

TEAM  
**HEROINE**  
...

c[●]achmate™

# Keeping girls in the game

A 'how-to' guide with tips for coaches,  
sports organisations, parents and supporters



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# Objective

Team Heroine and CoachMate have combined their expertise to encourage girls and young women to participate and thrive through sport.

This paper provides players, coaches, parents, clubs and sports organisations with tips and advice to support girls and young women participating in sport.

Our aim in the paper is to influence the thinking and strategy behind community sport for girls and young women. Decision-making must cater for their unique needs, and prioritise creating positive and enjoyable sports experiences.

# What you'll get out of this



It's OK to recognise the differences between boys and girls. In a sporting environment, they thrive in different ways and often participate for different reasons.

We acknowledge the specific gender traits of each group, but also the danger of stereotyping. All children should be encouraged to play and remain in sport. However we believe that there are unique barriers confronted by girls and young women that must be addressed to achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

So the intention of this paper is to provide practical tips and advice for all the stakeholders to achieve just that. Its aim is to create a positive physical and psychological environment for girls and young women where they can thrive and remain in the game for as long as they want to.

To help achieve our objective, we have developed seven specific recommendations. These are underpinned by practical 'Cheat Sheets' specifically designed for influencers including parents, supporters, coaches, sports organisations and schools.

# Introduction

The participation of girls and young women in sport is conspicuously less than boys. Girls are less likely to have ever experienced playing any sport at all and when they do, they're twice as likely to drop out by the age of 14 than are boys<sup>2</sup>.

The social and personal costs of this situation are immediate and lifelong. For example, a survey by consulting giant Ernst & Young, found that of 400 female corporate executives 94% played at least one sport. No less than 61% in the same survey said sports had contributed to their career success<sup>1</sup>.

The stark reality is that failure to participate in sport impacts the health and welfare of girls and young women. Their social, academic and career development are affected as is the potential for them to be happier and better versions of themselves.



More concerning evidence shows

- Girls are more likely than boys to leave sport because of negative coaching experiences<sup>2</sup>.
- Only 5% of kids who chose to leave a sport did so when their coaches HAD received skills and communications training... the attrition rate of kids leaving was more than five times higher (26%<sup>8</sup>) when their coaches had NOT received that training.



# We all win

We all win when more girls and young women enter, stay in and become lifelong participants and fans of sport.

The benefits that flow from female participation are immense, both for individuals and for the entire community...

## Benefits

- Physical health and mental wellbeing
- Increased confidence
- Greater success off the field including in education and careers
- Progress in achieving social objectives such as gender equality and community involvement
- Enhanced development of social connections

It's clear that the impact of keeping girls and young women in sport is in everyone's interest. Participation in sport helps girls reach their potential which in turn benefits the wider community.

# 1 Fun and friends are the foundation

Coaches have an important role in creating the right environment for their teams and players. Fun and camaraderie don't always happen naturally. Unlike boys who tend to be more naturally competitive, the main reason that girls stay in sport is to have fun <sup>8,9</sup> Along with friendships, enjoyment is critical for keeping girls "in the game".

Of course an environment that includes fun and camaraderie is an important component of all sport. But it is particularly relevant for females, given global research indicating that up to 2.4 million fewer women than men strongly agree that they find sport & exercise enjoyable and satisfying<sup>7</sup>.

## Key Actions

Encourage girls to turn up early to have some 'catch-up' time prior to training.

Play music in the changing room to develop a fun team culture.

Set up drills to encourage new and enhanced friendships.

Play a light-hearted warm-up game like 'pair-tag' to encourage fun and laughter.

Set the tone for how girls interact with things like a team huddle or a cheer at the end of each session.

Introduce casual 'have-a-go' or 'bring a friend' sessions to vary training and maintain interest (and fun!).

Create rituals that encourage bonding like high fives, team songs or pre-game meals.

Don't risk 'captains' picking their own teams for practice drills or games... players who are perceived as weaker (perhaps a girl in a mainly boys team) can be left as last choice!

## Pro Tip

Find ways in girls sport to combine competition and fun... they are not mutually exclusive! In fact, 50% of mid-teen girls view competing against each other as enjoyable<sup>2</sup>. Juggling exercises like 'compete-against-yourself' or group sessions of 'last-to-survive' are obvious examples for football. Try playing another sport like touch-rugby for variety, to warm-up and encourage fun and competition.

