SPORTING LIFE

NEW SIGNING STRIKES UP A GOOD PARTNERSHIP

SUPPORT: Amit Bhatia, vice chairman of QPR Holdings Ltd, and Nathan Bostock, CFO and executive director, Products and Marketing at Abbey

QUEENS Park Rangers can bank on the support of a major financial group thanks to a new two-year deal.

The Loftus Road club have linked up with Abbey, part of the Santander Group, which becomes an official financial partner.

The partnership will provide the financial group with a bespoke programme including joint branding at Loftus Road, access to players and senior staff and the use of club facilities throughout the year.

Other activities include a 'Business in Sport' programme building on the new arrangement.

Nathan Bostock, CFO and executive director, products and marketing at Abbey, said: "QPR have great ambition and we are excited to be part of it. We look forward to developing a business and community programme with the club that will involve our staff and customers as well as building on our existing initiatives with schools, charities and local communities."

Amit Bhatia, vice chairman of QPR Holdings Ltd, added: "Abbey is part of a global banking brand that stands for success and excellence worldwide, and these are qualities that we strive to instil within our club."

High Hoops

▶ We chat to Gareth Ainsworth of QPR ahead of their 2008-9 campaign
▶ Popular midfielder is delighted to be a player-coach at an exciting time

TOM DERBYSHIRE

IT'S probably a good sign that your player-coach's tip for Euro 2008 won the tournament.

But no-one should really be surprised about QPR talisman Gareth Ainsworth's choice of Spain, given the 35-year-old's long career in football.

The fans' favourite has been with the Loftus Road club since 2003, the longest-serving current player, and his great experience will now be put to good use as part of a trio alongside new manager Iain Dowie and former England goalkeeper Tim Flowers.

Ainsworth does admit his choice of Spain was partly influenced by his South American girlfriend, but QPR can still count on him to be a valuable influence – especially with Dowie.

"It is a bit of a step up from last year when I helped Luigi di Canio with some things but I was lucky enough that Iain Dowie came in and wanted to keep me coaching," he told *h&f news*.

"He is fantastic, and with Tim as well there are two great people, and I am really pleased with it.

"We looked at the squad, the three of us, and we have got talent there. If we can combine that with the hard work and effort that Iain has a reputation for it is going to be a good season."

Despite many pundits tipping QPR for a strong promotion challenge – given the new players, coaching staff and money coming into the club – Ainsworth is wary of predictions.

"I do not really set targets," he said. "All I would say is every game, every week we want to win. We want to win every game this season.

"Over 46 games it is a real reflection of how you have done. One of the few cliches I go with is the table at the end of the season does not lie.

"People are expecting us to be up there but we have a new manager who has not even taken training yet and we will have to take each game at a time."

Last season the Championship was incredibly close but Ainsworth says: "I do not think it is going to be as crazy as it was last year, everyone beating everyone, no runaway leaders.

"It was really good for football if you were a neutral.

"There will be a bigger gap between the top and bottom. There are a few ex-Premier League teams now that people expect to hit the ground running and bounce straight back – Birmingham and Reading will both be going for it and although Derby hit a brick wall last season they have some big names still.

"At the other end Forest and Swansea coming up are from big cities and have money to spend.

"Doncaster are a bit unknown but so were Blackpool and they did well.

"There are some big-hitters straightaway and people are spending money – it will be tough.

"This is probably the hardest division I have ever played in."

Ainsworth is happy with the QPR squad and feels it is the best team spirit since his days with Wimbledon's Crazy Gang.

The Rs finished in 14th place last season, with several new faces appearing in the January transfer window.

PASSING ON EXPERIENCE: QPR midfielder Gareth Ainsworth now has a player-coach role alongside Iain Dowie

PICTURE BY ACTION IMAGES

> **We have gone from being one of the poorest clubs to pinch-yourself time**

Ainsworth says despite the upheaval it was good to be in a team not 'battling for survival' and the Blackburn-born midfielder is optimistic about life at Loftus Road.

