

Q&A

SAM HUBERT, CO-FOUNDER AND HEAD COACH, FOOTBALL ESCAPES

INTERVIEW BY Natalie Marsh

Q. What was the inspiration for Football Escapes?

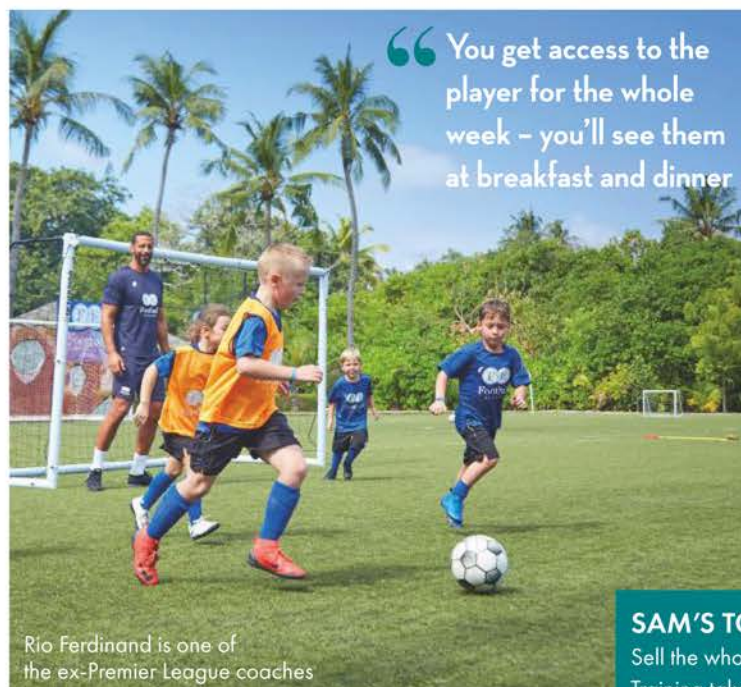
A. I set up Football Escapes, which offers football coaching at a range of popular family resorts during school holidays, with ex-Premier League footballers Bobby Zamora and Rio Ferdinand. It was based on trying to create a unique experience, giving the children a chance to train with these Premier League legends and giving the parents some free time while they're away on holiday. There was nothing really like that on the market.

Q. Who can attend the football coaching courses?

A. The courses are available for children aged between five and 15, and for all abilities. We want players from all backgrounds to join the experience. Women's football has grown so much that we want girls to have role models at these courses as well, and we have Rachel Yankey, Ciara Sherwood and Laura Rafferty involved. Football Escapes' big USP is that every camp is run by an ex-Premier League player. This year, we have 25 courses running. The size of the intake depends on the location and the pitch size. In Portugal, we get 100 children a week, in Dubai we get 75 and in Cyprus we max out at 30 to 40 children, because of the pitch size.

Q. Why did you decide to move from offering in-resort football coaching to being a full-service tour operator as well?

A. We noticed there was so much



Rio Ferdinand is one of the ex-Premier League coaches

“You get access to the player for the whole week – you'll see them at breakfast and dinner



Head coach Sam

SAM'S TOP TIP

Sell the whole holiday. Training takes place from 10am-12pm each day, so there's time for the family to enjoy the rest of their break too.

day and they go home having learnt something new. The family also gets that added experience of having a kickabout with a Premier League legend.

more we could do around the journey of the holiday for the children, to make it more of a personalised experience, so we're now able to book the whole holiday ourselves. When you book, you get a personalised video message from the player, a signed shirt and a football to start practising with before you arrive at the resort. It's building that excitement all the way along until the course starts. The parents love to stay and see what's happening and they get involved. We now do a parents' game so the mums and dads can also join in and play. We're trying to create that fun element, but we want the children to go back and have learned something on and off the pitch.

Rio [Ferdinand] hosted a breakfast in the Maldives, discussing nutrition and what he used to eat before training.

Q. What advice do you have for travel agents selling Football Escapes?

A. Let your customers know the full experience. You get access to that Premier League player throughout the whole week – you'll see them at breakfast and at dinner, you won't just see them for two hours on the pitch. We do a Sunday night drinks reception and a Q&A. Every child gets a personalised football kit, they get the two hours of training each

Q. Do your customers book according to who's going to be coaching?

A. Some kids like certain players, so we do get a few people ring up to ask where a player is going to be, and then book their holidays accordingly. Some families are just used to going to Dubai at a certain time of the year and they don't mind which player is there.

Q. Which team do you support?

A. I support Chelsea, where I coached for three-and-a-half years before starting Football Escapes. **TW**