

Team GB win football gold in Barnton



With all eyes on the Olympic Games in London, The Edinburgh Reporter today visited a group of budding stars of the future as they were put through their paces at the Play2learn football camp in Barnton.

This week, 46 children aged from 3-13 took part in the camp which was held within the grounds of the Royal High School.

Maintaining the Olympic theme, the kids were divided into teams including the UK, Jamaica, Germany and the USA, and there was no less determination to win amongst the youngsters as there is in London this week.

The camps take place every week of the school holidays, and during term times the coaches also work with schools and youth teams at clubs such as Civil Service Strollers, Currie Star and Edinburgh City.

Play2learn was founded by Dave Upton and Shane McCreevy in 2005. The pair met while coaching football in New Jersey, USA and both love football and favour short passing, high tempo, fast flowing, attacking football starting from the keeper.... Barca style!

The company have been coaching Edinburgh's youngsters for seven years. They were previously based in Clermiston before moving to the excellent facilities at their current base. So far, several of the youngsters who have received coaching have gone on to make a name for themselves in the professional game, and after witnessing some of the skills on display, it would not be surprising to see more going down that route.

Dave, who holds a UEFA 'B' coaching licence, told The Edinburgh Reporter:- "We have kids from 3-5 playing petite football, kids from 6-8 playing youth football and the seniors are between 9 and 13. The younger kids' games are geared toward their imagination and are suitable for boys and girls in Pre-School or Nursery aged 3-5yrs who love running about, laughing loads, role-playing and most importantly having lots of fun. We use imaginary story-based games linking the world of superheroes and cartoon characters to sport based fun games. These games are ideal for the kids in the early stages of their sporting life.

"We play games such as Shrek, Power Rangers and my personal favourite Sponge Bob Square Pants. The older kids play Diamond Football which is a fast flowing small sided 4-a-side game. It develops positional play by teaching width, length, depth & support play and players get more touches of the ball. It also sharpens their first touch.

"Today our tournament is an Olympic Fun Day and the players are all dressed in the countries' colours with face paint and hair dye. Sometimes we base the tournament on the World Cup or Champion's League teams.

"Another important aspect is teaching the children that positive competition is good and they have to accept that they can't win all the time. Everyone has fun, but we can be quite strict when we have to.

"An unexpected bonus from the camps has been the number of former players who have returned to coach the current players. Three of the coaches today, Steve, Louise and Aiden previously attended the camp, and are all in various stages of gaining coaching qualifications.

"We used to have a connection with Hutchie Vale and have coached established professional players such as Paul Hanlon, Leigh Griffiths and Danny Galbraith. Paul sometimes presents

our prizes and was due to do so today but he was required for the Hibs press conference.

“At the end of the week, everyone is presented with a certificate, at a ceremony in front of the excited parents. Trophies are awarded for Most Improved Player and Most Valuable Player, whilst the winning team all get medals and are photographed with the cup. We also hand out free gifts such as boot bags, so no-one leaves empty handed.”

The camp runs from Monday to Friday from 9.30 until 3pm for the older children and 9.30 until 12.30 for the under-fives. Full time costs £75 per week and half days cost £35.

Monday, the coaches concentrate on dribbling, Tuesday is passing, Wednesday is control and defending, Thursday is goalkeeping and goal scoring, and Friday is the tournament.

Any parent wishing to book a week's camp can do so at <http://www.play2learn.info/Bookings.html>

The week ended with a victory for Team GB and judging by the faces of the winning players, the medals meant as much to them as they will do to their more famous counterparts should they manage to do likewise.