

FA YOUTH CUP FOURTH ROUND



ARGYLE v LINCOLN CITY

WEDNESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2025, 7PM





Jamie Lowry

HEAD COACH NOTES

Good evening, all, and welcome to our exciting FA Youth Cup fourth-round tie against Lincoln City.

We're absolutely delighted to be able to play this match at Home Park, not only on the pitch but in front of you all in the crowd, so thank you ever so much for your unwavering support and attendance tonight.

We also extend our welcome to the players,

staff, officials, and supporters of Lincoln to Home Park this evening.

The squad and staff have had a well-deserved break over winter but now all attention turns to our clash with Lincoln under the lights. Despite not having huge amounts of contact time, the hard work has continued over Christmas and New Year to ensure that the squad's fitness and readiness are in place to

try and give us the best possible chance to get a result to progress in this competition.

Our win against Carlisle wasn't easy, but that shows the grit and determination of our group extremely well. They never gave up, came from behind, and have now been rewarded with the opportunity to play here, at Home Park, tonight in front of the cheering Green Army.

Once again, thank you for coming along. Your support will give us the spark on the pitch that we need in tough moments throughout the 90 minutes and hopefully we can continue our strong run of form and put on a performance for you tonight.

Enjoy the game,

Jamie

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Match

Action **CARLISLE UNITED**

Argyle Under-18s progressed to the Fourth Round of the FA Youth Cup with a dramatic 4-2 win in extra time against Carlisle United at Brunton Park.

A converted penalty from Cole Fisher and a last-gasp free-kick from Harry Shield took the game into an additional 30 minutes, where Argyle won the game with goals from Seb Campbell and Frankie Maund.

The hosts nearly took an early lead just two minutes into the tie, but a reaction save from Dan Holman in the Greens' goal woke Jamie Lowry's side up in the cold north of England.

Argyle were forced into an early change in the 12th minute, with Billy Devlin replacing Oscar Dean, but this did not change the forward thinking and attacking intent from the Greens. Soon enough, Shield flicked an effort towards goal from a corner and forced Carlisle goalkeeper Thomas Randall into an excellent diving save to keep the game level.

Minutes later, some of the staff and crowd at Brunton Park thought Argyle had taken the lead through Devlin's header from a free-kick. The midfielder leapt above all in the box and headed toward the Carlisle goal, but Randall made another diving save to prevent him.



A goalless half soon turned into a hectic second 45 minutes. Argyle's continued attacking phases wore down the Cumbrian side and, 20 minutes after the restart, the Pilgrims had the chance to take the lead from the penalty spot. Midfielder Fisher was fouled in the area and coolly converted the spot-kick to hand Argyle the lead just after the hour mark.

Jubilation soon turned to panic, though. Three minutes after Argyle took the lead, Carlisle's Dan Hopper ran behind the recovering defence and slotted home before rearing off to celebrate with his teammates.

Carlisle took the lead in the final stages of the game, through substitute Lewis Lambert, and with a 2-1 deficit and the thought of an FA Youth Cup exit looming, Argyle had to push forward and search for an important goal.

Two minutes before the end of the match, the Greens were awarded a free-kick on the edge of Carlisle's area. Like many Argyle players in the past, Shield stepped up and curled an unbelievable effort into the bottom corner of the goal, to bring the game level - before being mobbed by his exultant teammates.

With cramp and fatigue setting in, and all substitutions made bar one, an inspiring speech from Head Coach Lowry seemed to spur his side on, with Campbell scoring from a rebound in the 97th minute to give Argyle the lead.

The Greens continued to push on but were reduced to 10 men as Kian Burch was shown two yellow cards, the second for a foul in the middle of the park, and sent off. Argyle managed to hold on and, with seemingly the last kick of the game, increased their lead through Maund, securing a place in the next round of the competition.



DAN HOLMAN

INTERVIEW



Under Rhys Wilmot's guidance, goalkeeper Michael Cooper progressed through Argyle's Academy, forcing his way into the first team and eventually becoming a household name in the PL area.

Now, Wilmot, a favourite amongst the Green Army, finds himself working with another young keeper making a name for himself in the Academy and making crucial saves to secure Argyle's place in the fourth round of the FA Youth Cup. This keeper is Dan Holman.

The tall man between the sticks for Jamie Lowry's side has been instrumental in the Under-18s' success in the opening half of the season, which sees Argyle progress further in the aforementioned FA Youth Cup and EFL Youth Alliance Cup and sitting near the top of the Youth Alliance League South.

Featuring for Tavistock Athletic in youth football, Holman's coach's connections handed the keeper an opportunity to progress through the Centre of Excellence and into the Academy at Home Park. Despite being offered a scholarship whilst in the under-15s, he did have second thoughts about whether high-level football would be the right option as a schoolboy.

