

WESTERN WILDCATS HOCKEY CLUB

Founded 1898

FRIENDS OF WESTERN NEWSLETTER May 2014

Season 2013-14 will not go down as a particularly auspicious one for Western Wildcats, but in this issue we mark two milestones. 50 years separate the international debuts of Tony Duncan and Gavin Sommerville, and Alistair Trainor and Niall Sturrock have completed 40 years service in club colours. We highlight these, along with a brief review of Scotland's Commonwealth Games record since hockey was first included in the Games in 1998.

The season just ending

Last August it was felt that a top-four placing for participation in the league play-offs would be a reasonable aim for the men's 1st's. In fact they finished second at the end of the league programme despite inconsistent form, but lacklustre performances in the controversial play-offs culminated in third place. The women's 1st's staved off relegation with some doughty performances, and they should look forward to next season with confidence.

There will be no national cups at Auchenhowie this year. The men's 3rd's decided their near-monopoly of the Reserve Cup in recent years was unfair to others and the women's 1st's reached the quarter-final stage of Scottish Cup for the first time before going down to Grove Menzieshill.

All teams at the club, both men and women, include players still at school, and we are well-represented in district and national age-group squads. At junior level the coaches are excited about the under-14 age group, whose enthusiasm and energy seem boundless.

SCOTLAND AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

With the 2014 Commonwealth Games on our doorstep at Glasgow Green, it seemed appropriate to look at Scotland's performances in previous games. The British Empire Games as they were then known first took place in Hamilton, Canada in 1930, but it was not until 1998 that team sports were admitted.

Scotland's women have been more successful, qualifying on each occasion since 1998. That year they drew their final group game with India 2-2, when a win would have put them into the medal play-offs. Given the heat and the humidity, their fifth placing in a 10-team tournament was highly meritorious. Four years later in Manchester they came sixth.

The men finally made it to Melbourne in 2006. Western provided six players: Graham Dunlop, David Mansouri, Vishal Marwaha, David Mitchell, Graham Moodie and Douglas Simpson. Kris Kane and Andrew Sewnauth had been Scotland regulars for the previous four years, and were unlucky to miss out. In a very tough section losses to Australia, England and Malaysia were perhaps expected, but they overcame Canada. This led to a meeting with South Africa for 7th place, which was achieved with a 2-1 victory.

The women had a better time of it. After a narrow defeat to New Zealand and a 0-5 reverse to England they achieved 3rd place in their group with wins over Canada and Barbados. By overcoming Malaysia 3-0 in the play-offs an overall 5th place was secured.

In Delhi in 2010 Marwaha and former Western team mate Graham Moodie were selected. Again the men had a tough draw, and lost all their section games. However a 7-0 win in the play-offs against Trinidad and Tobago gave them 9th place. For Scotland's women, as in 1998 a draw with India in the group matches was costly, relegating them to the 7th-8th play-off with Wales, which they won comfortably.

Western's Kareena Marshall and Gavin Sommerville are in their respective training squads for 2014, but with selection restricted to 16 players nothing is guaranteed. We wish them well. Also in the men's group are former Auchenhowie stars Nicky Parkes and Ian Moodie. Neil Menzies and Graham Moodie will be involved on the coaching side. It should be a great event. For full details go to: www.glasgow2014.com/games/sports/hockey

The Big Fight 40 Years On :

BIG AL (the Drummie) TRAINOR versus NIALL (the Broughty Ferry Bantam) STURROCK

A Friends of Western Production- sponsored by Ralgex and Tubigrip.

Saturday 31 May Auchenhowie Arena. (Seconds away 2.0 pm.)

Glasgow - September 1973. The City centre resembles a post war rebuilding site as tenements make way for motorway corridors. Saturday night entertainment stops at 9.55 pm and is non-existent on Sunday. Rangers are yet to experience the Souness effect and Hampden remains an open public urinal. Also in the future is artificial turf, floodlit training (or any serious physical training), whiteboards, warm ups, warm downs, winter shut downs, substitutes, sticks bags, fitted strips, dug outs and sympathetic umpires.

