

SUNCORP 

in collaboration with
SPORTAUS

In Their Corner:

A guide for
parents coaching
young athletes.









About the author

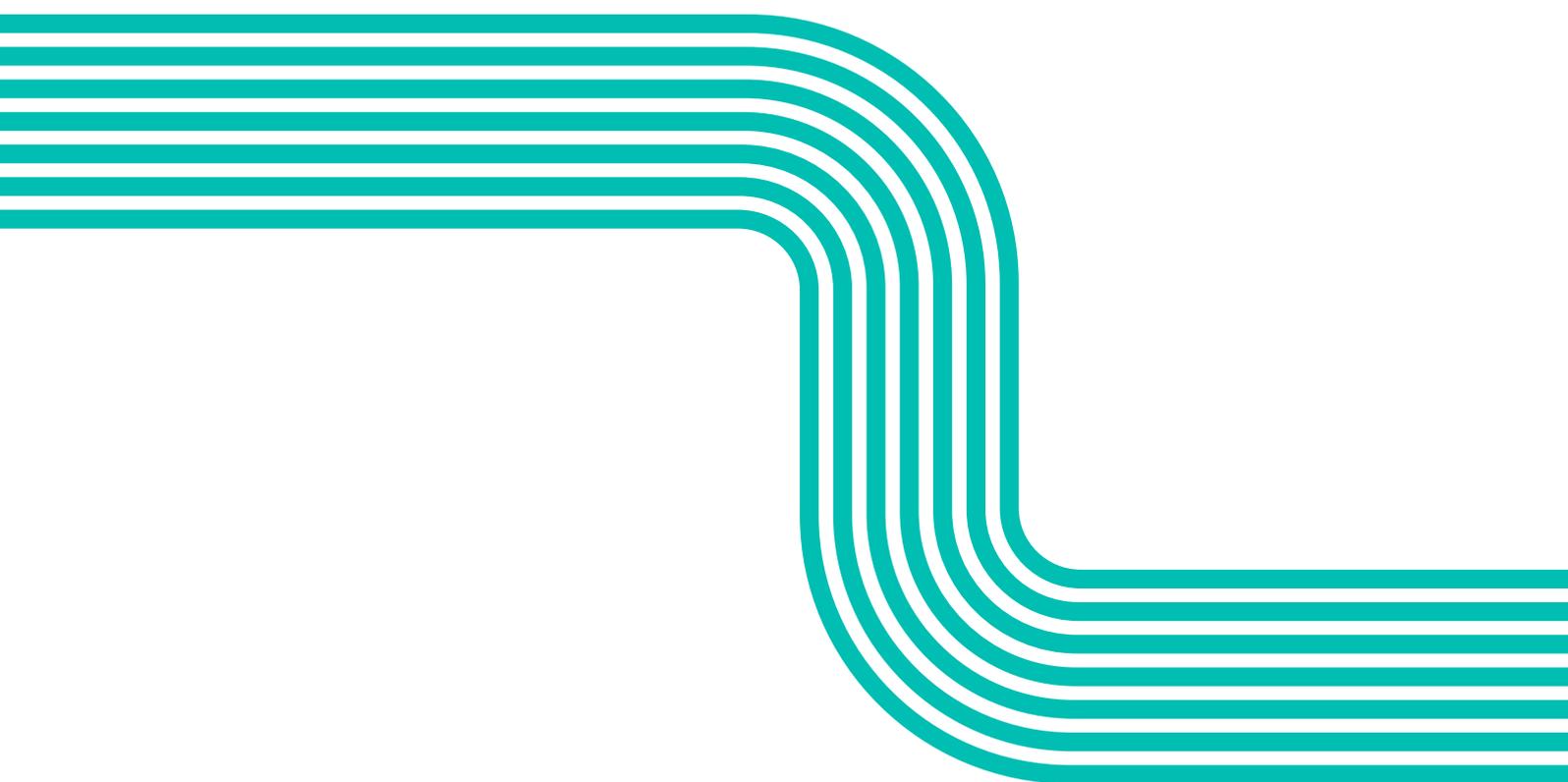
Clare Ferguson (nee McMeniman) is the Assistant Coach of the Queensland Firebirds, with an elite playing career spanning over a decade, including 15 International Test caps for the Australian Diamonds and 3 Premiership titles with the Queensland Firebirds. In 2016 she was appointed captain of the Australian Diamonds. Away from the court, Clare completed a Graduate Entry Masters of Speech Pathology at the University of Queensland and worked periodically during her sporting career. Since retiring in 2016, she has become a mother, remains actively engaged in the Australian netball community, is a proud Suncorp Team Girls ambassador and passionate advocate for investing in the self-development and growth of our next generation of young women.