## 1. Fun and friends are the foundation



## Real life examples of sports already on the front foot...



HUDOLE

FA Wales Huddle powered by Weetabix is a football initiative that aims to have 'girls fall in love with football' by offering a fun, relaxed, sociable and friendly way to give football a try. Through informal and casual football festivals, girls enjoy a positive first experience of the game while they'll make new friends, learn football skills and build their confidence.



GIRLS  
GOT  
GAME  
@basketballnz

Basketball NZ developed 'Girls Got Game' to introduce more young girls to basketball and encourage them to continue being active and enjoy basketball with their friends. 'Girls Got Game' lessons and tips were also launched on **CoachMate**, ensuring volunteer coaches not only have easy access to the content but develop the confidence and skills to create positive, fun and inclusive sessions for girls, that keep them coming back to the sport.



UEFA  
PLAYMAKERS  
Inspired by Disney

UEFA Playmakers is a fun and safe introduction to football for 5-8 year old girls that uses play-based learning and the magical power of Disney storytelling. Coaches can pick a chapter from a number of Disney stories like Moana, Frozen or Incredibles 2 which provides session guidelines that tap into the child's imagination.



## 2 The power of communication and connection

Girls respond to criticism and praise differently from boys, which means that how you say something is as important as what you are saying – tone, timing and setting are everything!

Communication isn't just about words. It's also about how we interact and ultimately the connections we form – with everyone, including teammates. When coaches receive training in skills and communication, only 5% of kids chose not to play again. However that drop-out rate jumps to 26% of kids when coaches are untrained<sup>8</sup>.

When girls and young women feel unsupported, they are more likely to drop out of sport to avoid further damage to their self-esteem. However, when they feel valued, they try harder and perform better. Girls also need to be seen as a whole person, an individual as well as an athlete. Their lives aren't just about what happens in the sports arena, so taking an interest in their life outside sport is also important for coaches and organisers.

### Key Actions

#### COMMUNICATION

Keep your tone and body language positive when communicating. Use a calm voice and an open stance rather than yelling or pointing.

Focus on team improvements in a group setting rather than specifically targeting an individual.

Specific positive feedback is really beneficial and best done in a group environment.

Ensure feedback is constructive and starts with a 'positive' before providing targeted feedback. For example, 'I loved your vision attempting that pass' and 'You made great space for yourself. What could you have done differently to make it a successful pass?'

When individual feedback is needed, it's usually best kept just between coach and player. Find a 'safe' environment to ask questions and allow the player to reflect and take ownership of their learning. Praise publicly, criticise or disapprove privately.

#### CONNECTION

Give young women 'agency' by seeking their input on things like where they play, the team name or the colour of its uniform.

Use team huddles to encourage connection and make everyone feel safe and at the 'same level'.

Create conversation that helps girls feel seen and valued... for example, 'what position or subject is your favourite?'

Consider what may be going on in a young woman's life outside of sport... Are her parents divorcing, could she be having a hard time at school?

Give players a voice and ask what they enjoyed about the game or training and what they would like to see or do that's different?

Ask players what they prefer to be called and use that name to show you value and respect them as individuals.

## 2. The power of communication and connection



### Real life examples



Wayne Smith, highly successful and world renowned rugby coach, recognised the importance of his female players using song and dance to communicate and connect as a team prior to games. He embraced this on the bus to games and in the locker room. However, when he coached the male national rugby teams, his players connected in different ways, preferring to sit by themselves on the team bus with headphones on.

**W**ith women, your effectiveness is through your ability to relate. They have to feel that you care about them personally or have some kind of connection with them beyond the game... To be an effective leader of a men's team, you don't need personal rapport as long as there is respect. That's the extent of the relationship... Women have to have a sense that you care for them above and beyond their (athletic) abilities.



#### **Anson Dorrance**

Former USA Head Soccer Coach

# 3 Boosting confidence

Confidence can be instilled in girls and young women from multiple supporters and systems – it doesn't just stem from coaches but also parents, teachers, peers, society and themselves. It is important to remember that we are all a coach.

## Key Actions

Encourage a culture of positive reinforcement with things like high-fives to celebrate success and cheers like “you’ve got this”.

Re-frame weaknesses as ‘work-ons’ and acknowledge what went well before transitioning to the next improvement area.

Start training with basics before moving on to more challenging or new tasks so girls can get some ‘early wins’ and establish confidence from the outset.

