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Grass Shroots: It's all about Sunday morning soccer for new Birmingham City signing

Jan 10 2009 By Andy Walker

BUDDING manager Robin Shroot plans to swap Championship stadiums for the sidelines of park pitches on a Sunday morning when the current season finishes.

The Blues new boy is only just starting out on a career in professional football having been snapped up from non-League Harrow Borough at the start of the January transfer window.

But the ambitious 20-year-old already has one eye on a career in football management having already taken charge of a kids team in London. Ex-Wimbledon trainee Shroot has been in charge of Balham Blazers Under-13s for the last two years and his managerial record already includes one promotion.

Obviously Blazers will now be forced to miss out on Shroot's tactical nous as he concentrates on his commitments with Alex McLeish's promotion-chasing Blues.

But the Northern Ireland Under-21 international plans to return to the sidelines of Balham when the current Championship campaign finishes in May.

"I managed an under-13s team when I was down in London and my record was phenomenal," said Shroot with a smile on his face.

"I've been with them for two years, we got promoted the first season I did it and that got them into the A division where they are second now, so I did pretty well. I liked to coach in the evenings, I believe strongly in good football and obviously the younger you can get them and work with them the better that will develop.

"I'll go back to them when the season is over because they go to tournaments in London and I like to give a bit back to the community. I was coaching for another club in south London and Balham Blazers approached me and said 'do you want to join us?'.

"I started coaching for them but they always knew what I wanted to achieve in football. As soon as I rang the chairman and said that Birmingham wanted to offer me a deal he was delighted and said 'take it'."

Shroot sees himself as a goal-scoring winger which will be welcome news for Blues who, following the loan acquisition of Chelsea forward Scott Sinclair, now possess an even more lethal attack.

However rather than rank Manchester United's wing wizard Cristiano Ronaldo as his No1 idol, Shroot instead hails the Brazilian striker Ronaldo as his hero.

"Big Ronaldo was my hero, I try to see myself as a goal-scoring winger. I wouldn't say I play anything like Ronaldo because he's a lot quicker than I am but I just love his confidence and the way he just thought that he could do anything he wanted."

Shroot has spent the last week floating around Wast Hills in a dream world having achieved most young boys' ambition of playing professional football.

Less than a month ago, the winger was earning £50 a week and playing in front of crowds of barely 200 in the Ryman Premier League. Now he could see himself thrown into the race for Premier League football with Blues.

Despite having his low points, including being released by Wimbledon, prior to the MK Dons franchise, as a 16-year-old after eight years as a trainee with the club, Shroot insists that he's remained focused on gaining an chance in the only industry he has ever been interested in.

"It's always just been football for me, I was quite good at school and didn't mind it but it was always PE for me rather than English and Maths.

"I was at Wimbledon from eight to 16 and then I got released at YTS and then I went to Staines Town, AFC Wimbledon and then Harrow Borough

"Now it's been weird acclimatising to life at a Championship club but I love turning up every day, I love training so I've just got to work hard. Signing for Birmingham was unreal." Blues had to pay AFC Wimbledon a nominal fee to gain the services of Shroot and the Blue Square South side may soon end up regretting their decision to have not played the highly-rated player more.

However Shroot has no sympathy for his former employers after admitted that his two-year spell with the Kingsmeadow club was 'very frustrating'.
"AFC Wimbledon never played me so I wanted to leave. It was very frustrating for me down there."
