

Chapter 42
1958 – 1961
Bannockburn / Jordanhill College (i)

I could write a whole book about the challenges, excitement and fulfilment of the three years I spent as a member of one of the select groups of sportsmen who were fortunate enough to be physical education teacher trainees at the Scottish School of Physical Education (SSPE) in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But, by their very nature as the experiences of a close-knit ‘family’, many of the details of all of our lives there must remain private and confidential. However, with a fair degree of generalisation, and some inoffensive and complimentary mention of individuals, I hope to give the reader a strong flavour of the fine opportunities for professional development that these three years provided.

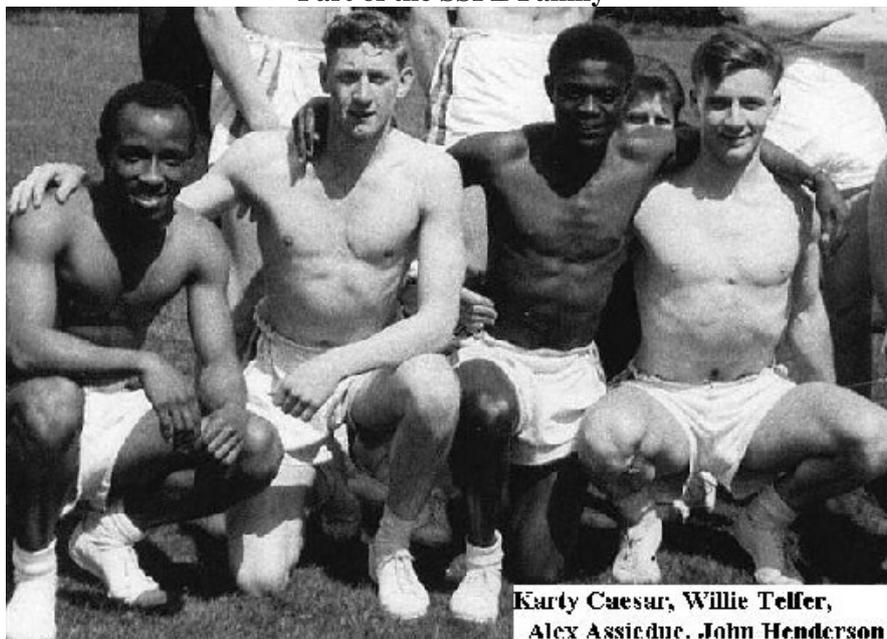
In any one academic year at SSPE there were three sections (S1, S2 and S3) with around thirty men in each cohort. The main base for activity, as an extension of the main college buildings, comprised a large gymnasium and store rooms enclosed on two sides by ancillary facilities: for students - two adequately sized changing-rooms with communal showers etc., a clothes’ drying-room, and a ‘boot’ room; for the six members of the teaching staff - three offices/changing rooms; for all – a small tutorial room. This last room looked out in a westerly direction over four tennis courts, while the gymnasium store, on the northern aspect, opened onto a fully-sized blaes soccer pitch. Stretching out eastwards from the front of the main college building, there were two acres of curved ornamental lawn, beyond which, extensively landscaped areas in winter and spring, not only provided one soccer and two rugby pitches on grass, but also a blaes hockey pitch. In summer, these grass areas served as both cricket oval and athletics’ arena. Significantly, at my time, there was no swimming pool on campus.

So this was the setting for my arrival in the first week of October, 1958, where, of the first matters to be attended to, there was the collecting all the many items of sports’ kit for which we recruits had been carefully measured during September visits to outfitter, R.W. Forsyth, in the city centre. Apart from clothing items of a more personal nature that had to be self-provided, like studded football boots, white plimsoles, white socks, black socks, ‘jock-straps’, and white dress shirts the ready-to-wear kit comprised a heavy track-suit and three college coloured games’ shirts, all conspicuously numbered [76 for me] ; two pairs each of blue field games’ shorts and college coloured stockings, gymnastics’ shorts, athletics’ shorts and vests, navy teaching trousers (‘blues’) and smart, light and smooth rubber-soled teaching shoes. From the outset, and constantly thereafter during subsequent initiation into the ‘school ethos’, we were ordered to pay great attention at all times to time-keeping for classes, as well as our dress appearance and personal hygiene. And, particularly, as the skin infection of ‘private parts’, feet and armpits, called ‘Dobie’s Itch’ was always lurking ready to infect the ‘unclean’ in such a close living, constantly showering, towelling and powdering, community as ours, the need for meticulous washing and drying of body and clothes was preached at us ‘ad nauseam’.

