

Jacob Mendy Mendy

It's been a great start for our new winger from Atletico Madrid!

Mendy Mendy - so good they named him twice! The Stones' new fullback/winger from Carshalton Athletic has endeared himself to the fans with two goals off the bench at Braintree and Hemel Hempstead.. and then his strike to open the scoring last Saturday. But what's the story behind that double-barrelled surname that makes him one of the most memorable players in non-League football?

"Oh that - it's just that I'm Spanish, and in Spain you have to have two second names" he laughed. "Normally it's your father's name and the mother's name but I was just 'Jacob Mendy'... so on my passport I added a second Mendy. People seem to like it!"

Dean Brennan definitely thinks he'll be known for all the right reasons. "He's a great lad and he'll turn out to be a real player. I think we've got a gem on our hands" he said after the Stones boss threw him into the fray at Hemel with just 17 minutes gone. Connor Smith came off injured and we were all expecting Jake Sheppard to step in - but



Three views of one great goal as Jacob loops in his header at Hemel

instead he rejigged the midfield and brought Jacob in as an extra attacking threat.

Jacob cracked one shot onto the face of the crossbar and generally ran Hemel a merry dance until he sealed the game with a reaction header in the closing stages.

"The ball came in from the right and both me and Roscoe (Lafayette) attacked the cross - Ross got there first, taking two players with him and the ball popped up into the air" he explained. "I was going to wait until the ball came down but the keeper was a bit off his line so I decided to head it... and happily it looped over him and into the net."

"But the goal at Braintree was probably my favourite as it was my first for the club. And I was pleased to beat the defender before shooting past the goalkeeper. They were my first goals at this level and I hope to score many more".

The 22-year-old's family is from Gambia, but he was brought up in Madrid with his family moving to Britain two years ago. And he hasn't got a bad pedigree, starting his career at Atletico Madrid!

"I was in the youth system at Atletico for one year from the age of 17, and played for the 'C' side in Segunda Division B, the third tier below La Liga and the Segunda Division... Atletico ran a B and a C team but the year I was there the B team were relegated into our division and you cannot have two teams from the same club in the same division so the 'C' team was broken up" said Jacob. "I went off and played for Puerta Bonita, another Madrid team, in the Tercera Division (the fourth tier) but then my family decided to come to England".

It must have been a huge wrench for

young Jacob to leave his friends behind in Spain. And he found it "really difficult" to even find a football team to play for once the Mendys were settled in Rainham, Kent - where he still lives.

"I couldn't even get a trial. Obviously I was new to this football, and the leagues in England, and didn't really know where to go. But eventually I got a trial at Redhill, in the Combined Counties League, and began to play games there and scored a few goals. Carshalton then took me on trial and I spent last season playing for them in the Ryman Premier League, and got noticed."

Now he's really enjoying his football, but not the travelling. "It takes me almost two hours to get to games and training by public transport, but often I travel up to Pimlico and in with Afolabe (Coker). Sanchez and Michee both live in East London so we all meet up there and travel in together".

I asked Jacob: Had you ever heard of Wealdstone FC before you signed?

"Honestly, yes I had! You know when you sit around with other players, you talk about other clubs in your division and the division above and the name Wealdstone came up. They were having a good season last year, and of course

got in the play-offs."

So I told him about the club's history, becoming the first-ever club to win the non-League Double, blah blah blah, and he was genuinely impressed. "No, I didn't know about that at all. Thirty-four years ago. That's why there are a lot of fans at the games, now I understand" he said.

Jacob has a 20-year-old cousin, Carlos Mendes Gomes (there's that Spanish double name again) playing for Morecambe in League Two after following a similar introduction to English football. "Carlos played youth football at Atletico Madrid too, and then started out in England playing local football in Manchester for West Didsbury & Chorlton. He was spotted and is in his second year at Morecambe. He played 19 times in the league last season and he's doing well".

Carlos is a striker, but Jacob still reckons his best position is at left-back. "I prefer it because that's where I play best" he said. "But the coaches and managers seem to want me to play on the wing or in attack - I suppose they see me as a danger to the opposition, that's why they want me there".

His natural strength, power and athleticism were quickly noted by the fans - and he also packs a powerful shot, often catching goalkeepers unawares.

In the week that our former discovery Abo Eisa moved from Shrewsbury Town to Scunthorpe, the similarities between him and Jacob are striking. Both have that X Factor but if anything, Mendy Mendy seems stronger and even harder to mark than Abo. He's certainly a young talent to watch.



JACOB MENDY

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