
Women in Coaching programme

Case Study: Mary Tough

Putting sport first

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the national agency for sport

sportscotland's Women in Coaching programme is a pilot project which supports the development of female coaches across four local authority areas and within five sports: gymnastics, hockey, netball, swimming and tennis.

The programme is aimed at increasing opportunities for development, and raising the profile of women as coaches, managers, leaders and role models. Each coach is supported by a mentor to help them develop in their role.

Focus

Mary Tough is a netball coach engaged on the Women in Coaching programme who has had some outstanding successes during the pilot.

Mary's aim in 2010 was to work with netball's national and superleague coach to develop her elite athlete coaching skills. The priorities for Mary's development were performance analysis, tactical awareness at international level and development of technical coaching skills at an elite level.

Mentor experience

The Women in Coaching programme provided Mary with a mentor, allowing her to discuss her development needs and identify opportunities for learning. The main benefit was to have a contact that would listen and support when required.

In addition Mary also had a sport specific mentor in Denise Holland, National Coach for netball in Scotland, who she shadowed and learned important skills from to take forward in her career.

Speaking about the experience, she said: 'It was very worthwhile having both mentors in this programme, especially at the outset. Getting their input into my development helped me with that initial stage and enabled me to take their advice forward into my coaching.'

A helping hand

Having mentoring relationships was found to be one of the major success factors of the programme along with goal setting and personal development plans which were also factors that the recent Women in Coaching evaluation identified as successes.

Mary explains: 'There was some cross over between personal development plans and the initial goal setting task which was carried out at the beginning of the programme, however documenting areas for development and being able to monitor and track how I was performing was very helpful – it ensured everyone could easily see what I was working towards.'

The course not only provides mentoring support, it also provides financial support to help meet the goals. For Mary, one area of her development plan was about getting exposure to international netball competition, to develop her tactical awareness at this level. The programme provided the funding which allowed her to travel to the Scottish Netball team's games to gain invaluable experience.



*“The programme helped me focus on my development needs and through my mentors, who worked for **sportscotland** and Netball Scotland I was able to gain access to various contacts that helped me with my progress...”*



Leading role

Although, many factors have contributed to Mary's success, she feels the Women in Coaching programme, has had a large role to play in this. She says: 'The programme helped me focus on my development needs and through my mentors, who worked for **sportscotland** and Netball Scotland I was able to gain access to various contacts that helped me with my progress, for example, performance analysis tools and techniques'.

The development courses, highlighted through the programme for the women involved also played a part in Mary's progress. One workshop in particular was timely, in the lead up to the 2011 Netball World Championship Qualifiers, 'Competition Management' which featured Misha Botting, Sports Psychologist from **sportscotland's** institute of sport. This workshop provided invaluable information for the programme's coaches – including Mary – covering emotion (athlete and coach) and coping strategies to deal with the unexpected.

This provided some new techniques for Mary to consider, but also highlighted that the approach being taken by Netball Scotland's national coaching team, was already demonstrating best practice, in a number of areas.

Aim

In 2010 Mary achieved the aim of working with the national and superleague coach and developed her technical coaching, match analysis and general elite performer coaching skills and in continuing to do so to develop her skills even further.

In addition, Mary was also appointed National Under 19 coach for the 2010/11 season. A role in which she's using the skills developed through the Women in Coaching programme. Mary takes responsibility for planning and delivering training sessions for the squad. She is also responsible for periodisation, which means structuring the team's training schedules in order to get the most out of the players and get them to peak at the right time. For this she has support from the Netball Scotland strength & conditioning coach.

Going forward, Mary will be part of the netball technical coaching team where she will support the national coach and potentially lead on some of the technical training sessions for 2014 group.

Thanks to the experiences she gained in the programme, she plans to continue to coach at an elite level and continue to develop her skills – whilst helping the squad meet their performance goals for the season.

Conclusion

Through the **sportscotland** Women in Coaching programme female coaches can gain invaluable experience and develop in all aspects of coaching. Mary is a prime example of how to get the most out of the initiative.

The Women in Coaching programme will now be taken forward using the results from the evaluation report and feedback from the women who have taken part so far.

For more information on the Women in Coaching programme and to read the first year evaluation report visit www.sportscotland.org.uk/womenincoaching