

CASE STUDY

PRIZEWINNING YEAR FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HOCKEY COACH

2008 was a milestone year for 24 year-old hockey coach Duncan Parnis. As well as being awarded a Nancy Ovens bursary for coaching, Duncan was named Young Coach of the Year at the UK Coaching Awards in December and just last month was shortlisted for England Hockey's Club Coach of the Year award.

With the support of SkillsActive and the Nancy Ovens Trust, Duncan spent the UK summer in Perth, Western Australia, as part of a worldwide voluntary projects scheme, Travellers.

For eight weeks, Duncan taught games and hockey at both primary and secondary schools. He taught a range of sports to refugees at a local centre, coached at Como Secondary College – a specialist hockey school with a reputation for producing state and national hockey representatives – and had the opportunity to contest some inter- school cup hockey finals at Lemming High School.

“The Australian pupils are very enthusiastic about PE and every year group seemed to enjoy participating, which made teaching very enjoyable,” Duncan says.

“The kids also really love hockey, so much so that they even play hockey at interval and lunchtime. It is also common to see juniors as well as seniors training before school for their club or school team.

With only five astro turfs in Perth and approximately 16 clubs and many hockey playing schools, pitch time is much sort after and all players value every minute they get to train and play on astro turf.”

The Refugee Sports Project Duncan was involved with in Perth is designed to help disadvantaged refugee children adjust and settle into their new home in Australia. Many of the children come from war-torn countries such as Sudan and Somalia and most have never participated in sport before.



“It was great to see these children learn new skills and grow in confidence, interacting with their Australian peers. Being involved in the project was a really great experience and one that is not easy to find. I think it’s important for coaches to get experience working with children from socially and economically diverse backgrounds because we live in such a diverse society now.”



During the evenings, Duncan coached at Melville City Hockey Club, where he was the assistant coach of the boys and girls under-15 teams and the ladies first squad. He also played and trained with the men’s teams, debuting for the fourth X1, then progressing to the second XI.

“The club competition runs throughout the weekend, and players are expected to be available all weekend long for their weekly fixtures. The level of commitment is great and the standard of hockey is very high.”

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DUNCAN PARNIS

A hockey coach for the past eight years, Duncan is the director of hockey at High Wycombe Hockey Club, coaches Buckinghamshire junior boys’ teams, and is also an England Hockey Level 2 coach. He says his Aussie coaching experience was a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity to develop his skills in a country renowned for sporting success.

“Australia has consistently produced the best Olympic hockey teams and the opportunity to coach in this environment was fantastic. The experience enabled me to learn a lot about my coaching, other teaching and coaching methods and leadership styles,” he says.

“There are many aspects that I have taken into my Wycombe and Bucks coaching sessions, and they include the expectation that all players give 100 percent in every training session.”

In December, Duncan’s commitment and contribution to hockey was recognised when he won Young Coach of the Year at the annual UK Coaching Awards held at the Dorchester in London’s Mayfair.

The event acknowledges the achievements, hard work and dedication of coaches of children, players and athletes worldwide, from grassroots to elite level. Past winners have included household names such as Sir Alex Ferguson OBE, CBE and Mickey Stewart OBE.

Duncan says his UK coaching award came as a huge surprise. "It was great to be shortlisted for the award and superb to win it. I love coaching because of the enthusiasm of the kids and seeing them improve."

In March, Duncan was also shortlisted for an England Hockey award in what will be England Hockey's first annual awards dinner, Hockey's Big Night Out, held in May.

The awards will recognise the valuable work of hockey volunteers throughout the country and

Duncan will contest the award for England Club Coach of the Year.

"The past year has been extremely exciting. I'd like to thank SkillsActive and the Nancy Ovens Trust for the support and financial contribution they provided to help me achieve these great honours."



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