## On benches



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Sports psychologist Michael Caulfield has a place where players and staff are happy to air their deeper thoughts, he tells Ben Fisher

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Michael Caulfield,
Brentford's sports
psychologist, and
with that Paisley,
a lurcher-whippet,
hops out of the boot of his car at the
training ground. He stops for a chat
with the groundstaff, on their hands
and knees repairing black netting
chewed by urban foxes in this part
of west London.

"When a fox sees Paisley, they scarper off to Surbiton," Caulfield says, walking past the immaculate pitches in front of the Robert Rowan Performance Centre named after their technical director who died six years ago. "It sounds pathetic but I walked past his portrait this morning and went: '1-1 last night [against Sheffield Wednesday], penalties, you wouldn't believe it, but we got there. Hope we get a home draw."

Soon Caulfield is talking about his open-air office. "There are four benches here now," he says. The first spot, he adds, was a "crappy tin bench" outside the original training pavilion. He sought an upgrade, ordering a wooden one, adding a plaque that reads: 'Michael's Bench; Just sit and talk, or just sit.'

"The most moving thing was Robert's widow, Suzanne, rang and said: 'Can we come and sit on the bench?' I could have filled the ground up with tears. We had 15 minutes in the sunshine. Some days no one comes near me but the next day you can't get on there. That was the whole point of it, to create a space where you can just sit there

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DICII and go: 'It's shit.' Or: 'Wasn't that Mbeu amazing?" him t It is on those benches where he he pa gets to work, chatting with players water and staff, usually with a light touch. Car Sometimes they walk and talk, credi Paisley in tow; Keane Lewis-Potter joyou and Aaron Hickey found it beneficial inside when injured. Mads Roerslev took three Paisley for a walk the day after 75 sec

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