

# Sport

## Sport has power to turn young lives around

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**K**elly (let us call her) suffered abuse at home. She seemed distracted at school. Kept losing her concentration. Turned up late. Had behavioural problems. The dangerous, downward spiral that so often emerges from hardships invisible to state institutions was in overdrive.

Today, Kelly is confident, courteous and dynamic. I have met her often, and am constantly surprised by the change she has undergone. It would be wrong to say that the emotional damage has been fully resolved, but all who know her, including her former teachers, regard her as a shining role model. She aced an entire series of vocational qualifications and is blossoming.

What happened to transform her life chances? Sport. Well, not sport, exactly, but an organisation that uses sport to alter the trajectory of the lives of young people. For Greenhouse, sport is not a panacea. It doesn't have inherent moral value. With bad coaches, children learn bad habits. With bad coaches, children are encouraged to cheat, to take shortcuts, to take drugs, to win at all costs.

With good coaches, however, sport can be a tool of multi-faceted significance. As Nelson Mandela said: "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." Children arrive at sports clubs with their

minds open, their enthusiasm engaged. A great coach can channel this towards building the aspirations that are so often missing, particularly among the white working class; creating a mindset that is about respecting rules rather than breaking them; a mindset about respecting an opponent rather than resenting them.

A mindset, above all, that challenges young people to think about success in a new way; as something all people can achieve if they are prepared to work hard enough, to go the extra mile, to explore the full range of their potential. This lesson isn't just about sport; it is about one's education, one's relationships, one's life. Greenhouse wants to develop young people who are resilient, curious and capable of responding to the toughest challenges. Psychologists call it "growth mindset".

The results have been remarkable. From tiny beginnings, the charity has grown into one of the most dynamic organisations in the UK. It now has 52 full-time coaches working in schools across London, each tasked with mentoring youngsters in socially deprived communities. The only limiting factor (other than funds, which is a constant challenge) is finding coaches with the sports-specific expertise as well as the mentoring skills that can trigger lasting change.

At this point, let me declare an interest as a trustee of Greenhouse, and someone who has been there since the earliest days. Table tennis, a sport well suited to inner-city schools with little outside space (you can accommodate lots of tables in a relatively small hall or gym, engaging lots of young people), is the mainstay of the charity, alongside football, swimming, basketball (the programme at Norwood School in south London is phenomenal), tennis, volleyball and judo.

## 25,000 goals but Le Tissier's still the best

**Z**latan Ibrahimovic scored the 25,000th goal in the Premier League at the weekend, which reminds us just how long this "upstart" league has been entertaining us. It also invites a discussion of which goal was best.

There are many candidates,

but I would like to flag up the goal by Matt Le Tissier against Newcastle United, this enigmatic player juggling the ball, one way and the other, teasing his opponents, a geometrical masterpiece of such control and imagination that you can't help smiling

while watching on YouTube all these years later. What a tragedy that his vision and flair (not to mention his penalty-taking prowess) were not harnessed by England managers. My sense is that he would have added much to a team that lacked verve.



Federer, a former world No 1, was quick to congratulate Murray when he achieved that ranking

## Respect must be part of healthy rivalry

**A**ndy Murray, I am sure most of us can agree, is a living testament to a positive work ethic, and his rise to No 1 in the world rates among his most formidable achievements.

But I was struck by the reaction of his rivals. Roger

Federer tweeted: "We have a new king in town. Congrats Sir @andy\_murray." Rafael Nadal tweeted: "Congrats to my friend @andy\_murray on becoming World Number One!"

Cynics will doubtless say that these messages were

written for PR reasons, but my sense is that they were sincere. Despite the fierce (and fascinating) rivalry at the top of tennis, there is a backdrop of mutual respect. In many ways, this juxtaposition encapsulates the meaning of sport.

This September, Greenhouse will open a new table-tennis club in the heart of the capital to encourage community sport, and as a hub for all the aspiring players on its various programmes. The magnificent Christ Church in Marylebone has recently been purchased on a long lease, and is now in the process of being converted into a state-of-the-art sports and social facility courtesy of a generous cheque from a donor.

In a rapidly changing world, with technology altering possibilities every week, with Brexit about to bite and a new presidency in the United States, it is imperative for Britain to have a generation of young people who are resilient, ambitious and adaptable. Young people who can face up to the difficulties that are part of life and learning, rather than being fazed by them. In the hands of a great coach, sport provides these lessons. It builds character, as it has for Kelly and thousands like her.

The Ancient Greeks understood this only too well. The instigators of mankind's first great intellectual revolution put the gymnasiums at the centre of education, aware that a healthy

body and healthy mind are part and parcel of the good life.

