

CRICKET SPOTLIGHT Academy ace given career boost

Trip Down Under a Teen dream

SIXTEEN-year-old James Haggaty's dreams of becoming a professional cricketer have been boosted by an offer to spend six winter months playing and training in Western Australia, writes **MIKE VIMPANY**.

The talented South Wilts all-rounder will fly to Perth in early October and play with one of the State's leading Grade clubs, probably Melville or Scarborough.

Haggaty's "opportunity of a lifetime" comes after a second successful summer with the Hampshire Academy at the Rose Bowl – and a glowing testimony from Academy Director Tony Middleton.

"James has been a full-time Academy scholar for two years now and for a 16-year old has made rapid advances in his development. He's a popular, hard

working lad with a plenty of character thrown in, but above all, shows an excellent attitude in training and always responds well to pressure," said Middleton.

Haggaty helped the Academy clinch runners-up spot in the ECB Southern Electric Premier League.

"James has been an integral part of that Academy side, often taking the new ball or bowling first change with maturity, added Middleton. "He has the ability to swing the ball and bowl accurately, often putting pressure on far more experienced players."

"He's made some key knocks as well, often batting lower than he would have liked, but there's no doubt he's got the potential to become a very decent all-round cricketer."

Haggaty, who hails from

Steeple Langford and began playing cricket at South Wilts as an eight-year old, plans to follow the footsteps of Wiltshire pair Liam Dawson and James Vince into the First Class game.

The likeable South Wilts prospect, who bowls left-arm medium pace but bats right-handed, said: "I was chosen to play for the West of England Under-15s in the ESCA Bunbury Festival and also toured the West Indies last year, but spending six months playing the game you love in Australia is something really special."

"In Perth I'll be working on all aspects of my game, with a lot of emphasis on fitness, net practice and playing in what will be a very demanding arena."

Haggaty, whose trip Down Under is being backed by Cube Design Ltd,

Contemporary Architects of Salisbury Road, Ringwood, plans to travel to Perth in two weeks time with Hampshire wicketkeeper Michael Bates.

"Liam Dawson is one of several Hampshire guys planning to spend some time in WA this winter and Jamie Miller, my Academy team-mate, is going there too, so I won't be short of company," said Haggaty.

"This really is a great opportunity for me and I plan to grab it with both hands."

Haggaty hasn't forgotten his Bemerton roots.

"It's always great to go back to South Wilts and play in their cup ties, particularly the Twenty20s, but what I am learning at the Rose Bowl will hopefully be beneficial to the club."



DOWN UNDER: Haggaty.

George V Dragons

■ HOCKEY

FORMER Great Britain international goalkeeper George Harris will be one of several new faces on parade when Fareham open their England Hockey League Western Conference challenge against Welsh champions Whitchurch at Henry Cort on Sunday, 1pm.

Fareham finished runners-up to runaway winners Team Bath in their debut season last term, but have never adequately filled the goalkeeping void left when David Staniforth returned to South Africa.

But, with years of National League experience behind him, the Welsh-



man fits perfectly into Fareham's plans.

Fareham completed the double over their Cardiff opponents last season, but coach Nigel Cook dismisses any notion of an easy start for his side against the Welsh dragons.

"Whitchurch were actually second going into the last game of the season, in which we beat them, and are a very handy side indeed," Cooke warned.

Oxford University's Charlie Duffell, and Varsity freshers Sam Hiscock, Sam Mallett and James Morris all make their Fareham league debuts, but a broken wrist keeps Alex Bennett out of the side for another month.

Striker Geoff Abbott has returned to South Africa, but a larger percentage of last season's successful side remain.

Fareham squad: Harris, Tremlett, Church, Price, Sims, Hiscock, Baker, Seager, Grice, Peel, Mallett, Duffell, Hibberd, Morris, Langridge, Rayner.

Everson returns

■ SNOOKER

NO ONE will begrudge Pete Everson his first victory back in the Southampton & District Social Clubs League after a year out.