It will be a difficult start, though, with influential players Akos Buzsaky and Rowan Vine injured.

"It is a massive blow," said Ainsworth. "It is a shame and we are going to be missing them."

Ainsworth feels other players who could be very influential include Martin Rowlands – 'he is probably at the peak of his career, playing his best' – and strikers Dexter Blackstock and Patrick Agyemang, if they can show the excellent form QPR fans have seen tantalising glimpses of.

Strength in depth is the key.

"We have a big squad," said Ainsworth. "It is certainly not about 11 players any more. It is all about the squad these days."

More signings are on the way, says chairman Gianni Paladini, with Argentine midfielder Emmanuel Jorge Ledesma the latest recruit.

One bonus from Ainsworth's experience is that the sometimes bewildering events at QPR over the past year did not unsettle him as it might have done with younger players.

Manager John Gregory went and the financial difficulties were biting hard, but supporters were delighted when Bernie Ecclestone and Flavio Briatore took over, later joined by billionaire Lakshmi Mittal, and the club can now look forward to a bright future – and a return to the Premier League has suddenly become a realistic aim.

A five-year deal with Lotto Sport was announced and to mark a new era the club badge was redesigned.

"Nothing does surprise me these days but it is a welcome change. We have gone from being one of the poorest clubs to pinch-yourself, fairytale time," Ainsworth said.

"The rumour mill is unbelievable, and you never actually believe anything until it happens.

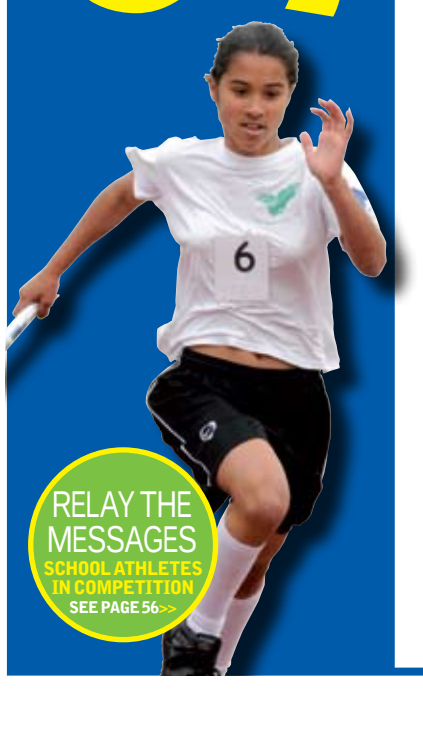
"It is great to be high-profile now but QPR has given me a good grounding in football. The speculation is amazing at times."

● The club's Championship campaign kicks off at home on August 9 against Barnsley. You can see them in action in a series of pre-season friendlies, starting with Stevenage Borough v QPR at 3pm on July 19.

FANS' FAVOURITE

Gareth Ainsworth

>> Born in Blackburn, May 10, 1973
>> Previous clubs are Cardiff City, Preston, Port Vale, Lincoln City, Preston (loan), Cambridge, Walsall (loan), Wimbledon
>> Joined QPR in June 2003
>> In 2007/8 he made 16 league appearances and eight as sub, scoring two goals, and one FA Cup appearance



RELAY THE MESSAGES
SCHOOL ATHLETES IN COMPETITION
SEE PAGE 56>>

SPORTING LIFE

SPORTING LIFE

DISTRICT ATHLETICS AT LINFORD CHRISTIE STADIUM>>

Stars are a bit too soon for 2012 but 2016 Olympics is beckoning!

Brackenbury has overall title success at schools' athletics day

The Hammersmith primary comes top of the girls' competition while Larmenier and Sacred Heart wins the boys' contest at borough stadium

MADELINE HEALEY

ATHLETES from Brackenbury Primary have proved their sporting prowess.

