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Inspirational African experience for new sports president

Northumbria University's new student sports president has returned from a six-week trip to Africa inspired to get more students involved in sport at every level.

Brogan O'Connor, who graduated with honours in Applied Sport and Exercise Science this summer, was recently elected as Team Northumbria's new president.

She recently returned from a trip to Zambia where she saw at first-hand the

difference that sport can make to people's lives.

“Northumbria has been supporting the IDEALS programme in Zambia for ten years and it's made a real difference to children of all ages and backgrounds.

At the heart of it is the idea that sport can be used to teach positive messages about healthy lifestyles and the prevention of Aids/HIV, and when you're there and surrounded by all of these kids desperate to play sport you realise it's even more important than that. I saw both sides.

“I saw some relatively privileged children at a Catholic girls' school who never had the chance to play sport and on the other side, there were hundreds of orphans who had very little but loved sport. For many it was their life. Some had found an old pair of trainers but they only wore one because they'd given the other to their best friend.

“Thanks to Northumbria I was able to experience something very special. It's inspired me to get stuck into my new role and try to encourage more young people to engage in sport.”

In the week that hundreds of thousands of A-level students ponder which university to pick, Brogan described how she believes there is no place better than Northumbria to realise your sporting dreams and gain a great degree.

“In terms of offering opportunities across the board, at every level on and off the field, I don't think there's anywhere that can top this place,” she said.

“When I came here three years ago I knew Northumbria had a strong reputation for sport but I had no idea just what I could achieve as a student. Everywhere I looked there were people keen to inspire me to try something different and reach the next level.”

“It was easy to engage in new experiences and activities and from day one I joined the volunteering and internship programme. Within sport there are opportunities to learn about event management, the media, marketing and more. I've been right through the programme, gained a degree and played sport the whole time.

“During my three years here Northumbria has moved into the top 10 sport universities in the country and we've won back-to-back Stan Calvert cups. It's

been incredible to be a part of it.”

Northumbria was one of the first universities in the country to offer sports degrees more than 30 years ago. Sport graduates include gold-medal winning cyclist Victoria Pendleton, former England rugby captain Martin Corry and athlete Steve Cram.

The University has a limited number of places available for well-qualified applicants through Clearing. Call the Clearing Hotline on 0191 40 60 901 or visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/clearing

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focussed, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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