

How to Become **A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER**



**Proven Strategies To Help
footballers (And Parents Of
footballers) Open Doors At
Professional Football Clubs.**



By Ex Professional Goalkeeper
And Founder Of Just4keepers
Ray Newland

How To Become A Professional Football Player

By

Ray Newland

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‘How To Become A Professional Football Player’ is my story how I achieved my dreams of becoming a professional football player, even though I never played for any professional academy as a child.

My story goes through my ups, my many downs about myself and my father, who helped me on my journey as a child chasing my dreams, and how we both had to endure rejection after rejection, having to deal with egoistical nasty coaches and how I nearly gave up on my dream, to signing professional forms for one of the most successful football players in English history, who became my manager.

I wrote this book to help inspire the next generation of young footballers who are now battling to achieve their dreams of wanting to become a football player. And I am positive my story, and more importantly my tips to open doors at professional clubs to give you an opportunity, will give you (or your footballing child) the edge!

So Who Is This Book For?

Footballers: Whether you are a budding footballer wanting to achieve your dreams of becoming a professional footballer, or you are a current footballer, and or footballing enthusiast.

Parent Of A Footballer: If you are a parent of a young footballer, trying to help your footballing child to become a professional football player, this book is 1000% for you and is a **MUST** read to make sure you understand how to help your footballing child, but more importantly it will help you protect

your child's mindset and confidence from egotistical coaches and the rejection he/she will inevitably receive that could destroy your child's chances.

Football Coach: If you are a football coach and you are trying to help your students achieve their dreams, this is a MUST read as it will help you, to give your students the edge.

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this book to all the young hopefuls who are chasing their dream of becoming a professional football player.

And to all their parents, who are sacrificing their time to help their child realise their dream!

‘If you shoot for the moon, and miss... you will still be among the stars!’

So **always** chase your dream!

Ray Newland

A Message To My Parents:

Without doubt, the only people I can thank for me achieving my dream of becoming a professional footballer... are my parents.

I would like to thank my mother for all her love and encouragement and making me believe in myself and I would like to thank my father who was with me every step of the way, taking me from football trial to football trial, making sure I wrote those letters for these trials and for giving me a kick up the backside when I needed it most!

There were many times my father would work twelve hour days, Monday to Friday, and when most parents would spend their weekends lazing in front of the TV or down the pub, my father spent every one of his weekends chauffeuring me across the UK to help me chase my dream of becoming a professional football player.

Thanks guys... love you.

Neville Southall

I would also like to say a special thank you to the legendary ex-Welsh international goalkeeper, Neville Southall, who took me under his wing when as I was with Everton Football Club for nearly two years..

Nev took time out of his life to not only train myself, but the other youngsters at Everton FC.

When the other professional players went home after their morning training session, Nev stayed behind more or less every afternoon to teach myself, Jason Kearton, Mark Deagan, Steven Reeves and John Clarridge.

At this time Neville was voted the 'Best keeper in the world' but to me, he was the 'Best person in the world'.

Nev will kill me for saying this, but he was a true gentleman and I cannot thank him enough for moulding me into a goalkeeper that became good enough to play professionally for nearly ten seasons.

Thanks Nev...

I will never forget what you done for me!

Side Note: This book has sold in OVER 20 countries to date, and my ebook version to even more.

I know certain countries call football soccer in their country, USA and Canada for example.

But please note within this book, as I am from England, so I will be referring soccer to football. (The proper name :)

Also, this book is for both male and female players, but within this book I refer, to he, his, etc only because it was easier for me to write in this way.

But please be rest assured, this book is to help female players and their parents, just as much as male players.

You will also read that I achieved my dreams of becoming a professional goalkeeper, however please note, if you are a outfield player, coach or parent of a young football player, the information within my book will still 1000% help because my book is not about the 'position' of goalkeeping, but how I achieved my dreams to become a professional football player (goalkeeper).

So throughout my book, I will obviously mention goalkeeping a lot, but please do not worry as my book will help any outfield player or coach (and or parent of a young player).

My Playing Career:

(1988-89) Became an apprentice footballer for Chester City

(1989-91) Got released and then played semi professional for a few seasons with:

Winsford United (Unibond league)

Newtown (Welsh League)

While at Newtown I also signed Non Contract forms with Everton FC, where I spent two great years

(1991 – 1993) Achieved my dream of becoming a professional, signing for Plymouth Argyle.

(1993-1995). I had a chance to sign for England legend Ray Clemence the then manager of Barnett FC, Unfortunately I moved to Chester City again, this time as a professional. I signed a two year deal but after 15 months, signed for

(1995-1996) Torquay United:

(1996-1998) I Got fed up with professional football and signed a two year deal for Vauxhall Conference side Leek Town, so I could set up my own business.

(1998 -1999) Was even more fed up with Conference league football, so my agent got me a professional contract with Wigan Athletic.

Unfortunately after only three months at Wigan and challenging Roy Carol (Who would go on to become Manchester United FC goalkeeper) a freak training ground injury prematurely ended my career aged just twenty eight.

(1999 – Present day) I started Just4keepers goalkeeper schools, which is an independent goalkeeper coaching school and now the leading and largest goalkeeper schools of its kind in the world.

To date this is the most rewarding thing that I achieved in football re setting up Just4keepers.

Just4keepers has helped OVER 1000 Goalkeepers achieve their dream to get into professional football clubs.

No individual or organisation WORLDWIDE even comes close to matching these fantastic results for goalkeepers in the history of football.

In fact I am the first and only goalkeeper coach in history to take a goalkeeper coaching concept into 37 countries and across 5 continents at the time of writing.

So now at nearly fifty years of age at the time of writing, I am still involved in goalkeeping, and still helping goalkeepers to achieve their dreams.

It is something I am very very proud of!

Here I am aged just 20:



This was my first professional game (For Plymouth Argyle) all be it, it was a Pre Season friendly against Tiverton Town FC.

I went along as cover for the 'Ex England legend International Peter Shilton' expecting to maybe get the last 10 minutes for a bit of experience. (Shilton was also my manager)

You could not even begin to imagine how frightened I was, when my name was read out to start the game!

I knew the photographer was taking the above picture of me, so I tried to put a 'Confident' look on my face...

However I was sooooo nervous!

This book is in two parts, 'Part 1' is all about my experiences of trying to become a professional goalkeeper so you will get an idea of what you need to do to also become a professional footballer/goalkeeper.

Or it will help you as a parent, help your child.

I would not say I had natural talent as a goalkeeper, far from it. In fact most of my peers and competition were much more talented than me.

However the advantage I had over my competition was, I just never quit! I definitely had the ex prime minister of England's fighting spirit of 'Never, ever , EVER, giving up!'

So I hope you get this important message out of my brief story in part 1 Because seriously, if you just follow this one success trait, and do not quit. This will put you ahead of 95% of the competition. Because most will quit!

So simply, do not quit!

Then 'Part 2' gives you ideas, tips and samples of all the correspondence that you can actually use to get trials at professional football clubs.

Please Note: Some of the techniques I used was many years ago, when we did not have the technology that we have today. So it is important when you read what I did, imagine how you can transfer what I teach you, into using the modern technology that you have currently today.

I have also wrote this book to try and educate parents on how to help their child to get into the professional game. So there is a whole chapter dedicated to advising parents.

So, If you are a pushy parent you REALLY need to listen to my advice before you make it unbearable for your child.

I have also written this book as 'me'. I have not had this proof read as I wanted to write this book from the heart, and like I am just chatting to you face to face, like I have done with tens of thousands of parents over the years, who I have helped, so they could help their child achieve their dreams.

So if there is some dodgy grammar or spelung mistuks do not be too hard on me :)

But I guarantee this book will help, and at the end of the day, this is the important part.

PART 1 Introduction:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Ray Newland and I was a professional footballer (goalkeeper) for ten seasons, until injury prematurely ended my career aged just twenty-eight.

That was in the 1999 –2000 season while at Wigan Athletic and since coming out of football, I have been very fortunate to have set up Just4Keepers, a specialist goalkeeper coaching company that at the time of writing, is the biggest goalkeeping school in the world (please check out Just4keepers on google)

Over the past two decades plus, I have been running Just4Keepers, we have coached over 100,000 goalkeepers, helping over 1000 of our students to achieve their dream of playing professional and or semi professional football, and also helping hundreds of goalkeepers gain college scholarships in the USA.

This is something I am super proud of.

In fact no other goalkeeper coach in history, even comes close to the success that I have had for developing goalkeepers over the past 20 plus years.

On top of my helping goalkeepers with developing their goalkeeping skills, I also help goalkeepers (and parents) save a fortune on their goalkeeper gloves.

In 2012 I started my own goalkeeper glove brand called the J4K goalkeeper gloves, (check out: www.j4ksports.com) because I got

fed up with parents and keepers asking me where I could get top spec goalkeeper gloves at a fair price.

At my answer was, I do not know, I too am paying through the nose for these so called big branded named gloves that just fell apart.

So after some peer pressure, I launched the J4K Gloves, first only to serve the Just4keepers students.

However over the past decade, the J4K gloves have become a phenomenal in the goalkeeping world, because goalkeepers and parents, see that my gloves are top top quality BUT at a fraction of the cost of the so called big branded names.

In some cases, you can get 3 pairs of J4K gloves, for the price of just 1 pair of the so called big branded gloves. And my gloves are the EXACT SAME specification, if not better!

So now as a result, the J4K goalkeeper gloves have become one of the most trusted goalkeeper glove brands globally, with over 50,000 goalkeepers and or their parents trusting the J4K Goalkeeper gloves every year.

I also have goalkeepers from all levels wearing J4K, from six year old grassroots goalkeepers, to semi, professional and even international goalkeepers.

If you goto www.j4ksports.com and use the code J4K20, you will get 20% off your goalkeeper gloves **FOR LIFE** as a thank you for trusting me, re purchasing my book.

So Why Can I Help You?

The reason why I can offer advice to young hopefuls (and parents) is because I know EVERY method and trick needed to become a professional footballer.

Not only did I achieve my dream of becoming a professional goalkeeper, I have more importantly helps hundreds and thousands, also achieve their goalkeeping dreams.

I also had to do this the hard way, I was not one of these players, who signed for a professional football academy age six, and went through the ranks.

In fact, I never attended any professional academy as a kid.

I earned my stripes, playing for local grassroot clubs and hustling my way into professional football clubs to get my chance.

You see, I was not a natural goalkeeper, In fact, as a youngster, I was not even a good average player.

My peers were head and shoulders above me, physically and mentally!

I had to practice, practice, practice, and PRACTICE, and I believe I actually turned out a better player than what I should have been for my physique and ability level.

‘You have to be in an academy to have a chance to become a professional footballer!’

This is what I was made to believe as a youngster growing up in my hometown of Liverpool, UK.

This drove me insane!

Please believe me, this is a myth and like millions of other children, I thought that if I was not at a professional football club's academy or centre of excellence aged 6,7,8,9 10 years of age etc, I had no chance of becoming a professional footballer.

But the good news here, is young hopefuls and parents will be **relieved** to know that even though it does help being at a professional academy or centre of excellence...

...it is not the end of the world if you are not!

In fact, there are cases where being at a professional football club's academy or centre of excellence can actually work against a youngster, which I will explain further into this book (see Academy hopping parents!).

Okay, going back to myself trying to achieve my dream of becoming a professional footballer and myself and other youngsters thinking we had to be at a professional football club's academy.

Where does this myth come from?

I think over the years, this has been propagated from parents who do not understand the process of becoming a professional footballer.

And only up until a few years ago, professional football clubs were the only place to go to train to have any chance of becoming a professional football player.

Also, let's just say that football clubs (or some of the coaches at these professional clubs) wrongly brain washed parents that the only chance their child had to achieve their dream, was to be at THEIR pro club!

Which was, and still is nonsense.

So many parents thought that this was the only type of specialist training that existed for their child.

I am not blaming parents for this, but a lot of parents completely miss the point that their child could be getting better training with their local grassroots coach, rather than a coach at a professional club.

I know this sounds crazy, but it is true.

Think about it, a professional club has to have many many coaches to coach throughout the club, and so they are all not going to be perfect

So parents, please do not under estimate the coaching your child is getting at their current local club, because a lot of the time, the coaching will be just as good, maybe even better in terms of developing your child

Also, alot of the coaches at professional academies are not on great money, and there is actually more money for coaches starting their own football schools.

So this is why you see coaches with more about them, and who also have more confidence about their coaching abilities, start their own coaching businesses, because they know they can earn more money, provide a better service for their students (because they do not have to work off the pro clubs templates) and they also enjoy what they do, because there is no boss looking over their shoulders, so as a result the atmosphere is normally very relaxed.

Which will help the child's development.

And the opposite happens, coaches who have not got the confidence in their own coaching abilities, will take the easy route and get a job at a pro clubs academy or centre of excellence.

Even though they know the money is not great, they are happy to get told what to do as a coach, which is not ideal developing children and players because as a coach, you must have confidence to work on what you believe in, not what you get told what to do.

I am not saying this is the case with every coach at a pro club, but I would say it is the vast majority.

So by getting coached at a pro club, the chances are you are getting coached (or your child is) by a coach who has less confidence in their coaching, than a coach who coaches independently.

So I believe that parents have come to the false realisation that their child must be at a professional football club to have any fighting chance to make the grade.

However, thankfully the tide is turning and over the past few years because there have been more and more specialist independent

football schools in operation (like Just4keepers), often run by ex-professional players, parents are now opting to put their child in these organisations.

You only have to browse the internet and see how many success stories these independents are creating. Put it this way, they are producing more pro players than most pro academies.

So why can it be better for a young player to be coached at these independent football schools like Just4keepers

Here are just a few reason why!

1: A lot of the coaches are ex-professionals, so the child is getting taught by a doer... not a theorist. This is something that we will go into in more detail, as A LOT of academies do not have ex-players coaching for them, this is because most opt to go independent.

By the way, I am not saying you have to be a ex player to be a great coach, far from it. Some of the best independent coaches I have seen, never played pro.

2: There is NO PRESSURE on their students because the coaching organisations are customer driven, (parents pay for their child to be coached) so parents know that their child will be getting the correct attention.

Important: This might not be the case all the time, so you have to watch as a parent is your child getting the attention they need to develop.

3: Most coaches are running these grassroots clubs and or coaching schools because THEY WANT TO, which means the

coach enjoys what he does and has fun, thus the children have fun, too!

4: The independent coach is not tied to a club, and normally has contacts all over the country, even world.

So we're a coach at an academy is working for the club, and thus, this is where their loyalties lie, the independent coaches are working for their students. THIS IS SO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND!!!

So do you get my point?

You do not have to be at an academy to become a professional footballer, because there are other options.

Because there is now enough independent specialised coaching schools around that are probably better than most football academies anyway!

Or they are at least doing it for the right reasons, Fun! Just how it should be for a young player learning their trade.

Also, most grassroots clubs, the coaching has really improved over the years, and normally for the most part, what separates what young players get from their grassroots club, compared to a professional academy, is venues.

