

## John\*: Street League London

Elite middle-distance athlete, Sam Coombes is involved in several athlete role model programmes. He has been involved RAMP since the outset and has engaged with young people across London and the South-East of England.

John\* was referred to RAMP by Street League (Football charity) in Stratford, London. At the age of 20 John had been involved in some serious criminal activity in London, eventually being arrested and sent to prison for armed robbery. Involved with gangs from an early age, John was electronically tagged by the police after leaving prison and had to report to his local police station every week to monitor his activity. John came out of prison having lost everything, his home, his car, his girlfriend and his job. Disillusioned with life he needed support to get back on the right path and prove he could become a valued member of society.

Working together over the past few months Sam was able to build a positive relationship with John and encouraged him to go on several courses so that he could show to the courts and police how he was trying hard to make a positive change to his life. After achieving various formal qualifications with the encouragement of Sam, John then started to look for gainful employment. This process took some time as numerous employers could see potential problems from John's troubled past. Fortunately John never gave up and even at some stages when his confidence was low and he felt that nobody cared, John was able to turn to Sam for some encouragement and persevere with his quest to look purposeful employment.

Fantastic news came in the middle of July when Kurt Geiger (Shoe Retailer) offered John a supervisor's position. He was ecstatic and couldn't believe his luck, especially in the current economic climate where unemployment is at its highest levels in years. During their mentoring sessions together John and Sam had talked about mental toughness, perseverance and self belief as components to professional and elite level sportsmen that cross-over into every day life.

John had loved playing football before being imprisoned and upon meeting Sam, they had continued to play and Sam had got John involved in some coaching courses and also gone along to support John at the Beckham Academy in Greenwich. The mental components Sam had instilled in John through explaining the strong psychological resilience needed by high level athletes to cope with their sport had transferred over into the way John had applied himself to finding employment.

John is now saving his money from his new job in attempt to get a deposit for a new place. His life is starting to get back on track now and he is extremely grateful to the ongoing support of Sam who regularly keeps in touch. Sam will be with John and when he next attends a meeting with his solicitor who is trying to obtain an early release for John from his 'electronic tag'. Justifying his case John's solicitor intends to highlight the work of Sam and John together to show John's dedicated and committed attitude since leaving prison to reshape his life in a constructive and positive manner.

\*Name has been changed to protect identity.

