



Mike Hicks pictured back, far left

# VISIONARY COACH'S PASSION FOR DEVELOPING YOUNG FOOTBALLERS SHINES THROUGH AN EXAMPLE OF DEVOTION AND DEDICATION



Mike Hicks pictured far left

Michael Hicks has spent over two decades nurturing spiritual and athletic growth in his community. As a dedicated church volunteer and football coach, he has made a lasting impact on both the church and the football field.

Mike's journey began in his childhood, deeply rooted in church traditions and activities, forming a foundation for his lifelong service. "I've been involved with the church since I was very little," he recalls. His involvement in a school football programme initiated by Fr John marked the start of his dual commitment to faith and sport.

Mike's motivation is simple yet profound: "Not a lot of children have the opportunity to play football, and parents may not have the money or time to do so." His dedication to providing these opportunities is evident in his years of unwavering service.

Throughout his volunteer work, Mike has accumulated countless cherished memories. Among these, winning a football tournament stands out. "Seeing all the children turn up to practice and then win the tournament was incredibly rewarding," he shares. These moments highlight the positive impact of his efforts.

Another highlight for Mike is witnessing the commitment and enthusiasm of the children he coaches. Their eagerness to participate and improve is a constant source of inspiration. "It's those moments, seeing them show up and give their best, that make all the hard work worthwhile," he says.

Over the years, Mike has witnessed significant changes within the church community. Having served as an altar server and participated in var-

## "MAKES ALL THE HARD WORK WORTHWHILE"

ious activities for over 22 years, he has seen new faces and experienced evolving parish dynamics. "Parishioners are now getting more involved," he notes, highlighting the growing sense of community and collaboration.

Mike's role has also adapted to these changes. Delegating responsibilities to team captains and other volunteers has become crucial in balancing his volunteer work with other commitments. "It's hard to balance work and volunteering, but it helps that many events are on the weekend. Delegation is key," he explains.

Volunteering is not without its challenges. Mike recalls a difficult situation during a church competition when confusion about team placements left some students feeling lost and uncomfortable. His ability to handle such challenges with empathy and patience is a testament to his dedication and leadership.

Mentorship has played a crucial role in Mike's journey. He attributes much of his success to the guidance and support of church leaders. "Fr John Armitage and Fr John Jesus have been instrumental in my volunteer work. Without them, I wouldn't be doing all the football stuff. They've always supported me," he acknowledges.

Looking ahead, Mike hopes to increase female participation in football. "I hope to get more girls interested in football coaching and playing, and to help them know that there is a support system in place," he says. This inclusive vision reflects his commitment to creating opportunities for all children, regardless of gender.

Reflecting on his years of service, Mike distills his experiences into valuable lessons. His first piece of advice: "Don't knock it 'till you try it." He encourages potential volunteers to overcome their hesitation and give it a go. His second lesson: "Be patient. There will be moments where you think it isn't worth it. Give things time to settle in; nothing will be done in a day or a week."

Michael Hicks's story is one of unwavering dedication, profound faith, and a commitment to nurturing young talent. His efforts have strengthened the fabric of the church community. As he looks to the future, Mike's legacy of faith and football will undoubtedly continue to inspire and uplift those around him. His story encourages us all to find ways to contribute, support one another, and build stronger, more connected communities.