The only difference seriously, could be pro academies obviously for the most part have better training facilities.

And again this can lull players and parents into a false sense of what they are getting.

I have seen it so many times were a player or parent at a pro academy, get the quality of the training facility confused with the actual coaching.

I have been watching certain goalkeeper sessions at pro academies, and lets just say the coaching was not that great, and I would have a parent standing next to me, saying, this is amazing here, the facility is fantastic

I have always tried to educate the parent, and say in a nice way, look forget the venue, look at the coaching.

But you will be surprised just how many parents make this mistake.

I do not want to sound rude here, and I will not mention names, but one HUGE premiership club that I was attached to for a while, the goalkeeper coach in question, I would not have him working within my Just4keepers coaching organisation, but there he was not only coaching the young keepers, but also advising goalkeeper coaches what they should be doing.

It was the blind, leading the blind. And this club was huge!

So, please do not under estimate the coaching you and or your child gets at your local grassroots club, just because you might be at a pro academy and the facilities are amazing.

You must look at the coaching.

Important point: I always get asked but Ray how do I know if I am going to a good independent coaching schools that will develop my child.

And the answer is a lot simpler than what you think!

I advise parents, it does not matter what sales patter the coach gives you, how unique or different their football schools re... simply look at their results!

It does matter if the lead coach is a ex professional player or not, the ONLY thing that matters is proven results for their students.

So see how many success stories this coaching school has had. If they have many success stories where their students have gone onto higher levels, you know your child is in the right place.

I really want to drive this point home, if you are not at a professional academy at present, it is no big deal just find an independent coaching schools nearby and or a decent grassroots club! Or both!

Okay, so going back to my story, and myself and my father thinking that I had to be at a professional clubs academy to have any chance of becoming a professional footballer.

As you can imagine when I got to the end of my last year in school and I was not at a professional football club, I thought my chances had well and truly gone of becoming a professional!

I was now aged seventeen, I was in sixth form in school and I was playing for just my local Saturday and Sunday team, oh and I was not getting any type of professional coaching.

Also, what was disheartening was that the blue eyed boys in our school team had already signed for professional clubs on YTS

forms (2 year Apprenticeships) and where now training everyday with these professional clubs.

So you can imagine that I felt very jealous of my fellow pupils, because I did honestly think at this stage of my life that I had missed out on becoming a professional goalkeeper.

But little did I realise, that your career does not end at seventeen as a footballer... it's only beginning.

Ex-England manager Graham Taylor, while he was manager at Aston Villa had rule which stated that EVERY single player who signed a two year YTS apprentice scheme with his club, would be given a guaranteed one year professional contract.

He believed (and I wholeheartedly agree), that he could not judge whether or not a player would make it as a professional until the end of the third year of his contract.

This would make these players at least eighteen (going on nineteen) years old. So Graham made his decisions on players when they where men, not boys.

So here you have it, an ex-England manager believed he could not make a decision on a player until the player was nearly nineteen years of old!

Now can you understand why I say, do not worry about getting into an academy aged 6,7,8,9,10 years old etc...

I also hope you understand, when some no mark of an academy coach tells you, that your child is not good enough aged just

6,7,8,9,10 years old etc...remember Graham did not make his decisions on a player until they were 18/19 years of age!

And before some smart arse says,

‘Ahh, but this is only Graham Taylor, the man the English press dubbed turnip head. What does he know?’

Well, Graham knows more than 99.9% of academy and centre of excellence coaches, and 99.9% more than most professional coaches in the UK.

And probably more than 100% of parents, so please listen to his advice guys, if your child gets released from an academy it really is, not the end of the world. Seriously it means absolute nothing!

Graham is one of only a handful of people to manage top-flight professional football clubs, and one of even a select few ever number to become the England manager.

So I would say that this information comes from a man who knew what he was talking about!

I believe the MASSIVE mistake children (and their parents) make is that they get to the end of their school life and think...

‘Well that’s it; I am not a professional footballer , so I have missed the boat.!!!’

I know I did!

In fact some children and their parents, think they have missed the boat if they are not at an academy aged 10 years old.

Guys, this is crazy and just not true.

I believe what happens at this crucial part of a child's life, when a child gets to the end of school age they think....

'Right, I have not made it as a professional footballer. I better now choose another career!'

These children will then all of a sudden go to college to study becoming an accountant, plumber, electrician etc...

And they give up on their footballing dream, which is such a shame.

Now even though I agree the above is a good idea to get a career in mind, it's also silly giving up on your dream!

Because who says you still cannot make the grade as a professional footballer?

Remember, a child's career is only beginning at seventeen... sorry, as ex-England boss said, nineteen!

What we recommend to our students in Just4keepers who come to the end of school and want to give up and find a career... is we advise them to simply DO BOTH!

We recommend that they choose another career path, but still chase their dream of becoming a professional goalkeeper.

We explain that they can study in the daytime Monday to Friday for a chosen career, but evenings and weekends can be left for the development of their goalkeeping.

As its better than sitting in and watching tv or going out and drinking in a pub or nightclub!

So if you are a sixteen or seventeen year old (or you are a parent) and are reading this book now and you have just reached a stage of giving in, or wondering what to do next... you now know!

You can do both! Have two irons in the fire!

So How On Earth Did I Become A Professional?

I have already stated, that I was not a natural and that I had got to seventeen years old and was still nowhere near becoming a professional and had nearly given up.

In fact, at this point of my life I was studying to become a technical drawer, architect.

Also, do not forget at this point, I had NO consistent specialised goalkeeper coaching in my life. So things were against me!

So how did I manage to become a pro footballer?

Well it all started at aged fifteen, when I began writing to football clubs asking for trials, and also making many, many phone calls to clubs.

Trials by the way, is when a professional football club will bring in players from all over and play some games. They do this to try and find a diamond in the rough.

I did indeed manage to get a few trials, but I was unsuccessful, with many of the academy coaches at these professional clubs being quite rude really, telling me to forget my dreams as I was not up to scratch to become a professional keeper.

Now this is where having belief in your own ability kicks in guys, because from the age of fifteen to seventeen years old, I must have received over 100 rejection letters and personally had several trials and told I was not good enough.

Did this discourage me?

To be honest, yes it did, bigtime, but I had a dream and I was not going to give up until I gave it my best shot.

However, when I was in sixth form I went on trial at Crewe Alexandra, and I ended up playing for their B team at the time, which was two teams below the reserves and normally for the under 16/17 players.

I also occasionally played for the A team, which was just one level before the reserves, and just two levels below first team football.

I managed to balance my time between going to sixth form, and training at Crewe. But after about 3 months doing this I realised that Crewe had no intention of signing me, and was just using me as a non paid player.

However, I continued to play for Crewe to gain experience, and every game I played, my father would walk over the the opposing team and asked if they needed a goalkeeper.

On particular game, I was playing against Chester City. When my dad approached the coach.

John Walsh was a fellow scouser and the coach, and he actually stated to my dad, that he was looking for a keeper, as his regular keeper recently went in for a knee operation.

Thankfully I had a good game that day, and I was invited to train on a Tuesday evening with the schools boys to start with.

But when John seen I was too good for this level (And in all fairness I was nearly 18 months older than most) he recommend to the then first team manager Harry McNally that I train and trial with the first team.

So the following week, I went and trained with the first team, and I remember thinking when I was training with them, 'how easy is this,' anyhow I had that good of a training session, that same day I was offered an apprenticeship position at the club!

So after years and years AND years of frustrations, and rejections, 'boom' all of a sudden in **just one day**, I had my **VERY FIRST** training session with first team professional players, and I was asked to sign for the club!

I can remember as if it was yesterday, saying to my dad when I got home, 'Dad what are you doing tomorrow.'

'Working', he said, with a look on his face that said, what a daft question!

So I answered, 'Is there any chance you can come with me tomorrow to Chester City!'

'I cannot' he said, 'I told you I am working, but you know I would love to come and see you train!'

I then beamed with a smile, 'But dad because I am under 18 years old, I am not allowed to sign for Chester City without an adult'

My dad looked at me paused, and when he realised what I was saying, he jumped about 8 ft in the air, and screamed exactly like Fred Flintstone use to shout, YABA DABA DOOOOOO!!!'

We both danced about for a few minutes and when he finally calmed down, he said 'Sade (my mum) tomorrow morning can you ring my work, and tell them I am ill, nothing is going to stop me going to Chester tomorrow!'

Because he had been on this journey with me for so long, he felt every frustration that I had felt, so when he jumped 8ft in the air, he was just as relieved as me that I had finally made it.

So the following day, he drove me to Chester City football club, met the manager and co signed my first pro contract at a professional club, at the age of 17 years old, even though I had never been too any professional academy, throughout my childhood.

So hopefully you will see if I can do this, well why not you!

And again remember, if you are not at a professional academy, it is not the end of the world!

My story so far should be proving this.

My time started very well at Chester, but by the time my contract was up, I had lost all passion for the club, and that affected the way I played sadly.

While at Chester, myself and my fellow apprentice team mates where treated terrible by both the coaching staff and professional players

Thankfully I never got bullied by the professional players, like my fellow team mates did, only because the bond I had with the older professional keepers, who were also from my home city' so they looked after me.

But the way some players got bullied was a disgrace. If it happened in this day and age, seriously some players and coaches, could have looked at some serious criminal convictions.

Another thing that was shocking, was the coaching myself and my fellow team mates received.

Or should I state, lack of coaching.

Morning times, myself and the other young players where just used as dogs bodies for the first team, we would either just have to stand around and collect the balls when they were kicked into another field, or we were used as pawns when the first team would practice their set pieces.

A lot of the apprentice players, who were only between the age of 16 and 18 years old like myself, got some serious injuries when grown men from the first team, would clatter them so hard, and think it was funny to have a child screaming in pain.

I remember one morning training session, I was asked to play midfield, yes midfield, in a first team v reserve team practice game, and I was against the so called super star of the team

Every time I took the ball off this player, the other first team players were mocking him, because a young goalkeeper was giving him the run around.

To be honest, I was surprised how easy it was to play against this player, I actually think he was one the of the biggest signings at the time.

So when he lunged at me in frustration, and I put the ball through his legs, to the cheers of the first team players, he ran behind me and sucker punched me so hard it split my nose!

I looked at the manager Harry McNally, as if to say, did you see that, but all my manager said to the player laughing, 'You could not even knock Ray to the ground, when he was not looking'

This made this player even more angry, and so for the rest of the game, I had to endure this player tacking me around the chest, elbowing me etc...

I could remember thinking, so this is what I have worked so hard for, this is professional football

Another disgrace was the youth coach who was supposed to train the young apprentices in my squad.

As apprentices, we were supposed to get trained in the afternoons, but this rarely happened.

Instead most of the time, we were cleaning kits, boots or sweeping the stands.

I will not mention our so called coach at the time, but instead of coaching us, he would come out and say 'right guys do this' then would leave us to train ourselves

It was totally disheartening.

I witnessed some really nice young lads, with super talent lose all interest in becoming a professional football player, including myself.

Also, because we were getting zero training, getting battered in first team training, and basically being used as slaves, as you could imagine, this effected our results

John Walsh who was our coach (he only took us for the games, he was actually not at the club to train us, so never witnessed the lack of coaching) he use to go mad at our poor results, but non of us were brave enough to tell him how we were getting treated, because we were just kids and feared repercussions.

But what was the most frustrating thing about getting beat, on the Monday in training, we were made to go on this 5 mile run out of punishment for getting beat.

Even though we got zero training, the coach and manager use to slaughter us for getting beat. This was the mentality of these coaches!

Also, when the coaching staff wanted to get rid of us, we were sent on this run!

We were sent on this 5 mile run that many times we got that fed up, and because we knew we were not getting watched by the coaching staff because basically they did not care, we would simply all jog out of the club, and sit off in our secret location, just a couple hundred yards around the corner, and speak about our futures.

Then when we knew the coach was expecting us back, we would all jog back to the club pretending to be tired from our 5 mile run.

It got to the point, none of us wanted to represent Chester City anymore, a couple of players left, but most like me just sat it out, in a hope things would improve. But it never did.

So when my contract was up, I never even bothered turning up to see the manager to see if I got a new contract, as I did not want to be there anymore.

I never ever got a call to ask where I was, so I guess my contract was not getting renewed. But I lost no sleep over this because I was so relieved to get away from the coaches and some of the players of this club, who had no shame how disgracefully they treated the young players at the club.

So after the disappointment of seeing my fellow apprentice teammates, as well as myself getting severely let down by the management that was trusted to develop us as players, I actually fell out of love with football for a bit.

But within a few short months. I started playing again for a local mens open aged team even though I had just turned 18 years old.

In that season, I got players, supporters and managers player of the year and I ended up signing for Winsford United as a semi professional and after a few months playing for them, I heard rumours of professional clubs watching me, but an ankle injury put me out of action for a few months, so I lost this momentum.

Once I was fit again, I was playing well for my local open aged team, when I got the attention of St Helens Town FC, a semi professional team just outside of Liverpool.

After a few reserve team games, I was drafted in to play for the first team but unbeknown to me, my reserve team manager John Davies was also a scout for Everton FC, and he advised EFC to check me out.

So unbeknown to me, while I was playing for St Helens, an Everton scout came to watch me play, and thankfully I had a good game and before I knew it, with in a few weeks, I was training everyday at Everton on trial, and I was invited to a tour to Gronnigen in Holland, where I played against, Napoli, and the Russian and Turkish national team, and because I had such a good tournament, Everton offered to sign me.

However because they had the full allocation of goalkeepers, I was signed as a non contract player.

I still trained every day with the pro keepers, and I played in their A and B teams, and also the reserves.

Also on two occasions, I travelled with the first team to cover the legend Everton goalkeeper, Neville Southall

I also played for Newtown FC, who are in the Welsh league, but at the time I played, they were in the HFS loans league, and in my first season I went on to win the players and supporters player of the year.

And I just missed out on the managers player of the year to Mark (Bomber) Williams, who went on to have an amazing professional football career.

After about 16 months at Everton, and because I was playing so well, I approached the then manager of Everton Howard Kendal to see what my chances were at getting a full time professional contract, which meant more money.

But at the time, I had three international goalkeepers in front of me, so it was no surprise when Howard said 'Ray, if the other three keepers were not on such long contracts, and or one of them wanted to leave, I would sign you up in a heartbeat, but my budget will not allow for four professional goalkeepers'.

So I asked Howard if he did not mind if I started looking for another professional club, to which he agreed not only was he cool with this, but he would write a recommendation letter for me to send off to clubs.

Please bear in mind, at this time, there was no agents, so you had to rely on yourself or someone to put a word in with another club to have a chance of getting a move to another club.

Also Neville Southall kindly offered to write me a letter of recommendation, which you will see further in this book.

And what happened next blew my mind.

I sent off my letter to 11 professional football clubs, stating I was a free agent, and added the recommendation letters from Howard and Nev, and within a few days I had offers of seven trials with professional clubs, with one club offering me a one year professional contract, without me even having to go on trial.

