



GADESIDE RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Est – 1973

Affiliated to:

The Football Association
Hertfordshire Football Association,
Watford Friendly League,
Watford Sunday Football League

www.gadeside.co.uk

5 Things about running a Youth Football Club.

How a decision to help out at my kids football club made me give something back to the game and become a FA Qualified Coach to produce a better team players ended to be so much more, in fact 24 years more, even 11 years after my sons have left. From assisting a team manager to Club President.

1. I always thought other people did it.

When my sons joined the club one in the Under 8 team I thought as most parents do the club has people to do all this. So at first I just assisted the Manager as I knew a bit about football as a player, but after a couple of seasons he quit so I took on the role as nobody else offered and I was told its mostly something to do with bibs, cones and sending a few result cards to the league. What it really meant was I had to find the time to run 30 training sessions a year with up to 15 or so boisterous kids on cold, wet Thursday nights in winter. Get out of bed early on a Sunday mornings to drive all over Hertfordshire and North London to take a team to play their league matches. Then to spend hours filling out results cards with stats to avoid getting £5 fines from the League. I once had to cough up £20 because I'd listed only 6 players on our team sheet when there should have been 7.

"Lesson learned early so no more fines."

What most parents think is when they drop their kids off at training for some reason and it never occurs to them that the Manager running the training session or getting ready for the match handing out shirts, balls and jackets from his bags, and someone in a club jacket putting up plastic goals, nets or corner flags are actually just other parents helping out after putting themselves forward. Again volunteering. They think the club must have legions of trained managers and coaches out there kicking their heels just waiting for the call up. *"Don't Happen"*

So the day when I was called to a committee meeting after being just a parent that took on a team and was asked by the then chairman if I would like to be on the committee and set up the clubs first website to provide information about the club to attract players and managers. I agreed and then that's how it all started first a manager, then from just doing a website to secretary, vice chairman, chairman (*whilst running a team*) and vice president. Now president and treasurer and still here after 24 years.

2. You don't spend that much time coaching or watching football.

I did once spend a week in a secondary school classroom and outside on a pitch with other Dads, teenage boys and girls to earn a Level 1 football coaching qualification. The instructors who taught us over the week turned us into experts at running, passing and move drills.

Now I often fretted over our formation, and even rather sadly resort to a mini whiteboard sometimes where I discuss our starting line with my fellow coach/helper

Actually what I quickly learned was you can spend Tuesday or Wednesday nights ringing up random phone numbers trying to find a referee. The you discuss the annual Managers v Seniors match in an empty club on a Monday night, with the rest of the committee (aka other volunteers) You spend Sunday mornings with a fork digging holes in the mud for water to drain away in the goalmouths. You sit at your kitchen table in June or July with a pair of scissors, dozens of passport photos, 2 jumbo Pritt Sticks and multiple forms to create your league registration cards. You then have each team to show these before every match to prove to your skeptical opponents that your

strapping 5ft 11 year old is still in Year 7. You can put up nets on all size of pitches but someone will keep losing all the pegs from the bag. You start every training session pumping up footballs, but will always lose one or two by the end. You'll start to find bags of odd kit all over your house, in the shed, under the bed, and the back of the car. You hand out messages each week keeping everyone informed of where to meet and kick off time. You end up ringing everyone on a Saturday Night to say "GAME OFF" as the weather has put paid to the state of the pitch. You basically end up running the show. The football bit and especially my son was just the excuse to get things done. Sometimes you need the "football bit" as the prompt to start anything; Writing, getting fit, making friends, and putting goose or dog poo in a bucket pre-match before putting up the corner flags.

3. The Club doesn't run itself.

Do parents and players really know what goes on at the club each week before a ball is kicked?

Each new season really starts in May/June as the old season finishes.

New Managers or Assistants have to have their Criminal Record Checks done for Safeguarding Children which involves documentation, Identification to be processed online.

The club has to affiliate to the County FA and a local League, this involves form filling for each of the teams and paying the annual fees to both affiliations.

Training slots and pitch use need to be booked and paid for with the Academy at a cost of £6,000 per year, however these are some of the best training and playing facilities in Watford. Each year many teams are looking to take these off us but the committee secured a Service Level agreement with the academy two years ago to prevent this from happening.

Then comes player registration this involves two passport photos, forms and subscription payments which all have to be checked, processed and stored. These then need to be individually scanned and uploaded to the league website for verification before a player is eligible to play.

Arrange kit, match balls, training balls and equipment for the matches and training sessions

Attend regular League Meeting for Fixtures, FA and League information.

Arrange fixtures with opposing teams and referees.

Chase outstanding subscription payments.

Arrange Presentation Evening, order trophies etc.

Arrange the Annual General Meeting

Who does all these tasks? "The Committee and Managers"

The Core committee consists of;
Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Charter Standard Officer, Child Welfare Officer, Social Secretary, Communications & Press Officer, 5-7s Coordinator, 5-7s Administrator, Team Managers/Coaches/Assistants

All Support by the Executive Committee;
President and Vice Presidents

4. You really can't do it by yourself.

Many positions on the committee are currently vacant and some members are doubling up, but this year many are stepping down.

Even now as President or when I was Chairman, Secretary or a manager I couldn't have done it by myself without the support of a committee to turn to for help and advice, If it was just me by myself not knowing how or what to do each season I'd have resigned. Years ago.

The saying goes "Many hands make light work"

That's why the club needs you the volunteers

5. It's really not all about winning.

The FA statement says;

"Where there are one sided score lines, these can act as a disincentive to continue playing for many children."

Now I like a win. I like a win a lot. There might have been the odd polite cheer and clap for example when our team won 4-3 with the last kick of the match. Our team were in the top 2 fighting it out to be promoted that season. Yet that's not really what success is about.

When I was 12, I was obsessed with football (and still). I really did kick a ball about in the street with friends until the sun went down. I desperately wanted to play league football every week. My local teams had trials to select players. I didn't make it as they already had a goalkeeper in their teams. I was in the Boys Brigade they had a battalion football team but they had no goalkeeper and I was asked, so my football story began and when I was 14 a football scout spotted me playing for the Boys brigade of all things and not my local team. I've kept playing until I turned 50 and reluctantly hung up my boots and gloves.

So when I was a manager I deliberately didn't turn away players, however good or bad they might be. Things do change. A poor defender at 10 years old can develop, put on a few inches and be your lynchpin box to box midfielder in a few years' time. Instead I'd start another team if we had enough players for two and asked for help with the team from new parents as many managers have done over the years. But sadly this seems to be a dying art as less and less volunteer to help.

Success for me is pretty simple;

It's about keeping the club teams playing.

Giving all the players a chance and enough game time every week, encouragement, some fun with their mates, perhaps even the odd new skill here and there.

To turn up next season and do it all over again.

So if I'm sitting down with the Pritt Stick on the kitchen table in June/July and have 80 or more players to register and they are willing to play then its job done.

My is Darren Hufford and my day job is currently President and Treasurer of Gadeside Rangers Youth Football Club, but I also find time to work and run my IT Business in North Lincolnshire where I now live. (*Approximately 200 miles from our home ground at Westfield*)