

Ice hockey – Cameron aiming high in Clan hot seat

Malcolm Cameron, a man raised in the New World, is determined to hit the old world, and the land of his ancestors, running. They left their native Tیره in the 1800's in search of a new beginning in Canada, landing in Nova Scotia.

Cameron (pictured) is leaving his home in sun-kissed Florida – where temperatures are touching 40c this week – to touch down in Britain for the first time seeking a fresh start on his coaching journey at leading Scottish ice hockey team, Glasgow Clan, sponsored by Aspray Glasgow West.

And he is totally aware of the challenges which await in a city where Glasgow Rangers and Celtic football clubs dominate the sporting landscape. They also eat up the precious column inches in the media.

Yet he is supremely confident in his ability to make a mark with this team and, in doing so, recruit newcomers to the club's fast-growing fan base, called the Purple Army.

The native of Cole Harbour, near Halifax, Nova Scotia, is endeavouring to shape a team of which Glasgow can be proud. It is a challenge, but tough-talking Cameron has faced challenges before.

In Italy, for example, most of the team spoke German. In Romania, the team was largely Hungarian, however he managed to communicate his message.

There he built a team which was tough to play against, competed for 60-minutes every night, pressurised teams at 100mph when they didn't have the puck, drove into "dirty areas" like around the net and a team which the opposition didn't want to play against.

His unfancied ice warriors were, he said, not “the most talented in the league” but they played play-off-style hockey from the off. They were like “sand paper” and scrapped so effectively that they qualified for the play-offs against all the odds.

Success is, he said, built on solid foundations. His defence will be buttressed by quality goaltending and that is why he has signed a tried and trusted player in Shane Starrett. He will be surrounded by players who know what is expected of them, basically making it tough for the opposition to score.

Clan will be “nasty” on the ice but Cameron will demand that his guys are ambassadors off it, becoming involved in community initiatives and interacting with fans.

He said: “In Romania we played play-off hockey from the start. In fact, we were playing play-off hockey for six months. Opposition teams had to change their style but we kept on going.”

Cameron added: “I also want players who identify with our team, who are also personalities who are exciting for the fans to watch, and I want an entertainment package.”

He has watched and learned from the marketing of the NHL (National Hockey League) to non-traditional hockey fans in North America.

“We are not just competing with Celtic and Rangers, we are competing with people who want to spend their money on going out to dinner, going on a mini-vacation.

“We need an entertainment package, a three-hour package, providing entertainment before warm-up, after warm-up, in the breaks and throughout the game.

“We don’t just want a hockey game, we want an event. New Jersey Devils were a successful club way back but they played boring hockey. Their fans came but other fans didn’t. I don’t

want that. Fans don't want to see a boring 2-1 game. They want aggression and a 5-4 hockey game."

Cameron's men are those who are willing to make sacrifices for the development of the club. He is making sacrifices. His wife Heather, who has Scottish ancestry, will remain in Florida to continue with her new job and look after sons, Brett, aged 20 and Logan, aged 13, both of whom are talented young hockey players.

Their 51-year-old father played as a right-wing for 13 teams, including Amarillo Rattlers, Florida Everblades, Elmire Jackals and Wichita Thunder, ending his career with El Paso Buzzards in 1998 before moving behind the bench.

He may have a solid CV but he is not at the top of the sporting hierarchy in Cole Harbour. Pride of place, currently, goes to three-time, Stanley Cup winner, Sidney Crosby.

Nathan MacKinnon, alternate captain of Colorado Avalanche, who was selected first overall in the 2013 NHL Entry Draft, is also up there.

Cameron said: "The area has not done badly producing hockey talent."

If the coach does make his mark in Glasgow then he could well be further along the road to being lauded back home as one of Cole Harbour's sporting greats. Time will tell.