

A Year with the Scotland Under 16 Hockey Squad

It all started away back in August 2008 at the Talent Camp at Strathallan School where technical skills and fitness were focussed on. From this weekend there has 2 follow up Talent days prior to the selection event at the Scottish Hockey Inter District Tournament of which I captained the North Under 16s at the event.

The following week I received my selection letter inviting me to attend a Development Weekend at Inverclyde Sports Centre, Largs over the weekend 19th-21st December. Having been part of the Development Squad the previous year I knew what to expect but with a camp holding 30 players it was always going to be hard to progress into the final 18 for the Home Nations in July 2009.

After 2 weekends of further Talent Days and training I was selected in the 18 players to face the Welsh national team at Largs over the weekend 4th/5th April. Unfortunately I was limited to just playing in the second game due to a knee injury but gaining my first full cap was an amazing experience and we won the match 4-0 with me playing at centre back.

A month off for the exam period saw me selected to play as part of the Development Squad to face 4 games against Ulster Under 16's in Belfast at the University of Ulster. With a very young squad it was a difficult weekend and we ended with two defeats (0-2, 1-3), a draw (3-3) and only one victory (3-1). The Saturday morning game saw another step forward for me with being made captain of the team.

Due to a lack of funds at the squad's disposal the trip that was scheduled to play Belgium had to be scratched and we again returned to Ireland for a 4 game series with the full 18 International Squad members. Friday night saw us play local side Mosley's Under 21 squad which saw us win 3-2 with me scoring the winning goal, my first Scottish goal. Two games on Saturday saw two victories (4-0, 4-2) over the Ulster U16 squad which I again captained a game. On Sunday we had our hardest game when we faced the Ulster U21's and lost 0-5, a great experience but slight disappointment in my performance and the knee injury flared up for the first time since Easter.

At the start of July (3rd/4th) we played the Great Britain Colleges team in Edinburgh. This was a three game series and against a very good side we were beaten 3 times but the experience gained by the side and myself against Under 21 players was brilliant. Unfortunately I only lasted 5 minutes in the last game as my knee was swollen and in a lot of pain.

Due to this flair up in my knee the coaches with advice from the physio decided that they wouldn't risk the injury further and I had to be withdrawn from the Home Nations Squad which is the biggest disappointment I have had in my life so far as the event was the following week. This was my goal for the season.

This should have been the end of my report but I was invited to train with the squad to represent Scotland at the UK School Sport Games in Cardiff (3rd to 6th September) as a continuation of my development. The day before the squad were to leave I received a phone call to invite me to join the squad as another injury had seen a player pull out. I was given limited time at the event but it was a brilliant experience, results for the side weren't very good but we were a young squad against Under 18 players. At this event my knee again flared up in the last game and I was advised by the physio that I needed 3 to 6 months to get my knee sorted properly, so I am half way through my rehabilitation.

It was a mixed year and my main goal was missed but I have gained experiences I never thought I would have, I have captained and scored for my country, I have played in a major event and I am looking forward to the future getting fit and playing for the Under 18's in the coming year.

Scott McNab
Scotland Under 16 Player 2009