



# Gender Equality in Wyndham Sport

## Common Club Questions/ Issues for engaging girls and women

### We don't have a female coach, what can we do? How can we attract one to the club?

Coaches who are girls and women are important, particularly from role modelling and leadership perspectives, however there are less coaches who are girls and women and having a female coach may not necessarily deliver the outcomes you are looking for. Consider what it is you think will be achieved by having a female coach, and if recruiting a female coach is difficult consider how else you can achieve those outcomes.

The gender of a coach is not the most important thing, **a coach's qualities and delivery style** are what make them good to work with girls and women, there are many men who have coached girls and women successfully. These qualities include: listening, asking girls and women for their feedback/ what they think, positive constructive and tailored feedback – mastery of skill development is a big confidence booster and a key motivator for girls and women, clear explanations of why you are doing something and what it will achieve, building links between team players. This article explains the key difference between males and females and how this affects coaching:

<https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Female-Psychology-and-Considerations-for-Coaching-Practice.pdf>

The article goes into further detail, however has sited some generalised tendencies/ traits from research on how men and women can be different:

Area of Difference	Men	Women
Intellectual function	Analytical, focused, linear, logical perspective	'Whole-brained' perspective
Base Reaction	Action	Feeling
Stress response	Fight or flight	Tend and befriend
Innate interest	Things	People
Survival strategy	Through self-interest, hierarchy, power and competition	Through relationships, empathy and connections
Mental preferences	Hard-wired to systemise	Hard-wired to empathise

There are a few options to bridge the gap and achieve similar outcomes:

- Create a Women's Officer for the club who will be the spokesperson for women and girls, liaise with them on how they are finding the club and what support they need. They can support teams and coaches as and when required without having the specific knowledge, experience and qualifications of the sport. Having an autonomous person has several benefits.
- Can you train someone up from within? Do you have an u16s/ u18s or senior women and girls' teams? Can you encourage some of them to help with coaching the younger teams? This is a great way to introduce players to the idea of coaching whilst providing support.
- Players committee – consisting of a representative from each team and an opportunity for each team to feedback

### We don't have enough playing space for new girls' teams. We need a new sports fields/ another lit pitch.

Creating new sports fields can be difficult, finding the space, the balance between community sport and passive community use and the funding to establish new fields are all challenges. Lighting requires funding, needing to be part of council's capital work program and also to measure the impact on the surrounding community. Both take time and money. Could smarter programming be the answer? How do you use your pitches? When do you use them? Could you have more teams training at a time? Could you spread out your training across the evenings and days? Do your younger teams need to train twice a week? Proving the need and longterm demand by making the most of the facilities, establishing an inclusive culture and steady girls and womens' teams will assist with making external funding applications more successful.

### Our changing rooms are old and not female friendly.

Renewing changing rooms and amenities are expensive and takes time. All works need to be included within council's capital works program and budget. All council infrastructure will have been listed within council's capital works depending on age, condition and community need. If you are planning your first girls/ women's team or teams or are fairly recently established then it will take some time to establish that your club will have girls'/ women's teams for the longterm and rationalise the expenditure.

### During pre-season our girls/ women have nowhere to change

First, speak to the girls/ women and identify whether this is an issue, and whether they can share any solutions, ie taking their kit with them to work/ school and changing there. Next open up a discussion with who is playing in season, do they use all the changing rooms, could there be a dedicated shared girls and women' changing rooms that both clubs' players could use, or one that your club's girls and women can use. You could return the favour when it is their pre-season. If the issue is only for a small number of girls/ women are there any other spaces that they could use, ie umpire change rooms. We need to keep on thinking as flexibly as we can and building relationships with other reserve users, ultimately we all want to provide good opportunities for girls and women to play sport.

