

Men's hockey – Riddell ready for Games



Duncan Riddell (centre) in action for Grange. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Duncan Riddell shivered on the sidelines as the thermometer hovered around zero watching his former club, Grange, slip-up against Western with a 1-1 draw in their bid to claim the Scottish Division One title.

The Scotland international, however, is in sunnier climes having jetted to Australia with the men's hockey squad for the Commonwealth Games.

The Edinburgh-born player has been a fixture in coach Derek Forsyth's squads for the past few years.

And soft-spoken Riddell, who was once a student at Abertay University, acknowledges the contribution playing for Grange made to his hockey development.

However, the transfer to top English side Reading has provided a perfect platform to step-up.

Reading are currently in third position in the men's Division One down south.

They have 33 points from 17 fixtures and trail second-placed Surbiton, who have several Scottish internationals in their line-up, including national skipper Chris Grassick, by two points with the same number of games played.

Beeston lead the title chase with 37 points from 17 outings and Riddell believes Reading have a real chance of lifting silverware.

His concentration, however, is on helping Scotland to a high

ranking in the games on the Gold Coast.

The former George Watson's College pupil is set to make his Commonwealth Games debut.

However, he was in the squad which last year won EuroHockey Championship II and qualified for the World League semi-final.

And the determined Scot is desperate to help the squad achieve Down Under.

Riddell, a school events co-ordinator, said his season so far in England had gone well.

And he praised his coach at Reading, Jason Lee, who took England to their first European title at the 2009 EuroHockey Nations Championship, for helping take his game to the next stage.

Riddell added: "With respect, it's a big step-up from Scottish domestic hockey to the top English league.

"The game is so much faster and the quality much higher and you are paying against experienced international players week-in, week-out.

"That helps you improve and Jason has been a massive help to me. He's got vast experience had his squads competed in three successive Olympic Games."

Riddell naturally hopes that experience will assist when they Scots start their Games campaign.

Scotland are drawn in Pool A alongside hosts Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa and coach Forsyth has already targeted Canada and South Africa as key games.

The player said: "We're going out in time to acclimatise. It's freezing here but over there heat will be a factor in games so we have to prepare well.

“A lot depends on how we start the competition. If we build momentum then we can do well as we have a talented team with most of us playing in highly-competitive leagues outwith Scotland.

“Our aim as a squad is to finish as high as we can and we are all determined to give it everything.”