So I had three years of sending hundreds of letters and getting a handful of trials, to within seven days sending just eleven letters and getting an offer of a professional contract.

Just shows you the power of having two legends like Howard and Nev recommending you heh :)

I was tempted to take the one year contract offer, but for a phone call from a certain Peter Shilton.

For you guys who may not know. Peter is the most capped goalkeeper in English history, and most will say he was the most successful keeper also in English history, and he was on the phone to ME, who had never even been to an academy as a youngster, offering me a chance to be his understudy!

Peter had just taken the players, manager role at Plymouth Argyle FC, and so was still playing himself, but he wanted a young goalkeeper to have as his second choice.

However this came with a big risk, there was no guarantee of a pro contract, I had to trial, and I also had to be at the club on that Monday... and it was Friday evening!!!

And Plymouth was about 350 miles from my home town of Liverpool, and this was back in the day, this type of trip would take about eight hours drive time because of the poor roads.

This was back in the day when there was no internet etc, but I decided there and then that I had enough confidence in my own ability that I would impress Peter.

So I took the risk of turning down the club who had offered me a one year professional contract, to risk a trial with Plymouth Argyle, and I was at the club Monday morning at 10am ready to train.

It also helped that Peter had arranged for me to stay in digs for the duration of my trial, at the clubs expense.

However, what was suppose to be a one week trial, ended up being nearly four weeks, but I had done enough to sign a professional contract with Peter and Plymouth Argyle.

I will never forget the day that I walked out of Shilton's office, having signed as a professional goalkeeper with arguably the most successful goalkeeper in English history!

Being a goalkeeper and having a legend like Shilton wanting to sign me, made me pinch myself.

And also adding to the fact that I had a glowing recommendation for Howard Kendal and Neville Southall.

And suddenly it dawned on me...

EVERYONE of these so called nobody academy coaches who did not give me a professional contract were wrong about me because now the most decorated English goalkeeper that ever lived thought I was good enough to become a professional goalkeeper as his understudy

So did this make all these agonising years of trying to become a professional goalkeeper worthwhile?

YOU BET IT DID!

So this is why I feel I can offer help and advice to young hopefuls, because I was not one of these players who got into an academy at aged six, went through the ranks and then signed a professional contract. (This rarely happens by the way)

NO, I had to **WORK** for my professional contract and I used every method and trick I could find to help me become a professional footballer... and this is what I am going to teach you throughout this book.

Not only my tips and techniques that I used to become a professional, but new ones, because time changes in football, so you must keep up to date with the methods needed to open the doors of football clubs.

As mentioned previously, even though signing for a professional football club's academy or centre of excellence can have its advantages, it is not VITAL!

As I have hopefully have proved!

In my Just4Keepers coaching schools, I tell my students that if they are good enough aged between 17 to even 22 years old that they still have a chance of making the grade whether they went through the ranks of their local professional clubs academy or whether they just played for their local grassroots club.

There has actually been players in their twenties that had a job, and we're only playing part time football, who achieved their dreams of becoming a professional football player.

If you do some due diligence, you will see so many players who made it professional, even in their late twenties.

So never give up on your dreams!

This is why I tell my students, look if your dream is to become a professional goalkeeper and you get to 18 years of age, and you are not at a professional club, do NOT give up on your dreams!

Yes, you will have to chose another career, and or you maybe have to get a job, but this should not stop you still chasing your dreams and playing the best standard you can play!

And To Prove Another Point:

Going back to my blue eyed ex-school team mates who got shipped off to professional clubs aged 6-16 years old and got their two year apprenticeship with their chosen football clubs...

Unfortunately for these guys, in EVERY case, every one of them got released from their respected professional football clubs after their many years of so called PROFESSIONAL coaching!

These guys had been around professional football clubs since they were six or seven, and they were now thrown onto the scrap heap.

What was sad for these guys was that their respected football clubs had filled their heads with so much crap over their childhood years about how they will make the grade to become a professional and not to worry about anything else, sadly, these guys never worried about their education.

When they were cruelly thrown out the game aged eighteen years old, with no qualifications, because they thought football would be their life, sadly all of my ex school friends never recovered.

I still know three of these ex-school mates, one became a HGV driver, one a bus driver and the third became a fireman.

And they all bar one, never played football again after getting released from their professional clubs.

Now I am not knocking these occupations by the way my ex school friends took, but I believe that these guys ended up in these jobs because from the age of six they were brainwashed that they would

become professional football players, so they never give a second thought to having another iron in the fire.

Also, to be fair to professional clubs in this new era, they are much better in terms of educating their young players that becoming a professional player is not guaranteed.

So at least it is not a shock to the system.

So hopefully my little story will give you the belief that you DO NOT need to be at a professional football club from the age of six in order to become a professional footballer.

Yes of course, it will most probably help if you are but because of the standard of coaching has improved at most grassroots clubs, and because there is also hundreds of independent football schools, who can develop players just as good as academies, and in fact in most cases they are a lot better developing players, there is so many options now for young players.

So please remember, if you are not at a professional academy when you are 6 to 16 years old, it is not a big deal!

Remember, It's a marathon... not a sprint!

Why Do The Players Who Come Late Often Make It?

I have heard sooooo many stories of successful players who come into the professional game between the ages of eighteen and up to their mid to late twenties.

Why is this?

I do not know really, I can only guess that these guys mature late (this was me).

Referring back to my blue-eyed schools mate, from a very young age, they were all physically very mature.

One player at the age of ten, seriously looked like a grown man. So this gave him a massive advantages over most kids, including me.

They towered above me in height and physical strength. However, by the age of eighteen, the roles had reversed and I was 3-5 inches bigger than these guys.

They seemed to stop growing at age fifteen., and this is when late bloomers, like I was, caught up and or overtook them.

So maybe this is the answer?

Advice For Parents

Okay before I educate young hopefuls to become a professional, first I want to digress and educate the parents!

I am going to be brutal with you here guys, and state some home truths; I will not beat about the bush, so hopefully you are sitting down!

I also want to state before the beat down, that I am doing this out of love, seriously. I have such a passion to help parents, so they can help their goalkeeping child, I will be nothing but truthful.

So here goes, and please remember, over the next pages is tough love, but if you are humble enough to listen, you and your child will have a much better experience and I promise you, this will teach you how to protect your child!

Okay so here goes.

‘Right... Do not live your life through your child’s eyes!’

There are too many parents now, who drag their poor child to every professional academy and centre of excellence in their area when they are just too young.

Or in the USA parents are brain washed that their child needs to be playing for the best team in their state, and paying the most money for their coaching. Which is not the case.

In the UK, we call these parents ‘Academy Hopping Parents!’

We have all seen these parents who drag their poor child from academy to academy. To be honest, these parents need to wake up and realise the pressure they are putting on their child!

I have seen this too many times to recount, where a parent (mostly the dad) pushes and pushes his child because he wants his child to become a professional, even more than the child wants to be for themselves!

And I can tell you horror story after horror story where parents have put their child on special diets, stopped them playing with their friends and banned them from playing other sports in school in case they get injured.

If you are like this as a parent, do your child a favour...

STOP RIGHT NOW!!!!

You are doing your child no favours, and you will quickly take any enjoyment out of the game for them.

Okay, you never became a professional footballer yourself and you wanted to... but so what!

This should not be an excuse for you to put pressure on your child to do something that you could not do!

Sorry to be to the point parents, but you need to wake up and stop putting the pressure on your child.

I know from first hand experience because one, my dad pushed me too hard to a degree and I was petrified of making a mistake as a

youngster and two, I see this on a daily basis with Just4keepers with parents who bring their children to my coaching schools.

Some of the parents who attend my schools will tell you that I can be pretty ruthless with them, if I feel they are pushing their child too hard.

In fact, I have been so 'to the point' with some parents that they have left my coaching schools because they did not like what I said to them.

They say the truth hurts.

But I will only ever be honest, and if a parent does not like some home truths, this is not my fault as I genuinely care about the goalkeepers who I coach and I do not like seeing them getting hurt or being put under unnecessary pressure!

Academy hopping parents 'Really annoy me if I am to be honest.

Academy hopping parents can ruin their child!

Academy hopping parents bounce their child from one academy to another for many months or sometimes years, dragging their poor child to their chosen football club three or more times a week, through heavy traffic, only to return home late each evening.

Then this poor child has to sit through their school day, absolutely knackered from the travelling, training and late nights.

And what is sad, sorry annoying, is that their education gets effected, which is 1000 times more important than playing for an academy.

Then when the child gets released by the academy, the parents are on the phone to every other available football club to get their child into the next academy.

Then the whole nightmare starts again for the child.

I kid you not; there are some ten year olds I know, who have played for more professional clubs than me!

Parents think, because their child has played for most of their local professional clubs that this is a good thing... but it can actually have a negative effect!

Most parents who have been around professional football academies and centres of excellence will tell you, that the egos from some of these academy coaches are a 1000ft tall!

I have lost count of the times I have heard an academy coach say, 'I am not signing that player, he has been at XYZ FC this season and they have not signed him, If they have not signed him then he will definitely not be any good for our club!'

This is a coach being egoistical at best !

So you can actually give your child a bad name, because if he keeps getting released by professional clubs, other professional clubs will not want to sign your child, because it is an ego thing with these coaches/clubs at times.

Also please think about what you are doing to your child's confidence.

If your child is getting let go by football club after football club, I do not care how strong you think your child is... it is only going to be negative!

Remember parents, I was rejected by clubs consistently for a few years and I will be honest with you, it's heart-wrenching.

I also know professional footballers (MEN!) who have fallen to pieces because they were released by their club.

So can you imagine what a child would be going through?

And do you know what?

It's your fault, as a parent if this happens!

Parents blame the clubs, and yes I agree some clubs are terrible, but as the parent, you are making the choices for your child. So hopefully within this chapter, you will listen to my advice and make some better choices for your child.

Other things you need to watch out for if you are an academy hopping parent is...

The academy coaches will mess you (and your child) about if they see you are a parent who is desperate for their child to be at an academy.

Parents who I have personally coached on this topic will back me up on this one.

If an academy/centre of excellence coach knows that they can have you eating out of their hands... they most probably will!

And they might start messing you and your child about!

Parents think because they kiss the backside of a coach, this will move their child forward.

No, it will not!

This is what I teach my parents when I advise them over academies and centres of excellence, and if you take in what I say here, you will lessen the risk of embarrassing yourself and your child, and hopefully prevent getting messed about.

I say to my parents, 'If the coach thinks your child is not good enough, all the brown nosing in the world is not going to help them. BUT, if the coach thinks your child is good enough, you will know by the manner the way they speak to you and your child!'

'So there is no point in brown nosing the coach, they will either think your child has got it... or has not!'

Also, many parents will back me up again when I say, if you do not kiss ass, the chances are your child will not be messed about!

Through my advice, many many parents have said to coaches at a professional club that they meet for the first time...

'Look, I will bring my child to your academy as long as my child wants to come. But the moment he tells me he is no longer enjoying coming here, I will pull him out, whether he has signed a deal or not.'

What you are stating here as a parent, that you only care for your child, you are not going to kiss ass, and if you think your child is

getting ill-treated and or not enjoying himself you will pull them out of this club.

In EVERY case were a parent has said this to a club, they have told me that they (and their child) did not get messed about, so it was a better experience for all because they made the statement at the beginning to the coach, 'that they would pull out their child'.

I have had parents say to me when I have advised the above, 'I do not want to say that... the coach might think I am cheeky and let my child go!'

But as long as you are not bad mannered with the coach, and you say the above politely, if the coach has anything decent about them, they will respect your honesty.

Also, make sure that you do not chase after these coaches after every training session or football match to see how your child is getting on!

I will tell you that most coaches HATE this, and I have known some coaches who have released a child because their parent was too much of a nuisance!

If the coach has something to say about your child, they will come to you, you will not have to hunt them down every time you see them!

Also if you case the coach every time you see them, this is a sign you are desperate and if the coach is that way of thinking, this could be the green light to mess you, your child about.

But if the coach sees you as a parent who is not bothering him, and if you have stated to him what I advise above, I can more or less guarantee you and your child will not be messed about by this coach.

Is The Coach Good Enough?

The moment a parent tells me their child is signing for a professional club, I ask the parent, 'Who is going to be your child's goalkeeper coach?'

'Why?' they ask, 'Is this important?'

I laugh and say, 'Of course it's important. Even if your child signs for Real Madrid, if his coach is poor what is he going to learn?'

I often get a blank look back from the parent!

True Story: A parent of mine came to me one day all excited because his son had just signed for a top premiership academy, when he was about 10 years old.

So you can imagine his face when I said, 'I wished you'd have told me this sooner, as I would have advised you not to sign!'

'What do you mean, it's such and such FC!' he shouted.

I responded, 'I know it's such and such FC and they are a massive club, but you have to look past their name and look at the goalkeeper coach who is going to be teaching your son. This coach has only played at a very poor standard, so what is he going to teach your son?'

His response again was, 'But it's such and such FC!'

Again I said, 'Look, you have to look past the club and look at the individual coaching your child will be getting. I personally know

this coach and as much as he is a nice guy, your child will go backwards if you allow him to train with this coach!’

The father again said, ‘But it’s such and such FC!’

The father ignored my advise because he could not see past the club (which is big) but the following year his son was released from the club.

I kid you not, this young keeper then came back to be coached by me at Just4Keepers and was not the goalkeeper he once was, he had seriously gone backwards.

He came back to Just4Keepers for about a month but got disheartened and left because goalkeepers who he had trained with 12 months earlier at Just4keepers, and who he was ahead of in ability, were now 12 months ahead of him!

This was too much for him and he sadly quit goalkeeping all together!

All because this parent would not listen to sincere and decent advice.

So try and find out if your coach has a good name for developing young talent, if you get invited to a pro academy, or if you are at one at present. Or no matter where you're taking your child for coaching, check to see if the coach has had proven results for his other students.

This is the impact a coach who cannot bring the best out of your child can have. So parents, you better do your homework on the coach who is going to be coaching your child.

So parents, just because your child has signed for XYZ FC, this does not mean he is going to get expert tuition.

This is why I advise all presents, even if your child signs for a pro academy, make sure they stay with their local grassroots club and independent goalkeeper coach, if they have one.

He is with his friends and doing what a child must do... have fun!

And if his manager or goalkeeper coach is Level 2 qualified or above, they will have the same qualifications and experiences of the majority of academy/centre of excellence coaches anyway!

I know as a parent myself, we want the best for our children, but sometimes you need to take a step back and make sure you are not putting your child under too much pressure.

Again I advise my parents not to let their child near an academy or centre of excellence until they are at least 14 years old. This way, they would have had all their fun and at this age and they will have a better idea if they actually do want to become a professional footballer or gain a college scholarship.

This is why independent football schools (like Just4Keepers) are becoming more popular.

Parents know that they are putting their child in a fun environment with coaches who have done something in the game. So their child's development, is guaranteed,

For example: At Just4Keepers, the combined professional playing experience of all our goalkeeper coaches is now over 1000 years at the time of writing.

