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International rugby ace inspires entire family to study at Northumbria University

With more than 60 caps for his country in major international competitions, it's little wonder that Scottish rugby hero Scott Hastings' two children followed in their father's footsteps.

So inspired by their father's success both on and off the rugby pitch that Corey, 22, and Kerry-Anne, 19, both decided to leave the family home in Edinburgh and pursue their studies across the Border at Northumbria, in Newcastle.

Corey, who graduated with a First Class degree in Design for Industry from Northumbria this year, has already started a full-time job for toy giant, LEGO, in Denmark where he spent time as an intern. His younger sister, Kerry-Anne, is preparing to start her second year at the University in Applied Sports Science with Coaching. Both brother and sister are talented athletes, representing the University and their country as junior hockey players. Their father Scott is among Northumbria's most prestigious alumni, playing rugby for Scotland, the Barbarians and British Lions among others.

Scott, 50, left his Scottish homeland to study for an HND in Business Studies with Graphic Design when the University was known as Newcastle Polytechnic.

He said: "The course suited me nicely as I wanted to be away from home, which is a pre-requisite for a lot of students. Like every school leaver I was a little bit lost before coming to university. But what was great about Northumbria then, and now, was the opportunity it gave to experience the world of work.

"I picked up a couple of smaller jobs and placements, then between my second and third year I gained an internship with an advertising agency that offered me a job after I graduated. Northumbria gave me that link to industry and it has continued with that tradition. My son secured internships with Phillips and Lego, who offered him a full-time position prior to graduation."

Like his children, Scott threw himself – quite literally – into the North East sporting scene during his time at Northumbria. As well as playing for the University on a Wednesday, Scott joined Northern Football Club, to enable him to play regular weekend rugby, before going on to represent the Northumberland county side. He was also playing for Scotland under 21s and it was in 1986 when he made his first test debut for Scotland alongside his brother Gavin at Murrayfield against France.

He also successfully managed to juggle his commitments as a high-profile rugby player with a career in advertising for 11 years; working in a number of positions and eventually becoming an account director. Scott insists that both his children made their own decision to study at Northumbria. During Open Days at the University, they fell in love with the set-up, the enthusiasm of the staff and the facilities on offer.

“It was far enough away from home for them to feel independent, but close enough to Edinburgh if they needed to come home at short notice,” said Scott.

Corey has recently landed a job with one of the world’s most coveted design employers, LEGO. Based in Billund, Denmark, the 22-year-old is currently working on a unique experience centre in the small Danish town, called the LEGO House. It was through an internship during his four-year degree - which Northumbria helped Corey to secure - that got him noticed by the world-famous toymaker.

“The University has some fantastic contacts in the design industry,” he said. “The Creative Director at LEGO is Northumbria alumnus Mike Ganderton, who was either in the same year or the year below iPod designer, Sir Jony Ive.

“The internships I’ve had while at Northumbria have allowed me to experience different cultures, different languages and a variety of working environments. They gave me a huge confidence boost and opened doors for me. I chose Northumbria over the Scottish universities because I wanted to branch out away from home. A lot of my friends from school went to the same university, but I wanted a different lifestyle. I enjoyed having free time to explore my design skills – it wasn’t like school, which I was relieved about.”

Like the rest of his family, Corey is a great team player and was made President of the Northumbria University men’s hockey team.

“The sport side of things at Northumbria was also a really good outlet for me,” he said. “I hope to return to Newcastle for the Stan Calvert weekend in March – to catch up with friends and hopefully see Northumbria retain the Cup for a third consecutive year.”

Kerry-Anne, who often visited her brother Corey while he was a student at Northumbria, said she was drawn by the vibrancy of Newcastle as a city and the state-of-the-art sporting facilities on offer.

“The course and the facilities are unbelievable,” she said. “The course is very challenging and I was delighted to achieve a First Class in my first-year assessments. I’m glad that it’s challenging because a few of my friends who

have gone to different universities say they're not being pushed as hard as they could be. The staff are really supportive and encouraging; they do a lot to make sure you achieve your potential. If I get the required grades I'd maybe look into doing sports psychology as I've had a couple of sessions myself and it really changed my mind set and helped my performance. I'd definitely like to do my coaching on the side as I love working with kids."

Kerry-Anne, who represents the Scotland under 21 women's hockey squad, has her sights on the senior side and is targeting the U21 European championships in 2017.

"I want to stay on and do a Masters here if I can," she said. "The University's hockey team has been promoted to the premier league for the first time in Northumbria's history. I've been made captain and I want to stay and help lead the team to further successes."

Scott will return to Newcastle when the Rugby World Cup heads to the city in October.

"I will be working for ITV as a commentator," he said. "There will be such energy around the city, I don't think the North East really knows what to expect. The support coming to Newcastle will be phenomenal and I can't wait to be back."

Discover more: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/academic-departments/northumbria-school-of-design/>

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk