



CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF CREATING A GREAT
FEMALE EXPERIENCE

KAWAROA PARK SQUASH CLUB



SQUASH
NEW ZEALAND

OVERVIEW

In what is usually regarded as a male-dominated environment, there are a number of barriers which can put females off participating in sport. Evidence suggests a lot of girls prefer to play without boys around so they aren't embarrassed with what they look like or how they perform.

The good news is that in recent years more women have been getting involved in various administration and coaching roles at many levels of squash around the country. The Kawaroa Park Squash Club is just one example of this with two female administrators helping the club to make huge strides towards creating a female friendly environment within the community.

CHALLENGES

(Lack of) Role Models

Findings show that in female sport in general, there is a lack of role models for up-and-coming athletes. This is particularly true the further you go up into the performance spaces.

Perceptions

Feedback suggests females do not always enjoy playing males in competition because males tend to hit the ball hard and fast – which makes it intimidating to play against; and many females don't enjoy playing males because they feel they aren't good enough.

Suitable Playing Partners

Research shows that females only make up 27% of the overall squash playing population. This makes it difficult to find other people to play, especially in clubs with small memberships.

SOLUTIONS

Female leaders

The club has two part-time female administrators who look after the running of the club, social activities and the coaching programmes.

Female only coaching

The club decided to offer a women's only group coaching programme that gives females something to participate in regularly with like-minded people. This allows the women to establish a network of players of a similar playing ability.

Female-only online group

A Facebook page was setup for all females – members and casuals – at the club to join. New people are encouraged to join this group and take part in conversations about what is happening and who is keen to have a hit.

RESULTS

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Females running the club.

12-15

Women regularly taking part in the 4-week coaching programmes throughout the year.

54

Females in the Facebook group.

CONCLUSION

There are significant opportunities to attract more women and girls to the game of squash. Providing solutions that address the challenges that females face – including family responsibilities, time, flexibility and the ability to improve – have enhanced the game's value proposition and resulted in better retention as well as converting more women who are interested in squash at the Kawaroa Park Squash Club.

Club administrator and coach Kaye Carter said "it's all about women getting together in a friendly club environment and embracing wives, mums, partners and families into the fold. We found the most important aspect was creating an environment that is non-intimidating and fun. This helps the newer women to make friends and because of this they come back. We are even seeing them bringing their friends now too, which is creating a snowball effect on members."

More female voices are likely to be heard on the courts in the near future with the club now looking to offer coach development Module 8: Women to help more girls and women try their hand at coaching.



The Women's Squash Programme draws in 12-15 people on Tuesdays between 6.45-8.15pm. These are run Feb-Mar and Oct-Nov each year and there are 10 more on the waiting list for the next programme.



There are a total 103 female members at the club. At the last annual women's club tournament 28 members competed (all grades).