A conversation with Wilmot changed Holman's mindset and now he believes it was the right choice. Opportunities to train and be involved with the first team have come in recent months, starting with the pre-season trip to Marbella, Spain.

"I was just at home and then Rhys called me," Dan said. "I wasn't expecting it, but he rang me a couple days before they went away and I did think, 'I might have a chance, I might have a chance.' I've honestly never been so excited about anything. I didn't know how to react really."

"When we went away, I quickly worked out it was a completely new environment because I hadn't really been fully integrated with the team. I'd never trained in those conditions before, especially the heat. However, in terms of the whole experience, that was one of the best of my life. I wouldn't have had it any different. It was such a good opportunity, and I enjoyed all of it.

"I almost quit at under-15s. I wasn't enjoying it. I was literally a message away from saying I don't want to do it anymore, but I had a meeting with Rhys and he told me that I had a good future at the club, so that inclined me to stay and it's been up since then, with pre-season being one of those moments I'll never forget."

Further chances with the first team arose as the summer months moved into autumn, with Holman grateful for every opportunity coming his way whether that was on the bench at Home Park in the Carabao Cup or at Harper's Park working with Daniel Grimshaw, Conor Hazard, Marko Marosi and goalkeeping coach Darryl Flahavan.

Holman said: "I didn't even think I was on the bench [for the Cheltenham game] until I'd turned up to the game. I just thought I was in for the warm-up, but then I was in the changing room, and someone pulled me out and was like, 'yeah, you're on the bench.' I didn't expect it, but it was such a surreal feeling going from watching it in the

stands to being on the bench with all the staff and all the players and hearing what they were talking about. Seeing the game from the bench was a whole different experience but it was pretty cool, I will admit.

"I've been in a few training sessions this season and it's been so good. The speed that it's all done and the intensity, it is quite a big step from under-18s to the first team. The power that they shoot with makes it quite difficult to adapt at the start but obviously, the more you do it the more you can better prepare yourself.

"All the keepers and staff have been really welcoming. Flavs has been really good with me. He's been great. Sometimes, if I'm not

involved with the games they play, I do some one-to-one stuff with him and he'll work on stuff that I need to work on specifically, like hand shape or diving technique, so that's been really helpful. He's also spotted things that people haven't spotted before, which is good that he's been able to help me in that aspect."

In December, Lowry's side travelled to the cold north to battle with Carlisle United in the third round of the FA Youth Cup. With the long journey playing on the minds of many players, staff and fans of Argyle, a strong mindset was needed to succeed at Brunton Park and try to rectify the third-round loss to Crystal Palace in the year prior.

"The power that they shoot with makes it quite difficult to adapt at the start but obviously, the more you do it the more you can better prepare yourself"



Then a first-year scholar, Holman was in the team for the Pilgrims under the lights at the Theatre of Greens and felt his and the team's performance was not deserving of a cup exit in front of over 1,000 fans that night.

"I think the way we played and dealt with a team as good as Palace, was good, so I was quite happy with the overall performance," he said. "I wasn't satisfied with the result, but I was quite pleased with how I played, how the team played and how it all came together. They had a few standout players, but I think we dealt with them really well.

"It was different playing them. When you're playing category 3 academies, obviously, the way they play football isn't quite as pretty as category 1's. They're focused on getting the ball down and playing, whereas sometimes when you play teams in our league, it's a lot of long ball or scruffy play. It was quite different to play against but, again, I don't think they particularly outplayed us."

The four-day round trip to and from Carlisle was daunting to Dan but, once under way, he chose not to think about the near 800-mile round-trip and on the main task at hand, progressing into the next round of the competition.

He said: "Initially, I was a bit worried about the journey, with it being one of the longest away days we could have drawn. However, with the way we organised it and the days we had up there in preparation, before the game, I felt relaxed, which is quite unusual. I thought for a game of that size, I would have been a little bit more nervous, but I was relaxed on the day.

"When we got to the stadium and you go out on the pitch and see the massive stands, that's quite daunting initially, but then, as soon as you get moving, you sort of just forget about it.

"Two minutes into the game, I made that important save and that really settled me into the game. I felt quite positive and quite confident going forward then, knowing that I'd started well. If that goes in, it's a completely different game and it would have been such a hard game to come back in



"The Green Army get behind you and it's so good for adrenaline"

because we didn't start particularly quickly. They had a lot of the ball in the opening 10 minutes, and I thought we might have been in for a long one, but we managed to turn it around and for the rest of the game we were on top in my eyes. We managed to pull through in the end, although it was extra time."