Two abiding memories of not only these early days, but many other days thereafter, were - the late afternoon aromas of various, often exotic, powders, the likes of which would not have disgraced the chambers of a harem – and – being aware of a likely personal morning greeting from our highly respected school principal, Hugh ‘The Bomber’ Brown, comprising, either, or both of two of his many uniquely penetrative and often highly amusing ‘one-liners’, namely, “Not close enough to the razor this morning, Henderson?” or “Lost your toothbrush, have you?”

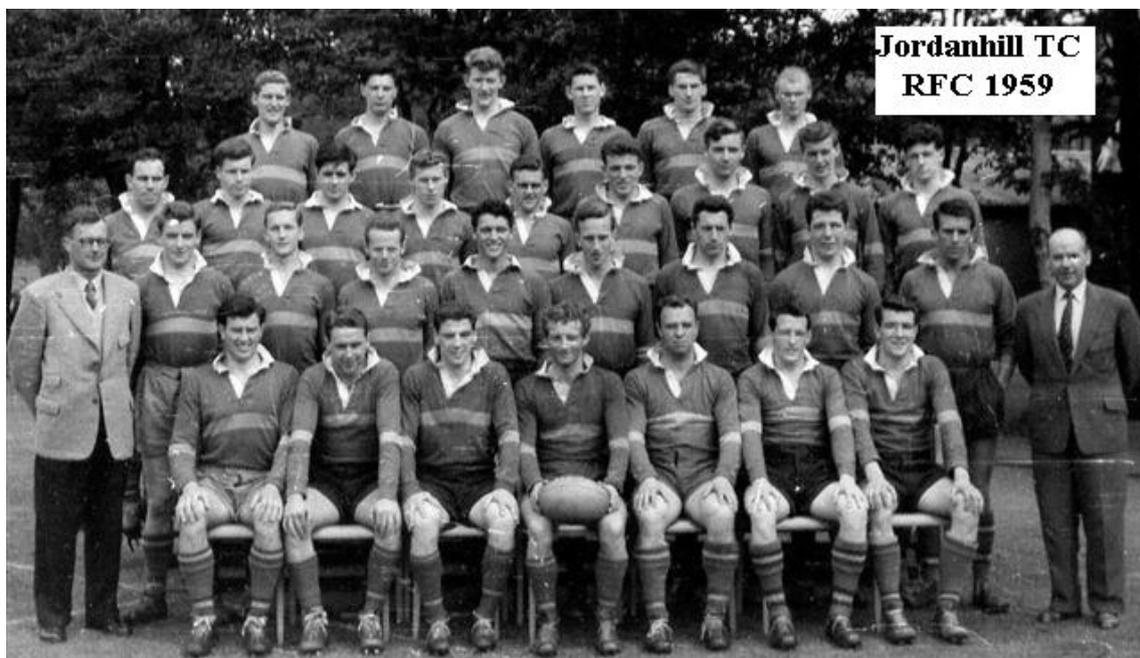
Timetables were quickly issued on that first morning and the extent of the physical demands of the course, if not the academic ones at that point, became very evident. Within a 30 x 45 minute period week of contact with staff we would sample their offerings for, and our own participation in, the following curriculum subjects: Gymnastics, Swimming, 3 Major Games (in season), ‘Commanding’ (basic teaching simulation in the gymnasium), Scottish Country Dancing, Theory of Teaching PE, Theory of Major Games, Health Education, Anatomy and Physiology, Speech Training, English Literature and Singing.

Part of the SSPE Family



Then, and this was what many of us were really looking forward to, we were informed that, apart from those with part-time professional contracts with national league clubs, we were all expected to play soccer, or rugby, or hockey, for College teams on Saturday afternoons during term-time until Easter. Thus that first day ended with our making our choice of sport and attending a club meeting with like-minded players from the other two cohorts.

I chose rugby with the knowledge that Jordanhill College RFC was striving to gain entry into the top sixteen 'unofficial championship' in Scotland. And I wanted, in due course, not only to be part of a squad in such a national context, but also to discover whether I was going to be good enough to progress to representative honours, at least at district, if not at international, levels.



Ron Small/Ivor Allan/Bob Wilson/Ian Beattie/ Ali Bradley/John Gray
George Reid/Jim McManus/Jim McKinnie/Bert Jess/Stan Ireland/Roy McCluskey/JH/Tom Robertson/Brian Blisset
Martin Brickley/Ian Robin/Ron Smith/Brian Smith/Pete Giles/Eddie Burnet/Ian Baptie/Jack Kelly
Harry Sydney/Eric Saunders/John Coletta/Romano Zavaroni/Ali Wright/John Roxburgh/ Colin McLeod
Mr W. Dickinson [Hon. Secretary] and Mr G.F. Orr [President]