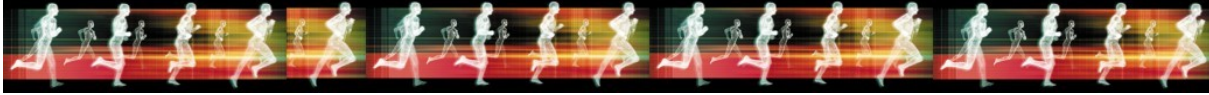


The Society of Sports Therapists



Original article available at

http://www.society-of-sports-therapists.org/article_nicola.dinsdale.htm



Nicola Dinsdale Recalls her Inspiring Bruce Hobbs Travelling Scholarship Trip to Ghana

The winner of the *Bruce Hobbs Travelling Scholarship 2010* was **Nicola Dinsdale**. Nicola is a BSc (Hons) Sports Therapy Graduate from Teesside University and works in *NJD Sports Injury Clinic*, Clitheroe, Lancashire, which she runs with her father Nick Dinsdale.

She recently spent 3 weeks in Ghana where her time mainly consisted of working with the Hearts of Oak Football Premiership team and working in a local hospital. We talked to Nicola about her trip.

How did your interest in going to Ghana come about?

Over recent years I have wanted to take part in some volunteer work abroad. However, all the programmes I came across were very expensive, and not relevant to my training. I found the Ghana sports injury trip through a volunteer agency called Gap Force, and couldn't resist as it sounded ideal for me. Although expensive, I thought it would be an amazing opportunity as I would be able to practice and develop my sports therapy skills, share knowledge and teach others. Moreover, I was the first sports therapist to work with Gap Force.



Nicola treating one of the player's injuries

Can you tell me about your time working with the Ghanaian Premier League side Hearts of Oak. What was your role whilst at the club and who were you working with? What would your day to day role involve?

The majority of my placement was spent with Hearts of Oak, who are Ghana's equivalent of Manchester United; they have six players who were part of the recent World Cup squad, therefore a very prestigious opportunity for me. I worked alongside the team therapist Ernest.

During my first week we spent long hours travelling to players' houses to provide treatment, only to arrive to

find no equipment. It would sometimes take 3-4 hours round trip to visit one player.



Nicola applies her first-aid skills

Another role I undertook was to provide pitch side treatment during games. For this I was given a bottle of water and a block of ice to run on with, so it was back to basics for me. This proved to be a slightly scary experience as the stadium has a 46,000 capacity (although it was nowhere near full), it was a few thousand more spectators, and live TV coverage, not what I'm used to compared to working at Blackburn Rugby Club.

At one of my meetings with the Team Doctor, he gave me a tour of his orthopaedic ward, and we accidentally ended up watching a caesarean birth in the dark by torchlight due to a power cut, which was a regular occurrence across the city!



The Hospital Nicola worked in

You also spent some time working at a local hospital in Ghana. What conditions were you working in and how did this affect your ability to do your job? Did you get to work on any interesting cases?

I spent 5 mornings in the main city hospital in the physiotherapy department. Prior to travelling to Ghana I managed to obtain donations of rehabilitation equipment from Patterson medical supplies which I presented to the staff of the hospital, it was greatly received.



Nicola with the hospital staff

Most of the hospital placement was in the treatment room, where I felt at home and got to work on back, and neck patients with a more hands on approach. I really enjoyed working with the staff here, and we were able to teach each other new techniques.

In what way has your trip developed you as a Sports Therapist, and a person?

I feel the trip has developed my skills as a therapist, by making me think more creatively to provide treatment and rehabilitation to patients when you have little if any equipment. The Hearts of Oak placement pushed me to develop ideas for players during rehabilitation programmes as they had no gym equipment, and limited money. Therefore I tried to develop ways they could strengthen using things around the house without any added costs. I have also developed skills from working in a professional team environment, which I had little experience with.

The whole experience of Ghana has made me appreciate what I have and the opportunities that are available to me as part of a developed country. However Ghana is developing and they adapt, and I learnt quickly to adapt and think on my feet.

When you weren't working, how else did you spend your time in Ghana? Did you find time to relax and enjoy the Ghanaian culture?

I had little free time in Ghana as I worked long hours, 7 days a week. However whilst working with Ernest he introduced me to the Ghanaian people and their culture.

I had off the beaten track tours around the city and cooking lessons from his family. A variety of local cuisine including fufu, palm wine and goat's intestines and often traumatic experiences using the local transport.



Nicola having some African drumming lessons

I took part in an African dance and drumming lesson in a dusty spot next to a main road, I learnt bits of the local language and ways of life, and even had some African dresses made for me! However, one experience I will never forget was when Ernest's sister went into labour and we rushed to the hospital in an unorthodox taxi ride, and she gave birth to a baby boy called James and she asked me to be his Godmother.



Nicola with her new Godson James

What will be your lasting memories from your time in Ghana?

My memories of Ghana, are how friendly everyone was, and how they wanted to go out of their way to welcome me. They made my trip most enjoyable, and I made some good friends. The things I won't miss though are; the ridiculous heat and humidity levels, and

the uncomfortable car journeys on Ghana's beaten up roads.

If you could go back to Ghana again, would you change anything about your visit or do anything differently?

I would love to return to Ghana to visit the friends I made, and of course my new Godson. I only wish I had had more free time to explore the country more.

If you were recommending The Bruce Hobbs Society of Sports Therapists Travelling Scholarship to a fellow member of the Society, why would you tell them to apply?

I would recommend other Sports Therapists to apply for the travelling scholarship and volunteer for projects abroad as it is likely to offer a life changing experience and develop professional qualities. My decision to apply for the travelling scholarship helped make my trip to Ghana possible.

I am grateful that the Society chose me and I had their backing for the project, and entrusted me with the role as an ambassador for Sports Therapy. The enjoyment and satisfaction I gained whilst in Ghana, helping and teaching others has been very rewarding professionally and personally. I suggest fellow therapists do not hesitate if they find a project suited to them.

