

'King of the Jungle' Harry helps launch Street Soccer initiative

Former West Ham United, Spurs, Portsmouth, Southampton and Bournemouth manager and current 'King of the Jungle' Harry Redknapp has helped launch the new Street Soccer Live broadcast initiative.

Some of football's most famous faces are rallying round to support charity Street Soccer Scotland as the coronavirus pandemic continues to put a halt to sporting activity around the world.

The charity, which supports people facing disadvantage and social isolation across Scotland, has been forced to lock up pitches and find new ways to engage and motivate its players.



Now, with the support of some of football's marquee names, the charity is offering free online Q&A sessions through its Street Soccer Live Zoom sessions, giving players the opportunity to quiz their sporting heroes.

Earlier this week renowned Premier League football manager Harry Redknapp, was joined from his home by almost 100 of the charity's players including the organisation's CEO and founder David Duke.

Former Manchester United and Hearts midfielder and broadcaster Michael Stewart has already taken part, with Chris Sutton, Ally McCoist, Shelley Kerr and Alex McLeish set to take part in the coming weeks.

Over almost an hour of chat the former Spurs and West Ham manager took a range of questions from Street Soccer Scotland players including many about Scottish players. With high praise for countless Scots he'd played with and managed, Redknapp made specific reference to the late Dave McKay who he described as the best ever Spurs player and also highlighted Jimmy Johnstone and Kenny Dalglish as outstanding.

Asked about current Scottish players Harry Redknapp picked out two he was impressed with – Aston Villa's John McGinn and Chelsea's Billy Gilmour who he described as 'a throwback to the great Scottish midfielders'.



Founder and CEO David Duke MBE said: "We've known for a long time that football is about more than just physical exercise. Every day at Street Soccer Scotland we see that it has the power to bring people together, to unite a community and to help some of the most vulnerable people in our society through the best and the worst of times.

"Ensuring the health and safety of our players, staff and

volunteers is vital, so unfortunately we have been unable to meet on the pitches for a kickabout, but we have done everything we can to make sure our players continue to feel supported and connected to the Street Soccer Scotland family.

“Street Soccer Live is just one of the ways we are supporting players and we are so grateful to all of the football legends who have agreed to join us.

“It’s a difficult time for everyone in our society, but is particularly hard for those who face disadvantage, whose only contact with others may have been at one of our sessions or with a teammate at Street Soccer Scotland. Many of our players are living in temporary accommodation or living alone in isolation. Those circumstances were hard enough to live in before lockdown.

“We want to ensure we do everything we can to support and motivate our players, to give them hope during this time. We have one aim and that’s to make sure the whole team gets back on the pitch when the time comes, to do what we do best, together.”

Andy Blyth, a player at Street Soccer Scotland, said: “Going down to play with the Street Soccer guys was something we all looked forward to, but we don’t even have that just now. The support we’ve all had has been great. I would have struggled to managed if Street Soccer hadn’t gone above and

beyond with food provisions and keeping in regular contact with video calls.

The contact has really helped keep my spirits high and gave me something to look forward to.

“Speaking to Harry was not something I ever thought I’d have the chance to do, let alone all of the other legends that we’ll be speaking to over the next few weeks. It’s incredible and is giving me something to look forward to each week. All the days are rolling into one so it’s important to have something to look forward to.”

Street Soccer Live comes on the back of several initiatives the charity has set up in response to the coronavirus lockdown. Over the last three weeks, Street Soccer Scotland have worked to provide food and supplies to players, provision of smart phones and data packages to ensure players are connected, hosting online fitness and football sessions as well as being in regular contact with players via a newly set up, free to call hotline on 0800 334 5119.