During the Academy's Christmas and New Year break, the players' focus was on tonight's game, with the lure of playing at Home Park always in their minds.

With the Green Army in attendance, Holman continues to remember how important their presence will be when it comes to kick-off next Wednesday.

"I was relieved to the fourth round would be at Home Park," Holman said. "The Green Army get behind you and it's so good for adrenaline. They pump you up when you do something well, which is positive.

"It's such a good feeling when you walk out on the pitch because it's what you're working towards. When you get the opportunity, whether it's 18s, first team, 17s, whatever it is, no matter who you're playing or what the game is, it's just such a surreal feeling. Being able to walk out, see the stadium, and hear the fans, is just what you dream of.

"It's a bit of a tough turnaround because of the Christmas break so we all must focus on staying fit for Christmas and not under preparing. We need to come back as fit and as sharp as possible to give ourselves the best chance of winning that game. However, we do know what we're up against with Lincoln. We played them in pre-season, so we have a rough understanding of how they play, but it's still important that we focus on ourselves over Christmas and don't let the time off ruin preparation.

"We need to stay as sharp as possible. We'll have parents, family, and Argyle fans turning up, so we don't want to disappoint. There's no point in turning up if you're not ready to play, so we must focus over the Christmas break."

ACADEMY
interview



HARRY SHIELD

Toby McLuskie spoke to under-18s player Harry Shield about his recent experience, travelling as part of the first-team squad, to Norwich City...

Argyle's Academy has had some noteworthy names come through the ranks at Home Park and find their way into the first team in recent seasons.

Michael Cooper and Adam Randell were a part of the Sky Bet League One champions team in 2022/23; Freddie Issaka and Caleb Roberts made the step up to the first team in the summer; and Tegan Finn and Joe Hatch have been handed opportunities this season, making their senior bows.

For another of Jamie Lowry's Under-18s side, full-back Harry Shield, an exciting opportunity arose in November as he travelled with the first team for their encounter with Norwich City at Carrow Road.

Shield has been a stalwart in Lowry's side this season. The defender's leadership skills have been on show whilst he has also set about showcasing his abilities on the ball and in front of goal. Despite being uncertain about what the trip would entail, Harry, 18, was still shocked and excited to have the chance to be involved with Head Coach Wayne Rooney's side.

"I trained with the first team on the Monday before I got told," Shield said. "I was just in for a session, I guess to get to know the lads. Our Academy game against Bristol City game was planned but it got cancelled on the Saturday, so we just had a normal weekend.

"Then Jamie [Lowry] called me in on Sunday evening. He said: 'you're with the first team. Pack and prepare to be travelling.'

"I took all my stuff in on Monday thinking I was just going to train normally and then just be with the 18s for the rest of the week, worked out with the players in training and then Pete [Shuttleworth] came up to me and said: 'oh, you're travelling with them.'

"I'm then smiling instantly, but I wanted to train and focus on what my preparation was like because I hadn't been told if I was on the bench or anything yet. I trained, and it was a good session. We did things like we do with the 18s but slightly different. It wasn't anything that I couldn't handle, which was good.

"We then got the first-team bus, travelled to Exeter, and got on the flight. It was a bit different than normal with the whole flying thing. I didn't know what to take or anything! I literally just had a rucksack, because I didn't know if we were going to have hand luggage or anything! Being able to fly is a lot easier for us. Mentally as well as physically, in my eyes. It was chilled."



"I'm then smiling instantly, but I wanted to train and focus"

Born in Bristol, Shield attended a holiday camp called TPS and through links at the event, found a place in the development centre with Southampton at their Bath Academy.

Harry and his twin brother Ollie, who is now in Premier League side Brentford's B team, stuck together through their youth and attended a boarding school in Beecham to help reduce the travel and ensure football was an easy focus of their life.

The story with the Saints did come to an end, however. Neither Harry or Ollie were offered contracts to progress past under-16s, and were left searching for new opportunities. The twins trialed at Brentford, but Harry did not feel at home with the Bees, and after a few training sessions and games, he found his new home in the South West.

Fast forward many months and Shield was sitting behind the bench at Carrow Road. In the end, he did not make the bench, but it is still a memory he will never forget, with his twin brother Ollie sitting in the stands undoubtedly smiling at the sight.

"On the Monday at the hotel, I had some food and got to know some of the players," Harry explained. "Tuesday was really chilled up until the evening. We had a team walk, and then had the team meeting where I found out that I was a spare man and, to be fair, I wasn't even annoyed about it. Some players would be annoyed going all that way, but I was just happy to have the experience and be around it.

