

2016 Saskatchewan Coaches Conference – Coaching Female Athletes Discussion and Notes (May 7/16)

This session facilitated by Laura McLeod/Sue Schmidt/Noreen Murphy (helper)

Notes from discussion that will help in addressing where to find resources, coaching female athletes, how your sport can engage more female participation and sustain, what we do as coaches to support the development of female athletes and programs/initiatives that sport delivers to improve the participation of females. Coaches that provided this learning represented the following sports: volleyball, soccer, cycling, wheelchair basketball, wrestling, judo, track and field, water polo, speed skating,

The main focus that came up through the dialogue was creating that social component to sports - changing the focus of competition from "against" to "together" in many respects. The emotional relationship between players, and between players and coaches, is very important to our female athletes. Having a role model to look up to in sports and to see as a future was also very prominent. We know that girls are a lot more technical, too, which informs what information we share with them and how we coach/train them.

One other note that participants asked facilitators was so many questions came up around "but what is this % of involvement compared to boys % of involvement" What we've since landed on is that, that is essentially an irrelevant question: what truly matters is, why isn't this involvement 100%? Shouldn't 100% involvement be the ideal goal, not simply "matching" the boys?

RESOURCES

- Long Term Athlete Model (LTAD/LTPD) each sport has this resource and accessible through your National Sport Organization – specific areas that address when to implement certain skills and periods of windows that are most important in order to establish foundations and building upon to provide females with best opportunities
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) is a not-for-profit organization working to encourage girls and women to participate and lead in sport and physical activity. For more information, visit www.caaws.ca
- Women in Sport Physical Activity and Recreation (WISPAR) is a partnership with Sask Sport Inc. and Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association along with Saskatchewan In Motion that provides information and resources to assist in working with girls and women in sport or physical activity. Also aligned with national organization CAAWS to deliver leadership workshops or provide opportunities working collaboratively together, visit <http://www.sasksport.sk.ca/WISPAR/> ; <http://www.spra.sk.ca/>
- Attending different coaching conferences or educational sessions that provide information or dialogue on working with female athletes
- Coaching Association of Canada, visit <http://www.coach.ca/>

- Coaching Association of Saskatchewan, visit <http://www.saskcoach.ca/>
- Saskatchewan Physical Education Association, visit <http://www.speaonline.ca/conference.html>
- Program opportunities - example of Regina Community Association that leads the coordinating of sport opportunities for females in partnership with provincial aquatic sports in Saskatchewan. Sports that have been used in past include swimming, synchro, diving, water polo and kayak in pool (instructors provided by sports to deliver the session). This is a 6 – 8 week program that offers different opportunities to learn new sports for girls that wouldn't otherwise have those opportunities to try sport
- Specific programs “Girls in Motion” – sponsored by the City of Saskatoon and in partnership with sport to find the instructors for sessions along with providing top quality experiences with female role models to deliver the sessions
- In the sport of soccer have specific resources to soccer community “Soccer Coach Weekly – Inside Soccer” ; can check other provincial sport governing bodies for specific coach information via websites or ask local sport clubs/organizations’

TIPS and STRATEGIES for COACHING Female ATHLETES

- Need to establish a FUN game or activity to engage the female athletes
- Allow the girls/women to be with friends
- Need TLC – Encouragement, love and support
- Great them at every practice, review the positives after and say good-bye
- Keep it social
- Treat them as equals “as Athletes”
- Find out/discuss what’s new at school or with friends = that you care as a coach
- Always smile and stay positive
- Research Hair Braiding techniques – brought up from those coaches that coach combative sports as you will need to learn how to tie back the hair for those athletes
- Learn all athlete names and then use correctly
- Females ask a lot of questions so coaches need to know the reasons why you are doing a certain drill or activity as the gals will ask this = be prepared with you answer

- Monitor social media

KEY ways to ENGAGE more FEMALE athletes into SPORT & foster long term PARTICIPATION

- Showcase events at the local level – example from wrestling – high school females only – shows fun and healthy, fit athletes
- All female camps
- Girls in the Game – Dr. June Zimmer (Regina)
- Emphasize leadership roles
- Female specific groups/clubs (age specific, female development LTAD)
- Create opportunities for involvement, especially after they've finished playing
- Invite local coaches into gym classes at schools
- After 2012 London Olympics – soccer brought in Christine Sinclair and Kaylyn Kyle (Saskatoon) to female soccer tournament and they toured northern Saskatchewan
<http://globalnews.ca/news/2263424/olympians-visit-northern-saskatchewan-to-inspire-youth/>
- Use positive attributes of females and that pretty can be in sport
- Using female athletes to promote sport

WHAT can we, as COACHES, do to SUPPORT the development of FEMALE athletes?

- Create opportunities for them to be involved in different capacities (participate, athlete, coach, officiate, volunteer, administrator, board etc.)
- Help females LOOK/Tie/Link them to other resources – grants for coaching; show what they can do in the sport and other sports
- Girls ONLY camps
- Girls only groupings with like sports (LTAD guidelines for development)
- Create a competitive environment (sometimes in specific sports vs boys and other times not)
- Place in LEADERSHIP positions on merit
- CELEBRATE successes – verbally, website, award ceremonies etc.

What Programs or initiatives that your sport/club/school delivers to improve the participation of females in sport?

- Abilities based competition or skill assessments
- Girls Retreat – mentioned by more than one person
- Female Sport Specific positive initiatives “Throw like a Girl” – baseball, softball etc.
- Girls in the Game – volleyball (and other sports staged out of Regina)
- Female only self defense builds strong female leaders (sport of judo)
- “Bring a Friend Night” – many sports stated works well
- Use current female athletes for recruitment to sport
- Provide Camps
- Create a social aspect to the sport learning = you will hook the girls/women for lifetime