

Curling coach reflects on what it means to make an athlete

As Edinburgh's Bruce Mouat and Jennifer Dodds played in Beijing, back home David Aitken reflected on his contribution to their journey with pride – as one of their ever first curling coaches.

Aitken watched on as Mouat and Dodds lost out to a strong Sweden team in the bronze medal match. Despite not coming home with a coveted Winter Olympic medal, he feels the team can be immensely proud of their performances in a world class field of opposition.

And finally from Curl Edinburgh a word from David Aitken former coach to Bruce Mouat who is on the ice playing in the Beijing Olympics – this is the comment after the first end against Norway... pic.twitter.com/ENe2CSz8lI

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [February 7, 2022](#)

Representing GB and at an Olympic Games is the pinnacle of sport for the pair, but Aitken recalls their first steps onto the ice having coached them from complete beginners to promising young curlers.



David Aitken

Aitken reflected on the value of coaching, and what it means to “make an athlete”.

He said: “I used to be a player myself, and initially started by just helping out with absolute beginners. At first, it was tricky to work out exactly how best to communicate some of the more technical things as I transitioned into being a coach – but eventually you develop that skill.

“When I first started coaching, it was just from a participation perspective – I wanted more and more people to play the sport that I enjoyed so much. But then as the players progressed, you see this opportunity for them to experience something at an elite level, and that journey is a magical thing to be part of.

“There’s so many opportunities through coaching to develop not just as a player but as a person. Bruce wasn’t from a ‘curling community’ – it was just a case of parents bringing a child along to try a sport that looked like fun. Part of the responsibility of a coach is to ensure that your sport is inclusive, that anyone can get involved.”

Aitken is still very much involved – currently British

Curling's Performance Foundation Manager based in Stirling. And regardless of medals, he could not be prouder of the talent emerging from GB's curling scene.

He said: "Britain are good at curling, because we have a very well-funded programme thanks to The National Lottery, we have a lot of experience regarding coaching and the support staff, and that input towards athletes really highlights the team behind the team.

"The breadth of input was a real eye-opener for me as I became a full-time coach, seeing how the athletes can be supported to perform to their best."

Following an encouraging showing from the British curling contingent in Beijing, Aitken will be hoping for even more to follow – and with all the right coaching behind the team, they have everything they need.

www.ukcoaching.org – if you are inspired to get into coaching there are resources and support here.



Members of Curl Edinburgh on the day of the mixed doubles semi-finals in Beijing at the 2022 Olympics PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter