

Milestone Group PLC

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Former Chelsea captain Elliott OnSide with Milestone Group

Football supporters of a certain vintage (and I count myself among them) will remember Paul Elliott as a cultured centre-back who starred for Chelsea, Aston Villa, Celtic and Pisa.

In a career cut short by injury, he marked Maradona and Marco Van Basten, two of the huge stars of 1980s football (think Messi and Van Persie today), survived and thrived in the cauldron atmosphere of Glasgow's Old Firm rivalry, and sadly endured the racist chants that were prevalent in the game at the time.

Unlike his contemporaries, who have gone into management, coaching, or punditry, Elliott has devoted himself to the betterment of the game from the grassroots up.

He's run football academies for disenfranchised and marginalised young players, and through the Kick It Out campaign is now tackling the issue of racism head on.

His portfolio of roles also includes a seat on the UEFA Football Committee and membership of the Diversity & Inclusion Board for LOCOG, the London Olympic organising committee.

And in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours he scored a unique double in becoming the first Premier League-era footballer and first black player to be awarded the CBE.

The gong is for services to equality and diversity, two concepts that appear to have eluded the pinstriped army of the Square Mile, where Elliott finds his latest challenge.

He has joined Milestone Group (LON:MSG). The AIM-listed new media company calls his position ambassadorial.

However he will be hands-on with development of the company's OnSide product, an initiative he has been involved with its various guises for a number of years.

OnSide is a web and smart-phone risk-assessment app for sports coaches, which allows the real-time exchange of data crucial to the welfare and safety of young people playing sport. It also allows the clubs to demonstrate their duty of care.

Milestone's chief executive Deborah White describes it as creating an "audit trail". But it does more than this, particularly with the "two-way sharing" of information with the police, and input from what are describe as "third party stakeholders".

Elliott says: "They [Milestone] have created something I was very excited to see. I was also intrigued by this community-based sports model and how that could be aligned with business and City."

Share Information

Code: MSG

Listing: AIM

Sector: Support Services

Website: www.milestonegroup.co.uk

Company Synopsis:

Milestone Group combines and leverages creative services and technologies to deliver high-value services and content. We develop solutions that are intelligent and effective, to ensure a positive impact on our clients' bottom line.

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That combination of corporate social responsibility with private enterprise particularly attracted the former footballer to this project.

And in Milestone CEO White, he says he has found a kindred spirit who believes it is possible to combine social and commercial enterprises and still make a profit.

"Deborah and I share the same values," Elliott adds. "We both think that sport has a huge unifying role to play in society.

"You look at the economy, you look back at the London riots and you look at the issues - banking and politics - which have disengaged and disenfranchised people.

"Sport has been the unifying them that has helped people reconnect and do good.

"Deborah wants to join up sport and community with her business. I found I was very curious how by doing this – doing something for the greater good – could add value."

Elliott reckons there is a "natural synergy" between what he has done in the past in football, and continues to do in his positions in sports administration, and Milestone's strategy, which, according to White, is "about connecting organisations and businesses, information and customers".

"I bring my expertise in community and corporate social responsibility, both locally and nationally," Elliott adds.

"The commercial value derives itself by doing good and making the difference. This is the important thing.

"The Milestone model under Deborah allows you to do just that.

"I want to be an intrinsic part of this - and I am.

"I want to take it to an international level – doing what we are doing now but taking it to an international level."

How exactly Milestone plans to roll the product out nationally and internationally isn't clear at this point in time, but having access to Elliott and his network of contacts can't hurt.

Indeed it is bound to be a huge positive when it comes to approaching grass-roots football, league clubs and the Football Association.

I ask, almost as a throw-away, whether Elliott would ever be tempted to take up a boardroom role, and not necessarily with Milestone.

The answer is he is game. As you'd expect from the former top-flight defender he wouldn't shirk the challenge. "I would be serious about it. I think one of the most serious issues of company boards is they are not reflective of the wider community.

"And I think people need to understand the socio-economic benefits of diversity, and how it is important to have greater gender inclusion; to have greater ethnicity. We live in a multi-gender, multi-racial society.

"It is about getting the best skill sets. Diversity allows you to get the best skill sets to add value to your businesses. If you have the same old people, you have same old opinions and the same old outcomes."

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