On an imperfect rutted blaes hockey pitch an oddly assorted group of men limber up for the forthcoming hockey season. Into this collection of vaguely athletic types wander two newcomers - each desperate to impress their new pals with a differing array of skills, speed and stamina.

Big Al and Little Niall had arrived. Although they arrive by different routes they are to remain constant fixtures for the next 40 years, and will each make unique contributions to the Western story over that time.

During their parallel but separate careers, one will be a fixture of the first team for 15 years before mentoring the next generation of super stars, play for Scotland, become one of the country's leading coaches and score twice in the Club's first Scotsman Cup win. The other will become a main stay of the former Kelvin XI and other "lower" teams, and progress from most "disciplined" i.e. most indisciplined, to El Presidenti, before he too realises his boyhood dream of representing Scotland - albeit with Zimmer in hand.

One is dapper, suave and athletic - a multi-talented sportsman. He will excel as the

heart and brains of the defence. The other, more of yeoman stock, will spend 40 years trying out every possible position in the hope that he can find one he can actually get the hang of. He is still looking.

But are they really that different?

Both had a "thing" about large items of equipment. Niall was the bearer of a Bothamesque weighted stick in the 1980s - all the better for whacking 16s and short corners. Al went for length - including 42 inch sticks to accommodate rigid legs and short arms (notable for their failure to reach the depths of his pockets).

They made extensive use of knee braces, tubigrips, eye patches, and visits to the physio couch. Both have spent many hours passing on their experience and skills to younger club members. How much notice these apprentices paid to either is not recorded.

Both also sought out the support of academics within the Western fold. Their cerebral mentors included Fine Art historian, Professor Martin (Mario) Kempes and chemist, Dr Howard (El Magico) Andrew.

During those 40 years they have had many unique highs and lows. Some perhaps less well known.

Niall's include being (briefly) dropped as one of the infamous Crichton Royal Six. This was a band of mavericks rejected by the Monaghan 1st XI regime during a vicious purge of dissident elements. The unlucky 2nd XI recipients under Gus Scott lost their unbeaten run at boggy Dumfries. Another unholy alliance/rivalry was with Malky (gobber) Callaghan and Billy (chubba) Bruce

culminating in a triangular boot and insult throwing tantrum as the trio debated the merits of Captain Doughnut's failed cup tie tactics.

Al's notable moments - such as they were - include the unusual sentence meted out by Dr Bill and hanging Judge Carnegie that he should invest in a gum shield as a deterrent to further verbal exchanges with officialdom. Unfortunately he failed to grasp the concept and simply removed the device when next confronted by the West of Scotland's finest.

Al was also the first Western player to be sent off at indoor training following an unprovoked and brutal assault on a more talented team mate (they all were) at Blairdardie.

He was of course a dedicated Environmental Health Officer as the club's Belgian hosts once discovered when they presented him with a barbecued steak. His repeated rejection of the offering and a lecture in food hygiene (probably lost in translation) left a genial host bemused and faintly insulted by the repeated "non".

Despite these hiccups Western has been massively enriched by the fantastic enthusiasm and service provided by both over such a prolonged period. And which they continue to give every week as they turn out on the pitch or on the sidelines.

We wish them both well in their richly deserved Celebration Match.

As do some past and present Members:

Roddy Philp: *Hard to know who will be missed (most) when they do the decent thing and retire.*

Gus Scott: *Their massive contributions to Western over the years have almost mirrored the size of their egos.*

Bill Matheson: *Ermm yes. Eventual maturity has meant that disciplinary meetings and first teams' matches have been a lot quieter recently.*

Gordon McKenzie: *A spell in the Boy Scouts would have done them both a power of good.*

Neil Menzies: *How do you coach players with Al's natural aptitude and Niall's level of self confidence? Beats me.*

Billy Bruce: *Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh. What a pair of ***** doughnuts.*

Martin Kemp: *That's an absolutely cretinous thing to do, Alistair.*

Malcolm Callaghan: *Shut your ***** puss, Niall.*

Howard Andrew: *They are just misunderstood youngsters. We were all young once, you know.*

Niall and Alistair have assembled two squads of varying levels of athleticism, panache and brutality for their joust on May 31st. Amongst the Western Diaspora scheduled to appear are Tim Wilcock, Kieran McLernan, Graham Joyce, Colin McCosh, Roddy Philp, Bill Cuthbert, Johnny McMeekin, Ben Johnson, Tom Macdonald, Tony Duncan, the magnificent Andersons and Krish Nayar. Martin Kemp and Billy Bruce are hedging their bets. Members of Friends of Western not selected (activating a sense of relief rather than high dudgeon perhaps) are very welcome to come along to spectate, and enjoy some refreshments. The club bar will be open from 12 noon.