No coaching school (Or professional club) in the world has this collective specialist goalkeeper coaching experience Just4keepers has!

Their child is getting coached by doers, not theorists in a FUN environment.

So parents, please do not be an academy hopping parent, as you could make football painful for your child!

Attend Our Course And Maybe Win A Trial At Our Club:

Parents, do not be fooled by these coaching courses ran by professional clubs that promise trials!

Parents have been getting caught out with this for many a year now, and this is when a professional football club runs a coaching course in their area and states something like this,

Come to XYZ FC summer course... the best players could win a trial at our football club'

Over the past twenty plus years running Just4Keepers, many of our parents have been suckered in by these courses and I do not know ONE student of ours who has gone on these courses and won a trial.

But, these same keepers that we have developed in our weekly Just4keepers classes, I have literally lost count how many we helped to get to professional clubs.

What does this tell you?

Sorry tell a lie, I do know one of my students who won one of these competitions. He got his face in the local paper with the other winners stating he had won a trial at this pro club. This made this professional club look great!

However, his father had to chase and pester this club for them to give his son this promised trial.

After about three months of pestering, they eventually invited his son to their training ground.

This father will tell you himself, that when his son went to this club, it was nothing short of a shambles. Nobody knew who his son was, they did not know where to put him, and when he was eventually sorted out, there was no effort from the coaches to assess or coach him.

After a couple of sessions, the father pulled him out.

Why did this club do this?

Most parents do not realise but there are two sides to coaching at professional football clubs (at the children's level). This is not at every club, but it is for the most part.

There is the academy side and the coaching in the community side, and there are normally different coaches for each department and generally these coaches do not get on with each other.

The academy coaches tend to look down at the coaches in the community, as these coaches are generally paid buttons for the coaching, and to be honest, are either just kids themselves, or struggling to get a coaching job elsewhere.

And the coaches in the community resent the academy coaches because they look down at them!

The courses that professional football clubs run in school holidays are generally run by the coaches in the community. So when these coaches find a player, the academy coaches tend not to respect their judgment and then what happens is the above scenario: a player gets invited to the pro club academy, but gets ignored.

So why do they these clubs promise trials, if they do not invite players, or when they do invite them, they ignore the player.

Reason being: Parents do not realise is that most coaching in the community is separate from the main club in terms of finances. Each club differs in the way they finance 'Football in the Community,' but in a lot of cases, this department has to finance themselves and have to find funding from other different agencies.

They use the club's NAME to get people's attention so they can gain money and run private school holiday programmes.

People think it's the professional side of the club of XYZ FC that is running these courses, when actually for the most part, it is the coaching in the community, which is just an arm of the football club that is running these courses.

And as coaching in the community relies on the income that they make from their soccer schools, they are going to use all the advertisement tricks they can to pull children onto their courses and the one that never fails for them is...

‘Come to our football camp, and win the chance to win a football trial!’

So you can imagine that a parent and child, who are lifelong supporters of XYZ football club, are going to be well and truly suckered into paying for the chance to win a prize to play for their favourite club!

So they will book onto this football course.

I am not saying all clubs do this, but the ones that do use this trick, know it’s like taking candy from a baby with this advertisement wording, and use it to great effect all the time.

My coaching company actually did a mini experiment a few years ago.

We ran a FREE goalkeeper course on the same day as our local premiership club. Now even though the coaches in our organisation were far more experienced than the coaches at this local professional club, AND also they were charging about £95 and our course was FREE, there was still about twenty of our students (well, their parents!!!) who where suckered into going to this professional clubs course...

And not one got an invite back for a trial, even though Just4keepers helped some of these students go onto professional clubs.

In fact a seventeen year old who went on this course told me in total frustration that in his group, he was getting taught by a coach, one year older than himself.

He angrily said, 'Ray, what can a coach one year older than me teach me!'

I simply answered, 'Mike you have answered your own question; what can he teach you!'

'I did warn you and your father that this club would not deliver what they promised; you only have yourself to blame for paying this club!'

Also parents need to be aware...

You are paying for your child to be under pressure!!!!

Another thing that parents do not realise is that they are actually PAYING for their child to be on trial, which means that they will be under pressure!

When a child attends a football summer course, it should be for one reason only. **To have fun!**

Yes obviously to learn, but it is for fun, because they are a child.

The should not be attending a paid for course, to be put under pressure. This is just wrong!

As the child believes their every move is getting watched (its not) for the chance of this great prize of a trial with their favourite club, so they are going to be giving it 110% percent!

If they make a mistake, this is going to ruin their day, as they will think that they have lost their chance!

Me personally, I cannot believe how naive and daft parents are for actually paying for their child to be under this pressure.

But hey, it's their favourite football club, one of the first team players might just stick their head around the corner for five minutes and give their child a wave, and their child just could get that trial and become a first team player...

'Sorry guys, the strong chances are, this is never going to happen'.

If your child does get picked up by a professional club, it will not be from one of these courses but rather playing for his Saturday or Sunday team with his friends, while having fun!

So parents, you have been warned over this, if you get suckered into paying high fees for one of these courses, just so your child 'might' get a trial or they 'might' see their favourite player for 30 seconds, you have nobody else to blame but yourself, when nothing will come to fruition.

By the way, if your child wants to go on one of these courses, fine, great. But it must be for one reason, and one reason only... **to have fun!**

And if something positive does happen, this is a bonus.

So PLEASE do not be sending your child onto a football course, were they are under pressure.

If your child is having fun and impresses, who knows, he might get that illusive trial anyway.

How Much !!!!

Another reason why parents want their child at a professional academy is because it is free!

Actually there are some pro clubs that actually charge their players to play for they club now, which I think is incredible.

They are developing kids to maybe sign professional with their club one day, and they can potentially make millions from these players, but yet they are making the parents pay ?

Now I get some clubs re finances etc might have to charge to pay coaching staff etc, but I think if they are going to charge parents, there should be some type of contract that states

‘If you pay our club x amount each month and your child becomes a professional at our club, if we sell your child on, we will reimburse you £\$X amount or X percentage’

Whether professional clubs who charge parents for their child to train under their club name, would do this, is for another discussion.

In England especially, people are so blinded when trying to save a buck, and if most parents had a choice of having their child at a professional academy with poor training for FREE, or pay for their child to be at a independent football schools where the training is a much higher standard, from my experience, most parents would pick the free option, and make the mistake of not opting for the more quality training.

Now I am not here to knock anyones finances, as I appreciate some parents might not have the money, and or that most parents cannot tell the difference between a good or bad training sessions and development, so it is out of naivety they pick the professional club, because they think ‘ Hey it is XYZ FC, so the training MUST be good!’

But this is not necessarily the case.

I have coached all over the world and when I emigrated to the USA, I was so impressed with how the US parents were prepared to invest in their child in private ran independent football (soccer) schools.

In the UK, we say ‘HOW MUCH!!!, then get out our brown paper bag and start hyper ventilating... Guys, I know, I am the same I am English too :)

But in US, they say ‘HOW MUCH?’, then get their cheque book out.

However the only downside for US parents, most are very naive towards football and they end up paying far too much to a coach who has not got the experience to develop their child.

I will not go into too much detail, as maybe this is for another book, but I must have seen over 2000 goalkeeper coaches in the US, many of them come from overseas, and most had that same ole story that they were going to become a professional goalkeeper and they blew their knee out.

Seriously, if I had a penny for every time I heard that same story !

However when I see these goalkeeper coaches train, well actually when I even hear them talk without seeing them train their students, I know they should be nowhere near a training field coaching keepers, and it is obvious the only reason why they moved to the US, is because they could not get a job in their own country.

So with the greatest respect to US parents, these coaches travel over and set up camp in the US, because they know most parents will not see what they are teaching their child is complete useless.

I hope parents do think I am knocking them here, because this is not the case, because I know it can be very very difficult for a parent to choose the best place for their child to train, if they do not know.

I have had the same issues with my children over the years, when I have put them into the likes of martial arts and or music schools. I had no experience, so now idea about these sports and hobbies, so I wasted my money and children's time putting them into the wrong clubs and programs,.

So this is one of the reasons why I wrote this book. In a hope I can help and educate parents, to help them make the correct choice for their child.

I absolutely HATE seeing a young goalkeeper child get short changed by a goalkeeper coach, and I have such a passion to help, so if some of my comments are cutting to the bone, it is not to insult you as a parent, but I am desperate to help you as a parent make the right choices for your child.

But I have lost count of the times parents have opted for the free training and the pro academy, rather than pay just a few pounds or dollars each week, to get their child more superior training at an independent coaching schools.

So if you are a parent who has no idea, this tip will help, and I mention this a couple of times in my book.

Look for results!!

Whether it is a professional club or a independent football schools, the only thing you should be asking as a parent... is my child going to have fun and be under no pressure from the coaches, and show me your proven results on what you have done for your previous students in terms of helping them achieve their dreams.

That's is guys, this is all you need to worry about!

Is your child going to be under no pressure and has the organisation you are looking at have proven results for their students.

If they cannot fulfil this answer, seriously walk away!

There will be MORE than enough other places that tick these boxes, where you can take your child.

Also beware of the wafflers!

When I have asked this question to organisations or coaches who are BS artists on behalf of a parent I am helping, normally the coach goes into waffle mode, and they will start to talk about themselves and their achievements, which is normally mediocre or just in fairy land.

For example one goalkeeper coach in Florida who I asked this same question, started waffling on about how he was this great pro goalkeeper playing in the 4th division in Italy, but his parents moved to USA, so he had to give up his professional career.

He was 15 years old when he apparently played for the 4th division professional team, before his US move.

I do not even need to go any further, as I am sure already as a parent, you can see through this BS!

Actually, a lot of parents do not see through these lies, and this is why a lot of coaches head to the US, because they get away with it.

So when a coach, club or organisation cannot look you in the eye and say something like this, 'At our organisation/club, your child will develop in a fun and friendly environment, with no pressure on your child, and if he/she works hard, you never know they could be one of our many many success stories!'

You will know you are on the right track, when you hear a clear message like this.

So watch out for coaches waffling on and not giving you a direct answer, because this is the sign for the most part, this coach or organisation has not got the correct credentials to help your child.

So as a parent, just look for fun environments, where there is a proven track record!

And take no notice, and walk away from the wafflers!

You Must Have Pressure

Any coach at a professional club reading this, especially about the pressure part, will be stating Ray, this is nonsense we need to help the students deal with pressure, because pressure is part of the game.

So without contradicting myself, your child will need to deal with pressure to have ANY chance of success.

But my beef with a lot of organisations, coaches and pro academies, they apply these pressure teachings fr too early in the childs development, with some starting with their players as young as six years old, which is ridiculous and I agree with some people that state, this is borderline child abuse!

For me, between the age of 6 to maybe 14 years, age, I believe the training should all be about fun, **so keep it fun!**

Because players will develop naturally, if they are having fun and are under no pressure.

Normally what happens around 14 years of age, players will either drop out of playing football because they have other interests, or they will make their mind up that they want some type of career in goalkeeping, whether to become professional, semi professional, to become a goalkeeper coach and or to use their goalkeeping skills to gain a college scholarship.

And so this is when it will get serious, and ONLY then should the teaching of pressure be applied, or to choose a better phrase, teach the students how to perform under pressure.

I believe the football coaching world would be a much better place, and a much better experience for the child and their parents, if the coaches/organisations focused on keeping things fun for a child, between the ages of 6 to 14 years old, while obviously still developing them and then at 14 years of age, start teaching them about the pressure side of the game.

Sadly over my 20 plus years running Just4keepers, I have seen so many talented children, give up the game because some coach was trying to coach them like an adult, and this must stop because it is wrong!

This is why I stopped coaching for professional academies over 20 years ago, because I got into so many arguments with academy coaches who spoke to (and screamed) at children in appalling ways!

And what I found baffling, is that the parent (normally the dad) would be standing on the sidelines watching their child getting screamed at. I am sorry to say, if I was that parent, I would be walking onto the pitch and taking my child home.

When I coached at academies, a couple of times I witnessed a coach screaming at a child (abusing him!) so I walked over to this coach (s) and stated, 'Do not dare speak to a child in this manner, while I am on the same pitch as you, because one it is wrong, two

you are a coward, and three, the parents watching will think I am D*** H*** like you!’

In all cases when I had a go at a coach for yelling at a child, they did what every good coward would do, they put in a complaint to the director of football.

And instead of the director of football, educating the coach screaming at a child, they would say ‘Ray, you were out of order having a go at your fellow coach’...

So this is one of the reasons, I stopped coaching for professional clubs and went independent and started Just4keepers, I just hated being around these egoistical coaches, who were failures themselves in life, and there only chance of glory was shouting at a child.

As a parent, it does not matter where your child is training, if they are between the age of 6 to 14 years old, and they are being put under pressure by a spinless coach, seriously just take them out and move them to another club, it will not be a big deal.

Obviously if you child is over 14 years old, and they are starting to take their goalkeeping seriously, the coach will need to be tougher because they are now preparing them to perform at higher levels, where they do have to learn to deal with stress and pressure.

Thankfully things are getting alot better now, but it still happens.

And also, do not think this only happens at professional clubs, it also happens at grassroots clubs and in independent football organisations.

But the same principles apply, if your child is not enjoying their time, or the coach is a Div, please just take them out and move them to somewhere else, where it is more enjoyable.

Even if the training is not as good, it is more important that your child has fun, feels no pressure and is not getting yelled at every 5 minutes by an egoistical coach, who is only shouting at your child anyway, as they are failing somewhere in their own life!

Remember, just move them somewhere else more enjoyable!

Mentally Protect Your Child!

Parents, arguably this is the most important thing you need to watch, so please focus on this chapter,

There are two categories to this:

The parent's fault

The Coaches Fault.

The Parent's Fault:

If you are going to let your child go to an academy or centre of excellence, please make sure you protect your child mentally. If your child gets released by a professional football club it can have a long term negative effect on them.

I have seen this just too many times, and it's painful for the child.

100% of parents blame the club for their child's sudden lack of interest in football when they are released, but 90% of the time it's actually the parent's fault!

As soon as a child gets into a professional club, they start saying to their child,

'This is your big chance, do not blow it.

' 'No messing about!'

'You need to be more mature here!'

(Even though their child is only 7 or 8 years old.)

‘Do not make a mistake!’

‘Do not answer back!’

Etc, etc and etc ...

Parents say all the above (and more) to their child, while they are driving, eating their dinner, taking them to school... even when they go on days out as a family, and sadly, also on holiday!

So the poor child, never gets a minute peace and quiet from the parent!

Now as a parent myself, I understand the parent only wants the best for their child, but they do not realise they are:

Building their child UP, to be knocked down and frightening their poor child to death, and taking all the fun out of playing in goal.

What this does is take every bit of enjoyment out of football for their child... which is wrong!

But by far the worst thing a parent can do to their child is make them out to be something that they are not!

You know these type of parents, when you ask them a simple question like. ‘Hey John, what’s the time...;

And their answer is.... ‘Yeah, my son plays for XYZ FC.’

