

Title: **Case Study  
Sport & Leisure  
in the West of England**

**Mark Smith** is taking a Higher National Diploma in Sport and Exercise Science at Filton College.

The two-day a week course fits in with Mark's busy lifestyle – he is a keen cyclist and trains hard for road racing competitions, as well as having a part-time job in Tesco.

After college he aims to get a degree in sports science at the University of Wales Institute Cardiff. Depending on his grades, his qualification could allow him a faster route to a degree by entering university in the second year.

His course has been particularly useful for highlighting areas of sport that interest him – he is interested in working in sports science, coaching or massage.

“The first year is more theory based, but in the second year you get plenty of hands-on practical experience,” he says. “You get to find out about lots of career opportunities.

“And I find it's really useful for my cycling because it gives you a wide range of knowledge on how to improve your own performance in sport, ranging from devising a training programme to learning massage techniques to aid recovery.”

Mark, aged 19, went to Castle School in Thornbury, South Gloucestershire. After taking GCSEs, he stayed on to do 'A' levels in Sport Studies, Psychology and Biology.

He has always loved sport and cites his dad Barry, an accomplished runner, as a major influence. “Ever since I was young I have had an interest in sport. I geared all my A levels around a sporting career.”

Filton College is one of the leading sports colleges in the country. It runs the Bristol Academy of Sport – a scheme designed to allow young sportsmen and women to study, train and compete at the same time.

The HND course gives students the opportunity to pursue a career, or graduate studies in sport, recreation, exercise, health or fitness, as well as providing routes towards health promotion, coaching, exercise prescription and leisure management.

They study core units including anatomy and physiology, fundamentals of training and fitness, sports psychology, social issues in sport as well as a research project – plus a range of optional units such as coaching science, prevention and treatment of injuries and nutrition.

Mark's advice to anyone seeking a career in sport is to get on to a sports science course. “The one I'm doing at the moment just gives you so many opportunities and knowledge in different areas of sport,” he says. “I'm really enjoying it.”