The school, from Brackenbury Road in Hammersmith, finished first in the field of 20, ahead of St Stephen's, of Shepherds Bush, and Hammersmith's Larmenier and Sacred Heart, at the annual District Athletics Meeting held at Linford Christie Stadium.

The event was run by the Hammersmith & Fulham Primary Schools' Sports Association on June 18.

Winning schools, as well as individual winners, will take home medals and certificates after a presentation day this Friday at the Town Hall. Organiser Deryck Fill said the meeting was a great day out enjoyed by the children and adults who attended.

"The weather behaved itself and all of us were treated to some very fine athletic endeavours," he said.

"It could be the start of something, too soon for 2012 but maybe 2016."

Brackenbury also came top in the overall girls' competition ahead of St Stephen's and Shepherds Bush's Good Shepherd school.

Hammersmith's John Betts Primary won the girls' Year 6 relay while Brackenbury won the Year 5 event.

The team from Larmenier and Sacred Heart won the boys' overall competition ahead of Hammersmith's St Peter's Primary School.

Larmenier and Sacred Heart was unbeatable in both the boys' Year 5 and Year 6 relay events.

Mr Fill said all the schools had done very well.

"It was good to note that every school scored in the overall league table," he said.

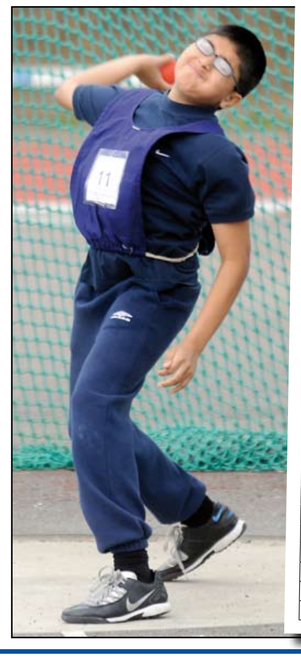
● See the table on the right to find out where the schools finished.

AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE: Solmaz Aslan of St Peter's in the high jump (above), the All Saints team in the relay (below), Naveed Majid of Canberra school (right) and spectators cheering on their friends at Linford Christie Stadium (above)

ON THEIR MARKS: The 70m Year 3 heat (top), and Eishana Thomas from Canberra Primary in the long jump (above)

PASS IT ON: Angel Ukuekw of St Stephen's in the relay (left) and Sayne Cabrera runs for Brackenbury in the Year 6 event (above)

PICTURES BY LEIGH QUINNELL



Tahj John, 11, of John Betts School, said: "I'm really tense. I'm taking part in the Year 6 relay and high jump and I'm quite scared because I haven't trained much."

Jamella Sampson, 11, of Brackenbury Primary, said: "I'm feeling really good because my school's come first in everything so far. I definitely think we can win the trophy today."

Charlie Lowe, 11, of St Peter's C of E Primary School, said: "I hope I can win the 400m sprint. We've all trained a lot and done quite well so far."

Andre McKoy, 11, of St Peter's C of E Primary School, came fourth in the Year 6 relay race and said: "I'm happy with the result, but we could have done better."

Emmie Sheehan Cozens, seven, of St Mary's Catholic Primary, said: "I'm nervous and excited. I've been training in the park and running is my favourite sport."

Rachel Shannon Quinn, nine, of St Mary's, said: "I'm really excited! I'm taking part in ball throwing, the 100m year 5 relay and the 100m girls sprint."

Toby Hall, 11, of Greenside Primary said: "I'm definitely feeling confident about throwing, but I'm a little bit nervous about the relay and the 150m run."

Osama Alfellini, 11, of Old Oak Primary, said: "Our school won the trophy last year, and we'll try our best to win it this year. I'm taking part in throwing."

Dan Keenan, 11, of Old Oak Primary, said: "We dropped the baton in the relay and didn't do too well. I'm disappointed with the result."

