



SINI field hockey athlete Angela Platt has recently returned from the Olympic Qualifying Tournament in New Zealand where a very inexperienced Irish side failed to qualify for Athens but held their world ranking. Angela was one of several Irish hockey players who now has to return to the work force having devoted much of the last two years to playing representative hockey for Ireland.

Angela graduated from the University of Ulster with a degree in Sport, Exercise and Leisure Studies in 2001. After qualifying she took on temporary employment with the Carrickfergus Council as a Primary Schools Coach Co-ordinator but in mid June 2002 decided to leave the council to focus on her preparation for the World Cup in Australia. The Irish Team were away for five weeks in Australia and Angela returned to the Council in January 2003. She managed to juggle her training with the Irish Team over the summer but again prior to the European Nations Cup in Spain in September 2003, she resigned from her job so she could focus on competing. The Irish Team finished sixth in that tournament with Angela playing a key role in goal. After the European Nations Cup Angela continued to training and travelled to the USA in January, Argentina and Spain in February and finally to the Olympic Qualifying Tournament in April 2004.

Angela remained unemployed throughout this time so she could focus solely on her dream of helping the Irish Team qualify for their first Olympic Games. Despite not achieving this goal in New Zealand, the Irish Team finished a creditable 8th and Angela returned to Ireland having played an outstanding tournament.

With the assistance of Peter McCabe, the Performance and Lifestyle Co-Coordinator at SINI, Angela is now back in fulltime employment with the Castlereagh Borough Council as a Sports Development Officer. She says she could not have secured her current position without Peter's assistance. " He helped me with my planning, writing my application, practicing for the interview and pulling together information for an interview presentation." Angela did this all in the weeks just prior to departing for New Zealand and heard the good news about securing her new job on the day of departure.

She is hoping to continue on as Ireland's number one goalkeeper for sometime yet with only 42 caps she is still relatively inexperienced by world standards. The challenge for Angela and other SINI athletes in a similar position is having to juggle fulltime employment and international sporting commitments. Sally Bell the High Performance Manager for Field Hockey at SINI has no doubt Angela is up to the task but will require strong support from her employers, SINI and the Irish Management to ensure she has another chance at realising her Olympic dream in 2008.