These parents look for any little excuse to let the world know their child is training with a professional football club.

Now I know there is nothing wrong with being proud of your child, but there is a difference between being a proud parent and a parent who is sooooo arrogant about his child playing for XYZ FC.

Again you know these parents, they say things like..

‘Arrgh, does your son only play for nobody juniors, well MY son plays for...’

These parents do not realise the long-term damage they could potentially do to their child!

I will be honest, I cannot stand this type of parent, because they are (albeit unknowingly) potentially destroying their child.

But you cannot educate this type of parent... trust me, I have tried!

I could tell you many stories, but I will pick one that sprung to mind while I was writing this section:

When I first started Just4Keepers, I called one of the parents because they had not turned up to my training session for about four weeks (I always do this out of courtesy).

Anyway the conversation went like this (I will use fictional names so as not to embarrass the child).

I said, ‘Hi John. It’s Ray Newland from J4K. Just making sure young Phil is okay, with not seeing him for a while?’

‘Never been better Ray, he has just signed for XYF FC’ he answered.

I continued, 'Congratulations, my friend. Well, I am just making sure he is still coming to J4K, as it will be sensible to still train with us. Plus, I think it will be good for Phil to still train in a relaxed environment!'

Now let me quickly digress here: Any advice that I give is not for my benefit just to keep the child training in my coaching business. Without sounding big-headed, I am financially free through my property business, so I do not need to coach for a living. Any advice I give is 100% genuine for the child or parent.

Anyhow, back to this dipstick father.

His father then interrupted, 'Why on earth do I want to bring my son to J4K? He is far more advanced than any goalkeeper in your class. No, it's only academy football for my son now... nothing else is acceptable.'

After I picked my jaw off the floor, thinking of Phil, I said, 'John, do you mind me being honest with you?'

'Sure,' he said.

'You really should not put your Phil on a pedestal like that; it's not fair on him if he falls off. I am afraid to say that there are many goalkeepers in my class that can comfortably compete with Phil. Phil is a great kid, and does have ability, but this club has only gone for him because he is very big for his age. When other keepers catch up to him in height in a few years, do not be surprised if he is released by this club,' I said, trying to be as sincere as I could.

I was hoping my honest words would sink in for Phil's sake, but the answer I got back was not very nice!

He shouted down the phone, 'Rubbish! You are only saying this because you want me to keep paying you his coaching fees!'

Totally gob-smacked by now, I answered, 'Is that what you think, that I am giving you this advice for the few pound a week fees from you?'

'Well, why else would you be telling me this?' he arrogantly answered.

Anyway there was a bit more conversation before I wished his son good luck and put the phone down.

Now over the years, I knew parents who knew this parent John and it seemed it was every other week that one of these parents at my coaching classes was telling me a story about John, who was publicly making Phil out to be the next England No 1.

Some of the stuff I heard, I could have cringed for his poor son.

Anyway, as I predicted, unfortunately for Phil, his peers caught up to him in height and when other goalkeepers were growing upwards, he was growing sideways.

And to make matters worse, the Pro club he was at released him from his contract halfway through the season, so poor Phil had to endure going for trials with local grass root junior clubs to get back into playing again.

The new problem was that when he went for a trial with a local junior club, if the manager did not make his son the automatic number one keeper for that club, his father would immediately take him out of this team, stating that he was too good to be number two.

The manager was only rightly trying to be fair with the keeper he already had, but John, again putting Phil on a pedestal, ruined it for his son!

I saw Phil the son a year or so later and he would have been about fourteen.

Warmly shaking his hand, I said, 'Hi Phil, how are you doing my friend, Who are you playing for?'

He answered unemotionally, 'No one at the moment, but I think my dad has got me a trial for a team his friend's son plays for.'

As he said this, I thought, 'Bloody hell, a trial for an U15 kids team. What happened to the days of just turning up and having a game with your mates?'

But this was his dad's fault; making him think he had to be on trial everywhere he went.

No wonder Phil did not seem excited about football anymore.

Phil then broke my trail of thought and said, 'I've asked my dad if I could come back to Just4Keepers, but he said your training centre is too far!'

‘It’s only a 10 minute drive, Phil. Tell your dad you would be most welcome back at J4K!’ I answered as I shook his hand goodbye.

As I walked away, I could not help notice the way Phil sat slumped over. He had no self-confidence or belief in himself and his bubbly character had disappeared.

These character traits were all abundant before his dad brainwashed him.

I could not help but get angry with Phil’s dad. He had put this poor kid on such a high pedestal, that it was one hell of a drop when he fell off.

Such was the drop, Phil did not recover and I believe he will never recover from it.

By the way, John to date has not brought his son back to J4K and I doubt he will. I guess he is embarrassed by the way he has acted, and he quite rightly should be.

Also, I heard that he blamed the football clubs for his son’s lack of development. But I know the GK coach at one of these clubs, and he is one of the best in the business.

No the fault firmly lies with John and now he has to live with the fact that he mentally tortured his son for about four years throughout his childhood.

That is, if he even realises what he actually did, as he had the type of poor character that it was everyones else’s fault.

I know this was a bit of a long-winded example, but seriously, I could write another 500 pages on the damage parents do to their own child, and for the most part it is purely **unintentionally**.

They will put it down to pushing and or encouraging their child, but this type of pressure, actually destroys their child.

This was one of the worst examples, but I wanted to shock you as a parent, so you do not make the same mistake as John.

So parents, please relax and let your child enjoy their football.

What you should be saying to your child is this:

‘Hey, it’s good news you have signed for Real Madrid. However Steve, you do know that this might not last forever. So all I want you to do, is try your best and listen to the coaches and enjoy yourself. Also the minute you stop enjoying yourself, let me know and I will pull you out.’

‘Look if you become a professional goalkeeper out of this, it is a bonus, but all I want you to do, is enjoy yourself.’

Is this not a much better way to mentally prepare your child!

What does this say to your child?

A lot really... that:

1: Well done for signing (so you have established he has done something great).

2: You are letting him know it will not last forever. So if he gets released, he knew this might happen, so he does not get disheartened.

Also if he does get another year out of the club, you can say, 'Wow, well done mate, I did not expect that, you must have really impressed the coaches, well done.' (How does this make him feel.. on cloud 9)

3: You want him to work hard by saying, just try your best but you are not jumping all over him, if his performance drops.

4: You have also let him know, you will pull him out if he does not enjoy his time. This takes SOOOOOOOO much pressure off your child if they know they are not pressured to stay somewhere they might not want to be.

Can you see the difference how you can relax your child by saying it this way?

It completely takes the pressure off your child, which is your responsibility as a parent.

The Coaches Fault!

As we know most coaches are excellent, they coach for the right reason, and they are your child's, coach, mentor and friend.

However, sadly there is that minority of coaches, who are rude, arrogant and it is all about them, not their students. We call these idiots, egotistical coaches and as a parent, you have to watch out for these weaklings, because they can destroy your child's self confidence in a heartbeat.

Again, I have heard many many horror stories were coaches have been out of order towards a child and to save a long-winded example, I will just name a few of the examples I have heard.

A coach telling an eight year old to go on a diet

A coach directly telling a child he is too fat

A coach directly telling a child he is too small

A coach ignoring a child

A coach having favourites

A coach who undermines a child

A coach who states a child will not make the grade.

And by the far worst, the egoistical coach that thinks the training session is all about him/her and not about their students.

These are only a handful of examples and academies/centres of excellence, grassroots clubs and independent football schools, will state that the above does not happen, as they will have policies in place for coaches to follow.

But sometimes as good as the club or organisation is, if they have a coach that decides to act in a certain poor way, they cannot see this coming.

It is a bit like your child's school: the school has good practice policies in place for teachers, but this does not stop the minority of teachers doing or saying silly things to their pupils

Now believe it or not, 95% of parents would let the above list go when a coach is abusive to their child, as they think this is part and parcel of learning the game of a football.

But I have news for you.

It is not!

Okay if your child is 15+ he will need to be able to start taking a bit of stick and pressure. But between the aged of six and fourteen, as a parent you have to make sure your child gets treated properly!

However some parents are either too scared, or have their tongue that far up the coach's backside, they do not want to upset them.

Well I am sorry to be blunt, but any parent should be ashamed of themselves, if they allow any coach to ill treated their child.

Another True story was a premiership club coach telling an eight year old student of mine to go on a diet and the parents and granddad thought this was OKAY!

Well if this coach would have said this to me, about any of my children when they were eight, I am afraid that they would have

needed an operation to take my foot from out of this coach's backside!

Seriously, I would have knocked him out! Especially as he told the eight year old to his face, in front of the parents. This coach never even had the common sense to have a quiet word with his parents, out of ear shot of this poor kid.

And the parents never had the common sense to say to the coach, do you mind, this should be said out of ear shot of our 8 year old child.

In fact, the parents of this eight year old never brought their child back to J4K because I told them how stupid I thought they were, for allowing a coach to make their 8 year old child go on a diet.

This poor child was at this club for only a few months, while he was forced on a diet by the coach, and worse his parents, and what happened? The club released him anyway.

Still to this day, I cannot believe the parents and grand parents accepted this!

If you feel your son is getting ill-treated by any coach, immediately speak to the coach and if you do not get any joy, go above them.

If this club, organisation has anything about them, they will deal with your query immediately and make sure everything is okay for your child.

Most organisations, will act swiftly and professionally. But for the ones who do not... pull your child out immediately!

Like I have said a few times already in this book, It is no big deal!

Your child is too precious to be messed about.

I have already established within this book that life begins between the ages of seventeen and twenty two for a chance to become professional.

So if you have a coach that is not treating your child correctly, get them away from this coach as fast as possible, if the organisation is not going to do anything about this idiot coach.

Because as a parent your biggest job is to protect your child's mind and self confidence.

Especially from egotistical coaches, who make young children feel insecure, because they are most probably failing in life, so it is their only chance to feel special.

You need to get your child away from this type of poor character as fast as possible.

So even though a coach can ruin a child confidence, I still blame the parent.

Because as parents, we can either step in straight away and tell the coach, what he is saying is totally not acceptable, and or simple pull your child away!

So please do not let ANY coach make your child feel inadequate!

So when parents come to me and say 'Ray, my child is going through a terrible time with his coach, this coach has really

knocked his confidence' and I ask the parent how long as this being going on?

If they state more than a few weeks, I abruptly answer, 'I am sorry to say, this is your fault as parent! You should have put a stop to this coach, or moved your child away from this coach/club!'

So yes, even though it is the egoistical coach treating the child incorrectly, I still believe it is the parents fault, because they need to protect their child.

So Do The Right Thing As A Parent!

I know most parents who have just read this section, will take my advice on board and will use it, to make sure their child will now have a much more pleasant experience as they develop their footballing skills.

Thank you for recognising my advice, it was tough love, and genuine advice because I sincerely want to help you, to help your goalkeeping child!

So thank you for listening to me!

And yes, I know there will be the minority who will think what I have stated is nonsense, that they must kiss the coaches backside, and they are going to push their child as hard as possible.

So for you parents who are blind to this, let me try to educate you one last time, for the sake fo your child.

I have coached over 100,000 goalkeepers through Just4keepers for over 20 years, and helped and advised even more parents of goalkeepers, and I will 'hand and heart' tell you...

Every parent that has ignored this advice, there is not **ONE** example, where their child went on to achieve their goalkeeping dreams!

Seriously, not one example!

So all this arse kissing, and allowing coaches to verbally and or mentally abuse their child, was for nothing!

So please reread this chapter, and try to implement at least some of my advice, because I promise you it will be a much better experience for your child (and you) and it will strengthen the chances of your child achieving their dreams.

Ok Back To Part 1: (More of my experiences)

Do not worry about the No's!

I remember hearing a saying while in football that went something like this,

‘In football when someone says no to you, this does not mean no... it means, not yet!’

This statement is true and false really. For example: a coach or manager could think you are a good talent, but maybe too young and is saying no to your age, rather than your ability.

Or you could be the right age and the coach or manager see you have talent, but at this moment in time you are not up to the standard they are looking for. This is where you roll your sleeves up, train even harder and go and see these managers and coaches, three, six or twelve months later.

The point I am trying to make here, is you will get LOADS of no's as you try to become a professional goalkeeper and a lot of the time the people who have told you ‘NO’ will not tell you why!

So you might be in danger of believing that these coaches and managers think you have no talent!

Okay, you might not be ready for them at this particular point in time, but this does not mean they will not think you are the best thing since sliced bread one year later!

There are literally thousands of stories in the professional game, where players who become football icons were turned down by football clubs a youngster, only for the same club to pay millions for them just a few years later!

So as you develop your career, please do not be put off by all the rejections you will inevitably get!

I actually used my no's as motivation.

The more no's I got, the more it made me determined that I was going to become a professional goalkeeper. I had to prove that all the coaches and managers, who were down right nasty and rude to me, and tried to steal my dream, were wrong!

So no's can actually help you!

In fact, I can put my hand on my heart and tell you that I would never have signed for Plymouth Argyle (my first professional club) and pass the one month gruelling trial the then manager Peter Shilton set out for me, if I had not had all these no's for years.

This was because the pressure of trying to impress a legend like Peter Shilton would have been too much for me!

But because I had had that many trials (and many no's) , I was sort of immune to all the pressures and even though I was trying to impress the great Peter Shilton, to me, it was just another trial: another 'no', or maybe 'yes'!

Thankfully this time, it was a yes!

This leads me on to the next tip, actually.

Know when to quit!

True Story: There was a guy I knew through a friend, he was a lovely lad and was desperate to become a professional footballer. Nearly every football club that I was at, he would call me and asked if I could get him a trial.

Anyone who has played professional football will tell you, just because you are a professional player at a club, it is still very difficult to get trials for friends.

Anyhow, I did hand over his CV as promised at my respected clubs, but unfortunately he was never invited.

One day I was in my hometown of Liverpool with my wife, and I heard someone shout me - it was this guy.

After I explained I had lost my career through injury, I was gob-smacked to hear he was still writing letters to clubs for trials. Now I had just turned twenty-eight and he was at least twelve months older than me!

I listened open-mouthed in amazement as he told me he threw away his education and took up any odd job to pay him a wage, while he kept himself fit waiting for his big chance and he explained how he would quit his jobs on the spot, if his boss would not give him a week off, if he did manage to get a football trial.

He then told me that he was about to send a CV to every football club in the old third division, as it was then. I listened to him, as he excitedly said that if he did sign for a professional club in this league, he would look forward to earning at least £1000 per week!

I looked at my wife, as if to say, what planet is this guy on?

I turned around to him and said,

‘John (this was not his real name), I do not know any player in the third division on a £1000 per week, so it’s going to be difficult for you to earn this type of income. If you do sign for a club, you will be lucky to get a 12 month contract and £350 - £500 per week!’

Dear me, I get more than that in my present job!’ he answered.

I thought that I had convinced him in a nice way that as a 29-year-old man, the chances are he was not going to make the grade.

But my jaw hit the floor yet again, when he told me that he was going to chase his dream anyway.