Kelisha Gibbons-Desouza, 10, of Langford Primary, said: "I'm feeling okay about the high jump but my legs were shaky for my first race because I was so nervous."

GIRLS' COMPETITION

	School	Points	Position
06	**Brackenbury**	**58**	**1**
21	**St Stephen's**	**41**	**2**
23	**Good Shepherd**	**25**	**3**
13	John Betts	24	=4
19	St Peter's	24	=4
04	All Saints	23	=6
22	Larmenier Sacred Heart	23	=6
26	Wormholt Park	22	8
17	Old Oak	17	9
05	Bentworth	16	=10
11	Canberra	16	=10
12	Greenside	14	12
20	St Mary's	13	13
29	Sulivan	11	14
14	Kenmont	8	=15
32	Langford	8	=15
02	Miles Coverdale	7	17
15	Lena Gardens	4	18
08	Queens Manor	3	19
01	Addison	0	20

BOYS' COMPETITION

	School	Points	Position
22	**Larmenier Sacred Heart**	**43**	**1**
19	**St Peter's**	**34**	**2**
06	**Brackenbury**	**28**	**3**
21	St Stephen's	27	=4
26	Wormholt Park	27	=4
04	All Saints	24	=6
20	St Mary's	24	=6
23	Good Shepherd	20	8
14	Kenmont	19	=9
15	Lena Gardens	19	=9
01	Addison	16	11
17	Old Oak	15	12
13	John Betts	14	=13
29	Sulivan	14	=13
11	Canberra	11	15
12	Greenside	7	=16
32	Langford	7	=16
05	Bentworth	4	18
02	Miles Coverdale	1	19
08	Queens Manor	0	20

OVERALL COMPETITION

	School	Points	Position
06	**Brackenbury**	**86**	**1**
21	**St Stephen's**	**68**	**2**
22	**Larmenier Sacred Heart**	**66**	**3**
19	St Peter's	58	4
26	Wormholt Park	49	5
04	All Saints	47	6
23	Good Shepherd	45	7
13	John Betts	38	8
20	St Mary's	37	9
17	Old Oak	32	10
11	Canberra	27	=11
14	Kenmont	27	=11
29	Sulivan	25	13
15	Lena Gardens	23	14
12	Greenside	21	15
05	Bentworth	20	16
01	Addison	16	17
32	Langford	15	18
02	Miles Coverdale	8	19
08	Queens Manor	3	20

SPORTING LIFE

Torch lights the way for youth sport in London

IN A somewhat less controversial way to the Olympic Torch, the symbol of London's youth games came to the borough.

It hosted the The Balfour Beatty London Youth Games' official torch as part of a tour of the capital.

Hammersmith & Fulham Mayor, Councillor Andy Johnson, was presented with the torch by a group of competitors from the borough's Youth Games Team at Lady Margaret School in Parsons Green.

The torch is travelling across all 32 London boroughs and the City of London on its way to Crystal Palace National Sports Centre, where the finals weekend will be held on July 5-6.

This year's Balfour Beatty London Youth Games will see 25,000 young Londoners take part in 33 different sports over the next month, from cycling to athletics and sailing to weightlifting.

LIGHT TOUCH: H&F Mayor Andy Johnson welcomes the youth games torch visit at Lady Margaret School in Parsons Green

Chance to work on cricket skills

FORGET England's efforts against New Zealand – cricket can be enjoyable.

W12 Community Cricket offers you the chance to learn or improve your skills under the supervision of a fully trained coach.

Over four sessions in July and August you will practise batting, bowling and fielding skills.

To test your improved skills there will be a final cricket match.

The sessions will be held at Latymer Upper School's cricket ground in Wood Lane, Shepherds Bush. Training will be on Thursdays, July 10 and 17, and August 7 and 14, between from 6pm-8pm.

The final cricket match will at the same venue on Sunday, August 17, between 2pm-6pm.