"My brother managed to come up and watch because his partner is from Norwich, which made me smile. I did a little bit of running before the game, and then just watched the game as normal. I was also in at half-time in the team talk, to see what it was like and understand what the whole set-up was like. The players helped me out a lot and made me feel welcome.

"On the whole, you're aware of the fact that some of them have played in the Premier League and all, but you've just got to speak to them as normally as possible and get involved in the conversations. It is hard because they're with each other all day, every day, and you're a new face, but being able to know Tegan, Freddie and Caleb helped me a lot



with being able to get into conversations. Once you get talking to them, they're all nice.

"A lot of them have been in that situation before, where they have stepped up into a new environment, so they know the feelings you're feeling. Nathanael [Ogbeta], Lewis [Gibson] and Daniel [Grimshaw] were at our table at dinner. We chatted with them, played little games to break the ice and they helped calm me down as well. Then you build confidence talking to other players and being able to get to know them and that kind of thing. It was good.

"Seeing how down-to-earth they all are helped me settle down and be calm. I always say, if you're calm off the pitch, then you'll be fine, because you're most confident and most comfortable on the pitch."

Although the opportunity to make his first-team debut did not come this time round, Shield knows that if he continues to work, develop and grow, these opportunities may keep coming around and give him a chance to showcase his skillset at Home Park or represent Argyle away from home.

With support from his parents, family, players, staff and more, Harry will always cherish the opportunity to be involved with the first-team squad.

He said: "As you can probably imagine I was smiling, nervous, excited: all of that, but it's what you work hard for. I remember sitting down on the bus to the airport and just thinking about how it's nearly two years since I was released from Southampton, and now I'm travelling away with the first team.

"I also got a phone call from our old under-18s manager, Darren Way, saying, 'well done for being involved - but you're still nowhere near where you need to be.'

"He's right. I want to be playing, being able to start and have an impact on the game, so the hard work doesn't stop now.

"It was a really good feeling, however. My mum and dad told Ollie and they're obviously happy. Ollie's also really happy. He's had moments with the first team, so it's always a little battle between me and him who can be better. We're both extremely supportive of each other and, as you can imagine, he was happy for me and I'm always happy for him.

"The whole environment is completely different, and you work hard to even train with them, let alone be on the bench; that's an

added extra. You need to be prepared for it all and being able to train with them regularly will help me develop. They think ten times quicker than under-18's football and move the ball so quickly.

"I always have the same mentality going into training: work hard and do what I can. If it isn't my best day, then I've got another day to go out and prove myself."

"Seeing how down-to-earth they all are helped me settle down and be calm"





2024/25 ACADEMY RESULTS

AUGUST

Fri 9 MK Dons L 3-1

Fri 16 Gillingham L 1-2

Sat 24 Exeter City W 1-3

Youth Alliance Cup group stage

Tue 27 Cheltenham Town L 6-1

Professional Development League Cup

SEPTEMBER

Wed 4 Bromley W 3-1

Sat 14 Bristol Rovers W 5-0

Youth Alliance Cup group stage

Sat 21 AFC Wimbledon L 2-1

Sat 28 Luton Town D 2-2

OCTOBER

Sat 5 Swansea City L 2-3

Professional Development League Cup

Tue 8 Newport County D 1-1

Youth Alliance Cup group stage

Sat 19 Cheltenham Town W 0-3

Sat 26 Exeter City W 3-1

Wed 30 Stevenage D 0-0

NOVEMBER

Sat 2 Swindon Town W 2-1

Sat 9 Oxford United W 5-1

Sat 16 Bristol Rovers W 1-5

Sat 30 Newport County W 1-5

DECEMBER

Tue 3 Bristol City D 2-2

Development League Cup

Fri 6 Portsmouth L 1-0

Youth Alliance Cup group stage

Tue 10 Carlisle United W 2-4

FA Youth Cup third round

Sat 21 Portsmouth W 2-0

JANUARY

Wed 8 Lincoln City

FA Youth Cup fourth round

THE TEAMS



Dan Holman 🍀
Jack Flower 🍀
Harry Shield
Malachi Davy
Joel Sullivan
Joe Mwaro
Toby Haley
Lewis Flowers
Jensen Ireland
Oscar Dean
Cole Fisher
Lewis Thomas
Sam Lord
Billy Devlin
Harley Sneap
Fletcher Poole
Seb Campbell
Kian Burch
Joe Hatch
Tegan Finn



Nicolae-Mario Vasiloiu 🍀
Issac Allan 🍀
Orin Alridge
Noah Simmons
Kelly Fombad
Resharne McLean
Charlie Carlisle
Charlie Parks
Gbolahan Okewoye
Carter Ford
Josh Blant
Denny Oliver
Zane Okoro
Daniel Vanderpuye
Dakara Wifa