

# 'I want to make a difference, just like mum'

## SAWYERS FINDS CALLING AWAY FROM THE PITCH

### EXCLUSIVE

**ROMAINE SAWYERS** believes Marcus Rashford is inspiring a new generation of footballers to help communities.

But the West Brom midfielder says it has always been "embedded" in him – because his mum Diane is so heavily involved with helping others.

Diane was recognised on the Football Black List this week for her outstanding voluntary work in Birmingham, where she helps run the Holford Drive Community Sports Hub offering football, boxing, tennis and cricket for children.

She took the keys in 2013 and the venue has since been visited by Prince William and received a Queen's Golden Jubilee Award.

Diane has devoted herself to the project after raising Sawyer and his older brother and sister, plus foster children, as a single parent.

Sawyers credits her as his inspiration and has been a long-term contributor at the set-up, which hosts up to 4,000 children over the summer holidays.

Now he is pleased to see other sportspeople making a difference after the phenomenal efforts of Manchester United and England striker Rashford trying to end child food poverty.

Sawyers believes promoting good causes is an antidote to the pressures of football.

The 29-year-old said: "I have a job to do on a match-day and every day in training, but helping the community is a bigger satisfaction."

"I am going to be a footballer for 10 to 15 years. I hope to be

### WEST BROM V SHEFF UTD 8PM, SKY SPORTS

By **James Nursey**

a human for 70 or so, hopefully.

"Rashford doing it as a Manchester United and England player is great because it gets highlighted.

"When there are people sitting on the fence, people like Rashford make them think, 'I need to get up and do my part'.

"It is not about awards or accolades, the real trophy is the child that comes back the next day – or the child that says, 'Thank you'.

"You can change somebody's day and that can have a domino effect and continue.

"In football most of the work is done on the grass but other skills were embedded in me at an early age.

"Whenever I come here I am not Romaine from West Brom, I am Diane's son – it humbles me."

But, despite Sawyer's kind and generous nature, he will be no soft touch for Sheffield United, who visit fellow strugglers Albion tonight.

He said: "If I lose on a Saturday I will be grumpy until Wednesday. But within that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, I can put another face on and realise there



**HUMBLE:** Sawyer with volunteer mum Diane and, left, in action on pitch

is another objective."

Under the leadership of

Diane and colleague Lincoln Moses MBE, the Holford Drive hub is home for 18 junior and adult football teams called Continental Star.

Sawyers has in the past provided the teams with strips and bought managers' coats

for all the bosses, but the venue's most important achievement is changing lives – and sometimes even preserving them.

Diane, who has a memorial wall at the hub, said: "We have saved some lives and helped in one way or another."

"Hopefully, we can be here to help the next person through the door."

## Fernandes 'can be the new Ronaldo'

**OLE GUNNAR** Solskjaer believes Bruno Fernandes can lift Manchester United in the same way his compatriot Cristiano Ronaldo did.

Like fellow Portugal star Ronaldo, Fernandes joined United from Sporting Lisbon.

Ronaldo, 18 when he joined, developed into a superstar, and Solskjaer, right, says Fernandes, 26, is relishing the responsibility of being United's talisman – just like Ronaldo did.

The United manager, who played alongside Ronaldo for two years at Old Trafford, said: "Bruno does definitely have that presence and

### SOUTHAMPTON V MAN UTD 2PM TOMORROW, SKY SPORTS

influence and impact on his team-mates.

"He's got loads of energy, leadership, and he's a team player, which is the key here now."

"Bruno has proved over and over

that's it's the team before 'I'."

United are looking to make it three league wins in a row for the first

time since July when they go to fifth-placed Southampton tomorrow.

Solskjaer said: "We know how well Southampton have done in the last year or so. This is a good test for the team."

**DAVID McDONNELL**



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**ARTETA:** Adventure

## Gunners must just go for it says Arteta

**MIKEL ARTETA** wants to set his Arsenal players free as they bid to make the Emirates a "fortress" again tomorrow.

The Gunners manager is keen to see the same kind of adventure against Wolves that his side have shown in the Europa League.

Arsenal beat Molde 3-0 on Thursday to reach the

### ARSENAL V WOLVES 7.15PM TOMORROW, SKY SPORTS

knockout stage and make it four wins from four in Europe, with 12 goals.

But they have not won or scored in their past two Premier League matches – and have lost their past two at home to Aston Villa and Leicester.

Arteta said: "We have to put that right. We have

to make the Emirates a fortress. In the Europa League we find ourselves with more flow and more creativity in the final third. I would say we have more, let's go for it and express ourselves."

Arsenal's flight from Norway was cancelled on Thursday night because of fog, giving them less time to prepare. Wolves will be

lifted by the return of England defender Conor Coady, who was in the stands for Monday's 1-1 draw with Southampton.

Captain Coady had to self-isolate despite testing negative for Covid-19.

Boss Nuno Espirito Santo said: "He is training and ready to go. He's very important for us."

**PAUL BROWN**