

= Ritchie Humphreys =

Ritchie John Humphreys ( born 30 November 1977 ) is an English professional footballer who plays for League One side Chesterfield . He is chairman of the Professional Footballers ' Association ( PFA ) and holds a UEFA A Licence coaching qualification .

Humphreys started his career with Premier League side Sheffield Wednesday in 1996 . Whilst with the club , he was loaned out to Scunthorpe United and Cardiff City . He also won five caps for England at under @-@ 20 and under @-@ 21 levels . He left the club in 2001 and joined Cambridge United for a short period , after which he joined Hartlepool United . He joined Port Vale on loan in 2006 . He left Hartlepool in July 2013 , and moved on to Chesterfield . Whilst at Chesterfield in 2014 he appeared at Wembley in the final of the Football League Trophy and helped the club to the League Two title in 2013 ? 14 .

In 12 seasons with Hartlepool he made a club record 544 appearances , and picked up numerous club awards , including two Player of the Year awards from fans , one Player of the Year award from his teammates , as well as the award for Player of the Decade ( 2000s ) . He was also recognised at regional and national levels , being named on the PFA Team of the Year twice , and recognised as the North East League Player of the Year in 2006 . He helped the club win promotion out of the fourth tier in 2002 ? 03 , and again in 2006 ? 07 . However he suffered play @-@ off heartbreak with the club on three separate occasions .

= = Childhood and early career = =

Humphreys was introduced to football from an early age , his grandfather , Ernest Humphreys , played for Millwall , Motherwell and St Mirren . His dad , John Humphreys , also had trials with Sheffield United .

Humphreys grew up as a Sheffield United fan and joined their academy , which he described as a " dream come true " . However , they released him when he was 13 .

Humphreys then played for the Sheffield Boys and was one of their few players who did not play for a professional club . However , that soon changed when Humphreys was scouted by a Sheffield Wednesday scout and he joined their centre of excellence . He completed a boy @-@ hood dream by scoring at Bramall Lane in a 3 ? 2 win for Hartlepool in December 2012 . In November 2009 , Humphreys was listed 40th in the Daily Mail 's Top 50 Teenage Sensations in Premier League history .

= = Playing career = =

= = = Sheffield Wednesday = = =

In 1995 , after leaving Newfield Secondary School , Humphreys became part of Sheffield Wednesday ? s youth squad . For the youth squad Humphreys played as a left winger and was offered a professional contract . Due to the injuries of strikers David Hirst and Mark Bright , Wednesday manager David Pleat gave Humphreys the opportunity to go on Wednesday 's pre @-@ season tour of the Netherlands .

Humphreys played the first game and scored twice . He then played in the second game against FC Utrecht and scored again . Johan Cruyff was the guest of honour for that game and he praised Humphreys and said he was the next Marco van Basten . It was during this pre season tour that he was taken under the wing and guidance of Wednesday legend Chris Waddle . After scoring 4 goals in his first 5 Premier League games lifting Wednesday to the top of the league , David Pleat decided to release his mentor Waddle . Humphreys did not score another league goal all season ( only notching a hat @-@ trick in a League Cup game against Grimsby Town in a 7 ? 1 win ) . Humphreys pre @-@ season form earned him a full league debut in Wednesday 's opening match against Aston Villa . In this match Humphreys scored a goal that was recorded at 95 @.@ 9 mph , one of the

hardest @-@ hit goals in the history of football . Humphreys also scored in the following match against Leeds United . Two games later , Humphreys scored a much talked about goal when he went on a 50 @-@ yard run and scored a spectacular chipped goal against Leicester City . Humphreys was seen as the driving force behind Sheffield Wednesday 's shock early lead at the top of The Premiership .

His form linked him to a £ 4 million transfer to Leeds United . However Humphreys remained at Sheffield Wednesday and played 34 games for them in the 1996 ? 97 season . His performances earned him a place in the England team for the 1997 FIFA U @-@ 20 World Cup in Malaysia . Humphreys wore the much coveted number 9 shirt for that tournament .