## How do we advertise to get girls?

Convincing girls, women and parents that your club is where they want to come to and has what they are looking for is more than an advert. There are several things you can do:

- Come & Try taster sessions at your club – not trials or selections
- Come & Try taster sessions at schools/ community centres/ youth centres – creating links with these key organisations will raise awareness within your community, taking an opportunity to your target audience is a great way of building rapport and trust. Getting to know a coach/ organisation within a familiar safe environment helps to bridge the gap of transferring over to your club.
- Is your Website friendly and welcoming to girls and women – what information does it provide? Are there pictures of girls and women? Does it answer questions people may have, ie what skill level do people need to have, do they need equipment/ kit, how often do they train, what do they need to commit to? When does the season start and end?
- Do you have any social sport opportunities – this doesn't mean a SSA offer, social sport is simply an hour where people can come and play and learn a few skills in a not too sporty, structured session where the focus is on fun, friendship and activity, without signing up to join a team which trains twice a week and plays matches on the weekend. You may find that you get your future players from this opportunity because they aren't ready to commit to joining a team and also retain some of your team players, you may also get other coaches and volunteers from this opportunity.
- Is your Facebook page welcoming to girls and women? – Of the last 10 posts how many mentioned girls and women or had a photo of girls and women? Parents often have a quick look at pages whilst deciding whether to try out your club, if there is no mention of girls and women in recent activity they may feel that girls and women aren't an equal part of the club.
- Introductory/ beginner short courses (at club/ schools/ community centres/ youth centres) – this is a great way of helping girls and women to develop basic skills and confidence, build connections with others, get to know your club and build a rapport with coaches without a longterm or big financial commitment. As with the taster sessions taking a course to someone else's environment can encourage involvement through convenience, feeling safe, and utilising current networks
- Club newsletters – are you mentioning your club's plans for girls and women, are you providing regular updates on taster sessions, teams, etc.? Ensure once you have girls'/ women's teams that they are getting equivalent coverage.
- Timing of your sessions – particularly for women, find out what would suit them, don't just assume that what you always have done is suitable.
- Posting in local Facebook groups – contact the admin and ask if you can put up a flyer in their group to see if anyone is interested, let people know that they can message you to find out more. Groups are more responsive to free opportunities, so use them to promote Come & Try/ taster sessions
- Posters at local shops, community noticeboards – keep them friendly and check your terminology (see below)

## Our club is welcoming to girls and women, we have set up some teams, but they don't stay/ move up age groups

Have you tried speaking to existing players and asking them how they feel about the sessions, the club. etc? Regular short feedback meetings can bring up little things that are an issue that are easily solved and can encourage girls and women to problem solve them too. Do you have beginning of season meetings with the girls (and possibly parents) to allow them to set ground rules, agree goals, ask questions, to tell the girls about club rules/ policies, etc. how the club works and how to bring up any issues they might have. Volunteering opportunities can be brought up at this meeting,

highlighting roles and how this supports the teams and enables them to have a better opportunity, what skills are needed, how much time this may take and the benefits of getting involved for a parent. Short surveys or meetings at the beginning, mid and end of season can identify issues and opportunities.

One example is a girls team training on a Friday night, the sessions were great but they felt isolated from the rest of the club – having a conversation with the team to understand this and their ideas about what could be done could make a real difference to how they feel. Think about when training is planned, who else is on site and whether the timing is convenient. Another target audience may value having that slot when no one else is around, or maybe you could make that day all girls and encourage Mums' sessions as well as girls' sessions, or a boys' social session, what do your club members really want?

### We are bringing a team over from another club is there anything that we should do?

Female teams, especially senior teams move around. How can you change this and keep them at your club? Speak with the coach and team manager and work out what they are trying to achieve – does this align with your club? Have a really honest conversation with them about the club's priorities, and make sure this is two way – make sure you and they understand both sides. What support do they want and expect, can you provide this? How can they be better integrated into the club? Can you make an agreement that means that they will commit to staying and integrating with the club – how can you help this happen? Next, speak with the team, come up with a combined set of expectations and how you can work together to achieve these, work out a clear communication pathway so that they feel represented and can input. The goal should be longterm integration, is having a team for one season and leaving better than not having had them?

### Establishing a team culture

This article provides an interesting overview of the importance of developing a strong team culture, based on a collaborative approach to identifying values, attitudes and goals. Whether establishing or developing teams this is a key component to consider.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-power-prime/201609/build-team-culture-athletic-success>

### Terminology

Trials, Clinics, Academies are fantastic words which imply high skill set. Many girls and women can be daunted by these words. If you are aiming for and confident that you will get high achieving players then use these. However, there are many potential players out there who will rule themselves out. Using words like 'Come & Try', Taster, Beginners, Improvers, Social x, course, etc. allow people to join at their level without feeling like they won't be good enough, and that they will have the opportunity to improve.