

» Sport 1

# Brent student Flogert intends to keep punching above his weight

► **Weightlifting**

by Rob Brennan

London Youth Games weightlifting champion Flogert Mali is determined to continue his winning streak when he competes at Bethnal Green on Saturday.

Mali, 18, will take part in the qualifying competition for the London Open and, if successful, he will go on to compete at Crystal Palace in November, with the aim of reaching the UK Open.

Mali is confident of reproducing the level of performance he displayed at the London Youth Games, where he set a personal best by lifting 120kg in the snatch and 150kg in the clean and jerk.

Mali told the *Times*: “My teacher in Albania told me when I was nine years old that I should try weightlifting. I was a strong child and he thought I would be good at it.

“I tried it and I was good – I keep on progressing and it’s good to win competitions like the London Youth Games.

“It was a very good competition and now I have been invited to take part in another competition, so I will try to win another one.”

Mali is currently studying English at the College of

North West London and says joining the West London Lifters weightlifting club, who train at Willesden Sports Centre, has helped him settle into life in Brent.

“My best friend Kreshnik Qato, who is a boxer in England, told me about the club here and invited me down. I started here last year and won four competitions.

“I like living in England, this is a nice club and I have a nice coach so everything is good.

“It is a fun sport but it is hard. Sometimes I am very tired and I need someone to push me.

“Mentally you have to keep telling yourself that you can do it. If you eat good as well – then you can be a champion.”

**Attributes**

Mali’s coach Laura Denise believes the teenager has all the attributes to have a long and successful career as a weightlifter.

She said: “At his age, what Flogert is able to lift is the norm where he comes from, but over here – he is the exception.

“A lot of Eastern Europeans start weightlifting from around the age of six. You have to be very committed to take this sort of sport on.

“The dedication and the workload required in weightlifting is tough because the weights don’t get any lighter – they only get heavier.

“He is a very dedicated young man who has a lot of potential. He is a different kind of lifter, a lifting machine. It is a pleasure to coach him, he gives it 100 per cent.”

Denise believes the training schedule put in place for Mali since he joined the club has been crucial to the youngster’s recent success.

“When he came to us he had a few injuries,” she added. “The London Youth Games was his first competition in six months. Between myself and the club physiotherapist we had a lot of work to do in order to get him fully fit.

“We had to be smart with his training – we didn’t want to push him too hard because we needed to avoid any setbacks.

“With a lot of deep tissue massage and compression work, fingers crossed everything is working out.

“He could go on to represent Team GB but he wouldn’t be able to make a living from the sport, as you can in other countries like Kazakhstan where you have



a female champion earning \$1million, plus a house and a car – that’s how seriously they take weightlifting.”

Denise would like to see more youngsters from Brent giving the sport a go.

She said: “We would encourage youngsters to start weightlifting but we have this battle with PE teachers

and parents who believe it will stunt the growth of a child.

“Anything done to extreme can be harmful but we monitor them. Even the likes of the diver Tom Daley had to be monitored.

“Every so often there will be growth spurts so it’s important that they are monitored and that goes for any sport.”

**Broomstick**

“It has to be structured, organised and monitored. We are not going to throw you in at the deep end – the very first thing you lift as a weightlifter is a broomstick.

“Your technique is your best friend. You find with a lot of people that their technique is 30 per cent and their strength is 70 per cent.

“In weightlifting you have to turn that around. When you are lifting up to your body weight your technique has to come through. That’s the only way you’re going to get that weight up.

“When people give up gymnastics at the ripe old age of about 14 then we take them.

“Technically, weightlifting is heavy gymnastics. You have to be so flexible, so fast – it is a lot about your body co-ordination and special awareness.”

For more information on West London Lifters, contact Denise on 07956 335750.

# Capital City prospect is through to Wimbledon

► **Tennis**

Willesden starlet Zachary Phillips will be aiming to succeed where Andy Murray failed this year after booking his spot at a prestigious Wimbledon tournament.

The 13-year-old Capital City Academy student claimed a fine victory in Sunday’s HSBC Road to Wimbledon regional qualifier at West Worthing Tennis and Squash Club.

Phillips, who beat Kai Maxted 6-2, 6-3, will now play in the 14 and Under Challenge at the All England Club, which takes place between August 11 and 16.

“I’m happy and excited to get the chance to play at Wimbledon,” said Phillips. “I didn’t play my best tennis but I played well and my serve was working, which is a big part of my game.

“At times I was getting frustrated with myself, but I needed to compose myself and find a way to be more consistent and win, even though I was playing badly.

The HSBC Road to Wimbledon 14 and Under Challenge, which began in 2002, is the largest junior tournament in the UK, involving some 850 clubs, parks and schools.

Phillips added: “I’m very proud of myself to have picked up three wins in the two days and have made it to Wimbledon. It’s always been a dream of mine to play there.

“I can’t wait to experience the courts. I’m a huge fan of Roger Federer. He has such calmness and a single backhand, which is what I have, so I try to learn from him.”

■ The HSBC Road to Wimbledon National 14 and Under Challenge is the UK’s largest national junior grass-court tournament and forms part of HSBC’s investment in the stars of the future.

# Time to get up and Go

► **Cycling**

Willesden CC members will take part in a GoRide session on Friday July 25 at Hillingdon Cycle Circuit.

There will be a number of fun races for novice youth riders under the age of 16. The races will be on the racing circuit and on the grass and are aimed at youth riders who are new to competition.

Entries cost £2 and all riders will need their own bike and helmet. The circuit is located at the rear of Goals football centre in Springfield Road, Hayes.

# St Joe’s youngsters savour successful sporting year

St Joseph’s RC Junior School in Wembley have been celebrating another successful year of sporting achievements.

Associate headteacher Mark Betts believes the children have benefited greatly from trying such a wide range of sports.

He said: “This year has been one of our most successful ever. We have won every football trophy and, as a result of winning the borough competitions, represented Brent at the London Youth Games in 11 sports including cross country, basketball, hockey, netball, tennis, tri golf, indoor athletics, quad kids, gymnastics, BMX and water polo.

“In Brent we gained gold medals in indoor athletics for the third year in a row and golf for the second year in a row. We also got silver in Quad kids and gymnastics, and bronze in water polo.



“We are by far the most successful junior school in London and are very proud of the hard work the children put into training to

gain these incredible performances.

“Thanks also to our football coach Ronan O’Rourke – a former pupil who is stud-

ying sports science – and our sports apprentice Moziah Pinder from Capital City Academy, who have helped with training the children.”

# Triallists help Greens to victory in opening warm-up match

► **Non-league football**

Hendon made a winning start to their pre-season campaign with a 3-1 victory over Erith & Belvedere at North Greenwich’s Soccer Dome, writes David Ballheimer.

The Greens used the game to look at a number of triallists and it was

through two players trying to catch the eye that they created the opening goal.

Andre De Costa linked with Kezie Ibe, whose pass set up new signing Tom O’Regan and his shot deflected past the Erith keeper.

The hosts managed to get level before half-time and Hendon boss

Gary McCann made sweeping changes at the break.

Leon Smith and Michael Murray found the back of the net in the second half to secure the win.

Hendon travel to Hertfordshire on Tuesday evening to face Tring Athletic before another away match at Leverstock Green two days later.

■ Gordon Bartlett’s Wealdstone beat Burnham 3-0 on Saturday before losing 2-0 at Rayners Lane on Monday night.

The Stones travel to Harrow Borough on Saturday afternoon (kick-off 3pm) for their fourth pre-season match and then face a Watford XI on Wednesday.