Use ‘Scaffolding Learning’ – break lessons or new tasks into manageable bites and provide decreasing levels of support as girls master new skills.

If they feel like they are failing at a certain task, rebuild their confidence by bringing them back to something they can conquer and encourage them to try again.

Set up ways for girls to succeed – every girl has something positive to contribute so find a way for her to offer that value to the team by things like sharing a ‘sprint’ technique or leading a ‘warm up’ session.

Get girls to set their own challenges against themselves e.g. beating their 3-pointer record.

Get girls to warm down in pairs and share something they learnt or did well during the match.

Offer shout-outs to girls who have achieved something new or get peers to praise others at the end of the game or training session.

Finish a session with a ‘win’ so girls leave feeling confident and recognised.

Encourage girls to identify with their own strengths.

## Why it matters

When their self-belief is strong and healthy, girls and young women can perform at their best and enjoy sport the most. And that means they are more likely to continue participating. ‘Not feeling good enough’ and ‘lacking confidence’ continue to be among the leading reasons that young players, and their parents, cite for them dropping out of sport<sup>2</sup>.

Confidence is the key. It is imperative that coaches and influencers never stop finding ways to help boost the confidence and self-esteem of girls and young women, both in and outside of sport.

### 3. Boosting confidence



The best I've ever played and felt was when I was encouraged by my coach, teammates and parents and had confidence in my ability. The times I contemplated giving up were when my flaws were pointed out and my confidence was at its lowest.

**Rebecca Sowden**

Team Heroine founder and former New Zealand Football Fern.

**Pro Tip**

Boys often have the confidence to try to shoot from half way or dribble through a whole team... sometimes all by themselves! But when playing in a mixed team with girls, they may need to be encouraged to be more inclusive and look for how their teammates can help them play better.

# 4 New skills and a sense of achievement

Developing new skills and feeling a sense of achievement can increase confidence for all players, their enjoyment of the game and their sense of self-worth outside of sport. Interestingly, this is something that girls especially like about sport.

Girls and young women seem more inclined to want to understand the reasons behind behaviours or choices, and also more open to the learning process within sports, than are boys.

## Key Actions

Rather than just focus on the outcome, foster a 'growth and improvement' mindset among players and the effort and process behind learning a skill. Place emphasis on things that are within an athlete's control.

Be aware of the power of language to foster this mindset. For example, coaches can ask players what their 'weapons and wishes' are, which is another way of saying 'strengths and weaknesses'.

Compliment and explain the 'why' so girls and young women can better understand the reasons behind an action. Coaches will have greater 'buy-in' and their players are more likely to repeat positive actions and avoid the negative ones.

Specific feedback is important. Don't just say "good job" - be sure to specifically acknowledge the behaviours that your players exhibit.

Learning doesn't come just from adults, encourage players to 'team up' or establish groups to discuss observations and growth.

Recognise and reward behaviour more than just outcome, perhaps by giving points for trying something new. For example, the effort and skill shown by a girl leading up to the goal is worth more points than scoring it.

Instead of having girls compare themselves to their teammates, have them keep track of their own personal records - celebrate when a girl sets a new best!

Bring learning to a conscious level - at the start of the session, get girls to communicate in pairs, what they hope to specifically bring to a skills session, for example.

Introduce reflection time - at the end of each training session, the game itself or even the season, set up 'circle time' and (in pairs) get players to reflect on what went well and what would need to improve.

Adopt a 'not yet' narrative in the team... even if a girl doesn't complete a task or can't accomplish a goal, respond with something like "OK, you can't do it YET but give it time".

Foster learning in the team by asking questions like "how did you do that?" This will encourage them to use their 'thinking brain' and better understand the learning process.

Encourage girls to be brave, not perfect - use terms like 'give it a go' and 'great try'. Formally recognise players for trying new things and offer a 'Bravery Award' as well as 'Player of the Day'.

#### 4. New skills and a sense of achievement



### Why it matters

Girls want feedback that is relevant, helps them develop, encourages them to take risks and recognises their improvements. They enjoy winning as much as boys do. But there needs to be an emphasis on development rather than the final result, without success narrowly defined as just the team's win-loss record.

### Real life examples



Golf New Zealand launched 'She Loves Golf' to encourage more women and young girls to give golf a try! Their aim was to create enjoyable and social experiences for women and girls, to inspire their love for golf.

