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Ewell coach builds free tool to give young footballers a fair go

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An Ewell football coach has combined his experience on the touchline with his skills as a web developer to create a free tool designed to make matchdays easier for grassroots managers.

Davide Domenghini, who manages Ayat FC's under-15s in the Tandridge League, has developed Gafferboard to help coaches select their teams, manage substitutions and keep track of each player's time on the pitch.

He says the idea grew from the familiar weekend challenge of working out who is available, who is injured, who missed training and who has had the fewest minutes — before typing the team out for the parents' WhatsApp group, often in the rain.

Gafferboard allows a coach to select available players, choose a formation and manage substitutions during the game. According to its creator, it also records every player's minutes, helping coaches give younger players a fair share of the action.

"At the younger ages that matters, because the aim is that everyone gets a fair go," Davide told the Epsom & Ewell Times.

The tool is free, with no advertisements or sign-up required. It currently works through a web browser on a phone, tablet or laptop, with nothing to install. Davide says an installable app will follow.

"I've kept it free because the people running these teams are volunteers already giving up their weekends," he said.

Davide has coached grassroots football for more than seven years. He began when his son was playing for the under-nines at Cheam Sports FC. His son is now in the under-15 age group, and Davide currently coaches in the Mitcham and Croydon area.

A longstanding web developer, he describes Gafferboard as a practical response to needs he has experienced as both a parent and a coach.

"I'm a parent as well as a coach, so I know what a manager needs on matchday, what a parent wants to hear before kick-off, and what the players need on the pitch: clear feedback, a fair go, and a bit of discipline sometimes," he said.

"I'm a practical person, so I built the thing I wanted on the touchline."

Ayat Fútbol Club was founded about five years ago by two local coaches and took its name from a local restaurant. It has since grown from one team to seven. Davide stressed that Gafferboard is his own project, rather than a club initiative.

He has also contacted youth leagues across Surrey and Kent to offer the tool to their managers.

While other software focuses on running a club, Davide says his priority is the job facing the volunteer coach during a match.

"Most tools out there are built for running the club. This one is built for the 90 minutes on the touchline."

Gafferboard can be accessed at https://gafferboard.com.

Lionel Blackman

Davide Domenghini with his app. Credit Gafferboard

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