

Duncan Aitken - Argyll and Bute Sports Coach of 2009

Duncan Aitken has been involved with rugby in Mid Argyll for some 30 years. During these 30 years he has volunteered in many capacities.

He has been involved with Mid Argyll Rugby Club for over 30 years as a player, coach, President, fixture secretary, driver to name a few. It is fair to say that Duncan really is the driving force behind Mid Argyll Rugby. He currently coaches the adult team twice a week on his own and is still playing!

Youth rugby in Mid Argyll, without Duncan simply wouldn't happen. He started an after school club at Lochgilphead High School almost four years ago and has been going from strength to strength ever since. During this school year Duncan and our Rugby Development Officer, Billy Thomson, set up a primary school rugby club which now sees almost forty youngsters getting involved in rugby each week.

Since the primary school rugby club started Duncan has been excellent in recruiting senior pupils from Lochgilphead High School and getting them involved in coaching, giving them experience at working with younger pupils. Duncan wholeheartedly sees the benefits in creating a pathway from playing to coaching for older pupils. In turn these pupils are now signing up to go on coaching and referee courses.

Duncan is currently coaching with the Pathway Programme which involves coaching youth players from U15 – U18 age groups on Sunday afternoons during the summer in Oban. Not only is his coaching experience invaluable but he travels each week at his own expense. This Pathway Programme ensures that talented youngsters from all over Argyll & Bute get the opportunity to compete at a high level against teams from all over the country. As a testimony to the hard work and dedication Duncan gives to these teams the U15 team made it to the final of the Bells Lawrie U15 Bowl at the end of March 09.

Along with being involved in the coaching side of rugby Duncan also participates in Argyll & Bute regional rugby development meetings, as a representative from Mid Argyll Rugby Club. Again these take place in Oban.

In summary, Duncan is an invaluable asset to rugby in Mid Argyll and Argyll & Bute. Without him rugby in Mid Argyll simply wouldn't happen. He gives up over four hours each week just to coach; not to mention the additional travel time and coaching time involved in the Pathway Programme and the organisational time to ensure primary pupils get opportunities to compete. There are so many people, both adults and children, who benefit from Duncan's expertise, time and passion for rugby.

Fiona Irwin – Argyll and Bute Sports Administrator of 2009

Fiona is a founder member of the Kintyre Jogscotland Group, a collection of people who wish to improve their own and other people in their community's health through physical activity. Fiona undertook training as a Jog Scotland leader through Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish Athletics and took these new found skills back to her community in Campbeltown and Kintyre.

Since that time, she has been a driving force in the area to establish, maintain and grow the Jogscotland Group to its current strength of over 100. Bearing in mind that the majority of members will never have dreamt of Jogging as an activity before, it takes a special talent and a great deal of determination and dedication to sustain this level of 'persuasion'.

Fiona is also the cheerleader, social secretary, chair and running buddy of the group and her easy going manner has encouraged so many to follow her on runs and even become Jog leaders themselves. The club now has 12 trained Jog Leaders.

The "Wee Toon Runners" can be seen plodding the pavements and even entering 5k and 10k events across Argyll and Bute as well as the rest of Scotland. The recent Mull of Kintyre 10k and Half Marathon had many many runners from Campbeltown and Kintyre participating simply because Fiona encouraged them to challenge themselves a few months or years ago.

There is no doubt that Fiona has made a telling and lasting contribution to the health and wellbeing of her local community and is a worthy winner.

Oban Saints AFC – Argyll and Bute Sports Organisation of the Year 2009

Oban Saints AFC have been described by the First Minister, Alex Salmond, the President of the Scottish FA, The Head of Development and the West Region Manager of the SFA as a model organisation for football in Scotland. The photograph shows one of the clubs longest serving volunteers, David Buchanan being presented with the club's Quality Mark Certificate at Hampden Park in 2008.

These great plaudits do not detract from the grass roots work the club do in their local community to encourage young people, boys and girls, older people, and ladies to adopt football as a way of getting/keeping fit and being involved in your local community.

The club operate teams and coaching for under 8's, uners 9's, under 12's, etc all the way to under 17's as well as a veterans team and a ladies team.

All coaches are qualified to the highest standards with SFA awards, have enhanced disclosure for child protection and give of their time freely.

The club sets itself and others very high standards both off and on the park and are a credit not only to Oban, but the whole of Argyll and Bute where their 'model' of organisation and operation is being used to help develop the game in other areas.

Not prepared to rest on their laurels, the club arrange and present one of the most successful amateur football tournaments in Scotland which attracts teams from a great number of Premier League and Scottish league clubs including Dundee United, Hearts, Motherwell Aberdeen and St Mirren. They also participate in the recently formed Argyll and Bute Football Forum and help others in their own development.

Katherine McNaughton – Argyll and Bute Junior Sports Volunteer of 2009

Katherine began volunteering with the Islay & Jura Dolphins swimming club more than 3 years ago, at the age of 14, while she was still a swimmer with the club. She expressed an interest in helping to coach the younger swimmers in the club and so was encouraged to take on the role of a Poolside Helper, assisting a qualified coach.

She worked with young swimmers between the ages of 6 and 11 and gained valuable skills, knowledge, and experience. At the age of 16 she qualified as a Level 1 Swimming Teacher, and although she no longer swims competitively, she has continued to volunteer as a coach. Once qualified she took on responsibility for a junior squad of her own, where the young swimmers responded immediately to her friendly, caring and fun approach. She has also taken on further responsibility such as mentoring a young poolside helper herself and is now coaching one of the senior squads in the club. On top of giving up her Saturday afternoons to coach swimming, Katherine regularly helps in the running of swimming competitions on Islay including in-house club events, galas against visiting clubs, and club championships.

This experience has led Katherine to consider a career in sports and she has gained a place at university to study a sports based course from September.

As a link between lessons and club swimming, she has made joining the swimming club appear much less intimidating to potential new members as children attending lesson already know, like and respect her. The club believes this is one of the reasons that club membership is at a maximum level for the first time in several years.

Katherine has become a role model for both young and senior members of the Dolphins club. She has a natural ability to build relationships with even the most shy and reluctant children, largely as a result of her patience, and her gentle and fun approach. She has also developed the respect of older swimmers for her knowledge of the sport and sense of humour.

Her example has shown other members of the club that volunteering is fun and appealing as well as worthwhile, and has helped to combat the perception that volunteering is only for older people. Katherine involvement with the club has been largely responsible for the fact that most of our older swimmers now volunteer as coaches or helpers.