I walked into the dressing room for the first time. Hally introduced me and said he'd just signed me from Enfield and one voice told me to f-off back there... if I hadn't have got that call, probably none of this would have happened. I was all set to pack up and I'd started to learn the saxophone!

It was a tough spell at the club as results didn't stack up to what was expected and we got relegated, then there were the money problems. Paul Rumens (then Chairman) came into the dressing room at one point and told the players what the situation was. Suddenly we'd been earning in some cases hundreds of pounds a week and here he was telling us we were on £40! Some players weren't happy, others, like me, took it on the chin and got on with the job.

Even in the dire times you got drawn into the passion everyone had for the club. The Directors, everyone around the squad and the fans – doing that sponsored walk to Fisher to help pay the wages. Amazing. Then when Gordon Bartlett reckoned my

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time was up and I left, I was ready to hang up my boots again.

As it happened, I moved on to Standon and Puckeridge and subsequently Ware, where I ended up manager for a short while. At Standon, we used to get paid about £30 a week and we'd drink that in the bar after the game, then at Ware after about nine games I had to pay a player out of my Cab earnings. That was when the wife told me it was time to pack up! I still keep in touch though. I speak to Gordon and a few others around the non-league game when I can and now I try and ensure that our pre-season will be against non-league clubs. Most people here reckon it's so we can win a few games, but actually, it's competitive and I also realize that it can be a decent payday for the non-league sides. The money helps them out. Perhaps it's me giving something back...

### **Now you're approaching the pinnacle of the pro game. What happened?**

In 1997 I got a job at Arsenal as a part-time Coach for the under 12's. It wasn't something I'd consciously looked for though. I played a couple of games for the Arsenal Pro-Celebrity XI and Liam Brady played. I'd been his

boot boy when I was an apprentice at the Gunners. We had a chat after one of the games. He was Head of Youth Development and I asked him if I could come in and perhaps do a bit of coaching – really just to see how things were set up and get a few tips – he said he'd give me a call if anything came up.

Eight months later I was in the cab and I'd just picked up a fare at Heathrow and I got the call and that was that really. Actually, I spoke to Gordon again and asked him how I should approach the interview. He said "just be yourself, you'll impress" so I did. It was good advice! He



was also the first Manager I'd had that used to talk to me, and not

at me and he didn't go round kicking the doors and that's something I've taken onboard...

I worked with some great coaches, and perhaps I take a little bit of each of them with me; Don Howe and Neil Bamfield and I also worked closely with Steve Bould as his assistant. We had some success in the youth ranks and then he moved on and I got involved with the U16s. Alongside these I've been able to observe Arsene Wenger for ten years and at Chelsea, I've been fortunate to see Jose Mourinho, Phil Scolari and Carlo Ancellotti - each outstanding.

We had a great side at Arsenal; Frempong, Wilshere; Emanuel Thomas - they were all in my Nike UK Final winning side which raised my profile and then Youth Team job came up at Chelsea. I applied for it and didn't get it! But I did get into their Youth Development system.

### **Do those experiences and your background help?**

Some, yes. It's now been fifteen years working with Elite clubs. A long way from my non-league experiences for sure. The knowledge I've gained in the past helps me now as I can be a father figure to some of the younger lads, especially those that are having a hard time on or off the

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field. I remember someone told me once that players get old and die, coaches get old and experienced!

I'll think back over games and about systems or players all the time. They're always on your mind, but to be a successful coach you have to believe in what you do. Without that belief it's very hard to be a leader and get the players to follow and believe in you.

Tomorrow I have a Reserve Squad for training – and that will include a few of the first team lads that aren't involved this weekend, so I'll be training the U21's and Malouda, Ferreira, Benayoun, Moses and Azpilicueta! For me, that's a great experience to work with players at the next level.

It's all part of The Club. I speak to Eddie Newton and Steve Holland on a daily basis and I've met up with Roberto Di Matteo on a number of occasions to discuss players and tactics. It's very refreshing to have such a positive connection with the first team and staff and that makes the integration between the senior players, reserves and youth systems much easier.

There are some things that you can only experience at this level though.

When a club signs a young lad on a long contract, being paid a lot of money, it can go to their heads. Imagine what it's like for a

seventeen year old earning very good money every week – it can be really tough keeping their feet on the ground and you do see examples where it all goes wrong. Some of those lads make it, some don't.

Others may have been brought in by a big agent. He may have a good contact in the hierarchy of the club and if you do something the player or agent doesn't agree with, there's always a chance that they'll go above your head. It comes back to that belief again. If I do what I believe is right and for the best, then I'll stand by my decision with my head held high.

### **How big a part does Technology play in your Coaching?**

It's all to the good, but I still say the eye doesn't lie.

