



CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF CREATING A GREAT
JUNIOR EXPERIENCE

MANA & TAWA SQUASH CLUBS



SQUASH
NEW ZEALAND

OVERVIEW

Sport New Zealand's Young People Survey is one of the biggest measures of sports participation and interest at the grassroots level for 5-18 year olds. Sadly for squash, the most recent findings showed it is not one of the activities of choice for young people. Persuading children to put down their mobile phones or leave their computers alone to get any kind of physical activity is becoming harder and harder for parents and teachers alike. Adding to this, squash has missed two or more generations of junior players and is now playing catch up - with a number of clubs heading towards crisis point with their junior membership numbers. Rather than doing what they have always done and knowing that junior club members are the key to securing their long-term futures, Wellington's Mana and Tawa Squash Clubs decided to try a different approach in order to reinvigorate their programme offerings for junior squash players.

CHALLENGES

Club Culture

Research shows most sports clubs are being led by people who focus on their own needs and deliver opportunities based on how they experienced sport when they were younger). This is often at the expense of newer / younger members which will grow and sustain the game for the future.

Player and Coaching Numbers

By not focusing on providing opportunities for new players to enjoy the game in the past, a number of clubs are experiencing a dwindling number of junior members and a lack of volunteer coaches and resources.

Player Development

Providing fair access to courts for juniors with age and stage appropriate coaching and activities to allow players the time to develop the appropriate skills and technical ability to enjoy the game for life.

SOLUTIONS

Collaboration

Situated about 15 minutes apart, the Mana and Tawa Squash Clubs decided to join their junior programmes and share resources to create critical mass.

Coaching Programme

Between them Mana and Tawa run mixed group (based on ability) coaching sessions on Mondays for 8 weeks every school term between 3.30-5.00PM for beginners at Tawa and 5.15-7.30PM for intermediate and advanced players at Mana. There are extra sessions on Tuesdays for those who can't make Mondays.

The clubs then hold respective club nights which cater for the juniors in the structured programme who want to practice what they have learned as well as any other juniors (including non-members). The two clubs also combine for fun tournaments and holiday programmes.

RESULTS

63

Juniors taking part in the programmes (42 in 2015).

15

Core volunteers (5 coaches) helping out each week - each doing a small task to help the big goal.

\$20k

Annual costs to run the junior programmes (\$65-\$80 per term - mostly user pays).

CONCLUSION

Many sports and clubs are experiencing declining membership numbers and with this brings a need to develop sustainable club structures to promote participation and maximise the use of limited resources. The way in which sport was delivered 20-30 years ago is no longer applicable and successful clubs acknowledge that they need to plan ahead and adopt modern practices to stay relevant. There is also an increasing interest in sport partnership approaches throughout the country - especially with the popular Sportsville concept and the combination of sports clubs.

Despite their respective club histories and rivalries, the Mana and Tawa Squash Clubs have shown how powerful working together using a unified delivery model can be in helping to engage more juniors into sport and set them on a journey towards a lifetime of squash happiness. By sharing their collective knowledge, skills, costs, services and facilities, both clubs are now well on their way to providing a greater collective benefit for young squash enthusiasts in the Wellington region - which is creating a larger participation base and will offer more competitive opportunities in years to come. After one year the clubs are already seeing more juniors playing in interclub.