Readers of *The Times* were pivotal in the early days of Greenhouse. After an article on these pages in 2002 about the lack of sports opportunities in the inner cities — a brilliant 12-year-old called Darius Knight was training in a friend's cramped garden shed — several readers sent in cheques. This helped to start the table-tennis programme, a catalyst, in many ways, for what Greenhouse has become, and a powerful message of the difference we can all make. Knight, incidentally, went on to become Youth Olympic Champion, a senior international, and now, aged 26, has his own business.

It is easy to write about bad news when it comes to sport. There is plenty around. But I trust you will forgive a good news story about an organisation that is not resting on its laurels. Great sports teams are built upon a culture of continuous improvement. Greenhouse is determined to find new ways to encourage the brilliant, inspirational young people who exist at the bottom of the pile.

### Results

#### Football

##### Checkatrade Trophy

##### Northern section: Group A

Cheltenham (0) 1 Bolton (0) 0

Morgan-Smith 90 1,038

Everton U23 (0) 1 Blackpool (0) 1

Charlsley 79 Gnanouillet 48

Blackpool won 5-4 on pens

##### Group B

Crewe (0) 0 Chesterfield (1) 2

929 O'Shea 23

Wilson 37 Dimiao 81 (pen)

Ronan 45 (pen) Accrington S (0) 0

Enobakhare 67 547

#### Group C

Stoke U23 (0) 1 Bury (0) 1

Bojan 86 Miller 68

Stoke won 4-3 on pens

#### Group D

Blackburn U23(1) 2 Oldham (0) 2

Stokes 22, Feeney 61 Ladapo 49, Wilson 67

Oldham won 5-4 on pens

#### Group E

Derby U23 (1) 2 Mansfield (2) 3

Hanson 24 Hemmings 2

Weimann 84 Henderson 5

1,495 Clements 90

Doncaster (0) 0 Port Vale (0) 0

1,495 Port Vale won 4-3 on pens

#### Group G

Cambridge (0) 0 Scunthorpe (1) 2

666 Williams 36, Adakun 90

#### Middlesbro U23(0) 0

308 Shrewsbury (2) 3

Leitch-Smith 10, 59

Toney 14

#### Group H

Leicester U23 (0) 0 Walsall (0) 1

Bakayoko 58

Southern section: Group A

Portsmouth (0) 1 Bristol Rovers (0) 0

Naismith 88 1,200

#### Group B

Newport Co (1) 2 AFC Wimbledon(0) 0

Bennett 7, Barnum-Bobb 85

Swansea U23 (2) 2 Plymouth (0) 0

James 13, McBurnie 20

#### Group C

Exeter (0) 1 Swindon (1) 1

Wheeler 59 Norris 30

Swindon won 4-2 on pens

#### Chelsea U23 (1) 1

Quintero 44 Oxford Utd (0) 1

5,200 Hemmings 90

Chelsea won 13-12 on pens

#### Group D

Northampton (1) 1 West Ham U23(1) 1

Beautyman 23 Parfitt-Williams 39

West Ham U23 won 3-2 on pens

#### Group E

Colchester (1) 1 Charlton (1) 1

Bonne 42 Ajose 32

548 Colchester won 4-3 on pens

#### Group F

Barnet (0) 1 Peterboro (1) 2

Amaluzor 68 Taylor 6

393 Moncur 84

#### Norwich U23 (2) 4

Morris 11 MK Dons (0) 1

Oliveira 38 (pen), 63 Tapp 84

Adams 87 1,042

#### Group G

Brighton U23 (1) 1 Leyton Orient (0) 0

Towell 16

Stevenage (2) 4 Southend (0) 0

Schumacher 8 559

Godden 18, Liburg 60, 90

#### Group H

Luton (0) 1 Millwall (0) 3

Hutchinson 58 (og) Smith 81, 87

2,251

West Brom U23(0) 0 Gillingham (1) 2

Oldaker 45

Emmanuel-Thomas 55

### Fixtures

#### Football

Kick-off 7.45 unless stated

Checkatrade Trophy: Group stage: Hartlepool

v Rochdale (7.30); Reading U21 v Yeovil

(7.30); Sunderland U21 v Notts County (7.30);

Carlisle v Fleetwood; Morecambe v Bradford;

Grimsby v Sheffield United; Southampton U21

v Crawley; Wycombe v Coventry.

Press & Journal Highland League: Wick

Academy v Buckie Thistle (8.0).

Women's Champions League: Round of 16, first

leg: Manchester City v Brondby (8.0).

#### Snooker

Rich Arena, Coventry: Dafabet Champion of

Champions.