For the next two seasons , after Sheffield Wednesday signed an influx of foreign players such as Paolo Di Canio and Benito Carbone , Humphreys failed to hold down a regular place and he only played a total of 31 games in those two seasons . Humphreys was sent on loan to Scunthorpe United on 13 August 1999 , where he played six matches and again scored twice . He was then sent on loan to Cardiff City where he played 11 matches , scoring twice . After a brief return to the Wednesday side for the 2000 ? 01 season , Humphreys decided to leave Wednesday to play more first team football was allowed to join Cambridge United on trial . Humphreys impressed on trial scoring 3 goals in 7 games and it looked likely that Cambridge manager Roy McFarland was going to offer him a contract . However , Humphreys ' trial was cut abruptly after he broke his foot . After the sacking of Roy McFarland , new Cambridge manager John Beck was reluctant to offer Humphreys a new contract until he had seen him play .

= = = Hartlepool United = = =

Hartlepool United manager Chris Turner then offered Humphreys the chance to train with the club . Shortly after Humphreys signed a new contract with the club , much to the dismay of Cambridge fans who wanted him to stay and described him as " a big loss " . Humphreys started the 2001 ? 02 season partnering Kevin Henderson up front for the first 9 league games . However , after a bad run Humphreys was dropped and replaced by new signing Gordon Watson . However , Humphreys would force his way back into the team and replace Henderson to partner Watson instead , these two players were already familiar with each other from their days at Sheffield Wednesday . Despite not scoring many goals Hartlepool manager Chris Turner was pleased with his performances . Humphreys was then moved into central midfield due to the injury of Tommy Widdrington and after impressing played there for the remainder of the season . Humphreys ' first season at the club would end in disappointment as he missed the decisive penalty in the play @-@ off semi final defeat to Cheltenham Town , which cost Hartlepool a place in Division Two . The penalty struck the woodwork twice and stayed out . Humphreys ' miss would send him to tears and he was photographed by Frank Reid , a photograph that would prove to be one of the most memorable images of Reid and Humphreys ' career . After his miss Humphreys was devastated but he was cheered up by Chris Turner and the players who rang him and told him to keep his head up . Humphreys also received lots of letters of support from the Hartlepool fans .

When Humphreys returned to pre @-@ season training for the following season , he was playfully teased over his penalty miss . Humphreys took the motto " that anything that doesn ? t kill you , makes you stronger " and was determined to come back stronger . Humphreys started the 2002 ? 03 season with a goal against Carlisle on the opening day of the season . Throughout the course of the season , Humphreys would be played prominently as a left winger . Humphreys finished the season as an ever present in the Hartlepool squad , adding 11 goals to his name in the process and helped Hartlepool gain promotion to Division 2 . His performances won him the Player of the Season award from the supporters . During this season it was revealed that Humphreys had been writing a diary , which he published and named it " From Tears to Cheers " , in reference to his tears at Cheltenham .

The following two seasons once again saw Humphreys as an ever @-@ present in the Hartlepool side under new manager Neale Cooper . In the 2003 ? 04 season , Hartlepool once again made the play @-@ offs , only to go out after conceding two last minute goals to Bristol City , a memory which

Humphreys described as more painful than Cheltenham . Due to the injuries of Michael Barron , Humphreys began regularly captaining the side .

In the 2004 ? 05 season , Humphreys helped Hartlepool once again make the play @-@ offs . During the play @-@ off semi @-@ final against Tranmere , Humphreys had the task of taking a penalty for Hartlepool in sudden death . This was the first time Humphreys had taken a penalty since his crucial miss at Cheltenham . This time he scored and sent Hartlepool through to the play @-@ off final against his old club Sheffield Wednesday at the Millennium Stadium . This helped to erase the memories of Cheltenham . However , Hartlepool lost the play @-@ off final to Sheffield Wednesday . Humphreys believes that of all the play @-@ off defeats he has suffered that the controversial loss to Wednesday was the hardest to take . Before the end of the season Humphreys extended his contract by a further two years .

The following season , 2005 ? 06 , saw Humphreys become the first player to make 200 consecutive league appearances for Hartlepool . For this season Humphreys ' moved to left back due to Hugh Robertson being injured . Unfortunately Hartlepool and Humphreys suffered relegation . Despite this Humphreys was named the Supporters and Players ' Player of the Season as well as the North East Football Awards Football League Player of the Season .

