

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!

