

the city violence

'It gets us away from doing bad things...'

HAYLEY Jones' 15-year-old son Junior Brown plays in the Sporting Elite Community League.

"I think linking the League with youth crime workshops is great," Hayley said.

"It gives the children an insight into what kind of life they could have if they choose to commit crime.

"My son loves playing football,

but as a parent I worry and it's nice to know he's getting this kind of guidance.

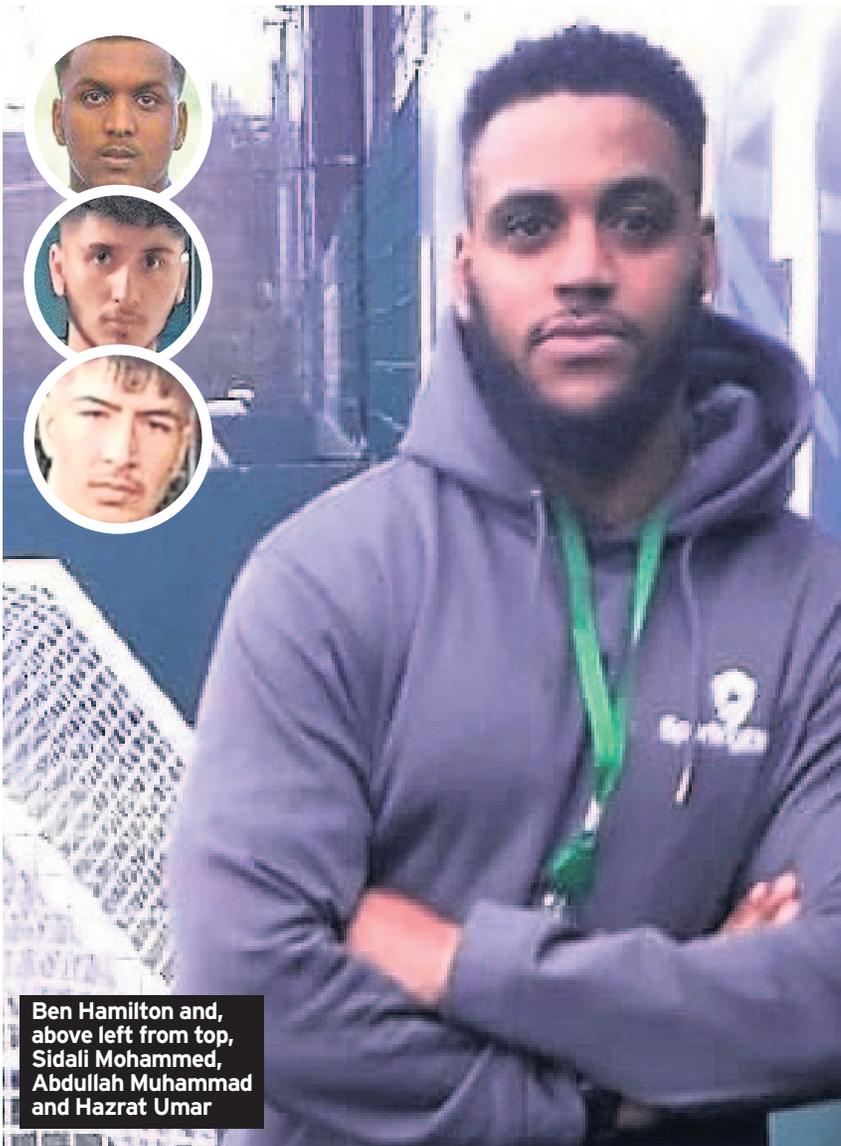
"I'm so thankful for the support, effort and time Seb and his team give the children and I'm glad my son can be a part of that."

Junior, from Tyseley, said: "The league is really good and it's helping me and my friends who play in it.

"The workshops are very interesting and it will definitely help a lot of young men like myself."

Ismail Akram, from Newtown, says the Wicketz scheme helps him to steer clear of trouble.

"It gets us away from doing bad things and gives us a chance for our future as the workshops improve our career prospects."



Ben Hamilton and, above left from top, Sidali Mohammed, Abdullah Muhammad and Hazrat Umar

Bringing people together

THE Lord's Taverners' national Wicketz programme aims to bring together disadvantaged kids through cricket as well as offer anti-crime and educational advice.

Harry Kitchen is development officer for the scheme in Birmingham and oversees weekly cricket sessions in Edgbaston and Erdington.

"We target deprived areas where cricket is not always that accessible and can carry a certain stigma with some youngsters," Kitchen told the Mail.

"That's not to say kids in these areas are always in trouble with the police, but it gives them something constructive to do.

"We work in areas populated with kids from south Asian communities. Cricket is a sport they enjoy and then we work on life skills when they are

with us. Most weeks it's predominantly a cricket session, but sometimes we put life skills courses on as well.

"We've recently been doing a sports leaders course which is something for them to put on their CVs.

"There's a lot of information we break down in cricket terms. We brought in a doctor who has worked with knife wounds to hit home the dangers of carrying knives.

"It's quite a mixed crowd. Some are there because they like cricket; some have been advised by their schools to go along; some have struggled at school because English is not their first language. One lad is a refugee from Afghanistan. He's been through a lot of stuff you don't want to go through. For him it's about meeting new people and interacting."

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