

Rise pupils train with Wanderers coach



Cookham Rise School youngsters limber up with Jim Melvin, from Wycombe Wanderers.

Would-be soccer stars from Cookham Rise School are taking part in a coaching scheme backed by the Football Association.

Under the eye of Wycombe Wanderers coach Jim Melvin, who was at Celtic as a schoolboy, the group of 20, which includes two girls, are the first in Cookham to take part in the Coca-Cola FA Soccer Star scheme.

This is a soccer education programme designed for the younger player, with the idea of developing ability. The course includes running with the ball, dribbling, heading, shooting, passing and control.

EXCELLENCE

Jim never attained professional status as a footballer, but has played as an amateur and spent some time in coaching and management. He explained that in order to measure progress and master the techniques there are star tests, which range over six grades:

"If a youngster reaches the six star grade, he or she will be invited to the local Centre of Excellence."

He is encouraged by the number of girls getting involved.

Nine-year-old Sally Panter, who lives at Strande View Walk, is one of the Cookham Rise group who is keen to develop her skills in what has for many years been a masculine domain.

"I enjoy doing it and I want to learn some more," she said. "Sport of all sorts should be open to both boys and girls. I see no difference between girls playing football or boys taking up netball. If you like it there should be equal opportunities."

Sessions currently in progress, for the older age-group (nine to 11), are held weekly and run for an hour and a half after school. They begin with warm-up exercises, and then one particular skill is tackled, coupled with tips and advice. The two children who have most improved during the session are then made captains of teams and a mini match is played.

The Cookham youngsters' first session concentrated on running with the ball. A cones channel was set up to get them to weave in and out. Their verdict was 'terrific' — all agreed they had learned a lot and it was great fun.

Julia Mellor, the football teacher at the school, was equally impressed and admitted she had learned quite a bit, too. "In Jim the youngsters feel they have a real expert," she said. "They particularly liked the competitive side of it. In a way it's a little like learning to be a star."

At the end of the course there will be tickets for them to go and see Wycombe Wanderers. All taking part receive individual progress reports as well as certificates, badges, stickers and stars for tests.

A second course for the younger age group (seven to nine) lasting one hour will start at the end of March.