

RAF Football Association - E-Bulletin

## RAF FA LRT Manager to Stand Down at the end of the 19/20 Season

### 14 years of being involved with the LRT is coming to an end

Sgt Michelle Perkins will be stepping down from her role as LRT Manager following the 2020 Inter Service Competition after 7 seasons in charge.

### **Why have you decided to stand down?**

At the end of each season I carry out a comprehensive review of what we have achieved both on and off the pitch as a group, and then what I have achieved in my role as a Manager. At the end of the 18/19 season and after winning the IS competition I felt that it was the right time to step away and allow some fresh eyes in to continue to take the team forward. However because I made my decision in March, I didn't want to leave the team in a position of uncertainty with regards to who would come in and whether a full backroom staff could be put together in time, so I decided to stay on for 1 more season in order to plan and prepare for my departure.

### **Talk us through your RAF football journey so far...**

After graduating as a PTI in 2006 I immediately contacted the RAF FA to express my interest in trialling for the LRT. I also put together a Station team at RAF High Wycombe and we entered the Uxbridge 8's which doubled up as the trials event. The team came second, and I received an invite to join the LRT. I played for the LRT between 2006 and 2013, captaining the team from 2007 onwards, achieving over 65 caps and competing in 7 IS competitions, winning twice. I was also selected for the Combined Service squads in that time and captained that team as well. Unfortunately, in Dec 2012 I suffered a complicated ankle fracture which stopped me playing at the level I wanted to; after the 12/13 season I made the decision to complete my L2 Coaching Certificate, step away from playing and move into the vacant LRT manager's position.

This was a steep learning curve for me but one which I relished. I tried to implement new ideas and ways of working, as well as building a strong backroom staff around me. I quickly realised I was comfortable managing people and I struck what I felt was the right balance with my players and staff. I must admit though that for the first 2 to 3 seasons I really missed playing. Over the past 6 seasons we have had many successes, not just on the pitch where we have won 2 of the last 3 IS Competitions. But also running 5 successful overseas training camps, developing a successful system of match analysis, adding player tracking through PlayerTek and participating in numerous community and charity projects along the way.



### **How have your experiences as a player enhanced how you have managed the team?**

Having been on the playing side, one of the main things I took into the role as manager was empathy. I understood how the players would be feeling after training, before games and during IS prep. This allowed me to tailor delivery, rest, team meetings, down time etc much better which allowed players to feel extremely prepared and relaxed going into games.

### **What have been your standout moments in your RAF Football career as a player and manager?**

Every season the big push is to win the Inter Service Competition and I have been fortunate enough to win this event 4 times, 2 as a player and 2 as a manager and I can honestly say nothing feels as good as winning the Williamson Trophy. Winning these trophies are certainly highlights of my career, however, for me one of

the biggest moments was when the Gaffer asked me to be his captain and presented me with a framed armband at the first squad announcement of the season. I felt very honoured and humbled to be offered that role and it is one I savoured and cherished for 6 years. The following season the squad went undefeated for the whole season, winning the South West Counties Cup for the first time and then retaining the Inter Services for the first time. This was no doubt my most successful season with the LRT. Getting to go to Hawaii for 2 weeks in 2012 was also a good experience.

### **What does the future have in store for you and the team?**

My aspiration is to stay involved with the RAF FA in some capacity; I have had some of the best experiences and created some of my best memories while involved with Service Football, so I want to continue to give back in any way I can for the remainder of my career. As far as the team goes, I have no doubt that they will continue to progress, develop and improve and remain a dominant force in service football for many years to come.

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