They offer events, promotions, and opportunities to learn and play at clubs and driving ranges throughout the country. Golf NZ also partnered with **CoachMate** to give volunteer coaches the confidence and skills to deliver great golfing sports experiences to girls and young women... every time they play!

# 5 Not an after-thought

History and culture have created structures, systems and beliefs that men's sport is the 'main event' and that women's sport is an inferior, secondary product. And women's sport continues to languish behind its male counterpart in terms of role models, representation, investment and visibility.

## Why it matters

Girls and young women belong in sport. We need to reinforce that idea throughout society and ensure that female participants know they are valued in the game. Outdated stereotypes need to be rejected and historic structures rewired to encourage participation and increase retention rates.

## Key Actions

### Visibility

Make sure promotional material like clubroom posters and match-day programmes equally represents both genders.

Audit your social media account and aim for an equal gender split in features, photographs, articles and other material.

When referring to successful players, coaches or teams, aim for a good balance between the genders.

Show training videos and include demonstrations that use women and girls.

Give girls the opportunity to see sportswomen in action by attending women's games or watching high-profile women on TV - make it part of your team trips and get-togethers.

Make sure your club brand and visual imagery as far as possible represents both genders.

### Redefine

Use inspiring women as team or competition names e.g. the Kate Sheppard Cup, Serena Williams Juniors.

Actively call-out or intervene if you hear or see anything that reinforces negative stereotypes.

Showcase a variety of role models to ensure representation across the range of girls and young women in sport - like different ages, ethnicities, roles, religions and body types.

Ditch your own bias - alarmingly, a third of parents continue to believe that boys are better and more suited to sports than girls<sup>2</sup>.

Offer girls both tangible and intangible support to participate and show them that they belong. Good examples of support include buying them sports-related birthday presents; telling them how much you enjoy watching them play or driving them to training; helping pack their sports bag; asking them about their games; and watching sports together.

## 5. Not an after-thought

### Representation

Actively recruit women into coaching and other roles that deal directly with players. Encourage women to get involved in new club, sport and player-focused programs and initiatives that they can try without feeling judged or threatened.

Men still dominate coaching across the spectrum of sport from elite to grass-roots. Men are twice as likely to coach the opposite gender<sup>2</sup> and just 26% of people who have ever coached kids identify as female.

Balance gender representation on boards and committees... this keeps women visible at club and sport level and decision-making will benefit from including female perspectives.

Encourage and commit to formal, written objectives specifically related to the inclusion of women and girls at club and sport level.

### Language

Ensure that girls and young women feel safe in club premises or facilities, for example with an appropriate allocation of gender-specific changing rooms.

Balance the use of gender qualifiers throughout your club or sport... for example references to a 'Women's FA Cup' should be balanced by the equal use of a 'Men's FA Cup'.

Avoid terms and labels that imply that women's sport is inferior or less important like "the women's first grade team is playing the curtain-raiser for the main match".

Adopt gender-neutral terminology like 'Chairman' (or 'Chair'), never refer to female players as 'girls' (especially adult women) unless male players are just as commonly referred to as 'boys'.

Insist on buying and distributing footwear, clothing and other merchandise that uses unisex labels or is not otherwise gender-specific.



**It's not a zero sum game, look at your organisation with all teams contributing different revenue, costs and opportunity to see the overall organisation.**

**Becca Roux**

Executive Director of US Women's National (Soccer) Team Players Association.



# 6 It's a girl thing

It is universally accepted in society that men and women are not the same. Their physiology is obviously unique and their mental, emotional and psychological needs and processes are often profoundly different.

It's still a work in progress, but society has largely adjusted and adapted to that.

However when it comes to community sport and physical activity, women still enjoy the status of an afterthought. Their unique needs are rarely catered for and invariably they are forced to adapt to facilities, equipment and environments designed for men and boys.

## Why it matters

Girls and young women are far more likely to reach their competitive athletic potential when the sporting facilities and programmes provided for them are specifically designed to cater for female physiology.

Psychology, including mindset, is also a significant factor that profoundly affects the enjoyment of sport and the participation and performance of girls. Young females representing Indigenous, Pacific, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures are particularly likely to be self-conscious about sporting gear, modesty and exposure of their bodies, hard in-game body contact, falling or being knocked over, injury, the convenience of toilet facilities, wearing shorts or skimpy uniforms and managing their period<sup>9</sup>.

We know that these and numerous other physical and psychological barriers are real concerns for girls and young women in sport. These must be addressed to achieve the best possible outcomes.

