



A school for sporting idols



THE South Wales PE teacher who watched three star pupils from the same year group become some of Britain's brightest sporting talents has spoken of his "immense pride". Gwyn Morris (pictured), head of the PE department at Whitchurch High School, oversaw the development of Tottenham winger Gareth Bale, Cardiff Blues and Wales International Rugby Union back-row Sam Warburton and Rugby League Crusader Elliot Kear. Amazingly, all three emerged from the same year group at the school – and Mr Morris

said their talent was obvious from the very beginning.

"That was an exceptionally talented year-group," he said. "The boys won the Welsh schools rugby cup in year nine, and again at under-18 level. I think having so much talent in the group really made them push each other." Mr Morris said the boys had always been determined to reach the top.

"They worked, and still do work, so hard to get to where they are today. "We used to hold early training sessions before school and these lads would turn up every week at quarter to eight to practise their skills. "But to get to where they are it is more than skill. It's about determination, dedication and sacrifice. These guys were the complete package. They actually sacrificed an awful lot. "To have so many with that kind of dedication and talent, that doesn't happen very often." All three of the boys were talented across a range of sports.

Sam Warburton was a talented footballer and had trials as a centre half with Cardiff City before focusing on rugby.

Elliot Kear represented Wales A and Cardiff schools as a rugby union player before focusing on league.

Gareth Bale was also a keen distance runner and hockey player. He eventually became so good at football that Mr Morris had to create a separate set of rules for him – forcing him to play one-touch or banning him from using his natural left foot to make it fair on the other players.

Despite going on to reach the very top at such a young age, Mr Morris said the lads were very down to earth and hadn't let the fame and exposure go to their heads. "It was funny the other day – Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp told Gareth to go abroad for a while to relax and instead he came back to Cardiff to stay with his mum. "That's just what he's like. Very down to earth and very grounded."

The school takes immense satisfaction from watching the boys develop, Mr Morris added.

"It's not down to any one teacher. The whole department works very hard on developing pupils across a whole range of sports. "To reach the top you need support from a number of people in and outside school. These lads have had fantastic help from their clubs and their parents. It's very much a group effort.

"We have a real ethos here that the more sport you play the better understanding you will have of what is expected of you. These boys excelled across a range of sports. It's wonderful to watch them improve."