New Member The latest recruit to FOW is John Graham. John graced the 2nd XI as a speedy winger in the late 70's and early 80's. He shares the distinction with Ian Watson of being in three consecutive District Cup finals - all won - between 1979 and 1981, and scored the winning goal in the last of these against Inverleith. Welcome, John.

Please note that the Friends of Western office will be closed between 1.00 pm and 6.00 pm on Saturday, 17th May. This has nothing at all to do with a football match in the east end of Glasgow that day involving a team from Perth.

Graham Lister passes on his thanks to those who contributed examples of experiences and observations of Glasgow for his research project.

Graham will contact those involved in due course when the project is completed with an invitation to come and see the work in a special show.

SCOTTISH CAPS - THEN AND NOW

- from roll-ins to rolling subs -

Gavin Sommerville's debut game for Scotland in June 2013 was almost exactly 50 years after Tony Duncan gained his first cap against Holland. Who would have predicted the changes which have taken place in the game of hockey in that period? Grass v water-based Astroturf; rule changes which removed offside, introduced the self-pass, and allowed for match squads of up to 18 players; changes in kit and equipment. Gavin and Tony, now our most senior internationalist agreed to describe their experience at the game's pinnacle.

The Pathway to International Hockey

TD: My introduction to hockey was at the Abbey School, Fort Augustus, where I got selected for the Scottish Schoolboys side. The district team was the starting point for international hockey, then a series of trials culminating in the final trial where the Probables played the Possibles twice over a weekend. For home players, being picked for the Home Scots for the annual fixture with Ulster was a stepping stone. It was felt that playing for a 'bigger' club gave greater exposure to the national selectors (who were often umpires).

GS: There was no hockey at school so all my early experiences were at Auchenhowie under the tutelage of Euan Millar and Vishal Marwaha. Early district hockey was as a gangly striker, but by age 13 I had been converted to a goalkeeper, and then worked my way through the national age squads at under 16, 18 and 21. In all I amassed around 40 caps at these levels along with several caps for Scottish and British Universities. In 2004 I was selected for the Senior Men's squad which included a training camp in South Africa. A career change meant hockey was on the back-burner for a few years until 2012 when I regained a place in the national squad, and I won my first cap against Wales at the age of 29.

Administrative Arrangements

TD: The side was announced, along with a travelling reserve, after the Sunday trial. For home fixtures you were told where and when to meet on the Saturday morning; for away matches you were informed where the team were staying and to arrive on the Friday. Travel arrangements

were left to the individual, but the home players usually travelled together. The only expenses granted by the SHA was 3/10ths of a 2nd class rail fare from your home to the team hotel.

Scottish shirts and white sweaters were issued in the changing room before the match. Players had to provide their own white shorts and red socks. Latterly all the players bought their own blazers with the SHA badge, and wore these prior to the game and afterwards at the official dinner. This was the only time the teams got together.

Each year Scotland played England, Ireland and Wales, with an additional fixture against continental opposition in alternate years. The team for the following fixture was usually announced on the evening after a game, but occasionally this was delayed and notification would be by post at the start of the following week.

GS: The team manager is responsible for all the administration including notification of international selection, travel arrangements etc. This is by email which goes to the entire training squad of around 25, so receiving one is no guarantee of selection. Most kit is provided but I had to bring my own shorts and socks as the kit sponsorship was coming to an end. I have been very fortunate to be supported by Monarch Hockey since the under-16's, who make my goalkeeping kit to my exact specifications.