## Key Actions

### Uniforms

Give girls options with flexibility to decide what training and playing outfits they feel most comfortable in. Cricket, for example could offer the choice of pants, shorts or culottes.

Ditch the white kits, especially shorts – “my only memory of making my football debut for New Zealand was being so anxious about bleeding all over my white shorts when I had my period”  
Rebecca Sowden, Team Heroine Founder

Let girls decide on their uniform – as long as it's safe and appropriate. Seek their opinions on colours, design, cut and what works best for them.

Avoid see-through or clingy outfits – girls going through puberty have heightened sensitivities around their bodies.

### Body confidence

Recognise that there is no one ideal player or athlete body – girls come in all body-shapes and sizes with varying levels of confidence in their bodies. And they can all participate!

Avoid comments about bodies, looks, appearance or traditional gender stereotypes. Re-frame physical attributes in a positive way, such as “you showed great strength through the legs, your power to jump high is fantastic”.

Recognise that players may have body issues that discourage them from participating in some team activities. For example, appearing publicly in a swimming costume may be embarrassing for some young women, so provide alternatives like yoga or allow board shorts or rash-shirts for post-game swimming recovery sessions.

## 6. It's a girl thing

### Ensure menstrual dignity

Make sure girls have discreet access to menstruation products and appropriate female support – keep female health products in the team medical bag, preferably available in the changing rooms.

Be aware and considerate of players who may be having an “off” day or are asking for an extra toilet break.

Periods are a regular, medical and predictable part of most young women's lives – normalise them, call them what they are, don't be afraid of ‘taboos’ like talking about periods and avoid remarks like “that time of the month”.

Never joke about or downplay the impact that menstruation can have on a player or athlete's performance or mood – it's not ‘just period cramps’, it's a profound physiological change in a woman's body that is often painful, uncomfortable, embarrassing and accompanied by emotional and psychological changes.

Adopt a ‘no questions asked’ policy when it comes to the health and wellbeing of young women – it's personal and it's their choice whether or not they want to talk about it.

### Changing rooms

Make sure that girls, especially when they're playing in boy's teams, have access to toilet facilities that meet their needs.

Ensure that all game and training venues have clean female-only toilets with bins and adequate stocks of soap, toilet paper and paper towels.

Privacy is paramount for girls and young women – avoid communal showers!

### Equipment

Ensure that equipment meets the specific needs of every girl participating – for example smaller golf clubs or lighter bats.

Make sure that equipment and other conveniences for girls like hair ties, sports bras and products like “Boob Armour” are supplied and accessible for all participants.



## 6. It's a girl thing



### Real life examples



Hockey England have released 'Inclusive Kit Regulation' for its domestic league to enable players to feel comfortable and included when playing hockey. Individual players have the freedom to choose to wear shorts, skirts or skorts, and apart from the prescribed team colours, no requirement to wear the same item as their teammates. Hockey England has also made head coverings for players, such as turbans and hijabs, an individual choice. These inclusive kit regulations give autonomy to the individual players. It encourages them to choose what they feel comfortable in, rather than comply with rigid uniform standards that pander to traditional gender norms.



Nike and **CoachMate** partner, New Zealand Football, recently worked with Football Ferns players to address the period anxiety and comfort issues they were experiencing. The introduction of teal shorts was the result, a courageous and welcomed move away from their traditional all-white uniform.

There's still times where we'll travel abroad and there won't be any facilities in the toilet. Period symptoms can already make it difficult for women to take part in sport. We don't need even more obstacles. This happens once a month - not once in a while, but 12 times a year.

**Elinor Snowsill**

Wales Rugby Player

# 7 A safe and inclusive environment

A safe and inclusive environment is of course essential in all areas of sport. But it's all the particularly the case for girls and young women. This group is more at risk of personal safety issues because they have less strength, maturity and life skills that older women develop.

Unfortunately, recent events have brought a number of unsafe or unwelcoming environments into the public spotlight. These include sexual abuse and coercion, bullying, manipulation and gaslighting. Other complex and hotly debated issues like the involvement of transgender athletes in women's sport are topical, each contributing to the discomfort and anxiety that girls and young women are particularly vulnerable to.

## Key Actions

Use inclusive language and be aware of gender vs identity terms.

Maintain professional relationships and avoid comments about sexuality, bodies or appearance.

Acknowledge and cater to all types of families by using terms like parent/guardian rather than mum/dad.

