

Justin Tollefson of **Kidsgrove Scouts**



(Just left)

Having come from the U.S. and now being in the U.K. are there any cultural differences? Differences in the people?

I have not noticed any major differences in cultures or in the people. The people that I know and interact with in the States are the same type of people that I know and interact with here in the UK – Drum Corps people.

Do you plan on staying in the U.K. after you can no longer march? Why/Why not?

Unfortunately, I must return stateside only a few days after finals. I would like to stay and see more of the country and my new friends but I am currently enrolled in University and will have already missed the first 6 weeks of the semester. Not to mention my girlfriend would disown me!

What made you decide that after aging out from Madison you would take part in drum corps in the U.K.?

Alex Willis. We aged out together in Madison. He had marched with Kidsgrove before coming to Madison as I had marched with The Governaires. Over the course of the winter rehearsals and then tour we became good friends. We would always exchange stories about our various Drum Corps experiences. One thing in particular he had mentioned about DCUK I found quite interesting. Age out is at 25 and not 21. Well that was it! It was decided. I would have to go over and we would age-out together – again.

Were friends/family supportive of you going ALL THE WAY to Kidsgrove?

I had given my friends and family fair warning (4 years), but when the time actually came everyone was a bit shocked that I was going through with it. Once they saw how serious I was they were very supportive. Even my girlfriend, knowing I would be gone for four and a half months backed me up one hundred percent.

Was there any assistance from Madison or Kidsgrove (Madison because of the “relationship” (staff/members being former Madison Scouts)?

It certainly assisted in my decision to go for it. Being that there are alumni of the Madison Scouts with Kidsgrove, I knew I could expect certain things. I knew I would be in good company with friendly people, I knew that I would get the chance to learn a lot from knowledgeable instructors, I knew that I would be challenged, and I knew that I would be part of a crowd-pleasing show.

How did you go about setting up the move?

The decision to march came long before I figured out any on the logistics. There was a brief period of panic once the plane ticket was purchased. I knew I really had to make it work. Lucky for me, Alex has a spare room, which he kindly offered up for my stay. So all I really had to organise was a permit to work. This I obtained through the student work abroad organization, BUNAC, after that, everything just kind of fell into place.

Outside of the age rule being different between DCI and DCUK/DCE, what is the biggest difference between drum corps in US and UK?

The biggest difference has got to be the rehearsal schedule; as opposed to rehearsing eight or more hours a day, like a DCI corps. We rehearsed mainly on weekends. All of the members hold down jobs during the Drum Corps season. It's very comparable to what you'd find in a competitive senior corps in the States.

Why did you choose to march Madison? Why not another corps?

How to answer the question without writing a book is the main problem! The short answer? They had everything I love about Drum Corps and nothing that I didn't. From the first step of the company front on to the field to the last surge of raw musical power being slammed into your face there was never any doubt regarding the sole objective of the Madison Scouts. Entertain every single person in the stands. When I became aware of an English Corps with a similar style and the same objective I immediately wanted to be a part of it.

From Madison to Kidsgrove are there any major changes in technique or style of playing?

It would be kind of hard for me to say. I actually learned to play tenors with Kidsgrove, so I have no basis for comparison. However, our tenor tech, Phil Brown, marched with Madison from 92-94, and was in the tenor line, so I'm guessing there are a lot of similarities.

Groups such as the Senators may gain popularity and publicity performing with main stream artists, this may also work to bring the activity out and make more people aware of its existence. Do you think the major movement will come when manufacturers (Vic, Pearl, Innovative, etc.) include footage of DCUK/DCE corps on their site (as they do with DCI)?

I don't think it would start a major movement, but it could be step in the right direction.

What did you enjoy most at Madison?

The camaraderie between members is amazing – staff included. No matter the situation in hand or what new adversity we faced, we did it together. At no time did I feel any less than 100% support from, or given any less than 100% support to my brothers.

What do you enjoy most about Kidsgrove?

The people are great. The corps as a whole has a great personality. I get the same feeling on the field as I did at Madison. The feeling of wanting to do your best for the people around you. A close second, as at Madison, is the love of the crowd.

In either corps situation, during the audition process were you nervous? How does the audition process differ between the corps?

I was nervous during my audition with Madison, but as I'm sure anyone who has been through the process would say, it's all part of the process.

I did not have an official audition with Kidsgrove. Alex has a good read on my abilities, and put in a word with the staff on my behalf. I then exchanged a few emails with Phil about where I would fit in the line. Had I not known Alex, I imagine I would've mailed over a video.

Was it difficult to manage studying/class time with practicing for Madison?

It can be extremely difficult and stressful managing both school and Drum Corps. Not to mention the monetary difficulty. But if you're someone like me who is generally crap at time management, it will whip you into shape and break habits very quickly.

Do you have any brothers, sisters, parents, or other that were/are involved with drum corps?



As far as I know, I'm the only one in my entire family to have marched drum corps. One of my grandmothers used to play snare, but did not march corps.

What advice would you give a young person who has seen drum corps and hopes to some day make it, but they aren't sure what to do, what to practice, or how to start?

Get yourself a good pad, sticks and a metronome. Then hammer the basics (accent to tap, diddles, flams etc.), at very slow tempos, paying attention to good technique. Don't worry about speed as that will develop over time. If you can achieve near perfect techniques at a young age you will definitely be laying the foundations to be a monster percussionist when you are older. It just takes a little time and dedication.



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