For more information contact: Jardine Finn, sports development officer, Room 37, Hammersmith Town Hall, W6 9JU, or call 07903 864846.

KWIK CRICKET COMPETITION>>

● New King's

● John Betts

● St Stephen's

Brack to the future

▶ All-borough finals held to find a representative for H&F at the Youth Games
▶ Brackenbury are winners for the third year running after beating Sir John Lillie in a masterful performance at Shepherds Bush Cricket Club

RUNNING IN: Samuel Craig of Sulivan (above) comes in to bowl

TOM DERBYSHIRE

NORTH and south came together for an all-borough battle of the bats for the privilege of representing Hammersmith & Fulham.

Brackenbury school in Brackenbury Road, Shepherds Bush, were the winners in the H&F Primary School Kwik Cricket competition.

They will now be the pride of the borough in the Youth Games, taking on schools from across London in Regents Park in this quicker version of the game.

The previous round saw teams divided into north and south of H&F, with Greenside, Sir John Lillie, Brackenbury, Peterborough, Sulivan, John Betts, New Kings and St Stephen's going through to the next stage.

For this round, at Shepherds Bush Cricket Club, the schools were divided into two pools and played three matches each before finals were played.

The two semi-finals were played between Brackenbury v New King's and Sir John Lillie v Sulivan.

Brackenbury defeated New King's in a thriller where the result was not determined until the final ball. Sir John Lillie won the second semi convincingly.

In the final Brackenbury were the victors by 40 runs.

The win completed an undefeated day for the school and ensured it was a hat-trick of titles after securing the competition now for the last three years.

JUST THE WICKET: Harry Riley (with shield), Hirrash Ahmed, Kane Brosens, Jack Walker, Amy Dhindsa, Arthur Morgan, Frank Vincent, Shazeel Ahmed and Frank Beere, from the winning Brackenbury team

● Sulivan

● Greenside

● Sir John LIllie

● Peterborough

RUN-UP: Neno Dodds bowls for John Betts (left)

PICTURES BY LEIGH QUINNELL

SPORTING LIFE

CLUB OF THE WEEK

POOLING TALENT: The Penguins ladies – Jon Lake (coach), Charlotte Hanson, Lorelle Dooley, Charlie Parkinson, Rebecca Fraser, Lis Holmes, Katie Collins, Rebecca Donoghue, El Thomson, Kate Allum, Karla Vega-Ponce, Morgen-Rae Graham, Claire Martin, Kelly Miller

A splashing bunch of swimming fans

CLUB NAME: West London Penguin Swimming and Water Polo Club

NICKNAME: Penguins

HOME 'GROUND': Pools used include St Paul's School in Barnes and Fulham Pools

WHAT DIVISION DO YOU PLAY IN? National and London leagues.

DESCRIBE YOUR CLUB: Historically based in and around Hammersmith, Penguin has been the leading London water polo club for many years.

WHEN WAS THE CLUB FORMED AND WHY? After the first world war, as a swimming and water polo club for the local area.

HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS SEASON? Just finished second (women) and fourth (men) in the British Championships.

ANY FUNNY STORIES? Water polo used to be played regularly at the old Lime Grove baths off Shepherds Bush Green. In the days before TV, spectators would queue around the block to watch. The royal family used to watch water polo in those days.

WHAT ARE THE CLUB'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS? The current Olympic men's team coach and national performance director are both former Penguin players.

WHO ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES AT YOUR CLUB AND WHY? Our greatest hero in recent memory was Ron Turner who died last year while cycling in Shepherds Bush aged 80. He was an Olympian in 1956 and was selected to the 'World VII' at the games.