Set up activities that can be modified for diverse needs and people with a disability.

Adopt gender-neutral terms like "let's go folks" instead of "let's go guys", especially when girls and boys are participating together.

Conduct one-on-one meetings with girls and young women with the door open and wherever possible, with another (preferably adult) person present.

Consider training times and lighting of areas to ensure it's safe for players to play, train and use changing facilities.

Be aware of appropriate and physical boundaries by using 'high-fives' instead of hugs as a form of physical contact.

Ensure girls are intentionally welcomed to programs, included in activities, warmly greeted and that all players are getting a turn.

Create sensory areas or rooms at sport's events so that players with autism or similar challenges can still participate.

Actively call out or intervene if you hear or see anything that denigrates girls or any other individual or group's ability to participate or perform.

Demonstrate your support for different groups and minorities via things like 'Pride Rounds' and 'Women and Girls Club Days'.

Be aware of common afflictions like ADHD in the community and adapt team activities for the different learning needs of players.

Create 'Girl Spaces' where girls only can relax and enjoy the space and time to feel like they can be completely themselves.

Carefully consider safety in all the available transport options available to players attending training and matches, and keep them focused on prioritising safety above everything else.

Wherever it's reasonable to do so, replace 'man' with 'person' (or another similar word or phrase) in all the terminology you use with girls and young women.... for example 'batsperson' 'Chairperson', 'Player of the Match'.

## 7. A safe and inclusive environment



### Why it matters

Girls and young women perform best when they feel safe and have a strong sense of belonging. It follows therefore, that everything reasonably possible is done to foster an environment at club and sport level that helps girls feel safe in sport and free to become the best possible versions of themselves.

# Conclusion

There are clearly many winners when more girls and young women participate in sport. But achieving that objective requires a big vision, planning, commitment and the collective action required to remove the barriers that hold girls back from entering sport and contribute to them dropping out.

With a consistent and bespoke approach to coaching girls, some fresh thinking, a range of tailored programmes, recognition of the drivers and unique needs of this group and state-of-the-art tools like **CoachMate**, it can be done. And as more girls play more sport, they'll continue to reap the benefits of better physical and mental health, stronger peer and social acceptance, a higher self-esteem, enduring happiness and emotional stability.

And they'll have a better chance of reaching their potential, both in sport itself and in the wider community.

## We'll all win when that happens!

We won't get it completely right straight away. We hope this paper will act as a launching pad in your role as a coach, administrator, educator, influencer, parent or supporter. The guidance and tips we've outlined here, you have the tools to make your unique, local contribution.

Together, we're on an unbeatable path to create a more supportive, safe and successful environment for girls and young women in sport.

# About CoachMate and Team Heroine



Our mission is simple; to ensure every player has great sports experiences. Through our app-based platform, we unite sports communities, equipping coaches, volunteers, and supporters with the tools they need to provide exceptional experiences that keep kids in the game.

Sporting bodies can partner with CoachMate to deliver their coaching curriculums and optimise their grassroots partnerships, creating vibrant and sustainable communities that empower kids to thrive.

If you share our mission of keeping kids in the game, we'd love to hear from you.

CoachMate is the official grassroots coaching platform for Golf NZ, Basketball NZ, NZ Football, and Golf Australia.



TEAM

## HEROINE

Team Heroine was founded by former New Zealand Football Fern and women's sport advocate and specialist, Rebecca Sowden and was set up to help sports organisations, media, sponsors and other stakeholders harness the power of women's sport. She has worked with world-leading women's sports clients including Visa Europe, Xero, Areto Labs, Sport New Zealand, Spark Sport and been a key-note speaker in global forums for International Working Group for Women in Sport (IWG), Air New Zealand, The Athletic Podcast, Sky News, BBC, Park Hyatt and more.



# Appendix

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# Cheat Sheet

## Tips for caregivers and supporters

### COMMUNICATION

Always keep your tone and body language positive when communicating, use a calm voice and an open stance rather than yelling or pointing.

Tell your girls to 'have fun' and that 'you love watching them play' rather than telling them what they or the team should be doing.

Ensure feedback is constructive and starts with a 'positive' - for example, "I loved your vision attempting that pass. What do you think could have been another option? Maybe shorter passes could have been a better option in this situation."

Create conversation that helps girls feel seen and reinforces that they belong in sports e.g. "What's your favourite playing position?".

Adopt a 'not yet' narrative. Respond to "I can't do that reverse shot" with "you can't do it YET, but give it time".

