

Drew's path through schools football was disrupted by a twice-broken leg. He recovered quickly from the first, but the second break was more complicated and took longer to heal. During this recovery period Drew began to question the wisdom of a career in football; these doubts persisted for a while after his recovery and led to his decision not to explore the offer of a youth team place at Chesterfield. He got as far as stepping off the train at Chesterfield for a meeting with Dave Bentley, before deciding that he was not yet ready for such a commitment to the game.

He returned to his native Barnsley and worked in an uncle's factory, until his father persuaded him to join the Dodworth Miners' Welfare team managed by Doug O'Connor, who had been one of Drew's coaches as a schoolboy. Drew rediscovered the hunger to play there, and a fast lad who could only be stopped by being kicked began attracting attention from the Football League.

Sheffield Wednesday were successful in their pursuit of him. Drew joined The Owls on 19th February 2004 and was placed with their youth team, but he soon came to the notice of manager Paul Sturrock as one of a number of youth teamers called up to train with the first eleven. He was made part of the Owls' first-team squad for the local derby with Barnsley in front of 25,000 in October 2004 and everything about the day made Drew feel that he belonged in the game.

A debut followed in the Owls' next game. His third appearance for them was his first in a Chesterfield match and came later in October 2004, as an 80th-minute substitute in a match at Hillsborough that we remember for Sammy Clingan's screamer that levelled the scores at 2-2. He was a similarly late sub for the Owls in their 3-1 win at Saltergate in February 2005; at the end of that season the football world looked to be opening up for him when he came off the bench to score in The Owls' play-off final win over Hartlepool. A back injury stalled his career as soon as it had started, however, and much of 2006-7 was missed. Fit again, but now down the pecking order, Drew was recalled from a loan at Scunthorpe in January 2007 to sign for Luton Town for a fee reported to be around £250,000.

His time at Luton was highlighted by a fine performance against Liverpool in the 2007-8 FA Cup that earned him the tag of the "Ginger Maradona," and opened up the chance of a move to Brescia, the Italian Serie-B club. That didn't come off, and Drew spent a year in midfield and attack before a knee ligament injury stopped his progress in March 2008. Determined not to let the injury win - a character trait that would be tested several times in his career - Drew returned to the first team ahead of schedule in November 2008.

Drew's second appearance at Saltergate came five minutes from the end of the Boxing Day 2008 game against Luton when, with Chesterfield leading 2-1, The Hatters went for broke and brought Drew on for the defensive midfielder Rossi Jarvis. The substitution can be said to have worked when another defender, Ian Roper, popped up with an equaliser in the sixth minute of added time.

Like everyone else, I went home that day chuntering about Roper's free header from a corner rather than the performance of Luton's third sub, so I can't tell you what Drew brought to the game in the eleven minutes he played, but Lee Richardson might have made a mental note; days later he became aware of Drew's potential availability and went to watch him play for Luton at Brighton in the Football League Trophy. He learned that Luton were faced with having to improve Drew's contract if he played fifty games; the Brighton match was game 49 for Drew at Luton.

Drew came in on loan on January 27th, 2009 and made his debut a day later, at home to Exeter City. While his focus was up front that season, he could not be pinned down to an individual role in the team, and operated as a right-sided winger/midfielder who went forward with a fast pace that was maintained and relentless, allowing him to reach a ball played towards the wing before his opponent. He would feint to go one way before wrong-footing a defender by going the other and could whip over a good cross. His maiden goal for the club won the game at Notts County on January 31st, 2009, when he produced a stylish, measured shot from Jack Lester's pass to help the ball over the Notts keeper and into the net. He was uncharacteristically sent off at Rotherham in March 2009, accruing two yellow cards in a game in which Rotherham's desperate defenders repeatedly fouled him.

Drew returned to Luton for the pre-season of 2009-10 but Chesterfield came back in for him before the season got properly underway. He had been offered a new contract with the Hatters but the attraction of playing much closer to home proved to be the thing that swung his options in Chesterfield's favour.

Niggling injuries meant that the season was a stop/start affair for Drew. His willingness to chase what sometimes appeared to be hopeful punts upfield helped keep the pressure off the defence and led to chances for his fellow forwards and himself - helped by four goals in two Johnstone's Paint games he led the club's scoring charts for most of the season, finishing as runner-up to top scorer Jack Lester with ten goals as the club ended its time at Saltergate by missing out on the play-offs by two points.

Chesterfield's first season in their new ground was successful for the club and Drew. He claimed an assist in the first Chesterfield goal scored at the B2Net stadium, rescuing a high cross over the defence before playing in Dwane Mattis for the goal. Drew operated in wide positions with distinction as the team hit the top spot in October. He seemed ideal for John Sheridan's "We'll score one more than you" approach to attacking football.

