

Scotland's Robertson hails influence of mentor Jack

In the frame: Blue Sticks player Sarah Robertson has seen rapid rise into elite hockey

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H&W ace looks back on why she chose hockey

SCOTLAND

The *Hockey Paper* speaks to Scotland's Sarah Robertson as she looks to fulfil her Olympic dream

Hockey is filled with multi-talented stars and Sarah Robertson is no different. Growing up in Selkirk, Scotland, Robertson was a talented junior footballer and luckily for hockey

she was mentored by former international Janet Jack, who told the current GB international that there was a big future for her in the sport.

"I had grown up in a state school area, hockey then was dominated by the private schools and it was all about rugby and football for me," she said. "But Janet's belief was 'well, who cares?'"

It wasn't until she was 16 that Robertson had to make a decision (in 2011) as she had hockey and football on the same day.

The 25-year-old said: "I had always wanted to play football, I was a little bit better. But Janet took me aside and

said I was a talented hockey player and that I could be playing in the Commonwealth Games.

"I thought 'wow, that's how close I am'. That's what got me excited, the multi-sport big events. At the time that wasn't possible in football. It was a whirlwind and I am glad I chose hockey."

She duly made the Scotland squad and experienced that superb summer in Glasgow. Then, after the Rio cycle, she went back to Edinburgh University to finish her law studies before re-trialling in 2017 and being handed a full-time contract.

"It's been pretty amazing since then," she admitted.

The Hampstead & Westminster player, who has played in more of an attacking role during the Pro League, will play for Scotland away from the glare of the EuroHockey Championships after the Blue Sticks were

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demoted after the 2017 tournament.

Scotland women were well-funded leading into Glasgow 2014, but in recent years have faced the same problems as the men.

"The girls have adapted brilliantly. It's credit to all the players, they basically commit to a full-time programme without the funding," added Robertson. "They are doing early morning weights sessions, late night pitch sessions and have jobs. Sometimes it can spur you on even more. We all get together and make sure you do it."

"But it's difficult for us as GB athletes in the Scotland squad. We've all been in touch with

Jen [Wilson, the coach] and all three of us are committed and want to get back up to the A Division."

And Robertson says that Jack's words still ring true as she looks towards securing a rare Scottish selection berth in the GB Olympic squad.

She said: "Janet taught me some invaluable lessons; she told me I had the determination and the ability and that I should go out there and show it."

"Being a Scottish athlete in the GB programme, that's something I've had to keep with me. That's the attitude I've got and to keep believing in myself."