Encourage girls to be brave and not perfect. Use terms like 'Give it a go' and 'it was awesome to see you try...'

### MAKE ROLE MODELS VISIBLE

Attend and watch women's sport's events together.

Talk about sports and matches that involved girls and women in a positive light.

Refer to inspiring role models who are well-known, relatable and not 'out-of-reach'.

Be mindful of systems that perpetuate gender bias in sport. Men are more often in the news and being talked about than women, so highlight imbalances at all levels.

When you refer to successful players or teams, ask yourself if they relate to girls and young women or are they usually examples of men?

### CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES

Avoid any reference to inferior attributes when it comes to sport e.g. "You throw like a girl".

Actively call-out or intervene if you hear any comments that reinforce negative stereotypes.

Make sure you provide the relevant equipment that meets the needs, size and shape of girls.

Avoid focusing on appearance and re-frame physical attributes in a positive way. Use comments like "You have great strength, your power to jump high is fantastic".

### BE A ROLE MODEL

Eliminate your own bias - Alarmingly, a third of parents endorse the belief that boys are better at sports than girls (Women's Sports Foundation 2020).

Offer girls support to participate and show them that they belong in sport. An example is buying them sports related gear for their birthday, driving them to training, helping pack their sports bag and asking them about the game.

Try to normalise periods, don't be afraid to call a period what it is - a period (it's not 'the time of the month').

Share your own stories about participating in sport or times you have messed up or been vulnerable.

# Cheat Sheet

## Tips for coaches

### CONNECTION

Use team huddles to encourage connection and make everyone feel on the 'same level'

Create conversation that helps girls feel seen e.g. 'what playing position or subject is your favourite?'

Consider what may be going on in young women's life outside of sport... Are her parents divorcing, could she be having a tough time at school?

Ask players what they prefer to be called and call them by that name to show you value and respect them as individuals (consider preferred pronouns).

### EQUIPMENT

Ensure equipment meets the needs, size and shape of girls i.e smaller sized golf clubs or lighter bats.

Make equipment specific to meeting girls needs available i.e hair ties, sports bras, Boob Armour.

### COMMUNICATION

Instead of 'calling out' a single player in a group environment, pull them aside at an appropriate time and in a 'safe' environment to provide individual feedback.

Ensure feedback is constructive and starts with a 'positive' before providing specific feedback.

Encourage risk taking - use terms like 'Give it a go' and 'Great try' and look to include accolades like a 'Bravery Award' alongside 'Player of the Day'.

Keep your tone and body language positive when communicating e.g. use a calm voice and open stance rather than yelling or pointing.

Adopt 'Scaffolding Learning' - break lessons or new tasks into manageable bites and provide decreasing levels of support as girls master new skills.

### SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Start training with the basics before moving on to more challenging or new tasks so girls can establish confidence at the start and get some 'early wins'.

Bring learning to a conscious level - at the start of the session, get girls to think or write what they hope to bring to the team or develop during that session.

Set up ways for girls to succeed - every girl has something positive to contribute so find a way for her to offer that value to the team e.g. sharing a technique, taking a 'warm up'.

Get girls to set their own challenges against themselves e.g. beating their 3-pointer record.

Finish a session with a 'win' so girls leave feeling confident.

# Cheat Sheet

## Tips for coaches cont.

### MAKE ROLE MODELS VISIBLE

Attend women's senior/representative games - make it part of a team trip.

Show training videos that use women and girls.

Actively call-out or intervene if you hear any comments that reinforce negative stereotypes.

Avoid any reference to inferior attributes when it comes to sport e.g. 'you throw like a girl'.

### FUN AND CAMARADERIE

Play music in the changing room to develop a fun team culture and include warm up games that encourage fun and laughter.

Encourage girls to turn up early to have some 'catch-up' time prior to training on while they are setting up.

Set the tone by creating rituals that encourage bonding like high fives, cheers, team songs or pre-game rituals.

If you are coaching a girl in a 'boy's team', pair them up instead having players choose so a single girl get left last.

### BODY CONFIDENCE & HEALTH

Avoid comments about bodies, looks, appearance or traditional gender stereotypes and re-frame physical attributes in a positive way i.e 'great strength, your power to jump high is fantastic'.

Recognise certain sport's activities heighten body issues post-game swimming recovery in a bathing suit can be a young woman's nightmare.

Understand the impacts of menstruation on performance and wellbeing.