A drab 2-0 home defeat to Morecambe in February was met with a significant re-shuffle by Sheridan in preparation for the home game with Wycombe three days later. Dean Morgan, Deane Smalley and Scott Griffiths were reintroduced but a positional change saw Drew slotted in at right full-back. The Chairboys were beaten 4-1 and the basic set-up of the team remained broadly unaltered for the next twelve games as The Spireites finished as League Two champions. Drew played in all but two of the club's 46 league games, went through the season without picking up a single yellow card and was named the "Players' Player of the Year" in the end-of-season awards.

Two more seasons of noted consistency followed. Drew was firmly established as right-back by now. He was part of the side that won the Johnstone's Paints Trophy in an otherwise poor 2011-12 season that led to relegation after other key members of the previous season's promotion team were not retained or replaced. Drew skippered the side for much of the season; and won the club's "goal of the Season" award in 2013 for a lofted shot at Burton Albion. This was his second such award, the first coming for a goal in September 2009 against Burton too, oddly.

Chesterfield's fans could have been forgiven for taking Drew's athleticism, reliability and commitment for granted. He had become a core part of a team that had done many good things. By operating on the left-hand side for some games, he had shown a willingness to play anywhere if it helped the team. A natural intensity to his game set an example to others. His value to the team was about to be expressed by his absence from it, however.

Drew picked up a groin injury in 2013-14 but played on, as the discomfort tended to subside before the next game, and no clear cause could be found. The injury became more persistent, and all but one game was missed after January 2014 as the team won the League Two title again. The injury flared up properly during the pre-season period in the summer of 2014; both abductor muscles had become detached and an operation was needed to re-anchor them to his pelvis. Apart from the physical damage, such long-term injuries cause mental challenges to be overcome but Drew battled past that, and returned to fitness. He was loaned to Plymouth, to play under John Sheridan again in an unfamiliar central midfield berth, but was recalled at a day's notice to play left-back in a 3-0 win over Gillingham in March.

He made only eight starts near the end of the 2014-15 season but, typically, the team climbed from 10th to 6th place in those eight games. By the time he left the field with a hamstring injury in the 26th minute of an April 2015 game at home to Colchester, Chesterfield were already 3-0 up and on their way to a 6-0 win that all but secured a play-off berth.

The start of the 2015-16 season saw Drew fit again, but he was given mixed opportunities by new manager Dean Saunders, sharing the "attacking right-back"

berth with Chris Herd. When Saunders' short tenure was ended, Mark Smith (who had been instrumental in taking Drew to Sheffield Wednesday) became caretaker and reinstated him, while Danny Wilson regarded him as a first-choice player after taking over. Managers who got what the club was about also got what Drew was about, too. Faced, however, with having to make economies at the end of the season, Drew's contract was allowed to lapse and he joined Paul Cook at Portsmouth in June 2016. Only nine league appearances were made in a season and a half at Pompey: having started at right-back as 2016-17 opened, a hamstring injury kept him out after five games and by the time he recovered, others pushed in front of him in the pecking order as Pompey won the League Two championship.

When Paul Cook left Pompey for Wigan his successor at Fratton Park appeared to give Drew the opportunity of a fresh start but that came to nothing as he was again left out after the opening few games of the 2017-18 season. No longer involved in matchday squads, Drew leapt at the chance of a return to Chesterfield in January 2018.

Drew came back to a club locked into an irreversible plunge towards the National League. He was one of five to make debuts at Accrington on January 6th, along with Sid Nelson, Zavon Hines, Josh Kay and Aaron Ramsdale. Despite having 20 games left, the club were in such a bad shape on and off the field that this had the look of a last throw of the dice for manager Jack Lester. The players tried for the manager but too much was wrong, and the club dropped out of the Football League.

Sticking with the club into the National League, Drew played in the side's opening 13 matches but a knee flared up after training on a 3g surface for a coming game at Maidstone. A routine "clean-up" operation did not really clear the damage and a sepsis infection set in. With the knee ballooning and in considerable pain, Drew was admitted to hospital in January 2019 for an operation to purge the knee of infection that might have become life-threatening, if left unchecked. Three weeks in hospital and months of rehabilitation followed.

The time out of the game forced Drew to consider his future. Surgeons had advised that he might not be able to play again, but, as much as this, the effect that the injury had on his wife and young children encouraged Drew to take the decision to retire in July 2019 at the age of 32.

Drew's football career extended to 421 first-team appearances for six clubs across fifteen seasons, 304 of those being in Chesterfield colours. During the course of this fifteen-year career he played everywhere except in goal. Such a career can only be sustained by players who are talented and committed, who can produce consistent levels of intensity and who can channel all of that into effective play for their chosen team. We are lucky that Drew chose to do this for us for so long. His testimonial game in July 2013 was an appropriate reward for his contribution to Chesterfield FC.

For Chesterfield: 259 + 12 Football League appearances, 15 goals.

Career: 317 + 53 Football League appearances, 23 goals.