



Guernsey Sporting Heroes

Who are Guernsey young people's sporting heroes?

Findings of a survey of 1000+ young people in Guernsey to discover who are the younger generation's local and international sporting heroes

Each year the education department in association with the health and social services department undertakes a survey to gauge the views, attitudes and beliefs of young people in Guernsey.

Over 1000 young people ranging in age from 10 to 17 years answer 100 questions on all aspects of their lives. This year the survey was part sponsored by GASP (Guernsey Adolescent Smokefree Project) who wanted to gather information on what makes young people tick.

For the first time young people were asked about sporting heroes and sports teams.

We will circulate information about favourite sports teams next week. Alun Williams, Chairperson of GASP explains the thinking behind the question:

We regularly hear debate about young people today and their relationship with sport. Comments are often made that young people are not so interested in sport and are more switched on by facebook and computer games. Also people look back to their own childhood nostalgically and remember how important sporting heroes were. My generation grew up with the England 1966 world cup winning team who profoundly shaped our love of sport. We wanted to find out if the same applied to today's youngsters. Do they still have sporting heroes? The answer to that question is a resounding yes

From the 1337 young people, we had a total of 668 nominations and in total 292 sporting heroes were put forward. It is particularly interesting that there was such an overwhelming response to the question about local heroes. Few other communities could come up with 87 local heroes. It really is a credit to the island and recognition of the strength of the quality of island sport.

Here are some of our observations:

Local Sporting Heroes

It is no surprise that the top three local heroes were Matt Le Tissier, Andy Priaulx and Dale Garland who were very clear winners of the poll. There were only a couple of votes between the trio but well done to Matt for pipping Andy and Dale at the post. It is a real credit to his reputation that some of the primary school pupils who voted for him were not even born when he hung up his boots.

It is also great to see Heather Watson and Alice Loveridge, two of Guernsey's rising stars, feature so prominently. We think that they are excellent role models especially for young girls who run the risk of being turned off sport as they grow older. Their efforts to make it on a global stage are an inspiration for us all.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is the inclusion of young rugby prop Leighton Batiste in the top five of sporting heroes. Rugby featured prominently in the nominations and I am sure that this will be well-received down at the rugby club where Leighton's determination and commitment is seen in every match he plays.

The importance of family role models is demonstrated by 'dad' featuring so highly. 'Mum', 'uncle', 'brother' and 'granddad' also all got a mention and it is reassuring to see that some of the youngsters had the self-confidence (and cheek!) to nominate themselves.

Guernsey has a great sporting tradition and it is pleasing to see that this is reflected in the nominations of sporting heroes from the past. Six of Guernsey's sporting heroes, as recognised by the sports commission, were nominated – Matt Le Tissier, Andy Priaulx, Dale Garland, Len Duquemin, Adrian Breton, Ali Merrien and Helen Watts. It is especially pleasing that Len Duquemin placed in the top 15.

One of the strengths of Guernsey sport, especially amongst young people is that there is such a variety of sports available to young people. This is reflected in the most popular fifteen heroes. Eight sports are represented and although football is the most mentioned sport with Matt Le Tissier, Len Duquemin, and current island players Matt Warren and Dominic Heaume it is great to see stars from tennis, table tennis, badminton, athletics, rugby, motor racing and swimming also receive their accolades

International/National Sporting Heroes

The domination of football on the international sporting stage is evident by the presence of so many footballers in the top 16 choices. Over half of the selections were footballers. We were surprised that Steven Gerrard was the most popular but remember that the survey was undertaken in may/ june. People, especially youngsters, have short memories in sport and surely a survey today would have the likes of world record breaker Usain Bolt and the new Galactico Christian Ronaldo ahead of Gerrard whose Liverpool side have had such a mediocre start to the season.

Having said that sporting memories are short it is interesting to see the number of sporting heroes whose exploits are not recent although clearly their achievements live on. David Beckham, Tiger Woods, Roy Keane, Johnny Wilkinson and Kelly Holmes all feature although their greatest moments were five to ten years ago.

The international nature of sport today is reflected by the range of countries amongst the international heroes. The sixteen champions were born in nine different countries.

Female sporting heroes were interesting. Only two of the top sixteen were women and congratulations to Heather Watson for accompanying Kelly Holmes in being nominated (and being the only Guernsey sports person to feature in both the local and the international list). But the inclusion of the likes of Darcy Bussell, Ellen Whitaker, Pippa Funnell, Rebecca Aldridge and Maria Shaparova shows that there is a place for inspirations for young girls.