TRUNKS CALL: The men – (back row, l to r) Attila Banhidy, Nick Beard, Peter Csorgo (player coach), David Standley, Paul Skerm, Gergely Fabian, Mark Bullerwell, Steve Cooter, Bruce Elder and Ian Grimwood (team manager). Front: Paul Tselentis, Karl Montfort, Taka Ota and Gavin Whittaker. Other members, not in the photo, are Jon Whatley, Mike Bond, Wayne Jacobs, Ed Morris, Oliver Djordijevic, Rowan Liebbrandt, Matthew Glass, Adam Collins, Matt Fox and Leon Smith

WHAT MAKES YOUR CLUB STAND OUT? We are actively promoting water polo for young kids in the London area, and trying to increase participation in schools and swimming clubs.

ANY POTENTIAL STARS FOR THE FUTURE? Rachel Bull is a 16-year-old currently playing with the junior team who has just made the GB development squad.

ANYTHING COMING UP WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?
We run junior water polo sessions on Saturdays at St Paul's School in Barnes from 12.30-2pm. Details are on our website: www.londonpenguin.com

We are going to start introductory water polo sessions at Fulham Pools on a Friday next term, and there will be a borough team competing in the first mini water polo competition at the London mini youth games (U11). Miguel Ortiz

CLICK ON
www.londonpenguin.com

FAN ZONE

● William Foulke was a big presence in his area. A very big presence. **Tim Harrison** looks back at a Blues keeper who was described as worth his weight in gold

WITH Petr Cech pledging his future at Chelsea until 2012 (pocketing a handy £20,000-a-week rise in the process), it's worth going back a century to look at the impact of the Blues' first star keeper, William Foulke.

He stood 6ft 3in in an era when 5ft 8in was considered imposing. More amazingly for a sportsman, he weighed 26 stone.

Although size 12 boots are not exceptional today, they caused a sensation in 1905.

The keeper in Chelsea's first season (and the first club captain), Foulke traded on his bulk by ambling on to the pitch at Stamford Bridge followed by the smallest player in the squad, a 5ft 4in minnow called Martin Moran.

During the game, the two smallest ball boys would be stationed behind the posts, to further emphasise his awesome girth.

Foulke summed up a Chelsea club attitude which has persisted down the years – whether or not you are winning trophies, give the crowd entertaining characters.

The club's first manager, John Tait Robertson, said of him: "As a draw alone, he is worth his weight in gold."

Nicknamed Little Willie, Foulke was a natty dresser, favouring the clothes shops either side of Fulham Broadway Tube station – or Walham Green as it was called.

With a size 24 collar, everything had to be specially made. The shop girls affectionately referred to him as 'Baby'.

Foulke was a skilled all-round keeper, but his real speciality was in saving penalties.

Despite his intimidating size, he was surprisingly nimble, hurling his colossal body through the air to block spot-kickers' efforts.

> **"Amazingly for a sportsman, he weighed 26 stone**

Once the ball had been smothered, the Chelsea forwards rapidly set off upfield. Foulke's tactic was to hurl the ball as far as he could, and the strikers' task was to intercept and go for goal.

In training sessions, despite the fact that old, waterlogged leather footballs weighed a lot more than their curling modern equivalents, he could fling them beyond the halfway line.

The first Chelsea programme described Shropshire-born Foulke as 'as fine a specimen of manhood as ever stepped on the field'. It continued: "In spite of his bulk, he possesses all the activity of a cat, combined with the playfulness of a kitten."

It was another 60 years before the real Cat – 1970 FA Cup winner Peter Bonetti – would pull on the green jersey, but the Blues obviously enjoyed feline comparisons even then.

Foulke signed for Chelsea's inaugural team from Sheffield United for £50.

Sadly he only lasted at the Bridge for a single season. His final game (a clean sheet) attracted the second biggest crowd of the year.

Paying tribute to Foulke's performance after one match, an exasperated opponent told a newspaper: "When he came out and put his arms out, it was as though darkness had come over the goal."

At 6ft 5in, Petr Cech may edge Foulke in sheer height. At £90,000 a week he certainly edges Foulke's fiver plus bonuses. But when it comes to body mass index, Little Willie was in a league of his own.