

Soccer's English

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MA in Leisure Studies. English has played soccer since he was four years old. A multi-talented athlete, he has played rugby in the past, and is also a current member of Dalhousie's varsity Track and Field team. He chose soccer simply because, as he puts it, "I was better at it".

He has also played in many leagues in his native England, both in the northeast and in London, and was also a member of the University of Birmingham team. In Canada, he has played in the Nova Scotia Soccer League (NSSL) First Division for the past two years for Halifax Dunbrack Keith's who won the Maritime championships this past summer. He has also been involved in the coaching of H.H. Marshall, Dunbrack, and Dal's International Soccer School.

He came to Dal via the so-called 'Birmingham connection':

"There have been three or four guys from the University of Birmingham over the past few years who enjoyed their soccer experiences at Dal. They suggested that I come over, so I did."

Lucky for Dal that he did. Yet English is modest when asked about what he feels he brings to the team.

"I bring age to the team," he replies with a laugh, then adds more seriously, "I bring experience... Since I have played at a high level in England, the intensity is there and I'm used to playing in highly-competitive situations... It's the intensity and competitive spirit that you hope will increase the intensity in other players."

English has consistently backed his words up, both on and off the playing field.

"He is the most athletic player we have ever had at Dalhousie," notes men's coach Ian Kent. "His quickness, his jumping ability, his speed over five or ten yards is the best I have seen. He has provided a weapon we haven't had before."

"He brings maturity," says Kent, adding "I expect leadership on and off the field [during the season]. I expect him to be lethal and make the best of every opportunity he gets."

Richie Tobin, Mooseheads team member and newcomer to the Tigers, has played against English in the NSSL.

"It is difficult and frustrating," Tobin says of playing against him. "He has a great mix of speed and ball control skills."

Tobin feels fortunate to be playing for the same side for a change.

"It's a real treat, a pleasure to play with him," he laughs, adding "He's a great player with a great attitude on and off the field. When he is on his game, he is unstoppable. He elevates everyone on the team."

English recognizes that Kent has had a significant impact on his game over the past two seasons.

"He has made me a lot more disciplined," he notes. "On other teams I could be quite lazy and do my own thing. He is very organized, disciplined, and structured, and it helps me."

English is reluctant to speculate on the team's chances for the remainder of the season.

"I look around and see [that] we are a young team... in a way the core of the team has been taken away," he says cautiously. On a more optimistic note, he adds, "There are [a lot of] new good players but it is going to take time for the team to gel. We don't have to worry about the AUAs — they are a ways away yet so there is time for the team to progress."

People have high expectations of English and over the years he has learned to bear the pressure that comes with the territory.

"It's nice to be anonymous and sort of just go out and play, but as soon as people see a few little titles next to your name, [if] you miss a good opportunity in a game [then] people say you don't deserve it... you just got to go on and enjoy the game."

I doubt that there will be any question as to whether English deserves the many honours awarded to him. Though it takes more than just one player to make a team, this player can be counted on to be consistent, committed and giving one hundred per cent at every turn.

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