

FEET FIRST

Former professional footballer Steve Sanders (right) turned down a life of fast cars and popstar girlfriends for QSing, and last March he aced the APC. So with the second round of APC exams coming up in November, the KHK project QS speaks to **Matthew Parsons** about tactics and psychology



Steve Sanders has played for Huddersfield Town, Lincoln City and Doncaster Rovers. He was good, he says, but adds that he knew he wasn't good enough to play in the premiership or for England. "Despite the myths that all footballers are rolling in it, the truth is that your average lower league player earns a modest income with little to no career opportunities outside of football after the age of 35," he says.

So at the age of 19 he decided to go semi-professional and study quantity surveying part-time at Leeds Metropolitan University. After graduating with a 2.1, he turned down big firms such as G&T and EC Harris to work for a smaller player – KHK Group, where he's been for five years. He's just finished working on Tabard Square, a major mixed-use regeneration scheme in south London, which he used as his APC case study.

How do people react when you say you were a pro-footballer?

Normally with: 'You used to be a what? Why on earth are you a QS?' I reply that I saw the light. Who needs to earn millions and drive fast cars when you can be a QS.

How did you balance working on a major scheme with the APC?

I've been lucky. My bosses were always prepared to give me as much responsibility as I could cope with, but with the support structure always in place. I knew that I'd been making presentations to clients, so knew I was ready for the APC.

We have an open plan office too, and that helps as you can just pop your head up and ask someone something. Or when you go and get a coffee, someone will always ask how it is going. KHK's attitude was similar to that of a football club: if you're good enough then you're old enough.

Did the size of the project boost your confidence?

With the support from KHK, and external support from APC Coach, I felt quietly confident about my chances of passing but unsure how the assessors would react to me telling them I was working on a £75m project.

How did you structure your presentation

You get 10 minutes for this, and it's useful because it puts you in the right frame of mind and allows you to settle your nerves. The presentation should quickly set the scene then concentrate on the critical issues. Don't waste time describing whether the outside of the building was white, the carpets were green and plush. Make sure your presentation mirrors the technical analysis that you've already submitted.

Any tips for the final assessment?

Don't look to try and make friends in that room; go in there with a professional attitude and prepare yourself mentally. I had four mock interviews – with Alpesh Patel (founder of APC Coach) and colleagues. You have to take these seriously – even with colleagues there was no joking around. Make it realistic, be professional.

Describe your experience on the final day

It was the most surreal place – a hotel in Heathrow. You walk down a long corridor and into a room where there are 25 other people waiting, some frantically flicking through their notes. It was deathly silent. I felt relaxed on the day because I knew I'd done my preparation.

Are you still playing football?

Not really. I had an injury a while back, so it's more golf now. And anyway, I've been too busy with work.

Appointments

AA strengthens northeast presence

Fast growing AA Projects has made three appointments, including a director who formerly worked at Gleeds. Stuart Denton has joined to establish a Northeast operation, which is already servicing over £160m of construction schemes in the region. The firm has also brought in Laurence Harte and Matthew Hirst as associate directors. Harte was formerly director of estates and development at Doncaster College and will be responsible for Yorkshire and Humberside. Hirst joins from the Learning and Skills Council and will join the firm's property consultancy team specialising in further education.



L to R: Hirst, Harte and Denton

DBK makes promotions

Cost consultant DBK Back has promoted three staff to director level one year after its management buyout. Senior project manager David Maude steps up to become regional director of the London office. In the Birmingham HQ Mike Woolley and David Browne have been promoted from senior project managers to associate directors.

Hill International appoints Major

Hill International has appointed a new president of its project management group. Major General Hans van Winkle will start in his post, a newly created role, at the end of October. He will be responsible for the firm's project management operations throughout the western hemisphere. Van Winkle, 57, is currently director of the Construction Industry Institute, a non-profit consortium that aims to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the industry through research and industry alliances. Prior to that he spent 30 years with the US Army Corps of Engineers, eventually rising to deputy commander of the Corps from 2001 to 2003.

PMP Halesowen gets new associate

Paul Mantle Partnership has appointed Michael Davies as an associate in its Halesowen Office. Davies has been with the firm for six years and recently graduated from Halesowen College.

Bannister joins Davis Langdon

Davis Langdon has taken on Richard Bannister from Mace. He joins as partner in the Manchester office, where he will grow project management to match the cost consulting side of the business. He joins 13 other Davis Langdon partners in the northern region.

For up-to-date appointments go to our website – qsnews.co.uk