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Hockey: Drag-flick King Ferreira



IT looks like SA hockey has an exceptional talent in the making in Pretoria Boys High School striker Donovan Ferreira.

Known as Don or Donnas to his mates, the possessor of a lethal reverse stick shot as well as a formidable penalty corner drag-flick, Ferreira has been an incredible sportsman at PBHS over the last five years in both hockey and cricket.

Donnas' Brief Hockey History tells the story:

- Provincial Hockey through all age groups (U14, U16 AND U18)
- U18A Northerns 2015 (finished 4th)
- 1ST XI Hockey at PBHS 2014, 2015, 2016
- Currently stands on 76 goals for the 2016 season in 24 matches
- Penalty corner specialist

- Scored 10 of the 11 goals in PBHS 11-1 Victory over arch-rivals St Alban's
- Plays centre forward or striker for the PBHS 1st XI and unsurprisingly has a hunger for goals - and knows how to score goals.
- Jacques Kallis Cricket Bursary boy
- Loves the game of hockey and hopes to continue playing when he leaves school as he believes his hockey and his cricket both complement each other in so many ways

And if any more credibility is needed, here's what an astute coach has said of him.

"What a gamebreaker! From what I've seen he's a serious athlete with tremendous pace when in possession, a vital ingredient for any striker of note. The other key item in the recipe is his hunger for goals – and he has the talent and ability to pull that off. Donovan plays upfront to great effect and is outstanding at setting up all defensive and attacking formations.

"Two personal standout performances that catch the eye are Ferreira's harvest of 17 successful strikes at the St Stithians Festival as well as those 10 goals in the match against St Albans."

With seven PBHS boys in the Northerns side (Ferreira is captain) for the 2016 Interprovincial Nationals that starts in the last week of June and ends at University of The Free State Hockey Centre on July 1, it looks like the team could go one better than last year's semi-finals and eventual fourth place (their highest position since 2006).

PBHS director of hockey and first team coach Ryan Anderson is at Northerns' helm again and his experience at senior level will be invaluable for the Pretoria lads.

"Interprovincial Nationals don't allow much room to make up for a bad game. IPT is IPT and there are always surprises," was Anderson's succinct summation.

But what of Mr Donovan Ferreira himself? Well let's hear what he's got to say.

With all this sport you'd think Ferreira's studies would suffer? Not a jot. "I am coping fine. It is tough but with good time management I am coping. I don't think I could do without sport. Not sure what degree I'm going to do next year but I might go to Tuks or Pukke."

And what does Don enjoy about PBHS as a school? "I enjoy the fact that there is a brotherhood that is unbreakable. It is a school that offers you many different opportunities. It is a well-rounded school

"As to which sport I might prefer, I can't really choose because they are so different. They both complement each other and keep me fit all year round. Cricket builds my mental strength and hockey enhances my hand eye co-ordination. Therefore they both benefit one another."

Extremely grateful to be a recipient of the Jacques Kallis bursary Ferreira is wisely keeping his sporting options open. "One does not know what life will throw at you."

"I am a striker. My role is to score goals. I am also the drag flicker and I have stood in as captain due to Mathew Glover's misfortunes."

In both cricket and hockey Ferreira leads from the front, is a motivator and has a never-say-die attitude. The first team

cricket skipper and wicketkeeper/batsman, batting at four, has been PBHS' leading run scorer in the past two years. He has amassed 110 appearances for the first cricket side as well as 51 in hockey.

"I must thank Mr Ryan Anderson. He has faith in me. He has boosted my confidence as a player and I respect him. He is a great man who is always there for me if I need help."

On the cricket front it's Aldin Smith: "He is not only a coach to me. He is a role model to me. I have been with him for over five years and he has stuck with me through thick and thin. I wouldn't be where I am today without him."

The Wilgers Hospital-born Ferreira has been a Pretoria citizen since day one. It seems only an IPL cricket contract or an overseas club hockey contract will take him away from the capital.

With the pressure of playing top sport, how does Ferreira ever switch off? Golf. It gets my mind off cricket and hockey and allows me to bond with my friends."

Does he have aspirations to make the SA U18 hockey team and SA Schools cricket team this year, do the double? Yes I do believe that I can do the double. I have put in many hours behind the scenes and hope it all pays off. It is a dream that I have been chasing for a while now."

As far as core life skills are concerned, mom and dad have been there for him too. "My mom has always taught me to tell the truth no matter what, while dad has taught me to never give up."

And who are the teams he most looks forward to playing against? "Maritzburg College is on top of my hockey list and in cricket it's Rondebosch. It's these sort of challenges that make me very hard on myself. At training I work hard because what you put in is what you will get out.

As to his most memorable hockey match for PBHS in the 2016 season, Ferreira is in no doubt: "It was against St Andrews Grahamstown. We won after being down 4-2 at half-time. The other victory I won't forget is beating Westville at home 3-1. It was amazing."

Donovan Ferreira. A name worth remembering.

