

Hochiki Europe Scores Community Goal: Medway Soccer Academy Wins Big

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[Hochiki Europe](#) has brought the thrill of live football to the heart of the Gillingham community, awarding 35 coveted tickets to a Gillingham FC home game to the deserving Medway Soccer Academy. The academy, a grassroots initiative providing affordable football training to local children, emerged as the winners of Hochiki's "Golden Ticket" competition.

Founded in 2019 by Matt Waters, Medway Soccer Academy addresses the financial barriers that prevent many children from participating in organised football. Matt's vision of a £4 "pay and play" model, run by nine dedicated volunteer coaches, ensures that football remains accessible to all. All funds are reinvested into the club, providing essential equipment and kit for its 64 regular attendees.

The academy's dedication to fostering a love for the game, promoting physical activity, and building confidence resonated deeply with Hochiki Europe. Kara Martin, Marketing Projects Specialist at Hochiki, who nominated the academy, highlighted Matt's unwavering commitment to the community, noting that many children would otherwise miss out on the experience of a live football match.

Hochiki's Marketing Manager, Craig Taylor, and Kara Martin, Marketing Project Specialist, visited one of the academy's training sessions at a local community park, accompanied by Gillingham FC midfielder Ethan Coleman. Coleman spent over an hour engaging with the children and coaches, sharing insights into his professional journey and answering enthusiastic questions. The children were eager to learn about everything from the pre-game atmosphere to Coleman's football idols and even his car.

Kara Martin also spoke with parents, who emphasised the academy's vital role in providing affordable and engaging activities for local children. The "pay and play" flexibility was particularly valued by families who couldn't commit to weekly team schedules, while the supportive environment helped build the confidence in the children. The smiles and palpable joy on the children's faces attested to the academy's positive

impact.

The day culminated in an exciting penalty shootout, with successful participants entered into a raffle for a Gillingham FC training experience at a later date. To cap off the memorable visit, Ethan Coleman presented Matt Waters with a golden envelope containing the 35 tickets for the Gillingham FC vs. Swindon Town match which took place last week on April 26th.

"We are incredibly grateful to Hochiki Europe for this amazing opportunity," said Matt Waters. "This means the world to our children, many of whom have never experienced a live football game. It's a testament to the hard work of our volunteer coaches and the dedication of our young players."

Looking ahead, Matt is striving to establish an U11s team for the 2025/26 season and is actively seeking sponsorship to cover the associated grassroots fees. This expansion would enable even more children to benefit from the academy's inclusive and supportive environment.

Hochiki Europe is proud to support Medway Soccer Academy and its commitment to providing accessible football opportunities for the local community. The company believes in the power of sport to inspire and unite and is thrilled to have played a role in creating lasting memories for these young football enthusiasts.

Hochiki Europe is the Gillingham Football Club Rainham End Sponsor.