For the 2006 ? 07 season , Danny Wilson was appointed the new manager , Wilson had previously managed Humphreys at Sheffield Wednesday . On 22 August 2006 , Humphreys was dropped for Hartlepool 's match against Hereford United . After making 230 consecutive appearances , this was the first time Humphreys had not played since October 2001 . Shortly after that match , Humphreys joined Port Vale on a month 's loan . This was the third time that Danny Wilson had loaned Humphreys out during his career , the only times Humphreys had ever been loaned out . Port Vale tried to extend Humphreys ' loan deal by at least another month , but Hartlepool refused and Humphreys returned . Humphreys later stated that he had no intentions of leaving Hartlepool .

After a bad start to the season , Hartlepool were struggling near the lower reaches of the table . However , this changed against Accrington Stanley when Humphreys scored a spectacular last minute winner . This sent Hartlepool on 23 match unbeaten streak . During that streak , Humphreys scored another spectacular goal against Walsall to give Hartlepool the lead in a victory that sent them into second place . Hartlepool would remain in the top two for the remainder of the season and secured promotion , narrowly missing out on the title . Humphreys performances earned him a place in the League Two PFA Team of the Year . Humphreys was also awarded the Monkey Business Achievement Award for this contribution to the season , and had a street in Hartlepool named after him . However these awards proved small in comparison to when Humphreys was honoured by the Queen for making a " significant contribution to local and national life " earlier on in the season .

At the end of the 2007 ? 08 season , Humphreys was voted Player of the Year , Player of the 2000s and Hartlepool United 's Player of the Century . He continued to be a key player in 2008 ? 09 , making a total of 54 appearances . He was a key figure once again in the 2009 ? 10 season , missing just nine games as a central midfielder . On 26 February 2011 , Humphreys replaced Joe Gamble after 82 minutes to play his 473rd game for " Pools " . This broke the record previously held by Watty Moore for over half a century . Over the course of the 2010 ? 11 season he played 29 games . On 2 August 2011 , Humphreys was given a testimonial game against Premier League Sunderland to mark his ten years at Hartlepool United . Sunderland won 3 ? 1 , though the 5 @,@ 757 fans present at the Victoria Park were reported to be very vocal in their appreciation of the veteran player . On 7 January 2012 , Humphreys replaced Luke James 90 minutes into a 2 ? 0 win over Rochdale to make his 500th appearance for " Pools " . He signed an " undisclosed extension to his contract " in May 2012 . He made 33 appearances in the 2012 ? 13 campaign , as Hartlepool were relegated into League Two .

Hartlepool released Humphreys from the club in May 2013 , after it was decided that the option in his contract to extend would not be taken up .

= = = Chesterfield = = =

Humphreys signed a one @-@ year contract with League Two club Chesterfield on 15 July 2013 .

He became a key player for Paul Cook 's " Spireites " during the 2013 ? 14 season , and on 30 March 2014 he made his first appearance at Wembley Stadium in Chesterfield 's 3 ? 1 defeat to Peterborough United in the final of the Football League Trophy . In total he made 49 appearances throughout the 2013 ? 14 campaign as Chesterfield won promotion as divisional champions .

He made 25 appearances in the 2014 ? 15 campaign , helping the " Spireites " to the play @-@ offs , where they were beaten by Preston North End at the semi @-@ final stage . He made only three appearances in the 2015 ? 16 campaign .

= = PFA work = =

Humphreys succeeded Clarke Carlisle as chairman of the Professional Footballers ' Association ( PFA ) in 2013 .

= = Statistics = =

As of match played 22 May 2016 .

= = Honours = =

Hartlepool United Fans ' Player of the Year : 2003 , 2006

Hartlepool United Players ' Player of the Year : 2006

Hartlepool United Player of the Decade ( for the 2000s )

North East League Player of the Year : 2006

PFA Team of the Year : 2002 ? 03 , 2006 ? 07

With Hartlepool United

Football League Third Division play @-@ off semi @-@ finalists : 2001 ? 02

Football League Third Division runners @-@ up : 2002 ? 03

North East Team of the Year : 2002 ? 03

League One play @-@ off semi @-@ finalists : 2003 ? 04

League One play @-@ off finalists : 2004 ? 05

League Two runners @-@ up : 2006 ? 07

With Chesterfield

Football League Trophy runners @-@ up : 2014

League Two champions : 2013 ? 14