



Worth School
Paddockhurst Road
Turners Hill
West Sussex RH10 4SD

To whom it may concern,

I have no hesitation in recommending Max Willsher to your organisation as a student athlete and know he will have an enormously positive impact on any soccer program both on and off the field. You'd be gaining an outstanding player with national schoolboy representative honours and experience in the professional club academy system, as well as a young person who has played at the best levels of youth football in the UK.

In my capacity as Head of Football (soccer) at Worth, I've known Max since he joined us as an 11-year-old in Year 7. His ability was evident from the start as Max soon established himself as the dominant force in matches on the circuit against other schools; indeed, we barely lost a game with Max playing and he was always the standout player on the field. To make things more challenging for Max, we often asked him to play in a range of different positions or set him individual match challenges, both to drive his own development and to give other sides a chance!

Such was Max's talent, it was clear that we had to do more to push at the edge of his potential and support his growth by finding the correct level of challenge. As such, we asked Max and his family if he would play two-years 'up' with the Year 9 (U13) teams in their league campaign. He did this willingly and with great enthusiasm - Max and his family have always been acutely aware of the need to go outside his comfort zone to improve. Of course, he excelled. Max should also be commended on his willingness to play with older students and his bravery to be part of a different peer group - playing with older boys is not an easy thing to do, socially or physically, but he took to it with confidence and humility. He has continued to play with older age groups throughout his time at school, making his first/senior team (U18) debut as an U15.

I know that playing 'up' into older year groups has also driven Max's development in his club football. Certainly, the school should take nowhere near as much credit for Max's development as his club sides, his family and Max himself. Max has been a key player for some of the strongest youth teams in the region - at National League Dorking, previously Horsham and playing in the Junior Premier League (the best level of youth football outside of professional club academies).

I had no hesitation in sending Max for ISFA representative trials (Independent School Football Association) at the first opportunity. It came as no surprise when he was selected for the south-east squad and then the national team, where he is a regular starter. This was a huge achievement, given Max was one of the few national squad players selected not signed to a professional club academy at the time - I should clarify this point; I have no doubt that Max would have been attached to a professional club academy long before, if not for the fact he lives in a rural part of the country with relatively few professional teams, so he needed the exposure of ISFA to be seen on a national level.

I am delighted to say Max gained interest from professional clubs as soon as he began playing for the ISFA national side. I was delighted to be messaged by Brentford Football Club, having contacted them previously, who had already been scouting Max in ISFA, club and school games. I enthusiastically recommended him to the club for trial. As you will be aware, as a category one academy and Premier League club, Brentford's set-up is recognised as one of the 30 'best' in the land. Having coached many academy players, future professionals and ex-professionals myself, I can say with confidence that Max belongs at that level.

As a player, Max has excelled as both a midfielder and as a centre back. He can drive with the ball from midfield to support attacks and score, but is equally, if not more adept, at sitting at the base of midfield and utilising his excellent distribution skills to penetrate opposition lines or dictate the pace of the game as appropriate. His technical ability and physique make him press resistant and able to cover ground at speed on defensive transition. In recent years, he has spent most of his time excelling at centre back - in my opinion a position where we don't produce a quantity of elite players as a nation, so Max's abilities really stand out. He can defend superbly 1v1, head, 'emergency defend' and organise the unit around him, but his technical ability and athleticism make him a 'ball playing' defender, able to break lines with passes short and long and step confidently into midfield carrying the ball. All that said, Max's all-round game means could play anywhere for you, which is the mark of a good player.

A note on Max's athletic abilities; although now chiefly a footballer, he is also a strong rugby player, a very good 400m runner and excels on the cricket field, where our head of cricket, a former professional, is of the opinion Max could have played to an extremely high level and been part of the professional academy pathway had he not chosen football. Indeed, Max has played senior level cricket at school when still a junior.

As a personality, I would say perhaps Max's greatest qualities are his determination, resilience and persistence. Setbacks don't phase him - it's another challenge to be overcome. He is very focused and goal orientated and, if he sets himself a target, he'll do whatever is necessary to meet and exceed it. Extra-training, playing for multiple clubs, playing up age groups, several matches in a week or travelling long distances to play - Max takes it all in his stride and will do whatever is required in the pursuit of being as good as he can be. All helped by a family who, in my experience, give Max a wonderful support network, encourage him to work hard, keep his feet on the ground but are never overbearing or pushy and trust his coaches.

I've helped to train or worked with several of Max's club coaches in my roles as a head coach and as an FA coach developer and the feedback on Max is always consistent - a crucial player for them who is driven and hardworking, constantly pushing himself and not resting on his laurels.

Academically Max shows the same desire to constantly learn and improve. Far from being a sports 'jock' with no interest in academia, feedback from teachers is that Max is an extremely bright young man who appreciates the value of a rounded education and understands that academic commitment and hard work are as important as his sporting prowess. His recent end of year report demonstrated strong academic attainment across a range of subjects, noting Max approaches classes with 'maturity and intellectual curiosity'.

It has been a privilege to watch Max develop on his journey and your program will only benefit from his talent.

With best wishes,

Daniel Collins

Daniel Collins
Head of Football
Worth School