Why do I tell you this?

Because there does come a time when you have to look in the mirror and say, ‘Enough is enough. I gave it my best shot; it’s now time to move on!’

This leads me on to the next tip...

Have Two Irons In The Fire!

I think the mistake most young hopefuls make, is that they think they should either try to become a professional footballer, or go after another career.

The mistake they make is...

They do not realise they can do both!

See the mistake I (and my 29 year old friend) made is we burnt our bridges to become a professional footballer.

I myself stopped my education and threw everything into becoming a footballer. Thankfully, I managed to live this dream and was fortunate enough to have played in front of thousands of people each week for nearly 10 years.

But what would have happened if I did not achieve my dream?

Well to be honest, I dread to think!

But when I got injured aged twenty-eight, the mistake of me giving up my education hit me like a sledgehammer when I could not get a decent job after football.

You see, football was all I knew, so when I came out the game there was no one to turn to. The football clubs, the fans, the media, the professional footballer association, who had all been such an important factor in my life, did not want to know me anymore... I was very much on my own.

There was no longer going to be thousands of supporters chanting my name, this was now all gone...

And the only job I could find was packing blood for a living!

This was a very depressing time in my life but thankfully a temporary one, and again thankfully, I have gone to achieve success in many different business ventures additional to Just4keepers.

So why I am telling you this?

I would not want anyone to go through what I had to go through when I came out of football.

What I should have done... and what I am advising you to do, is always have at least two irons in the fire.

Give yourself options.

What I tell my students who get to school leaving age, is try your best to become a professional goalkeeper, but still be sensible enough to have another career in mind.

For example: say for your second choice career you would like to be an accountant.

There is no reason whatsoever why you cannot do your studying to become an accountant of a daytime and in the evening and weekends, you put all your efforts into training and playing to become a professional goalkeeper.

And if you are lucky to become a professional goalkeeper still continue to study accountancy at evening school.

...because you now have the best of both worlds.

But the secret here guys, is to always give yourself at least two options.

This way you will not end up packing blood for a living like me, or like my 29 year old friend's friend, having mediocre jobs while chasing a dream that should have stopped maybe 8 years earlier.

Football Gets Less Competitive The Older You Get.

Previously I mentioned that football life can begin between the age of seventeen to nineteen for footballers, and there is another reason it gets better at this age.

There is less competition!

If you go for a trial aged nine for example at a pro club, I will bet you my bottom dollar that there will be easily another one hundred nine year olds, also going for this trial!

If you go for this same trial aged eighteen, there will only be a handful of other eighteen year olds.

However, even though the competition is less, the standard is much, much higher!

So this is a reason why you must keep the faith, as it actually gets easier as you get older with you not having to battle against the other thousands of players, who gave up the game at age sixteen or before.

But remember, you better be working hard at your game as the majority of other players hanging in there, will be of a very good standard and you have obviously got to be able to compete with these guys.

Foreign Players

This is a sore point with me, because even though the foreign flux of players has helped our game, I believe it is also ruining it!

I will be honest; I do not think that I have watched a full premiership match in over five years now!

I just cannot be bothered watching grown men, throwing themselves on the floor and rolling around as if they have been shot just because another player comes within ten yards of them!

I think they are embarrassing and are a bad influence on young children watching.

Another reason why I am not keen on this foreign influence is competition for our own players.

The amount of mediocre foreign players now in our leagues is annoying!

Do not get me wrong, there are some world class foreign players in our leagues, but this is the minority but the majority of them are NOT as good as our own home grown talent.

So this underlines the importance of not neglecting your education!

Over the years, my coaching company has developed some great young talent, who quite comfortably could have made it to the professional ranks. However, the local professional clubs I

contacted on their behalf we're not interested in even looking at my students.

One of my local professional clubs once had a seventeen year old foreign goalkeeper on their books, who I was told, was on a hefty weekly wage.

I said to one of the coaches at this club,

'I will bet you £10,000 that I will have at least three local goalkeepers just as good as this import and they will be willing to play for their beloved club for a fraction of this keeper's wage!'

The coach answered, 'You probably have more Ray, but what can I do. The manager is Spanish, so he is giving the young talent in Spain the opportunity ahead of the local player who live within a few miles of the club. But what can I do, if I say anything, I am out the door.'

So you have to realise, that you are in competition with players all around the world now and places at professional clubs are even more limited than ever.

Also did you know, that most English professional football clubs, have coaching academies and soccer schools in other countries?

So they can develop talent and bring them to England.

Sad, annoying, mind boggling... but true!

So this is why it is important to have options and never neglect your education, or have a second career in mind.

Sadly a lot of parents and children, think if they are loyal supporters of XYZ FC, that their club will show loyalty back in terms of giving their child an opportunity. But this is not actually true.

I have heard many tales over the years where a player has been at their local professional football club since they were six or seven, come right through the ranks and got to their final year, with great reports from all their coaches.

Then, when it MATTERS, the club release the player because a foreign player has come in at the last minute and taken this loyal player's role and position.

This player had given this club, all his childhood playing days, had been 100% loyal, but then, all of a sudden, is let go by this club for a foreign player who will be no better than he.

Over the years, I have heard horror stories like this many, many, MANY times over.

And again what is annoying, a lot of the time, these players coming in our the same nationality as the manager and or coaches, so these coaches are looking after their own, while coaching at our professional clubs.

I am not saying this is happening at all clubs, but it does 100% happen.

So I repeat myself to parents and budding players, do not neglect your education.

You might have what it takes to make the grade as a pro goalkeeper but this still might not be enough to stop you getting tossed aside.

In closing Part 1, I want to encourage any youngster to try and achieve their dream of becoming a professional goalkeeper because it is the best occupation in the world but please remember, it is VERY tough to achieve this dream, so yes give it 1000% of your efforts, but always have another iron in the fire just in case.

Me Making My Professional Debut Aged Just 20 Years Old

And yes, I was wearing a pink goalkeeper jersey! In fact, I was the first goalkeeper ever to wear a pink goalkeeper jersey as far as I know..

This was the FA CUP 5th round (I think?) against Dorking Town FC and the pitch resembled a mud bath.



I actually thought I was going as under study to my player, manager Peter Shilton, and this time I was roomed with our captain Gary Poole which I thought was strange, as I normally roomed with Marc Edworthy, who went on to have an amazing career.

I loved Gary, he was a complete leader and a super nice guy. I was sharing the hotel room with him when he said, 'Ray, make sure you mentally prepare yourself for tomorrows game.'

I answered, 'I am not playing Gary, The gaffer will play surely. Or has he said anything to you?'

Gary, laughed and said, 'Ray you are so naive (I was) if you think Peter Shilton who is the most capped goalkeeper in English history, who has played in World Cups is going to play on a mud field at Dorking FC, against two centre forwards who are 6ft 5 and 6ft 6, inches tall, you are the most naivest footballer I have met (I was).

It then dawned on me that Shilton was not famous for coming off his line for crosses, and Dorking with having two giant centre forwards were known for putting the ball directly into the box as they had the advantage.

So Garys predictions was right, in the team talk the next morning, as Peter Shilton flipped the flip chart over, I seen my name at the top, I was indeed playing.

My heart rate, went to 500 miles per hour, when my fellow team mates tried to calm my down by making farting noises with their mouths.

I laughed and said 'Thanks guys for the show of confidence'

They laughed and then patted me on the back and said I would be ok. And Shilton said to me, 'Ray do not worry, Dorking will see you are a young goalkeeper making your debut and will put the ball high into the box to pressure you, so they will play right into your strengths

My strength indeed was coming for crosses because I learnt my trade playing for my local pub team and also semi professional teams, so when Dorking started crossing the ball high into my penalty box, I just came for everything!

In fact, I remember the very first cross like it was yesterday. I seen the 6ft 6 inch player coming into challenge me for the ball, and I remember thinking in an instant 'make a statement Ray!'

So even though I could have caught the ball, I opted to punch and followed through as hard as I could on this giant forward right In front of my own travelling supporters.

I hit him that hard, he ended up flat out on his back, and I just stood over him, staring at him to my fans amusement, who gave me a big cheer, then started chanting 'Newland, Newland, Newland'

And that was that for the rest of the game, I made my statement and both forwards were very tentative challenging me for crosses, seeing me win every cross that came into my penalty box for the remainder of the game.

We went on to win 3-2 and I got man of the man in a lot of the tabloids.

This is a day I will always remember with fondness and pride!

I will never forget the final whistle, as we had a big cheer come from our fans, I remember looking over and seeing our assistant manager and legend John McGovern wading through the mud struggling not to slip in his trainers.

He was walking towards me and ignored every player from both sides, and put his hand out to me to shake and said ‘ Ray, superb son!’

To get this response from such a legend meant the world to me.

So like I said above, this is a memory I will never forget, and something I wanted to share with you.

My thoughts on professional academies and centre of excellences.

Side Note: Throughout this book it seems like I am negative towards professional football club academies and or centres of excellences... but I am not, I am 100% all for them.

I am for **ANY** organisation that develops children.

Like anything in life, there is the good, the bad and the ugly!

The only thing that I do not agree with about academies and or centres of excellence, is that a lot of them (not all) do not set the players and parents expectations and make them aware that becoming a professional player, is a very difficult thing to achieve.

Instead they wrongly fill a child's and parents mind that they have now made it to the top levels, this I do not agree with and is also not the case.

I also believe they should take themselves a little less seriously, put away their egos and focus more on fun and developing the confidence of the players, especially the young players.

Look, I know it is a business for these clubs and coaches jobs are at stake if they do not get results, but I honestly believe through over 20 years of coaching, and coaching over 100,000 goalkeepers and helping thousands of my students to achieve their dreams, that if clubs focused more on having fun with their younger players, say 6 to 13, even up to 14 years old, and then gradually

with each year getting a little tougher on their players, they would see such a HUGE surge in developing more confident players.

I know a lot of clubs are thankfully doing this now, and or working towards this, but there are still clubs and coaches that need to get with the times, put away their egos and make the environment a much better place for the students AND parents!

I believe if they get this part right, they would see huge improvements in their students development, plus it will make the environment such a happier place for everyone involved. Even them as a coach!

I also want to drum my point into parents one more time, before I move on.

And that is, no matter how good or bad a professional academy or even a grassroots club is, if the child has a bad experience because of an arse hole coach, in my opinion it is **STILL** the parents fault!

Yes I know the coach has zero excuses, and yes I know there are coaches out there who should be nowhere a coaching field, but as a parent, we have a choice to **immediately** take our child out of this environment!

Again I want to stress, it is **NO** big deal to take your child out of any environment where they are not enjoying their time, and or they feel ridiculed or bullied.

Just simply move your child to an environment where they are enjoying themselves with **NO** pressure from an egoistical coach!

You need to get your child away from these morons ASAP!

So this is why I say it is so so SO important that you say to your child before they join ANY team, whether it is Liverpool FC or your local U9 grassroots team...

‘Son/daughter, you are now with your new team mates and coaches. All I ask of you, is you first and foremost enjoy yourself and if you make mistakes ‘SO WHAT’ as long as you learn from these mistakes, it is all part of learning and we will do this together with a smile on our faces’

‘All I ask you to do, is laugh, smile enjoy yourself and if you stop enjoying playing for this team and or coach, not a problem, I can always find you a new club!’

How much better experience would a child have if they knew their parent had their back, and they were under NO pressure to be somewhere they do not want to be!

As a parent myself, and urge you to try this and see the difference in your child confidence and well being.

Look I know as your child gets older, and they take their football more seriously, you have to be a little tougher (as does the coach) because things obviously get more serious as everyone gets older.

But I believe between the ages of 6 to 13, even 14 years old, it is more important you child has an enjoyable experience.

Then at this age, when they do start taking football seriously, then yes they will have to deal with the arsehole coaches that you do sadly get in football. But until they get to this age, as a parent you need to protect your child's mindset.

So I hope this helps you, to help your child have a pleasant, enjoyable, fun and exciting experience playing this amazing game, while being under absolute no pressure by some weak minded egotistical coach!

And also if a coach at ANY club knows as a parent you will not allow and tolerate them treating your child poorly, trust me most will not!

Part 2: How To Contact Professional Clubs

Okay I have given you some food for thought on what it TAKES to become a professional goalkeeper. So now I want to give you some tips to what I did to achieve my dreams.

As you now know, I was not one of these professional players that started at a pro academy and went through their ranks, I was 17 years of age before I finally got my break at Chester City FC.

So I tried every trick in the book. And this is what I am going to share with you in PART 2.

So, now over the next pages, I are going to give you ACTION POINTS and actual techniques that you can put into practice to help you get into the shop window with football clubs.

I will give you techniques that I personally used to help me become a professional first, but as a bonus I will give you techniques that I have advised my students to use with success as times has changed since I was chasing my dreams all those years ago and there are more options to now contact clubs.

So get your pen and paper ready for this section...

Contacting Clubs

There are a few ways to contact a coach at a professional football club to ask for a trial, either by a worded correspondence (letter, fax, e-mail) or by phone calls... but it's knowing which is best.

I know that you could get picked up by a professional scout while you play locally and this is one way of getting into professional football clubs.

But the reason for this section, if you are like me (and MANY other players), that do not get invited to a professional football club for a trial..

You need to find a way, to invite yourself!

Part 2, will teach you how to do this.

So what is better, ringing a professional football club or sending a worded correspondence?

Me personally I think ringing!

But I am going to recommend you to both, and more!

The trouble when you send a letter, fax or email, is that a million other players have the same dream as you, and each day, every day, hundreds of letters will be sent to individual professional football clubs.

And if the clubs are honest with you, they will tell you that most of these letters go straight into the bin!

I know it is out of order from these clubs, but you have to look at it through their eyes, they just have not got the time to sift through all these letters, emails etc.

True Story: I remember an occasion when I played for Plymouth Argyle and I walked into the youth development officer's office. He was sitting at his desk and I am not kidding, there must have been over one hundred letters on his desk.

Jokingly I said, 'Fan mail, Nizzy? ' (Nizzy was his nickname).

My coach laughed and said, 'I wish it was. It's bloody more trialist letters!'

He then started sifting through the mail carefully selecting mailings with his name on, then tossing them to one side, saying,

'Nizzy, Nizzy, Nizzy,'

Obviously picking out the mail that was addressed to HIM!

After he had sifted through what he wanted, he leaned forward towards his desk, got his bin in his right hand and with one big swoop of his left arm, guided all the unopened mail into his bin!

Totally surprised with seeing all these unopened letters go into the bin, I said, 'Bloody hell, Nizzy, that's out of order. That's kids dreams in those envelopes. You should have the decency to at least read them. Now I know why I never got much response when I sent letters to professional clubs as a youngster!'

Nizzy, realising that I was less than impressed with his letter reading skills quickly said, 'Ray, there will be another hundred on my desk tomorrow, I just have not got the time to read every letter!'

Again in disgust I said, 'No Nizzy, you are out of order, you should be reading them!'

