

BLADES



HERE are ten occupations for you. Sky Sports news presenter, Newspaper columnist, Women's Aid ambassador, qualified football coach, Sky speedway presenter, Nike Women ambassador, broadcast journalist, amateur boxer, voluntary youth teacher and marathon runner. One woman is all this and even has time to be a 100% Blade!

Sheffield-born action girl Charlie Webster is probably better known for the first job on that list but the mad keen Blades fan has excelled in all the other areas too. Talking to her this week ahead of Sheffield United's trip to Huish Park, you can tell she is fiercely proud of her roots and her Bramall Lane heritage that began before she went to school.

"My dad is a massive Blade and he took me when I was four years old; I had a season ticket then. We lived nearer Bramall Lane than Hillsborough and I was always brought up a Blade – a lot of Blades come from the central area of the city whereas Owls tend to be from the edge of town."

Following the red side of Sheffield has been a real rollercoaster since those days as Charlie happily (and sadly) recalls. "Getting into the Premier League was really exciting and obviously going to Wembley in the semi-final of the cup was fantastic – I was only 11 or 12 at the time!" And the down side?

ALL SMILES:
A happy Charlie after finishing this year's London Marathon



"When we were relegated from the top flight for the last time in 2007, I was working in Asia presenting for the TV company ESPN. I was on air on the day when we had to draw with or beat Wigan at home and West Ham had to beat Manchester United. It was so close; on the face of it, we really should have won. After the game, I was so upset that I had a rant and a rave on air and loads of fans emailed in to see if I was all right!"

Sampling third tier football for the first time in more than two decades, Charlie is well aware that this season will be a marathon, and not a sprint. Which is just as well as she has regularly turned her hand to the 26.2 mile race, six times in fact, and has two half marathons lined up in the space of eight days in October. Her last outing in the big race world wasn't without incident either as he she explained. "Running has always been a huge part of my life and I was training for my third London race.

"I felt a pulling sensation in my right hip and groin but couldn't get an MRI scan till way after the race. In the event itself, I started feeling pain after three miles but somehow, through believing in myself and gritting my teeth, I got home!"

Self-belief, motivation and effort are things that this particular Blades fan has in spades.

So much so that she now works,

mostly unpublicised, as an ambassador for both Women's Aid and Nike Women; the former helps victims of domestic abuse and violence and the latter to inspire other women into sport.

There's encouragement too for the youth of the country where the Sky Sports presenter spent a whole term going into a Slough school to help the kids improve their self-esteem and, with it, their behaviour.

Her most recent project, 'Sport: Changing Lives' aired on Sky Sports last Monday but remains available to view via the website and Sky Anytime.

Despite her busy life, none of it has dimmed her love for today's visitors though work commitments means she is restricted to the occasional home game but gets to matches in and around her London base. "I get to see most of the United games though as I see the highlights of the games while I'm working at Sky" she says excitedly. She recently presented the official Olympic Beach Volleyball "test" event, a real Championship featuring real competitors which she described as "an amazing opportunity" ahead of the 2012 Olympics next year.

It's clear that the desire to change her own life, and those of others, has come from deep within her and something she described to me as "prominently important in my life". Like everything else in her life, she will give it nothing less than 100% and it will be others who benefit from her hard work and dedication.

INNER



**THE BIG
INTERVIEW
CHARLIE
WEBSTER**