

Interview with U23's Chelsea Footballer, Dion Rankine – interview by Jess Harcup, edited by Raymond Matata and Callista Quadling

Dion Rankine is a former student from Sir Christopher Hatton who went on to play for Chelsea FC.

**With regards to football, where would you say it started?**

For me, I think it all started when I was about 6 or 7. A close friend of mine joined a Sunday league team and I think I just wanted to copy him. I always loved football, I just hadn't got to try playing until that point.

**What inspired you to keep playing football? Were you motivated throughout your career with this?**

As soon as I started playing, I really fell in love with the game; I loved the thought of doing this for a living and I think that still motivates me today.

**When did you realise this was something you wanted to pursue as your career? What made you think this was possible?**

I think it was, maybe, in one of the first training sessions I had with Old Grammarians in Wellingborough, where I really just thought to myself that it was something I wanted to do for as long as I could. I think I really realised that this could be possible when I signed for Cambridge United Academy when I was 9.

**That's amazing! What position do you play?**

I'm a winger. I prefer playing on the right but I can play on the left too.

**What would you say is the best part about playing football as your career?**

I think the best thing about what I do right now is being able to wake up in the morning and go to do what I love everyday: playing football.

**That is honestly amazing. I'm sure doing what you love and making money from it is really motivating! What would you say your next steps are?**

My next step is to be playing in some first team football. I've played in the U23's but I think the next step for me is to get some first team experience.

**Once you have finished with football, what do you hope to have achieved?**

By the time my career is over, I hope to have played at the highest level and to have played for my country. I want to be able to have played at the best of my ability.

**That would be such a great accomplishment! Who do you think are the best players you have played with and against?**

The best player I have played with in a match would have to either be Ruben Loftus-Cheek or Jamal Musiala. I think the best I've played against is Jude Bellingham.

**For these games, or any games in general, do you have a way of preparing?**

Before matches, I don't really do anything in particular. I usually just listen to music with headphones to relax and visualise how I'm going to play.

**Do you have any advice for young boys who aspire to achieve what you have?**

I think the best advice I can give is to just keep working hard. Don't give up just because the journey isn't always easy. It is not a linear path and you won't win every game but it will all be worth it.

**That is great advice. I'm sure many boys will take that with them. But is there anything you feel like you miss out on because of being a footballer?**

I think being away from home, family and friends is the hardest part of being a footballer. However, these are sacrifices that I'm willing to make to hopefully be able to achieve my dream.

**Some of the sixth formers were interested to know if you support Chelsea and is it the team you aspired to play for?**

My dad supported Arsenal and so that is the team I grew up supporting. However, Chelsea has done so much for me. I love that team because of all they have done for me. I would love to break into the first team at Chelsea but if it isn't meant to be, I still aim to play at the highest level no matter what.

**That's so great! It is so amazing to see how far you've come as a footballer, and it is so clear you love to represent Chelsea. Here's the most important question, which is why I have saved it for last: what is your favourite food?!**

Dion: My favourite food is my mum's spaghetti bolognese but I do also like pizza from time to time!

**Thank you Dion for doing this interview!**

