

Bankers team up with homeless footballers



United by beautiful game

By **ROB VIRTUE**

THERE have been some unorthodox football teams in the past but this side made up of homeless people and bankers might top them all.

Morgan Stanley staff are lining up with residents from Anchor House, a hostel in Canning Town, and proving to be a difficult team to beat.

In the last tournament they played they made it to the final before narrowly losing. But while the team missed out on a trophy they gained some invaluable experiences.

James Miller, 22, a volunteer coordinator with the community affairs team at the Cabot Square bank,

helped to organise the side for the one-day event at the Catford Power League Centre in October.

"An important part of the work we do is to get involved by contributing something to the local community," he said. "It's great to spend time out of the office meeting people from different walks of life. It's easy to get caught up in your own world and it's good to get out there and do something like this."

Anchor House, a centre that provides shelter and support for 117 people, was paired with the bank by a football charity for the homeless, Street League.

The hostel helps those who have fallen on hard times get back on their feet and many residents have gained full-time employment in the last couple of years.

Colin Nicol, who works at Anchor

House and manages the football side, said events such as the football tournament help those in Anchor House rediscover their confidence.

"The team gives our lads a feeling, a place to belong and helps them feel needed," he said. "Morgan Stanley is a big company and our team appreciate working with them on the pitch."

In the last tournament the team included six players from the bank and 12 from Anchor House.

Morgan Stanley sponsors the kit and players attend the Tuesday training session for a few weeks before the tournaments, which take place twice a year.

"It's beneficial to both sides," said Colin. "It's city high-flyers next to residents. It's good to know that people from our kind of background get on well and mix

with people like Morgan Stanley workers."

It's not all for fun either. Some Anchor House residents have had trials with West Ham United and one used to be on the books at Sporting Club de Portugal in Lisbon.

And the desire to win means it's not all pleasantries on the pitch.

"I can't pretend it's all plain sailing," said James. "There were a few tactical disagreements but it only made us stronger once we'd worked together to resolve them."

The next tournament is likely to take place in April.

"If I can get myself on the team it would be great to go out there and avenge our narrow defeat last year," James added.

Visit www.anchorhouseuk.org.

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