

# Talking Black History Month with City Matters' BAME representative

As part of the Club's Black History Month celebrations, we caught up with Mohammed Ullah, City Matters' Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage representative.

**City has always been known as an inclusive Club, with many Black players achieving success on the pitch while being adored by fans. Which Black players, in particular, stand out for you as key in the Club's history and why?**

Every City fan should know the name Stan Horne, and if you don't you need to research him. He was the trailblazer, City's first Black player and the first Black man to win a top division championship medal. He played at Aston Villa and when the then Villa manager Joe Mercer moved to City in 1965, he took Stan, who was 20 years old, and played him as a full back. Someone very special to me is Dave Bennett. He was born in Longsight near the market on Dickenson Road and went to Burnage High School – exactly like me! For the modern era it has to be Yaya Toure – and as a Muslim, watching him say he doesn't drink alcohol when presented with the Man of the Match award after the Newcastle game was astonishing. There are so many to mention – Adebayor, Sterling, Goater, Balotelli... the list goes on.

**Why do you feel it is important to reflect on and celebrate the Black community's history?**

It is important to highlight the contributions of the Black community in all areas. It is a celebration of diversity and



brings awareness that we are different, but diversity is beautiful. It should hopefully bring us together and takes us beyond the history books showcasing real people. Ignorance is no longer an excuse as we have a wealth of information at our fingertips, but we need to break down barriers and reflect on not only the good, wonderful parts of our history but those that make us feel uncomfortable like slavery and systemic abuse and racism. It wasn't, and sadly still isn't, completely uncommon for Black players to have racist chants and actions directed at them. That idea of triumph over constant adversity is something we need to focus on until we eradicate hate. Our Black communities all around us in Manchester are constantly working to make our society a better place and that should be recognised.

**How important is it that City Matters has a BAME representative?**

It is vital and a really important

step in getting to a place where we can really make a difference for our BAME fans. A key focus for myself is to promote diversity and bring to attention things to the Club that they might have not necessarily considered. Hopefully this can have a hugely positive impact for future generations. We need to understand the years of stories we have been told have been by the same voices and now we have to embrace different stories and that is how we grow as a Club and society. It is not just arbitrarily pointing out discrimination, it is about working to find solutions and cast a light on things like Black History Month and Islamophobia awareness month in November because these things matter to our fans. Ultimately it is about representation and attention being paid to specific cultural heritages in modern Britain.