I know some coaches that watch the screen and get the printouts and that's fine for them. For me, I have to see the session and see what's happening. I watch how a player moves and how they are involved. GPS stats aren't the whole answer, for me, they are a tool.

I have everything available to me – heart monitors, distance trackers, all sorts, but I use the tools to aid me, not to lead me.

Even watching games – I often meet up with other Managers and scouts or even with my own coaches when we are watching matches – they'll be there with a note pad frantically writing things down, whereas I don't.

Then we'll have a discussion after the game or in the car on the way home they'll mention a player and I'll say "yes, he did so and so or his touch was this or that" – they look surprised as I've said what they have in their notes. I think it must come back to learning 'the knowledge' – you can't bike round London making notes, you have to memorise things and I still have that ability. My eye sees it, my mind records it and files it away and that is good because sometimes the machines and the technology aren't available.

### **Are there differences with the influx of foreign players to the game – does that change what you do as a coach?**

It varies with the players and the age. At Arsenal I had Voltz and Aladaiair, Djouru for example. They were great. Very focused and technically, we could learn from them. They were also very studious and generally quiet, they didn't really get involved with the banter that you get around a squad, perhaps as they didn't get some of the humour or didn't at the time have the language skills. Others do get a little more involved like Gokan Tore who has just signed for Rubin Kazan. He was technically gifted and soon caught up with the banter as well – an all round good lad.

With the younger players it can be difficult, leaving homes and

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families – that’s where I can help as a father figure again – some can’t cut the mustard and go, others adapt and develop their career in the game.

Personally, I like the mix.

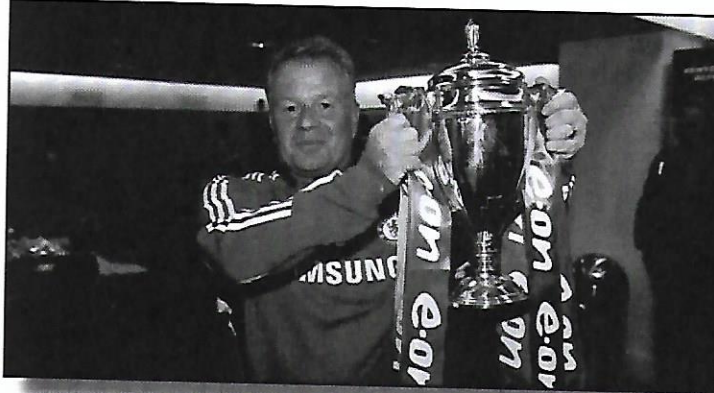
A fast ‘English’ style, with typical foreign flair and technical ability. It’s a good fit.

**Many Non-League clubs these days have relationships with the local Pro sides loaning players out to gain experience. Is that something that could ever happen at Premier League level?**

In a word, No.

Aside from the costs involved and insurances, at Chelsea the aim is to keep the best of the U18 – U21 players together and develop them as a team, though one or two may find their way to a Championship club for a period. None would ever go down to the level of non-league. In fact, even those players that go through the system but end up being released – we try and feed those into lower league clubs or perhaps to the Conference.

We’ll help them as much as we can, finding clubs, trying to help them get settled and perhaps



re-start their career – that’s something else I can help with from personal experience. The aftercare at Chelsea is excellent. Players that don’t quite make the grade can be helped into a trade and to get qualified – a third year scholar for example being put through college by the club to do a Plumbing course – the club will try and ensure that there is some security in the future of everyone who leaves the club.

**Given the opportunity for football as a whole, what would you change in the way the game is structured?**

I think that the philosophy for 8-12 should work both sides for the mind and the movement of the body to develop players with a natural feel for the ball along with a analytical brain to problem solve.

**What does the future hold?**

**Will we see ‘Dermot Drummy – Manager’**

Honestly, I’m not sure. I’ve never

been a ‘man with a plan’ as such.

Some people do have a career path laid out, but I take a lead from those around me. We have a guy called Humphrey Walters who visits us at

Chelsea and he has become a bit of a mentor for me. For the past 30 years, he’s been inspiring and motivating individuals, teams and corporations in leadership and management and the concept of “The Business of Winning”. (<http://www.humphreywalters.com/> if you are interested). Then, there’s Neil Bath, Chelsea Academy Manager and he also has been a fantastic mentor to me... I also never forget that Liam Brady gave me a life changing break to come into the football world.

Whatever the future holds I’ll take it in a positive vein.

Five Minutes of Your Time is one of a number of articles produced for the blog at [www.2ndyellow.com](http://www.2ndyellow.com) where there is a regular column on Wealdstone.

**Pics** - Graham Smith  
Chelsea FC