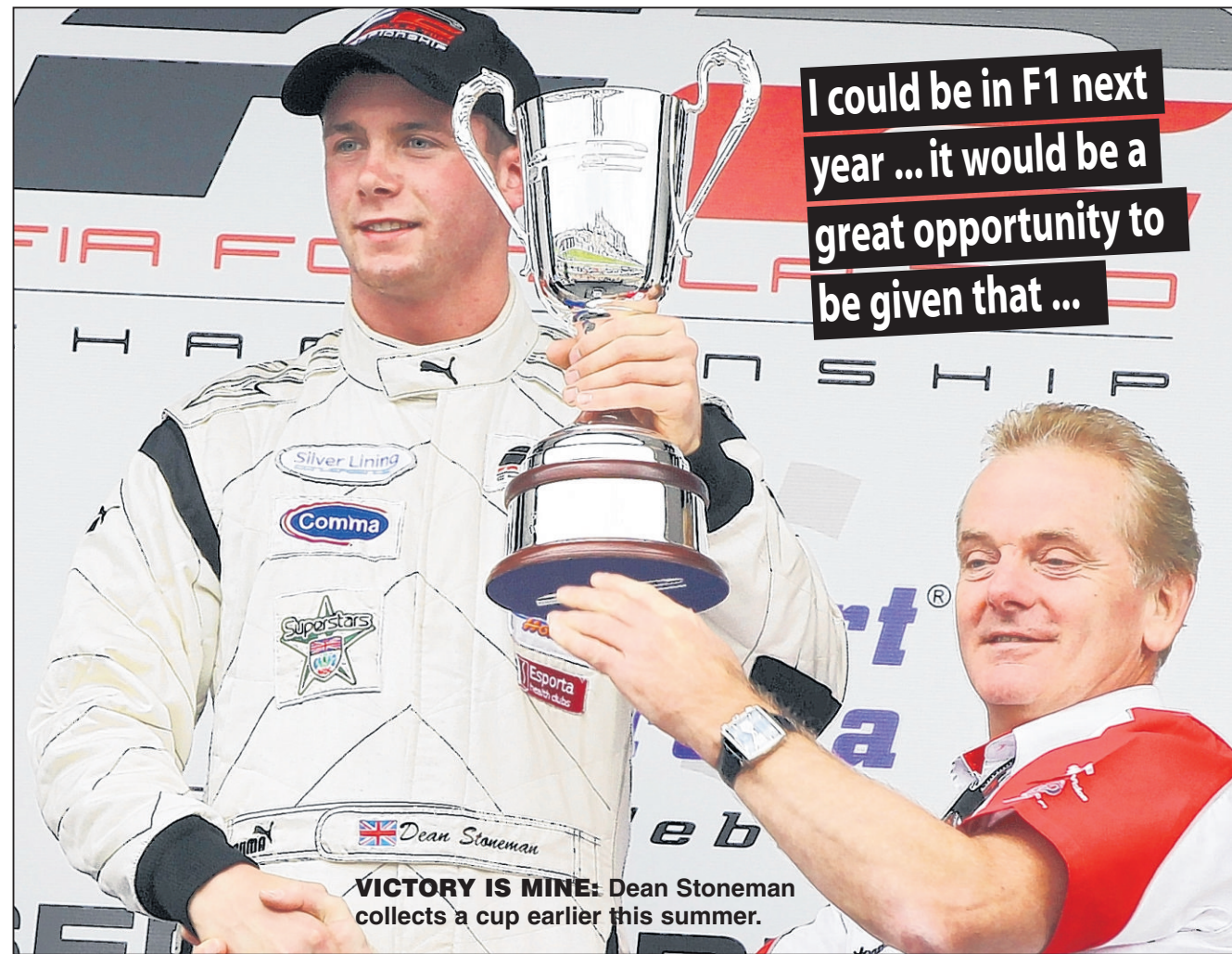
Everson did not play snooker at all last season following the death of his son Dean in a car crash in May, 2009.

"I left it alone for a year," said the 71-year-old grandfather of 11.

But now he's back – and he's resurrected the careers of two other players who were drifting away from the game.

● Full story: See tomorrow's Daily Echo.

Stoneman looks to have the talent to challenge the top stars



VICTORY IS MINE: Dean Stoneman collects a cup earlier this summer.

"I was the youngest driver to ever win it and with the most points anyone has ever won, so it was good."

"We didn't expect it."

"We were going to do two years (in that championship) but because I had won it in the first we decided there was not much point doing a second."

Stoneman opted for the Formula Renault BARC Championship and, once

again, made an immediate impression, finishing second and missing out on the title by just one point.

He stepped things up a notch in 2008, moving to the Formula Renault UK Championship, which features more powerful cars, and finished fourth. He also won the Graduate Cup.

It was the year that many viewed as Stoneman's breakthrough campaign. And one

during which he displayed a real indication of his potential.

His fourth-placed finish came courtesy of three wins, nine podium finishes and three pole positions – a better record than Lewis Hamilton managed in his debut year in Formula Renault UK in 2002.

And his potential was really starting to be recognised.

He was nominated for the prestigious McLaren

Autosport BRDC Young Driver title in 2008, an award won previously by the likes of Jensen Button and David Coulthard, and was also awarded BRDC Rising Star status in the same year.

Stoneman remained in the Formula Renault UK Championship for 2009 and, despite a number of reliability issues with his car, finished fourth again.

He fancied another change

for 2010 and looked to be heading for the British GT3 championship – until he received a call from former F1 driver and current F2 chief executive Jonathan Palmer.

"He (Palmer) rang me up and asked me to go into F2 and do the Championship," Stoneman said.

"I have known him for a while now and he wanted me to go into the Championship because he knew I had potential to do well."

"I'm glad I didn't go to GT3 now."

Palmer might not be now, though – it's his son, Jolyon, who Stoneman could beat to the F2 title this weekend.

Stoneman stands on the brink of the championship after an incredibly consistent season, though he has been playing catch-up for much of it and only assumed pole position in the title race after capitalising on a poor weekend for Palmer in the last round in Germany.

He has won six of 16 races, finished second five times, third once and been outside the top three on just four occasions.

Now he has to see the job through in Spain this weekend.

"I am surprised how well this season has gone," he admitted.

"I didn't expect it to go as well as it has."

"But I have tried my best and done everything I can to try and win the title so hopefully I can."

"If you win it you get an F1 test drive (in a Williams F1 car after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November) and I could be in F1 next year."

"It would be a great opportunity to be given that."

"To get to F1 is the aim but, if not, then hopefully a few more doors will open to go to other places."

"I have just got to see what happens this weekend."

TOMORROW: DARTS/SNOOKER/SOCIAL CLUBS SPOTLIGHTS