



# Belfast Boy

Football in Northern Ireland has been on the up in recent years with the international side claiming some big scalps at Windsor Park. Spain, Sweden and of course England have all been beaten and they have been close to qualifying for a major event, something they have not achieved since the heady days of the 1982 and 1986 World Cups. David Healy, their prolific striker, also became the first player to score thirteen goals in a European Championship qualifying campaign. But what was happening at grassroots and in children's football across Northern Ireland? Paul Cooper from SoccerCoachingInternational went on a four day fact finding mission.

By: Paul Cooper

## Tim Wareing

I had met a young coach from Belfast called Tim Wareing who had made an immediate impact on me both in terms of a coach and person. When Tim invited me over to see the work he was doing at youth level, I was already on my way to the airport before the phone was set down. Tim played for Saintfield United before moving onto Agape to play under Sam Watterson. It was the late Watterson that got him involved in coaching and it was under his guidance that Tim set up Castlereagh Colts which was the youth development side at Agape. During this time Wareing got his UEFA B license and fixed up friendly fixtures with the like of Glasgow Rangers, Leeds and Fulham. Tim has always aimed high as he always wants the best for his charges.

Later Tim joined Lisburn Distillery as youth coach before being appointed Academy Director at the club and a couple of years ago obtained his A-license. The young coach was very keen to do more football in the community and set up mini soccer centre across Northern Ireland through the coaching company he set called TWSports.org with the result that now hundreds of smiling boys and girls have the opportunity to play for fun.

## East Belfast

This was my first visit to Northern Ireland although I already felt as if I knew it, as while growing up it was never off our screens at tea - time. The early evening news was full of many familiar names and places, though sadly nearly all were linked to the troubles. I was staying with Tim, his partner and their children in East Belfast, only a few hundred yards from where George Best lived and where George's father, Dickie still lives in the family home on Burren Way. Tim drove me around the Cregagh Estate, and to see the field and streets where the great man played as a child was inspiring. A couple of nights later Tim had organised a World Cup 4v4 on the estate with the local children. With the floodlights on the Astro pitch, lighting up the autumn sky and with George Best's mural looming out from the side of an adjacent house, you felt that the spirit of the man was still living inside these local kids from the Cregagh, playing with smiles as wide as the River Lagan that flows through the city.

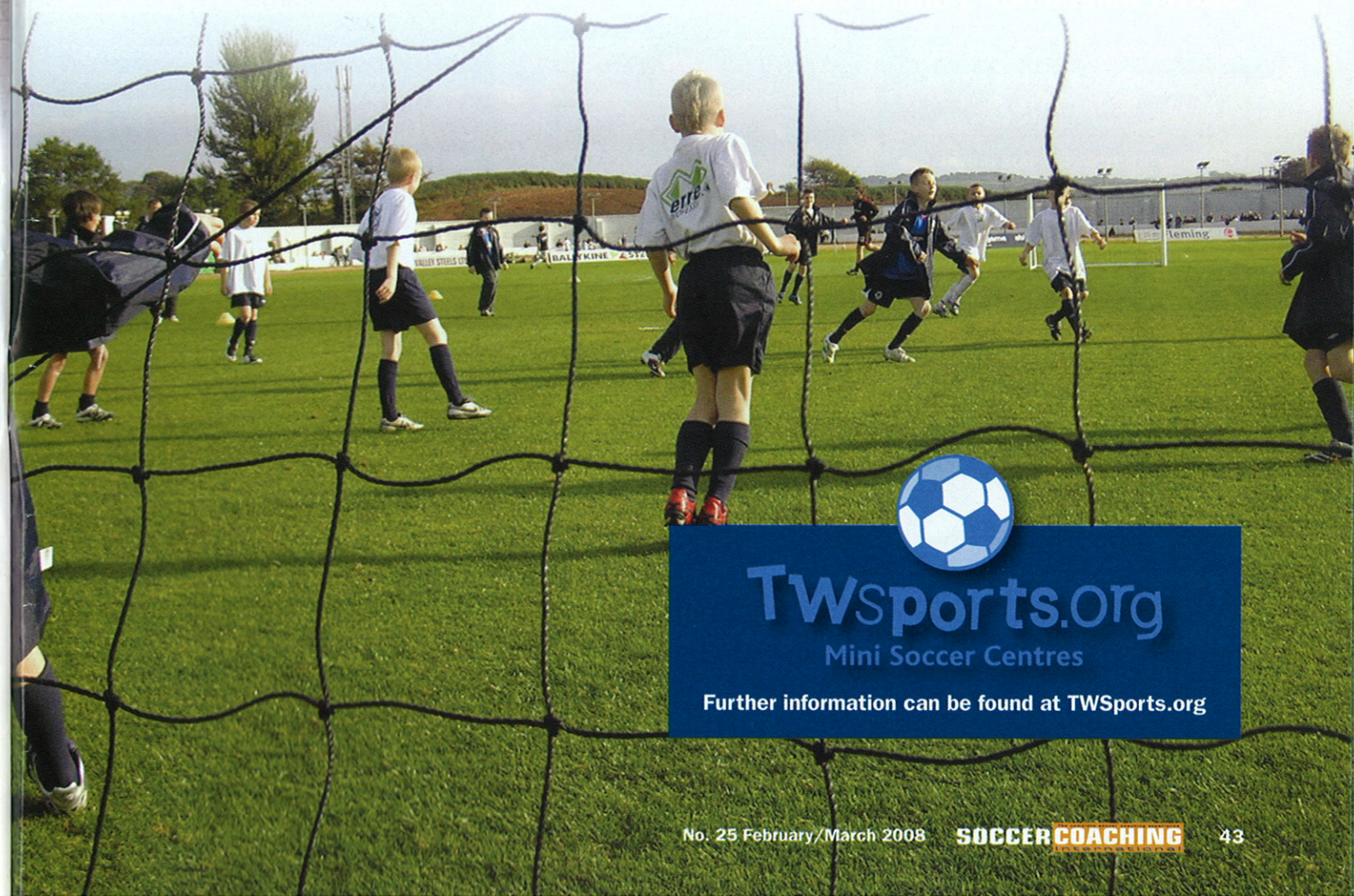
For several days I followed Tim and his coaches around Northern Ireland, to Belfast, Larne, Carrickfergus and Lisburn to name just a few places. We visited schools, play groups and leisure centres there with young kids from 5-13 playing football. The ingredients were simple, lots of fun, lots of touches of the

ball and skills. Everywhere we went the children were hungry to play, trying moves and feints without a care in the world. The environment was so positive and the children were encouraged to show what they could do and express themselves at all time. Every six weeks they have a Wold Cup competition which the children love. As well as these mini soccer centres Tim also runs Toddler Soccer sessions for the really young ones, where they learn to fall in love with the game.



For the more gifted players there is the opportunity to join the Lisburn Distillery Academy. Tim and the coaches at the club have been very careful to create a culture of skilful play and creativity at the Academy. Children are encouraged to play the game how it should be played. The training I saw was full of inventive play with players taking on opponents in many 1 v 1 situations and neat passages of passing play with good movement off the ball. I don't remember ever visiting a club or district and see so many happy kids, but Tim's love for the game is incredibly infectious.

Tim's achievements in stimulating youth soccer in Northern Ireland are quite staggering and with the foundations being laid deep, the omens, (as long as he gets the support he deserves) look promising.



TWSports.org  
Mini Soccer Centres

Further information can be found at [TWSports.org](http://TWSports.org)