



# Posh fan helps rebuild lives with football skill



By **JAMES WESTGATE**

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**POSH fan Charles Gould is the last person you might expect to find showcasing his football skills on a dust bowl of a pitch in down town Accra.**

For starters the Ghanaian capital is more than 3,000 miles from the UK and about as far removed from Gould's quiet home town of Fotheringhay, near Oundle, as it's possible to get.

Known as a graveyard for Westerners in colonial times due to the high numbers of Europeans who succumbed to tropical diseases, the West African country is not the average destination for a young man with the urge to travel.

Added to the fact the 22-year-old former Laxton School pupil has no pedigree in the game and he seems an unlikely candidate to coach in a country which has produced the likes of Abedi Pele, Tony Yeboah and Michael Essien in recent years.

But what Gould does have is bags of passion and a desire to do his bit for football in a country where just getting hold of the basics can be a monumental challenge.

"I graduated from university and couldn't find a job so decided to do something different and coaching football in Ghana is certainly different," said Gould.

"I work through the charity Projects Abroad as Technical Director at Cantonments Football Club in Ghana with the senior team as well as supervising the junior sides and it is very rewarding work."

"We are trying to get more young players in Europe and America and at the moment I am sending off various certificates to the States to try and make that happen for one of our young players."

"Last week I also visited a Liberian refugee camp to donate some equipment which was an eye opener."

"Making sure everyone has the right



equipment is hard, especially boots, which we get donated from around the world, but they are not always easy to get hold of when they do arrive."

A point neatly illustrated by a recent incident involving a bag of boots and a dodgy airport official..

Gould added: "We had a shipment of about 100 odd pairs come in the other day but the Ghanaian customs would not release them because the box wasn't marked properly, apparently."

"In the end it took about five hours and me visiting 15 different offices before they would release the boots and only then after we had handed over a 1000 Cedis (about £400) cash bribe to the officials."

"I know it was a bribe because when we handed over the money, the official openly placed a wad of notes in his top pocket. He then had the cheek to ask for a pair of boots!"

"But we got them in the end and the boys were absolutely delighted. In the UK new boots would be no big deal for most kids but here it is a massive thing to get a second hand pair, it's a different world."

Despite the difficulties however, Gould is clearly happy to be working in a country where football comes second only to religion.

He said: "The country is football mad with most supporting Man Utd, Chelsea

or Barcelona."

"And last month when Ghana won the under 20 World Cup the celebrations were unbelievable."

"There was a massive street party on the main street in Accra after, I was in a taxi as I had been watching in a bar and wanted to get to the main celebrations - there were fireworks going off everywhere."

"People were hanging out of car windows and groups of men were running up the middle of a busy road waving Ghana flags while people flew out of the way."

"The only thing that touches football in terms of passion over here is god and the two go hand in hand. Our team pray before and after training."

"Before a home match they pray for over half an hour, first in the changing room, then both goals, the corner flag and finally they pray round the centre circle holding hands so there barely get a warm up. But it is the way it's done out here."

Whatever the eccentricities of his new charges however, it is clear Gould treasuring his time on the Gold Coast.

"I miss home a bit and the decent meals and Posh games - although at the moment I don't think I am missing too much - but I have found it all just a brilliant experience and very rewarding, especially if we can get Cantonments promoted this season."

**SUPPORT:** Charles Gould with a youth team in Ghana, above, and right, giving advice to an injured player.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Learn about your rights at carers event

DO you know what rights you are entitled to as a carer? To ensure people looking after sick or disabled relatives are not missing out on vital benefits or support, NHS Peterborough are holding a Carers Rights Day. It will take place on Friday, December 4, between 9.30am and 1.30pm at the Park Inn, in Wentworth Street, Peterborough. Carers are invited head along to the event and talk to advisors from a number of organisations.

### Festive courses on offer at city college

A college will host a special day of Christmas courses this weekend to get people in the yuletide spirit. Peterborough College of Adult Education is running a number of free festive family classes, as well as courses costing from £20 for adults on Saturday. For more information visit the college's Brook Street campus near the city centre, phone 01733 761361 or [www.pals.ac.uk](http://www.pals.ac.uk)

### Call for better facilities in park

YOUNGSTERS want Central Park in Peterborough to have better facilities for children as its number one priority. Pupils from Thomas Deacon Academy met representatives of Central Park, in Park Road, and the police to voice their thoughts on action to help youngsters stay out of trouble. The meeting was part of a pilot scheme to get children to raise issues for discussion.

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