Training Requirements

TD: In 1963 it was left to the individual to carry out his own programme to achieve and maintain fitness. I would train with Western on Wednesdays, and do circuit training on my own on another evening. Along with Western's Saturday and Sunday matches this kept me reasonably fit.

Later, when Scotland were preparing for European tournaments a 16 or 18-man pool spent weekends at Largs or Perth for training sessions. It was at these that sticks were sometimes handed out - this took my total of sticks to three, and I never ever paid more than £5.00 for one.

GS: At the start of the season we are emailed a spreadsheet which details the programme for the next 12 months. A typical training week for me will consist of two weight sessions, two running/conditioning sessions and two or three pitch sessions. I train every weeknight after work apart from Friday which is a rest day. We are required to complete an online diary for each session, which includes 'wellbeing indicators' such as fatigue, mood state and appetite, and details of any injuries or illness. Sessions also have to be graded for difficulty, and I wear a heart monitor to record how hard I have worked. Every two weeks the data from the heart monitor is analysed by the team physiologist.

The Match

TD: Pre-match the captain gave a run down on the opposition and the tactics we were to adopt. A one-hour session on the morning of the game was used to go through set pieces. The support team consisted of a manager and the selectors - if one of them was a doctor that was a bonus.

My first (and last) caps were due to late call-offs - the Wednesday before the Holland game at Titwood (due to J.A.A. Hunter's withdrawal) and the Tuesday before the Wales game at Ayr in 1966. It was a time of mixed emotions - relief, having almost given up on a Cap as I had been on the edge for three years - disappointment that my dad had died two months before, never having seen me play - excitement and apprehension at playing against one of the best sides in Europe.

I was very nervous before the start, especially when I saw the stature of the opposition (all over 6ft.) Early on in the game I made a bad mistake but a voice from the back (G. Black) told me to forget it - "it's water under the bridge". After that I settled down and played reasonably well, even though we lost 4 - 0. I took from the game the knowledge that size does not matter and never again paid any heed to an opponent's size.

For the Wales match, I had not played or trained in the preceding four weeks due to professional exams, apart from a 'guest appearance' for Western 4's at Ayr, where I was arguably the worst player on the pitch. Changed days

After the match there was a general discussion about how it went, much the same as with the club. We were sent a team photo, and we were entitled to wear an SHA tie, which had to be purchased by the individual. Western had a tradition of presenting new caps with the tie.

GS: The backroom staff comprises the coach, two assistant coaches and a goalkeeping coach, manager, video analyst and physiotherapist.

The match came round very quickly and before I knew it we had finished the warm-up and we were in the pre-match huddle. There was a clap from all the boys for the new caps and some final words of wisdom from captain then we were off. As a goalkeeper I like to get an early touch but my initial involvements were scrappy, clearing up a few bits and pieces on the baseline. We were comfortably on top and went 1-0 ahead but conceded a deflected corner just before half time. The second half was a much more open affair and I was much busier but we held out and finished up 2-1 winners. The next morning we debriefed the game, analysed some video clips and prepared for the second test of the series that afternoon. The following week at training we were all issued USB memory sticks containing our 'clips' from the game. This is a recording of every time you are involved in play, which for me meant the entire game was distilled down to 2 minutes of action, so you can analyse your performance.

During the game the outfielders wear GPS trackers to monitor their every movement on the pitch. Their work intensity is measured by distance travelled per minute. International hockey is a truly squad based game now with constant substitutions and rotation stints that can be as short as three minutes and rarely longer than 10. A player's time on the pitch depends upon how long he can sustain the required intensity, and the data collected by GPS forms the basis of the rotation.

Best Player

TD: Dennis Hay was the best I played with, because of his ability and general attributes. He always seemed to be there to help when you were in trouble.

Mike Corby of England was the most difficult opponent. He had outstanding stickwork and great pace over the first ten yards.

GS: I've played with many great players over the years but the best I have played alongside is Gordon Moore (Kelburne, Western and Scotland). He was the epitome of 'gallus', and had a never say die attitude so he was a great inspiration.

Without doubt the best player I've ever seen is the Dutch legend Teun de Nooijer. He was a genuine world star, and could do everything.

