



BLACK... Oz move

Johnny is off to be whiz in Oz

By MARK McINTOSH

OUT-OF-CONTRACT Linfield ace Johnny Black is going to Australia.

But top hitman Peter Thompson is staying at Windsor Park after signing a new one-year deal.

Former Glentoran and Coleraine full-back Black, 25, put off a move Down Under a year ago to sign for the Blues, but he has decided the time is right.

He will make the move in September and has made himself available to boss David Jeffrey until then.

Jeffrey said: "While Johnny certainly would have been a continuing asset to the club, we fully appreciate and respect his decision."

"He advised us of his intentions at this very early stage and before we had engaged in contract negotiations."

"He has told me if there's anything he can do between now and September to help the club, he'll be only too happy to help."

"And certainly, should he ever return to these shores, I would be recommending that we



JEFFREY... best wishes

discuss re-engaging him."

Linfield have managed to attract Glenavon defender Mark Haughey and ex-Rangers left-back Matthew Clarke to the club this summer — and were turned down by Coleraine midfielder Stephen Lowry this week.

Jeffrey was locked in talks at a team committee meeting last night with a move for Glentoran's transfer-listed Sean Ward on the agenda.

And Glenavon skipper Brendan Shannon is also rumoured to be a surprise name on a list of players the Blues are watching, but they are yet to make any approach.

Experienced full-back Jim Ervin and young keeper Gareth Deane have joined 'Pistol Pete' by penning new one-year deals.

However, winger Nathan Hanley will leave Windsor Park.

Elsewhere, defender Mark Turkington has been released by Glenavon after six years at Mourneview Park. Coleraine have snapped up ex-Linfield defender Steven Douglas.

Dungannon Swifts are monitoring Lisburn Distillery's David McCullough and Donegal Celtic ace Peter McCann.

SOCCER SUNSPORT GETS

From the age of 16 I have been working to improve every team I've come in contact with



ALL THE BIG INTERVIEWS



HUGHES ... impressed

Jeff puts his faith in God

By MARK McINTOSH

JEFF HUGHES hopes that Fleetwood can paint him back into the international picture.

Midfielder Hughes, 27, has dropped a division to join the Cod Army after being impressed by the club's ambitious plans.

The ex-Notts County man has been a regular goalscorer throughout his career and hopes to bring those qualities to Highbury.

He said: "When I saw the things Fleetwood have in place, like the training ground and the stadium, I knew the move was right."

"Then I spoke to the chairman and he really sold the club to me."

"He is an ambitious man and his ideas about the future are exciting."

"I want to play a part in that and I feel it is the perfect move for me at this stage of my career."

"Last year didn't go as well as I would have liked but although I enjoyed my time at Notts County, that is in the past now and Fleetwood is my future."

Fleetwood boss Graham Alexander has been a big



JOHNSON ... exiting

admirer of Hughes for some time and jumped at the chance of bringing the Larne man to the League Two outfit.

And Hughes, who hopes to add to the two Northern Ireland caps he won seven years ago, added: "I had a really good chat with Graham at the start of the week and he is very enthusiastic about me coming to the club."

"That is always good to hear and you can tell he is going to be a very good manager — and along with the chairman, he sold it to me."

"I want to get my head down in pre-season."

"I was chopped and changed a lot last season and played in a few different positions, but hopefully I will hit the ground running."

One player on his way out of Fleetwood, however, is ex-Northern Ireland star Damien Johnson.

The former Birmingham City midfielder, 34, has been placed on the transfer list by Alexander as he aims to revamp his squad.

Johnson played 23 times in his first season at the club but failed to make an appearance since January this year.

Johnny McKINSTRY

JOHNNY McKINSTRY knew he was never going to play football at the highest level — so he set about becoming one of the world's best coaches.

When he was just 15 he made his intentions — no matter how unrealistic — known when he applied to become the next England manager.

Now 27, the Northern Ireland man already has a decade of coaching experience behind him.

From working with young players at hometown club Lisburn Distillery and with the Irish FA, the highly-motivated coach began a journey which has led him to Sierra Leone via Newcastle and New York.

Three years after moving to the African nation to work at the Craig Bellamy Foundation, McKinstry applied to become the national coach and, against all the odds, got the job.

Ideas

He said: "I realised as a teenager that I wasn't going to be able to make a living out of playing the game."

"But I always felt that I understood the game on a level that would allow me to have a continued and meaningful impact on players' and teams' performances."

"I decided to become involved in coaching, and from the age of 16 I have been working to improve every team and individual I have come in contact with."

"I have been following the national team of Sierra Leone closely ever since moving to the country."

"Recently, following the resignation of the previous coach, I felt there was an opportunity that I could help move the team forward, and improve the overall condition of Sierra Leone football."

"So I was compelled to apply and discuss my ideas with the FA. Clearly they were happy with my vision for the future, and offered me the position and I was only too happy to accept."

Sierra Leone currently sit second in their World Cup qual-

By MARK McINTOSH

ifying group, five points behind leaders Tunisia with three games remaining.

Realistically, McKinstry's side need to win the away matches against Cape Verde and Equatorial Guinea as well as the home match with Tunisia to have a chance of finishing top of Group B. If they do that, they will play off with another group winner in Round 3 for a World Cup berth.

Eyebrows were raised when the Sierra Leone FA took a gamble in appointing McKinstry, but the young coach believes he has the experience to be a success.

He insisted: "I think my record to date more than suggests that I am ready to take on a new challenge such as this one."

"My CV shows a path that has constantly been moving upwards. I see this as a natural progression for me, and I believe that after the upcoming games many of the cynics will be less inclined to be so critical. Also, let's not forget

YOUTH LEADER ... McKinstry at Craig Bellamy Foundation



that Andre Villas-Boas was given the reins of the British Virgin Islands at 21, and Rafa Benitez was named coach of the Real Madrid B team at 26 and they haven't done so badly."

McKinstry clearly knows his way around a training pitch and every new adventure has left him hungry for more. He revealed: "I remember, during my UEFA B licence assessment, Nigel Best of the Irish FA telling me that I clearly had an immense understanding of the game. That gave me great encouragement."

"Then there was winning Grassroots Coach of the Year in 2006 and being presented with the award by Sir Bobby Charlton at Old Trafford, which was an amazing experience."

Ambitions

"My career has taken me around the world over the last decade. From coaching for Lisburn Distillery and the Irish FA in youth football, to working for Newcastle United and the New York Red Bulls in their pre-academy and academy programmes."

"I believe I gained a good grounding in what it meant to be a football coach, and helped develop a real commitment to excellence."

"Most recently I have been working as academy manager for the Craig Bellamy Foundation in Sierra Leone, where I am responsible for the selection and development of the country's best young talent."

Should McKinstry take Sierra Leone to the World Cup in Brazil, they will almost certainly struggle to keep a hold of him.

He added: My ambitions are to reach the top of the world game.

"Will this lead to the Premier League or the Northern Ireland team one day? Who knows."

"At the moment, I have the opportunity to lead my adopted country to the World Cup."

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JOHN THE UP ... Johnny McKinstry has big plans for the Sierra Leone national team (inset)