It's only now as I get older, that I realise it was impossible for Nizzy to read every letter, but it taught me one very valuable lesson...

...and what I now always advise my students is to always, always, always make certain that if and when they do send correspondence to a club asking for a trial, they make sure they get the NAME of the coach, otherwise their letter is most likely to end up in the bin, with the other un-addressed letters!

So am I saying, it's not worth writing letters to professional football clubs?

No, I am not, I think you should write letters, but you have to realise that you probably will not get a great response... but you never know, when your correspondence lands on the desk of the person who might give you, or your child that opportunity!

Between the ages of 15 and 17, I must have sent over 500 letters to professional football clubs. In fact, most football clubs I would write at least three times per year (I will explain later on why you need to do this).

So year in, year out, I sent letter after letter, getting many no's but also getting some successes in the form of trials (I was getting about three to six trials per year).

So even though it can be very disheartening sending letter after letter, as you have seen from my story, you never know when you will get that lucky break.

Why write to clubs at least three times in one season?

Football is a very fickle occupation, and if you do not get results, people lose their jobs very quickly. Generally, when a manager gets the sack, the new manager coming in brings in his own staff, so the turnaround of staff can be extensive throughout the season.

I will use Liverpool FC as an example. When Gerard Houllier was manager, he brought in many French players and staff and what happened as soon as Spaniard boss Rafael Benitez took over the reins at Liverpool?

That's right, he brought in his own staff and mostly I might add... there was a Spanish connection.

So whenever a new manager comes in, generally, the old staff are kicked out, and the new brought in.

And this gives you another opportunity to pitch your abilities to this continual flow of new staff!

So when you are on the hunt for a professional club, watch the news and if you see a manager getting the sack, wait until a new one is appointed and send in your letters/correspondence.

When I was a child, even if a manager did not get the sack, I still sent the same letter to the same club, three times each year, which was the beginning, mid and at the end of each season.

I did this because there are always changes to backroom staff, that you may never get to hear about... and you just never know when your letter/email falls onto the lap of the right person.

I also remember getting a letter from Crewe Alexandra FC and the coach had written, 'If I invite you for a trial, will you please stop writing to me?'

I went for a trial with Crewe and was with them for nearly three months training with their youth set up, so this was worth pestering this coach. In fact, this coach told me the reason why he gave me this trial was that he admired my determination.

But being at Crewe, I was spotted by Chester City FC, who signed me as an apprentice. This is when I first started getting paid to play football, so by pestering the Crewe coach and getting a trial, it helped me to move on to Chester, which got me earning a wage playing football... and kick started my career.

So was it worth sending this coach a letter every four months for about eighteen months?

YEP!

Another reason why it's good sending letters (even though you might not get a trial or response from a club), is that your name may get known.

For Example: Say you sent a letter three or four times to a coach at XYZ football club and this coach never replied but was thinking,

'That bloody Ray Newland has written to me again!'

Even though you never got an invite to this club, this coach still knows your name!

And say just one day, you have a good game and a scout from XYZ FC spots you and mentions you to this coach.

This coach will say to the scout, 'Ray Newland? That pain has been writing to me for about a year now, and you say he is worth a look?'

The strong chances are you will get a trial, because the coach has heard of you!

Shortly you will see some examples of letters that I sent to professional football clubs, and even a real life recommendation letter the legendary Welsh international goalkeeper, Neville Southall did for me.

On this note: If you can get a recommendation from a coach with authority and attach it to your letter/email, this can be worth its weight in gold for you.

True Stats : I must have written close to 500 letters without a recommendation letter in the early days, and I would say the statistics were like this (roughly):

- 85% did not reply to my letters.
- 5% would write, stating that there were no vacancies.
- 5% said they would send a scout to watch me (even though they did not know where I played?).
- 3% would write stating that I was not good enough (even though they did not see me play?)
- 2% offered me a trial.

Then I sent just eleven letters out with Neville Southall's and Howard Kendals recommendation letter stapled to my letter.

- Within the space of **one week**, I had seven clubs contact me.
- One club offered to SIGN ME without even seeing me play (they had also personally spoken to Neville about me, though).
- Four clubs never got in contact.
- Six clubs asked me to go for a trial, immediately'. The one I picked was Plymouth, who I signed for.

This is the power of getting a recommendation letter!

Obviously the bigger the name of the person recommending you...the greater your chance of success.

Having your Sunday/Saturday league manager recommend you, is not really going to cut any mustard with anyone, so try and get someone with a bit of a reputation to recommend you.

- Maybe a school teacher.
- A local football scout (who has credibility with clubs, because most have not)
- A coach from another academy, where you might have been released from
- Have you got a relative who has a connection within the pro game?

You get my point, try and get a recommendation from someone who could get the coach that you have contacted to raise their eyebrows, as this will give you more credibility than the 'Joe Averages' writing in.

Shortly you will see a copy of the EXTACT letter I sent to football clubs, with Neville Southall's personal recommendation, I unfortunately lost Howard Kendals letter.

This letter was responsible for getting the wheels in motion for me becoming a professional goalkeeper. Yes I had to work hard and prove I had what it takes, but I honestly do not believe I would have got this chance with Peter Shilton, only for another legend in Neville Southall recommending me.

Please Note: I never had a personal computer when I was young writing letters, so every letter was HAND written, every time, yes over Over 500 times.

Jeez, you have it SO EASY nowadays guys!

Because you can write a letter and just save to your computer and print out when you need, or photo copy.

Ringin A Football Club!

Players (or their parents if the player is under eighteen), do not realise that they can actually ring a professional football club!

Players and parents get a bit nervous just thinking about having to speak to a coach or maybe a first team manager... but I have news for you, these guys are only human, so do not be afraid to speak to them.

I remember speaking to ex-Everton manager Joe Royle when I was released from Plymouth Argyle FC. He was Oldham Athletic FC's manager at the time.

And he was a gentleman!

It actually took me about four hours to pluck up the courage to call him, and it was a miracle he could not hear the fear in my voice. Actually, maybe he could.

But he was polite and courteous to my call.

The trouble you will have though is getting to speak to them, as they will have a secretary screening their calls and I will be honest, most coaches will not want to speak to you!

The mistake parents or a player makes, is that they ring up and say,

'Can I speak to the youth coach, please?'

What you are telling this secretary is that you are calling uninvited. And because nobody likes getting their day interrupted, this is

where your conversation will end. The secretary will ask why you are calling and when you tell them, they will simply ask for you to send in a letter or email.

Ideally, you do not want this because a million other starry-eyed players (or parents of players) are also sending in their letters, too. You then have to rely on the fact that your letter will get opened, never mind read.

So how can you guarantee you speak to the coach or manager?

Well you cannot, and the chances of you getting to speak to them will be slim... but this is what you can try (This use to work me).

Pick say ten clubs you want to have trials with and pick a day to call them up. Once you have identified the clubs, get their phone numbers.

Once you have the numbers ring up these clubs and say to the person who picks up...

Example one: For parents ringing up for their child.

‘Can you give me the name of the coach who is responsible for giving trials to 10 year olds (or your child's age) as I want to write him a letter?’

Or you can ask for the academy director, or youth coach etc. Go onto the clubs website, it should give you the details of all coaches.

Once you have the name of the coach, say thank you and put the phone down. Do NOT go any further.

You then do this until you have all ten names.

Example Two: If you are ringing for yourself.

‘Hi. I am 16 years old (or whatever your age) and I would like to write in for a trial. Can you give me the name of the coach I need to write to please?’

Again, once you have the name thank the secretary and put down the phone.

Once you have ten names, pick another day to call the coaches.

When you have picked your day, you ring up club one on your list and you say something like....

Example two: If you are asking for a trial yourself.

‘Hi can I speak to David please?’

(Not David Smith, or Mr Smith, as you are trying to sound like you know this coach personally)

Generally the secretary will say, ‘Which David? We have a few.’

You then say, ‘Oh sorry, David Smith please’

The secretary will then either put you straight through (if you are very lucky) or most probably ask,

‘Who is calling and what’s the nature of your call?’

You then say, ‘My name is Ray Newland and I have been asked to contact David about coming in for a trial with your club’.

Again, she will either put you through at this stage or ask,

‘Who asked you to call him?’

You can then say either...

My manager John Rogers, I think he is a scout for your club.’

Or,

A manager in my league called John. I do not know his second name but I think he is a scout for your club.

Or

I was given his name by a manager in my league. I believe he is after a goalkeeper my age, and I am a goalkeeper the age David is looking for.

I know the above are little white lies, but if you are too honest you will not get put through.

At this stage the secretary will tell you to write in, ring back or put you through to David.

The key is, to try and sound convincing **that you were asked to call David.**

If she puts you through to David, when he answers you simply say,

‘Hi David, you do not know me but I have been asked to contact you by a manager in my league who I believe is a scout for your club. He has told me that your club has some up and coming trials, and or you could be looking for a goalkeeper my age and I would be available anytime if you would like to have a look at me?’

At this stage, he might just say, ‘Can you write in to me, email me, send a promo video etc?’

If he says this, do not be downhearted, at least you can address your correspondence...

Hi David

I trust you are well?

It’s Ray Newland here. As **requested** I am sending you my details.....

If David is going to read hundreds of letters and has to invite a certain limited number from these letters for a trial, who is he going to pick?

Will he invite players from the letters that come uninvited and headed ‘To the coach’ or is he going to invite the ones who have addressed his name on the envelope and made the first few lines of the letter personal to him like I have shown you in this example above?

You will have noticed that I printed the word ‘requested’ in bold!

The reason why I did this, is to show you I think it is important to mention this word, as you are reminding David, he has **asked you** to write in. So the chances are, he will invite a player he has requested to write in, rather than a player who has written an uninvited impersonal letter.

Example 1: Parents Ringing On Behalf Of Their Child.

Parents can use the same examples as I just explained but you will obviously start most of your conversations,

‘Hi, I am ringing on behalf of my son/daughter...’

But I stress, do not be scared to directly contact football coaches as most of them are just decent down to earth blokes, who will help if they can.

Writing Letters To Clubs:

Going back to writing letters to football clubs, this is one of the old ways to contact clubs that has still never really gone out of fashion.

The great thing about a letter is that it is personal to the coach or the person you are sending it to, so will always give you half a chance of getting spotted.

Also the majority of your competition would never dream or think about writing in to clubs, so this gives you the edge.

I have already gone into great detail how VITAL it is to make sure your letters (or any correspondence to a coach must be made personal with their name, otherwise the strong chances are it will not get read).

Below you will see a few sample letters to send to clubs.

TIP: Remember the coach has limited time to read any correspondence you send him. He has literally hundreds to read each week, so do not make your letters like a novel.

Make them short and to the point, so that the coach can scan through your letter and make a quick decision on you.

If your letter is pages long, they will end up in the bin!

Please Note: I have written these letters, as if the player himself was writing them. For parents who would be writing on behalf of their child, simple just start your letters,

‘I am writing to you on behalf of my son/daughter...’

Sample letter/email one:

Your address

Date

Dear Mr David Smith I trust you are well?

As requested, please find my playing details enclosed.

My name is Ray Newland and I am a goalkeeper aged 16 years old, 6ft 11inch tall and 15 stone.

I have had trials with Liverpool and Leeds, and currently represent my school and county.

I currently play for my school, St Johns, on a Saturday morning, my county Merseyside, on a Friday night and I play on Sunday morning in the BGY league at Heron Eccles playing fields for my club, 'The Anny'.

I am dedicated towards my development and train most nights. I also attend any course that can enhance my game. I am also mentally strong, command my area, am a good communicator and will not hesitate to go into any challenge.

I would be grateful if I could be invited to your next trial day, or invite me to your clubs training.

I promise you, I will not let you down.

Yours sincerely

Ray Newland

THIS LETTER YOU ARE ASKING FOR A TRIAL.

Sample letter/email two:

Your address

Date

Dear Mr David Smith I trust you are well?

As requested, please find my playing details enclosed.

My name is Ray Newland and I am a goalkeeper aged 16 years old, 6ft 11inch tall and 15 stone.

I currently play for my school, St Johns, on a Saturday morning, my county Merseyside, on a Friday night and I play on Sunday morning in the BGY league at Heron Eccles playing fields for my club, 'The Anny'.

I have had trials with Liverpool and Leeds, and currently represent my school and county.

I am dedicated towards my development and train most nights. I also attend any course that can enhance my game. I am also mentally strong, command my area, am a good communicator and will not hesitate to go into any challenge.

I would be grateful if I could be invited to your next trial day, I promise you I will not let you down.

Also, if you wish to send a scout to watch me, I have enclosed a fixture list of my next 10 games.

Yours sincerely

Ray Newland

THIS LETTER, YOU NOT ONLY ASKED FOR A TRIAL, YOU ALSO CLEVERLY INVITED THIS CLUB TO WATCH YOU PLAY. THIS IS GOOD IF THEY HAVE NO TRIAL GAMES COMING UP.

DO NOT FORGET TO ADD YOUR FIXTURES TO THIS TYPE OF LETTER!!!

Sample letter/email three:

Your address

Date

Dear Mr David Smith I trust you are well?

As requested, please find my playing details enclosed.

My name is Ray Newland and I am a goalkeeper aged 16 years old, 6ft 11inch tall and 15 stone.

I currently play for my school, St Johns, on a Saturday morning, my county Merseyside, on a Friday night and I play on Sunday morning in the BGY league at Heron Eccles playing fields for my club, 'The Anny'.

I have had trials with Liverpool and Leeds, and currently represent my school and county.

I am dedicated towards my development and train most nights. I also attend any course that can enhance my game. I am also mentally strong, command my area, am a good communicator and will not hesitate to go into any challenge.

I would be grateful if I could be invited to your next trial day, I promise you I will not let you down.

Also, if you wish to send a scout to watch me, I have enclosed a fixture list of my next 10 games.

Yours sincerely

Ray Newland

PS: My school football team/ teacher Mr Wilson, has also kindly left his personal number, so you can call.

He would be willing to give me a personal recommendation: His number is 123 4567.

FOR THIS LETTER YOU HAVE NOW ADDED A PERSONAL NUMBER THAT THE COACH CAN CALL FOR FURTHER INFO ON YOU. IF YOU CHECK THIS LETTER, YOU NOW HAVE THREE OPTIONS TO GET YOUR FEET UNDER THE TABLE WITH THIS CLUB.

TRIAL, SCOUTED and a RECOMMENDATION.

Sample letter/email four:

Your address

Date

Dear Mr David Smith I trust you are well?

As requested, please find my playing details enclosed.

My name is Ray Newland and I am a goalkeeper aged 16 years old, 6ft 11inch tall and 15 stone.

I currently play for my school, St Johns, on a Saturday morning, my county Merseyside, on a Friday night and I play on Sunday morning in the BGY league at Heron Eccles playing fields for my club, 'The Anny'.

I have had trials with Liverpool and Leeds, and currently represent my school and county.

I am dedicated towards my development and train most nights. I also attend any course that can enhance my game. I am also mentally strong, command my area, am a good communicator and will not hesitate to go into any challenge.

