Lewis Simmons, from the Dream of the Premier League to the Maroon Beret

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Sometimes life takes unexpected turns, but for those with courage, discipline, and a desire to fight, even an interrupted dream can become a new beginning. This is the case of **Lewis Simmons**, former footballer of Preston North End, an English Championship team, who now wears the uniform of the Parachute Regiment of the British Army.

A Broken Dream, but Not the Will

Lewis started playing football as a child, and considered a young talent, he joined Preston's academy at the age of eight, signing his first contract at 16. For two seasons, he gave everything to earn a professional spot in the first team, but at the end of the journey, in 2019, the awaited confirmation did not come.

Lewis Simmons during his time at Preston North End

After a brief period in non-professional football, useful to stay in shape and look for new opportunities, Covid arrived, complicating things and leading to the suspension of championships. It was at that moment that Simmons decided to take a new path: enlisting in the army.

From the Playing Field to the Training Field

Attracted by the toughest physical and mental challenges, Lewis chose to test himself with one of the most selective units: the Parachute Regiment.

Ironically, he was assigned to the legendary *2nd Battalion* (2 PARA), the unit that on June 14, 1982, was the first to enter Port Stanley, in the famous image with maroon berets instead of helmets and British flags waving, returning the Falkland Islands to Great Britain at the end of the harsh conflict against Argentina.

The Parachute Regiment is one of the most prestigious units in the United Kingdom.

"*I went to Estonia for cold climate survival training. It was -22 degrees: an absurd cold. I stayed there for five weeks. I was also in North Macedonia for an airborne exercise, working with armed forces from other countries. These are training missions, to stay ready for potential real deployment.*"

Immediately on Operation in Afghanistan

After weeks of intensive training, he found himself immediately operational. In June 2021, he was sent to Afghanistan as part of **Operation Pitting**, to evacuate British personnel during the Taliban takeover.

“We were there to evacuate British personnel while the Taliban took control. I was in Afghanistan for 14 days, practically just out of training: it was all new to me, I was a bit like a rabbit caught in the headlights, but it was an important moment in my life. I was the youngest and least experienced in the unit, but surrounded by extraordinary men. Despite the initial fear, I found strength in my comrades. We were a team, a family.”

Football Never Left Him

Despite the radical life change, Lewis never stopped loving football. Within the army, he found new opportunities to continue playing at a high level.

“In the British army, football is much more developed than one might imagine. There are teams for every unit and an official team representing the entire British Army. There are players who,

like me, come from professional or semi-professional experiences."

Today, Lewis is a regular starter in the 2 PARA football team, which competes in the Army FA Midlands League.

Lewis Simmons celebrating a trophy victory with the 2 PARA football team, competing in the Army FA Midlands League.

The sports structure of the British army is surprisingly similar to that of football clubs: physiotherapists, nutritionists, sports kits provided for free, and a high-level competitive environment.

A New Life, but with the Same Passion

Today, Lewis Simmons is a Paratrooper, proud to belong to one of the most prestigious units in the United Kingdom. But he is also an example for all those young people who, seeing a dream fade, believe that all is lost. His story shows that, with resilience and determination, every end can become a new and exciting beginning.

Curiously, on the renowned international site TransferMarkt, Lewis is still listed as "unattached". But don't get any strange ideas: Lewis has already found his team.

News link: https://www.efl.com/news/2025/march/18/ex-preston-north-end-footballer-transitions-from-pitch-to-parachute-regiment/