



CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF INCREASING
PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP

SQUASH SOUTHLAND



SQUASH
NEW ZEALAND

OVERVIEW

There are a huge number of people nationwide who are disabled, shy, obese, gifted and talented or non-English speaking who may have a keen interest in squash. However, in some cases we do not cater for these athletes – whether it be from a facilities and equipment point of view or just the welcoming smile we would expect to see within the club.

As part of the Racquet Packet programme delivered at the ILT Stadium Southland in 2015, Squash Southland's Development Officer Bruce Thirkell coached 20 secondary school students after school for 6 weeks. One of the students used a wheelchair to aid with mobility – which required some easy adaptations to be made to allow them to participate in and enjoy their squash experience.

CHALLENGES

Negative Attitudes

Historically people with a disability were identified by their impairment rather than as a person with a disability.

Language and Understanding

The words we use can influence attitudes which can impact on the lives of others. Some words, by their very nature, degrade and diminish people with a disability and reinforce inaccurate stereotypes.

Physical Barriers

Obstacles within the environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability such as steps to the building and poor equipment.

SOLUTIONS

Awareness

Physically disabled athletes are also people and play sport for the same reasons as anyone else. Understanding why our athletes have chosen to play squash will make it easier to meet their needs and expectations.

Approach

Focusing on what the person can do rather than focusing on their limitations promotes a fair, accurate and positive portrayal of a person with a disability. This follows the athlete-centred coaching philosophy for all sport in New Zealand.

Modifications

Using the STEP adaptation tool there are four key areas that can be modified to create a more inclusive environment – the Space, Task, Equipment or People. For example, using a bigger ball.

RESULTS

1

Disabled athlete took part in the 6 week programme.



Awareness about inclusive practices.



Quality experiences provided for all 20 participants.

CONCLUSION

Sport is an essential component of everyone's lives – it provides meaning, positive self-esteem, pleasure and health. For disabled people this is not always the case because of negative societal attitudes, a lack of opportunities and inadequate facilities that prevent participation. However, there is no reason why squash shouldn't be enjoyed by all, including disabled athletes. By understanding how to practically adapt different situations, we can create more inclusive environments. This then allows us to provide all members of our communities with opportunities to be a part of our clubs and enjoy the fun learning and participation experiences that we all know squash offers.

From his experience, Bruce mentioned that "it is alright to ask a person with a disability questions and give things a go as this is often the best way to learn."