I would be grateful if I could be invited to your next trial day, I promise you I will not let you down.

Also, if you wish to send a scout to watch me, I have enclosed a fixture list of my next 10 games.

Yours sincerely

Ray Newland

PS: Please find enclosed a recommendation from Peter Kelly on my playing abilities.

DO NOT FORGET TO ADD THISRECOMMENDATION LETTER!

Okay the letters I have just shown you have been made quite personal because the coach **asked you** to write in... but how would you start it if you were cold calling him?

Well firstly, you will STILL need to get his name, so you are trying to make it as personal as you can (even though you are writing uninvited).

But I started my uninvited letters like this,

Sample letter /email five:

Your address

Date

Dear Mr David Smith

I apologise for contacting you out the blue but I believe you are looking for goalkeepers my age. You will find enclosed details about myself and if I fit your criteria, I would be available ANYTIME for you to assess me.

My name is Ray Newland and I am a goalkeeper aged 16 years old, 6ft 11ch tall and 15 stone.

I have had trials with Liverpool and Leeds, and currently represent my school and county.

I currently play for my school, St Johns, on a Saturday morning, my county Merseyside, on a Friday night and I play on Sunday morning in the BGY league at Heron Eccles playing fields for my club, 'The Anny'.

I am dedicated for my development and train most nights, and attend any course that can enhance my game. I am also mentally strong, command my area, am a good communicator and will not hesitate to go into any challenge.

I would be grateful if I could be invited to your next trial day, I promise you I will not let you down.

Also, if you wish to send a scout to watch me, I have enclosed a fixture list of my next 10 games.

Yours sincerely

Ray Newland

IN MY SAMPLE LETTERS, I HAVE USED GOALKEEPING. YOU
WILL OBVIOUSLY CHANGE THIS TO YOUR POSITION.

My Winning letter!

Please now see the letter that got me my FIRST PROFESSIONAL CONTRACT!

You will see the power of having enclosed a recommendation from someone with influence, as my letter was not that impressive.

The letter looked uninviting; it was not printed but hand written (I never had a personal computer so had to personally write each individual letter).

When I look at this letter, I wonder how I managed to get invited for trials.

Nowadays it should be so easy, all you have to do is write a template on your computer and print it off when you want. You can also get your computer to print out your envelopes.

So where it would have taken me at least two hours to prepare one letter, you can have every letter and envelope printed off to every professional football club that you wish to contact within this time frame!

Technology is great isn't it!

So please read the letters that I personally sent to football clubs as a teenager, while I was a non- contract at Everton FC. This was the letter that Peter Shilton had read which resulted in me getting that winning trial that made me achieve my dream of becoming a professional footballer.

You will also see the recommendation letter attached by the legend Neville Southall.

RAY J NEWLAND.

K GREEN
EEN.
L.
DA.
3616.

Der Sir,

At present I'm a goalkeeper at
EVERTON FC, where I've been since last season.

I'm on a Non-contract basis where I've
played up to now several times for the A-team,
several Reserves games and traveled with the
First Team on a couple of occasions as over,
as a fifthteenth man.

I have also been on tour last season
to Holland.

But unfortunately there is already five keepers
on the books full-time, so there is not
an opening.

So I'm am writing to your club asking
for a vacancy on professional terms.

If you would like a reference
you can contact Neville Southall &
Ray Hall at Everton (Bellfield training
Ground).

Please note: this is the same letter, when it was scanned but page 1 came out a slightly different colour for some reason?

My statistics are .
Position - Goalkeeper .
Height - 6^{ft} 3 inches
Weight - 13st 1^{lb}
Age - 20 years old .

I will be able any-time for a trial .
You can also contact me at Belfield
Before 1.00pm .

Yours
Sincerely .

Rayferland .

Everton

EVERTON FOOTBALL CLUB COMPANY LIMITED
GOODISON PARK, LIVERPOOL L4 4EL.



To Whom it May Concern

I would like to recommend Ray on his goalkeeping abilities.
He is one of the best young keepers I have seen for a while.
Having watched him play and train, I know given the chance
he would make it into league football at any level.

If I can be of further assistance do not hesitate to contact
me at Bellefield Training Ground.

Yours Sincerely

Neville Southall

NEVILLE SOUTHALL
E.F.C.

Secretary/Chief Executive:
J. GREENWOOD
Manager:
H. KENDALL

TELEPHONE NUMBERS
051-521 2020 Administration
051-523 6666 Box Office
051-523 6666 NEC Facsimile
TELECOM GOLD TELEX
Box No. CJJ511 205871 (Ref. CJJ511)
Registered Number 36924, England



The above letter from Legend Neville Southall was photocopied
and enclosed with every letter I sent to professional football clubs.

Sending a fax.

Now I understand this technique is outdated now, but some clubs still have faxes. So, If they have a fax, definitely send a fax.

Reason being, most people would never dream of sending a fax, so it might just give you the edge.

The fax you send can be the letter you send to coaches via mail like I have already shown you but make sure you put right across the top of the letter/fax...

FAO: Chief Coach John Nelson.

Like the letters you send out, you need to have a contact name of the person you want the fax to be read by.

Make it personal to the coach!

If you just send a fax to every football club with no name attached for whom the fax is for, I will guarantee most of your faxes will end up in the bin.

I know it might be a little time consuming finding out the right contact details of each individual coach, in each individual football club, but this will be well worth the effort and will drastically improve your hit rate of getting a trial at a professional football club!

So make sure the fax is addressed to someone!

This way, when the fax comes out of the machine the receptionist will not read the letter, she will immediately pop it on the desk of

the intended coach, thus you achieve your goal of contacting the correct person!

The great thing about a fax is that it costs literally pennies to send hundreds at once, so you can send your fax on the 1st day of each month, EVERY month, so you will be getting continuity with your target mailings, thus strengthening your chance of success.

Another advantage is that the coach does not have to open an envelope.

Put yourselves in the shoes of a very busy coach, and you only have just enough time left to read just one more correspondence before you head off to train.

Would you spend your time opening an envelope or grab a piece of paper (fax) on your desk you can quickly read?

I think the answer is obvious.

Send An Email.

I never had this luxury when I was chasing my dreams, but the email is a great tool for you to use.

Again the great things about emails are that they are time and money friendly. You can put literally hundreds of emails on one address folder and at the click of a mouse, send every one of your contacts an email, and they will receive them within seconds.

Again like the fax method, you can send once a month, as it will not cost you one penny, so you have NOTHING to lose!

Again, like the fax and letter, please ensure you make the email personal to the coach.

For example in the subject line state:

FAO: Joey Jones

This way, the coach knows it is not junk mail. Also, this lessens the risk of your email going into this coach's junk mail folder and getting lost forever!

The only downside to this type of contacting is, the coach may not be computer literate or lazy with his emails!

However, if you are sending letters, faxes AND emails, it does not take a rocket scientist to realise that it will only be a question of time before your correspondences get read.

It is a numbers game, and all you have to do is make sure YOUR NUMBER is always in the hat!

As they say in the lottery adverts,

‘You have to be in it... to win it!’

You cannot get a trial if you do not contact the clubs. And I will guarantee the majority of people, will NOT contact clubs. So put yourself in the minority and contact the club coaches!

Club Websites

EVERY professional football club now has a website and even the lowest of division football teams have some type of football website.

And this can provide you with a whole lot of useful information at your fingertips!

You can gather information on the club, and find out which coaches you need to contact!

Also, you can get the addresses of football clubs, emails and fax numbers so that you have everything needed to contact the necessary people who will have the authority to invite you for a trial.

IMPORTANT TIP: If you can find the name of the coach that you are contacting, you can research what type of player he was, as normally this club's website will have some blurb on the career of their coaching staff.

(More explained on this shortly)

Internet

Even if there is no blurb on this coach on the club's website, once you know their name you can do a web search for them through the likes of google, yahoo, etc.

You type in for example:

'Mike Smith professional footballer'

You then should get a list of different pages of information on the coach you are researching. Now if you are clever, you can use this information in in your correspondence, to make your letter, fax or email to this coach, personal to him (and you!).

For example:

Say Mike Smith was a defender, who was a no- nonsense hard tackler, who took no prisoners.

In your correspondence to this coach, you can give him your details and then say something like,

'I am a tough tackler, who prides himself in never pulling out of a challenge. I also like to try and mentally beat my opponent throughout any match I play.'

Can you see that you have made your letter
personal to this coach?

Every coach likes to think he can develop a player that is a ‘mirror image’ of themselves as a player. I suppose in a way, it reminds them of their playing days.

Over the years as a professional footballer myself, I saw this happen on a near daily basis!

The coach always seemed to prefer the players that were similar to them when they played.

What happens if a coach was in a different position to you though? How can you make this personal?

Remember, it not their position you are trying to match but mostly the mental state, character and or personality of this coach (when they played).

Foe Example: Say you are a goalkeeper, and the coach you are trying to persuade was a centre forward.

Two different positions and known enemies on the pitch!

So how can you make yourself personal to a coach in a different position to yourself?

Easy, like this.

Say after your research on this ex-centre forward coach, you find that this coach was an honest player.

In your correspondence to him you can say,

‘As a goalkeeper, I feel that I am honest within my game and if I make a mistake, I will be the first to hold my hand up, then make sure I do not make this same mistake again.’

Or, if this centre forward coach was a bit of a bully on the pitch, you can write,

‘As a goalkeeper, I use my physique to intimidate opponents, and if I get a chance I will let the opponents know they are in a game and will not hesitate to put another player off by hitting them hard in a tackle.’

As you can see, I am trying to find something in this coach’s character that I can use to make my correspondence PERSONAL.

So this coach might see a little bit of himself... in me.

Look at this from the point of view of a coach. Would you rather invite a stranger for a trial, who writes an impersonal letter, fax or email to you, or would you invite a player who has written a personal headed letter to you and reminds you of what you were like during your playing days... and also seems to have similar characteristics to you?

I think the answer is obvious.

Just Turn Up!

Even though I do not recommend this, just turning up on the day and asking for a trial can actually work.

I have actually seen this work a couple of times when I was a professional.

This is where a player (generally aged over eighteen) had just turned up and asked could he train with the club.

Now in this day and age, I cannot see a manager allowing a stranger to train with his team, especially the amount that players are now worth!

And another thing that you would need, is skin as thick as a rhino!

Because to do this, takes an awful lot of courage.

Even though I have seen this work in the past, and I think it would be difficult to do now, it still maybe worth a last ditch effort if your letters, faxes, etc are failing.

However this is more likely to work for a parent taking their child to an academy or satellite centre.

If you have the bottle as a parent to do this, and you have a child aged between seven and fourteen, you could walk into your local professional football club academy or satellite centre with your child all kitted out and approach one of the coaches.

There are many things that you can say. For example,

‘Hi, my son was playing this Sunday at Edge Park for his team, and one of your scouts asked me to bring him here tonight.’

or,

‘Hi, I got a phone call on Tuesday by one of your scouts asking me to bring my child here tonight.’

or,

‘Hi, my son’s manager was asked on Sunday at Edge Park to invite my son to your training session for tonight.’

If you can hold your nerve, you will most probably get away with this!

Let me explain why.

In professional football clubs they have THAT MANY scouts, so-called scouts, hanger’s on, school teachers who think they can coach and scout, football managers, referees, etc, who all think they are that ‘Super Scout’.

So if you approached a coach at a professional football club’s academy or satellite centre, they would have NO WAY of knowing if you were telling a teensie-weensie white lie!

The strong chances are, they will say that your child can train, ‘just for tonight’...but if your child impresses, you never know?

I know one parent who did this, and his child went to this club for nearly a whole year!

Also, if the coach refuses to allow your son to train, you can state... again if you have the bottle.

‘I do not believe this! I took time off work to bring my son here on the back of one of your coaches or scouts inviting us here!’

‘My son is going to be gutted, I am going to the local papers over this!’

The chances are the coach you speak to will panic if you say this because they know there are ssooooooooooooo many coaches and scouts involved in the club, they will be thinking at the back of their heads,

‘What if it was such and such coach/scout who invited this guy? I will be slaughtered if I let this kid leave tonight.’

or,

‘Crumbs, this guy is cheesed off, I’d better just humour him and give him tonight’s training as I do not want him going to the press and giving the club a bad name.’

Actually if you said, ‘What’s your name, I am going to the press over this! We were invited and you have just disregarded my child like he was an unwanted animal!’

This coach would REALLY panic over this, as he would not want his name attached to kicking a kid into the street so distastefully!

As I mentioned above, you would probably only get one training session, just to shut you up. But if your child impresses one of the coaches who has a say at this club, he could get an invite back.

You would have to have very thick skin to do this but if you have got a lot of confidence, seriously 95% of coaches would crumble in they where fronted in this way.

Send In A DVD Or You Tube Link.

Another quick tip, is you can send in a promo DVD of yourself (or your child). Or email a you tube video.

If this lands on the desk of the right person and they like what they see, you could be in luck,

Video is now becoming one of the most common ways for coaches now to narrow down players before they invite them to their club for training.

So get a promo video done of yourself, playing and training.

Tip: Do not put booming music on this promo video, this is a sure way for the coach to switch you off.

Do MORE Than The ‘Average’

I do not know if you have caught on to what I have been trying to teach you within this book, but this is to try and contact the coach who has a say in whether he can invite you to his club.

Making your correspondences personal, will 100% give you an advantage on the majority, who send in impersonal correspondences!

But more importantly...

Do more than the average person!

The average person would write just one or two letters a year, and if they did not get a response think, ‘Oh well, they must have thought I was not good enough!’

Please DO NOT think like this, otherwise you will have NO CHANCE of getting that invite!

This is like a centre forward shooting for goal, and the goalkeeper saving it.

Now most forwards will not think, ‘Wow, this keeper is great. I have no chance of scoring, so I will not shoot again, I will pass to a team mate instead.’

Would any centre forward do this?

Of course they would not!

If they thought this goalkeeper was amazing, they would simply try harder to beat him.

They would try:

- Curling the ball around him
- Hitting it high
- Hitting it low
- Volleying it
- Faking shots
- They would try everything in their power to score that goal, and they would do this with different options and choices that they would make!

So you have to be like these centre forwards and not give up just because one or two of your shots gets saved – or one or two of your letters get ignored.

By writing this book for you, I have hopefully given you enough **options** and **choices** for you to at least do more than the average when contacting professional football clubs.

It's now up to you (or you as a parent if you are doing this on your child's behalf).

I have given you the gun, and the bullets to fire, but you need to pull the trigger.

The techniques in this training book worked for me, and have worked for thousands of other players, so can work for you also.

I now wish with all my heart that you achieve your dream of becoming a professional goalkeeper.

Even though my career was only short and I never reached my full potential because of my premature injury, it was the best experience of my life.

So I urge you to chase YOUR dream!

Your friend

Ray Newland

Want to know more about me, and how I might be able to help you, check out my personal website: **www.raynewland.com**

Also please check out www.j4ksports.com for all your sporting needs, and if you use the code J4K20, you will get 20% off for life.