

Former Crewe Alex coach sentenced for child sex abuse

Barry Bennell has multiple convictions to his name

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Barry Bennell, published in 2003

A former Crewe Alex youth coach who describes himself as a 'monster' has been jailed for two years after admitting to abusing a young boy in 1980.

Barry Bennell – already a convicted paedophile – preyed upon his 12-year-old victim after inviting him to take part in a youth football course in Macclesfield.

The 61-year-old, who was 26 at the time, arranged for the innocent youngster to stay with him at a nearby children's home where he was working.

It was there that he had 'play fights' with his victim, 'tickled' him and 'flicked him with tea towels' before sexually abusing him in his bed.

Bennell, who now goes by the name of Richard Jones and was a youth coach at Crewe Alex in the 80s and 90s, already has convictions against his name for a 'large number' of sex offences, committed against young boys in both this country and America.

His crimes were at one point the subject of a Channel 4 Dispatches programme.

But he claims to have 'no recollection' of the events which led to his latest conviction.

However, he pleaded guilty on April 7, the day he was due to go on trial at Chester Crown Court, to two counts of indecent assault on a male under the age of 14, and two counts of enticing a boy under the age of 14 to commit an act of gross indecency.

He appeared back at Chester last Friday (May 8) where he was sentenced two years in prison, with a minimum term of 12 months.

During the hearing the court heard how Bennell – who now lives in Hodge Lea in Milton Keynes – first met his victim while the boy had been staying with his family at a Butlins holiday park.

Bennell was working there as a football coach.

Recorder Mark Ainsworth said: "He (victim) was so impressed and enamoured with the course that he participated in that he returned with his family in the September of 1979."

It was there that Bennell gave his victim the 'boy of the week' prize .

In April 1980, he then invited the boy to take part in a football course in Macclesfield.

The judge added: "The previous time he had been with his family, on this occasion he was coming to Macclesfield to stay with you...You coached him in football, of course your conduct went much further than that because on that occasion you sexually abused him."

The brave victim, who came forward in 2013, was present during the sentencing hearing and read out impact statements from behind a screen. He said he'd 'suffered a great deal' as a result of the abuse and described how it had significantly affected his relationships throughout his life.

Trust, he said, 'has become a real issue', adding: "The things he did to me will never go away and I live with that every single day."

Defending Bennell, barrister Laban Leake said his client was now 'not a risk'.

"He's fully aware that, in his own words, he's a monster," he added. "His depravity has got the better of him and the consequence of that is that he has ruined lives...he does express remorse."

He said that when Bennell – who at one point also had a close association with Stoke City and Manchester City football clubs – was released from prison in 2004, having been sentenced to nine years, he was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue and lost the ability to swallow.

He also told the court that Bennell had been forced to move because of vigilantes.

Sentencing Bennell, the judge said that while he didn't condone the actions of vigilantes, 'there is only one victim of child abuse, and that is the child'.

"One only has to listen to (victim) as he explained in detail the difficulties he has faced throughout his life in almost every relationship," he added.

DC Alison Greenwood, who led the investigation, said: "Bennell befriended a young boy and his family with the promise of helping to improve his footballing skills. He had clearly made a big impression on them all and the young boy was excited at the prospect of being able to attend the football skills course alongside Bennell.

"Little did he know that the man he looked up to and admired so much would take advantage of him, abuse his position of trust and treat him in the way he did.

"The victim was too scared to tell anyone what had happened and has had to live with what happened to him for many years. He has found it difficult to come forward and it was only in recent times that he felt the courage to speak out and report what happened to him.

"He has shown great courage in coming to court to give evidence and relive what happened to him and I hope that the conclusion of this case today will help to bring some closure for him - and help him to rebuild his life."

DC Greenwood added: "I hope this case encourages other victims of non-recent sexual assault to come forward and report what happened to them - no matter how long ago the incident took place. A sexual offence is a devastating crime and has a long-lasting impact on the victim.

"Cheshire police is committed to tackling this type of crime and will do all it can to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice – and that the appropriate advice and support are available for all victims.

"Anyone who has been a victim of this type of crime, who may need support or has information can contact Cheshire police on 101 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555111."

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