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January 7, 2011

The word is out: Edge School's world-class trainer O'Brien named to The Hockey News' Top 40 Under 40 list

CALGARY, Alta. – The Hockey News now trumpets Andy O'Brien as Top 40 material. But as far as brass at the Edge School is concerned, O'Brien has been topping the charts ever since he took over high-performance training duties on campus.

O'Brien, 33, the Director of Sport Performance at the Edge School's Duckett Performance Centre, has been tapped by THN, the most revered hockey publication in North America, as part of a prestigious Top 40 Under 40 list. Among other accomplishments, O'Brien has been the personal strength and conditioning coach for Stanley Cup champion and Olympic gold medallist Sidney Crosby for nearly a decade.

"It comes as no surprise to me that Andy was recognized in this way," says Brent Devost, the Edge School's founder and president. "He's been instrumental in the development of the best hockey player in the world right now.

"To have Andy's model for athlete development at Edge School truly gives our athletes an advantage that is just not available to minor hockey players, let alone pro, junior, or collegiate programs."

As part of its 12th annual 100 People of Power and Influence edition, which is dated Jan. 17, 2011 but has already hit newsstands, THN has included a list entitled The Top 40 Under 40: Hockey's Next Lions, which highlights "the next generation of movers and shakers" in the sport.

The list also includes Scott Salmond, the director of hockey operations for Hockey Canada; Hockey Night in Canada analyst Kevin Weekes, a former NHL goalie; Bauer Hockey's director of design Philippe Jean; and Columbus Blue Jackets assistant coach Bob Boughner, a former NHLPA executive vice-president and two-time Memorial Cup winning coach.

As for O'Brien, "the former strength and conditioning coach for the Florida Panthers has worked with Sidney Crosby for eight years," reads the THN article, "and is now guiding the off-ice regimen for (multi-time Olympic gold medallist) Hayley Wickenheiser."

O'Brien, who hails from Charlottetown, P.E.I., spent four years with the Panthers ending in 2009, and has mapped out strength and conditioning plans for NHLers Shawn Horcoff of the Edmonton Oilers and Jason Spezza of the Ottawa Senators. He also works with New York Yankees star slugger Alex Rodriguez and elite Canadian figure skater Patrick Chan, and consulted extensively with American swimmer Dara Torres leading up to the Beijing Olympics, where she won three medals at age 41.

In all, O'Brien has worked with more than 100 professional and 50 Olympic athletes, whose resumes include five major-sport MVP awards, 40 world championships, and 22 Olympic medals.

“Over the years, I've developed a bit of a niche for understanding movement efficiency in athletes – being able to evaluate flaws in movement,” says O'Brien, a University of Western Ontario graduate who has worked with pro athletes for more than 13 years. “The vast majority of injuries nowadays come from repetitive overuse in motion.

“Speed, for example, is about efficiency. There are a couple of biomechanical factors that are associated with first-step efficiency,” he adds. “It all comes down efficiency, conditioning, body readiness, and the ability for the nervous system to respond and react.

“Those things are not as much about training programs and being fit, per se, as they are about building an optimal physiological environment for the athlete to perform in.”

The 9,200-square-foot Duckett Performance Centre, which opened with O'Brien at the helm in the fall of 2009, is rapidly building a worldwide reputation as a premier training centre for high-performance athletes.

The centre offers the latest in sport science and human performance measurement, including high-speed motion analysis, posture analysis, maximal oxygen uptake, gait analysis, and sport-specific measurement of dynamic power and flexibility.

Of course, the Edge School's student body also benefits from this world-class expertise that's continually being honed by O'Brien and his staff.

Every one of the approximately 320 students at the Edge School have DPC privileges, whether they're on the Mountaineers prep boys' or girls' hockey teams, the soccer team, the golf team, or the dance program.

“My trainers and I have a uniform philosophy that applies to all of our students,” says O'Brien, who's the director of high performance for Edge School's students.

“We believe in building fundamental principles of movement efficiency first, before we develop specialization in certain areas.”

Remarks Devost: “A lot of people aren’t aware yet that Andy is running his model out of our world-class Duckett Performance Centre, because he’s such a humble, down-to-earth guy. But now that the word is out, we’re getting an influx of families wanting access to what Andy and his DPC team have to offer.”

As for his inclusion on a Top 40 Under 40 list by such an influential publication, O’Brien is typically humble.

“Some of the people on that list are great people, with a lot of influence on the game of hockey,” he says. “To be mentioned in the same breath as some of those other people is very flattering.”

About Edge School

Edge School for Athletes, founded in 1999, is where students in Grades 5 to 12 pursue academic excellence while striving to reach their full athletic potential. Our school philosophy is based on the truism that a passion for sport can drive a passion for learning and for leading. Our mission is to make a Positive Difference in the lives of our students through the purposeful integration of excellence in academics, athletics and character-building. We offer high performance training in dance, golf, hockey and soccer as well as a flex program providing busy student-athletes in sports such as equestrian, skiing, figure skating and gymnastics the opportunity to craft a flexible schedule which meets all their needs. As of September 2010, Edge School is proud to be an Alternative program within the Rocky View School District.

Further information on Edge School for Athletes is available on the school’s main website, www.edgeschool.com, or by contacting the **Director of Admissions** at 403 246 6432 ext 111. For complete information about Edge Mountaineers athletics, visit www.edgemountaineers.com

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