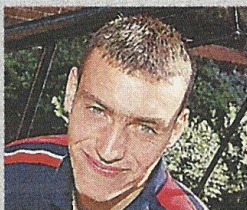


## STEPHEN BYWATER



**Club:** West Ham

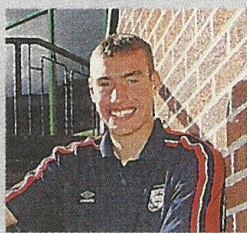
**Position:** Goalkeeper

**Birthdate:** June 7, 1981

**Birthplace:** Manchester

**Honours:** 1999 FA Youth Cup, England Under-18 and Under-20 caps

**Role models** "I haven't really got a football idol as such, but I do admire my dad. He used to play for Halifax Town and then Leeds United reserves as a professional 'keeper. I've never watched him play, but he's certainly taught me a lot about the game."



THERE AREN'T MANY YOUNG PLAYERS WHO hit the headlines when they're 16. But Stephen Bywater did just that when he was snapped up by West Ham in a deal that could eventually be worth £2.3 million – and he couldn't even sign a contract until his 17th birthday.

The talented 'keeper had played only once for Rochdale – against Carlisle United in the Auto Windscreens Shield – and let in six goals, but The Hammers knew he could be a star. "I've settled in very well," Stephen says. "I've been at West Ham for a year-and-a-half now and we've got a very good youth set-up there. We won the FA Youth Cup last season and the Under-19s Premier League, so the academy director Tony Carr has done well for the lads."

The West Ham camp is currently oozing with young talent, with Joe Cole, Adam Newton and Michael Carrick having made their first-team debuts already. Bywater, though, has a massive task ahead of him to get into Harry Redknapp's XI ahead of fans' favourite Shaka Hislop, but his current loan spell at Third Division Hull City will certainly help. "I've been getting some good experience at Hull, which will help when I get in the team at West Ham. But I don't think that will happen for three or four years yet because Shaka is too good."

Stephen's also playing for England Under-18s, learning about international football. Although he has had two defeats in his opening games, he still feels he's developing well. "Harry Redknapp always asks me how the England trips have gone," he says. "He's a good man and looks after the young ones. He's got a young lad in football himself, so he knows what it's like to be away from home at a big club."

# WHAT IF..



## DEAN WINDASS

**BRADFORD CITY**

**Full name:** Dean Windass.

**Date of birth:** April 1, 1969.

**Family:** Wife Helen, sons Josh, five and Jordan, nine months.

**Nickname:** Deano.

**What if you had to pick the best goal you have scored?** For Hull City at Wycombe four years ago. Hull keeper Alan Fettis kicked the ball out of his hands and I controlled it on my chest on halfway. I looped it over the centre-half's head and then hit it with my left foot straight into the top corner.