



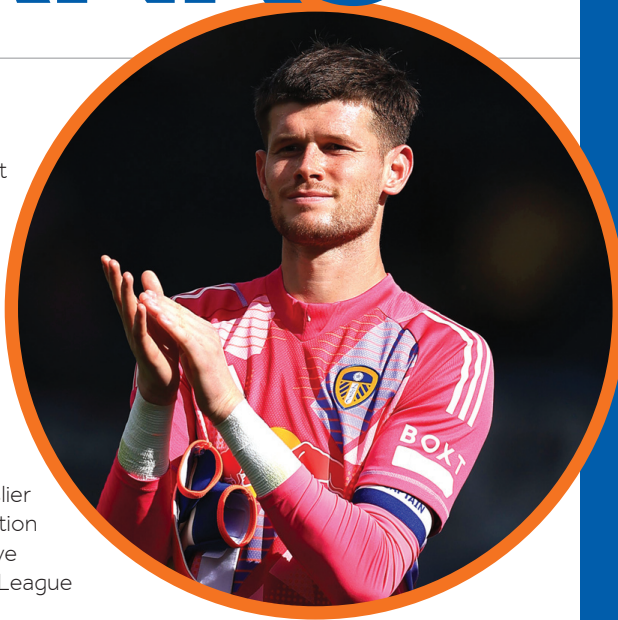
THROUGH THE RANKS

ILLAN MESLIER

Leeds' number one got a clean sheet under his belt against West Brom last Saturday and will be looking to retain his record from last season, which saw the Frenchman keep the joint-most Championship shutouts.

Starting out in his home country, the 24-year-old signed a deal for boyhood club Lorient in 2018. That summer, both AS Monaco and Chelsea were credited with interest in the keeper. Lorient stood firm, reaping immediate rewards as Meslier kept five clean sheets on the bounce, as part of a tally of 11 in 30 games.

Following a loan spell at Elland Road the following year, Meslier became first choice in lockdown, helping Leeds win promotion with seven clean sheets in 10 games. After making his move permanent, the shot-stopper missed only seven Premier League games in three seasons.



PASCAL STRUIJK

Scorer of the Whites' opening goal of the season from the penalty spot, Struijk was back to more familiar duties last Saturday by stopping the Baggies from scoring.

The Belgian initially had to bide his time at Elland Road following a youth career in the Netherlands with ADO Den Haag and Ajax.

His move to West Yorkshire came about early in 2018, spending the second half of the season predominantly with the youth side who were victorious in the Professional Development League.

The 25-year-old debuted against Hull in December 2019, the first of only five senior appearances as he struggled to break into the side that won the Championship.

Game-time improved in the top flight though, playing every game bar two from the Manchester United encounter onwards in December 2020.

In the following two seasons, Struijk made 29 Premier League appearances in each campaign and posted 23 games in the Championship last term.



ETHAN AMPADU

Last month named captain for the season, Ampadu picks up a familiar role which he undertook from January last campaign. Impressing regularly in the holding midfield role, following his move from Chelsea, he was also deployed as a centre-half.

The 2023/24 season also held great significance at international level as Ampadu led Wales in their most recent friendly against Slovakia. That was appearance number 52 at the age of 23 to become the youngest Welshman to hit half a century of caps.

The Exeter product progressed through the academy of his boyhood club, making just 13 senior appearances before Chelsea acquired his services in the summer of 2017. Loan spells with RB Leipzig, Sheffield United, Venezia and Spezia followed before a permanent move to Leeds in 2023.



DANIEL JAMES

The Welshman netted 13 goals and laid on seven assists last term. The losses of Georginio Rutter, Crysencio Summerville and Luis Sinisterra have left the West Yorkshire side rather shy in forward areas compared to the previous campaign, meaning increased responsibility for James.

Born in Hull but able to represent Wales through his father, the wideman moved to Swansea as a youngster. His evident talent in the youth side was soon replicated for the first team, with 13 direct goal involvements in his only full season in the second tier.

An on/off winter move to Leeds allowed Manchester United to pounce in the summer, with James playing 33 times in the Premier League in his first campaign. But after his appearances halved the following year, a move to Elland Road finally arrived in 2021.