Get rid of period taboo by normalising periods even if you are a man, don't be afraid to call a period what it is - a period (not the time of the month).

Ensure discreet access to menstruation products or support make the team medical bag available in the changing rooms rather than having a male team manager hold it.

### CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Be aware of appropriate and physical boundaries use 'high-fives' instead of hugs as a form of physical contact.

Have one-on-one meetings with girls and young women in the visibility of others, with the door open or with another adult present.

Set up activities that can be modified for diverse needs i.e able-bodied vs people with a disability or ADHD.

Ensure girls are actively and intentionally welcomed to programmes and are included in activities. Say "Hi" on arrival and ensure that everyone is getting a turn.

Adopt gender-neutral terms i.e. "Let's go folks" instead of "Let's go guys" especially in situations where girls are participating in 'boys' teams.

# Cheat Sheet

## Tips for sports organisations and schools

### LANGUAGE

Ensure girls aren't alienated by using language that makes them feel included and valued.

If you are going to use a gender qualifier around women's sport e.g. 'Women's FA Cup' then do the same for the mens version and call it 'Men's FA Cup'.

If you are holding a double-header, mix it up - trial double-header events with girls/women competing prior to boys/men and then swap it so boys/men are playing first.

Make merchandise sizing labels unisex or have both genders available so girls aren't forced to wear or buy gear that have mens' or boys' labels.

### FUN AND FRIENDS

Introduce casual 'have-a-go-days' or 'bring a friend' to encourage girls to get into sport.

### CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

You can show support for and welcome different groups and minorities in the community via things like 'Pride Rounds' and 'Women and Girls Club Days'.

Wherever it's reasonable to do so, replace 'man' with 'person'. For example 'batperson', 'Chairperson', 'Player of the Match'.

Be aware of and cater to all types of families. Instead of using mum/dad's name on forms, use terms like parent/guardian instead.

Consider training times and lighting of areas to ensure it's safe for players to play, train, and use changing facilities.

Consider safe transport options e.g. getting to and from pick-up points, car-pooling, biking or walking at night.

### PERCEPTION

Ensure girls and women are given equal focus and effort by creating a culture that keeps girls and women at the forefront alongside boys and men.

Set objectives specifically related to the inclusion of women and girls in your sport e.g. attract 20% more female players and coaches within 2 years.

Ensure the women's and girls game are included within responsibilities and job descriptions.

Actively recruit women into coaching and other roles with bespoke programmes, policies and marketing.

# Cheat Sheet

## Tips for sports organisations and schools cont.

### PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Split access to top-tier pitches, courts and facilities evenly across both boys and girls.

Organisations can remind parents of the value of girls participating in sports to influence parent attitudes e.g. 90% of executive roles in the workplace are held by women who played sport.

Showcase a variety of female role models in sport e.g. different ages, ethnicities, roles, religions and body types.

Ensure quality of equipment and gear is shared across genders and girls are not given the second tier balls or hand-me-down golf clubs to use.

Remind parents/caregivers that when girls do not participate in sport, there are lifelong impacts across all aspects of their lives including health and wellbeing, social, education and career potential.

Don't tack girls or women's marketing opportunities on as an after-thought to boys and mens. View them as a key part of the marketing mix and ensure investment as well as human resource is fairly allocated.

### UNIFORMS

Give them options - provide flexibility so girls can decide what training and playing outfits they feel most comfortable in e.g. cricket pants, shorts or culottes.

Girls going through puberty have heightened senses around body parts so avoid see-through or clingy outfits and ditch the white kits!

### CHANGING ROOMS

Make sure girls, especially girls participating in 'boys teams' have access to facilities that meet their needs e.g. toilets and not just urinals and ditch the gender labels.

Ensure bins, toilet paper and sanitary supplies are discreetly accessible in your sports environments.

Avoid communal showers so young girls don't feel self conscious or have to worry about who may come in.

### EQUIPMENT

Ensure equipment meets the needs, size and shape of girls e.g. smaller sized golf clubs or lighter bats.

Make equipment specific to meeting girl's needs available e.g. hair ties, sports bras, Boob Armour.

### VISIBILITY

Ensure girls and women's sport are given equal presence and prominence visually.

Make sure promotional material like clubroom/school posters and match programmes include both genders in equal presence.

Mix it up, don't always put girls schedules or results last or at the bottom below boys.

Audit your social media accounts and aim for an equal gender split.