



COACHING FOR CHANGE

THE IMPACT OF A
GOOD SPORTS WORKSHOP
MARCH - JUNE 2021

COACH/PARENT

BALANCE IS BETTER

GOOD SPORTS®

BACKGROUND

On 23 March 2021 Sport Taranaki held a Good Sports Workshop to help coaches and parents in our region to understand how they can contribute to a great sporting environment for young people.

Five people attended this workshop representing five different sports. As part of our workshop evaluation, we followed one of these participants to understand three key things:

- What were the key takeaways from the workshop?
- What changes have they made to their coaching or parenting?
- What impact have they observed as a result of the changes?

We met with a netball/ surf lifesaving coach who is also the mother of two children, eight weeks after the workshop to discuss her thoughts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

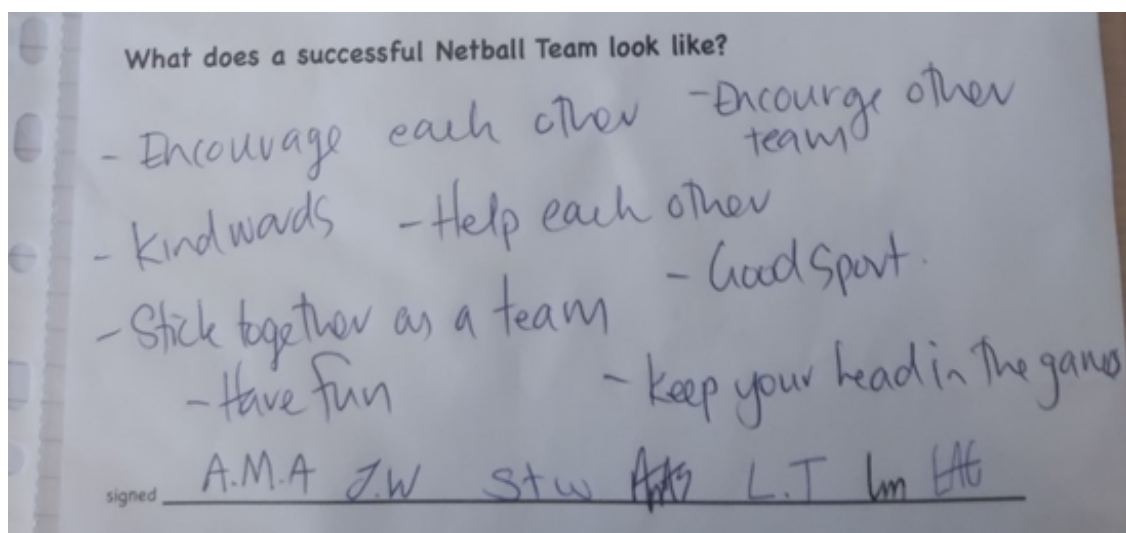
This coach felt the workshop was reaffirming everything that she was doing. "It gave me purpose to keep moving forward".

When she left the workshop, she felt really energized and wanted more people to hear the messaging. She has approached the chair of her junior sports club to encourage them to run their own Good Sports workshop for coaches and parents. The Chair of the club is now looking for an opportunity to make this happen. As the winter season has already started the focus might be on just the netball coaches in the first instance or on summer sports at the end of the year. She said she told her chair:

"We've got to get them (Sport Taranaki) in, we need to all be playing from the same playbook, we all might be in various chapters of that playbook, because we all have different kids, different codes, different ages and all that, but let's do this, because if everyone's not on board. It's just like trying to save the world but you're just one person."

As a result of the workshop this coach also decided to have a pre-season meeting with her team to understand what the girls determine a successful team to be, and to set expectations, giving them ownership of their experience.

WHAT HER TEAM HAD TO SAY:



This coach also set up an agreement with the girls, so they committed to certain behaviours and had parents sign up to this as well after meeting them to explain it. "After I sent the agreements home over half of them messaged to say thanks and they appreciated the approach". "Immediately the next week, I saw changes, like, they were taking responsibility of having their drink bottles and tying their hair up". The coach thought it was possible this player agreement system could be extended through the club but "likely there would need to be the same level of passion from other coaches, or a system in place to ensure it happens and coaches would need to understand the value in putting place a system like this". "We spend so much time on the fundamentals of the game that we don't actually talk about the fundamentals of being a good human, or a player or a team member". This coach is now focusing on inspiring great team dynamics and healthy behaviours through commitment.

Another area of focus for this coach after the workshop has been to give praise - "Loads of praise, which I think I probably like quadrupled since I did the Good Sports workshop". "It is ridiculous how much better they perform with the tiniest bit of praise, just because they caught the ball well. That is probably the number one thing from that "What is fun list".

In Good Sports workshops we introduce attendees to the work of Amanda Visek and her research on what is fun for kids in youth sport. Amanda Visek identified and ranked by importance 81 different areas that kids say, makes sport more fun. In the workshop we focus in on the top 10 and this coach is focusing on increasing praise in her approach to coaching.

"When you praise, performance goes up, they get engaged, and you can read it on their faces instantly".

"When I tell a player, they're good at defending - They become really good at defending. When I praise individual players, other players rise and look for praise too. When I praise on the sidelines parents start to praise. Praising is infectious, so infectious and that's the best thing about positive reinforcement". "Like if every team just said, we're only going to use positive reinforcement. Imagine what it would be like".

WHAT MORE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED?

This coach has been inspired to think more deeply about sport for tamariki and rangatahi and so has identified more changes she could make in the future.

- Be able to verbalise her own coaching philosophy.
- Explain her coaching philosophy to parents at the start of the season.
- Share the list of 'What is fun' with parents.
- Devise an alternative to the player of the day system to reward players.
- Ask her team how the season has gone to evaluate.



THE ONGOING CHALLENGES

Her journey through these changes have not always been smooth sailing and she has identified a few challenges that have made implementing change difficult.

“Not every coach is taking this approach so it’s hard to do without the kids asking why other teams have a different approach. It’s hard to continue this when other coaches aren’t doing it”.

“I’m also always thinking - ‘how does this approach prepare them for sport as they grow?’ What if their next coach doesn’t praise them or let all the kids have time on the court? Should I be toughening them up more”.

This coach is also wondering how her agreement system would work in a different context. If the kids cannot meet the set obligations due to financial barriers or lack of parental support.

Another challenge is that while codes request evenly matched teams be entered into fixtures some schools, clubs or coaches do not do this. This can create uneven and unfair competition for those that have followed the request.

SUMMARY

The sporting environment can be difficult to navigate. There are efforts being made at national and regional level to encourage positive experiences in youth sport. However, not everyone has managed to implement change yet. This coach’s experience highlights how a small amount of education can support both coaches and parents to implement positive change in our region that listens to kids, praises them, and keeps sport fun for everyone in the team.