Acknowledgements

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SPORTAUS







In action against the Silver Ferns during the Constellation Cup, October 2016.



Front, middle, Queensland Firebirds, Australian Conference Winners of ANZ Championship 2016.



Accepting the Quad Series Trophy as Australian Diamonds Captain after beating New Zealand in Melbourne in September 2016.



After being appointed as acting Australian Diamonds Captain at the beginning of 2016 prior to departing for an International Test Series vs England.



Clare, Age 17 (2002) on the right and Gila (my high-school coach), this was at U17 Nationals in Adelaide.

Foreword

‘Who was your most influential coach?’

As an elite netballer, that’s the question I’m most often asked.

Throughout my career I’ve been fortunate to have been coached by some of the greats of our game; Vicki Wilson, Rose Jencke, Norma Plummer and Lisa Alexander. The truth is each of these women left an indelible mark on my life.

But the most influential coach in my netball career? Well, that title has to go to my high school netball coach, Gila. During my teenage years Gila really helped me to develop a love for netball but more than that, she also helped shape me into the person I am today. Training and games quickly became the highlight of my week. As my high school netball coach Gila exposed me to more than just skills and drills—

“ During my teenage years Gila really helped me to develop a love for netball but more than that, she also helped shape me into the person I am today. ”

under her guidance my team mates and I set our first ever goals and learnt key skills like the importance of seeking feedback, reflecting on performance and developing a team culture. Gila also facilitated the formation of rich social connections with us as a group. She created an environment for us to have FUN and grow as individuals and as a group of young women. I suppose what I’m saying is that my high school coach played the biggest role in my netball journey as she was critical in the development of my physical literacy.

“ She created an environment for us to have FUN and grow as individuals and as a group of young women. ”





Physical Literacy





What is physical literacy?

Put simply, physical literacy is holistic lifelong learning through movement and physical activity. It delivers physical, psychological, social and cognitive health and wellbeing benefits. In a nutshell, it's more than just about exercising, it's about developing our whole self. Current evidence suggests that if we develop our physical literacy at an early age, then we are more likely to remain active for life. We also know that the more physical literacy domains you include in an activity—physical, psychological, social and cognitive, the more likely a child will enjoy their experience in sport.

Watch this quick video to learn more about physical literacy:



Scan the QR code to view.

Why should physical literacy matter to volunteer coaches?

Good question! The truth is grassroots and volunteer coaches have a vital role in building physical literacy within their players and inspiring them to lead active and fulfilling lives. What we hope to gain from this as a society is confident young women who will contribute more broadly to our communities. Just think...as their coach you can help to ignite a little fire in their soul that makes them want to be better!

Almost 50% of teenage girls stop playing sport by the time they leave high school (2019 Suncorp Australian Youth and Confidence Report). This concerning statistic has remained relatively unchanged in recent years and it continues to be worrying because we know the benefits associated with ongoing sports participation are INCREDIBLE. By remaining engaged in sport, girls are able to equip themselves with skills, knowledge and confidence that transfer beyond the netball court and into better performance in the classroom, the boardroom and wellbeing in their general life.

Ultimately, we all have a role to play in building our future generations of confident girls, regardless of our level of experience as a coach. This resource is designed to introduce you to Sport Australia's Physical Literacy Framework and help you get the ball rolling with ideas around how you could use it in your coaching. These skills are largely meant to be learned by your players through movements/skills/drills/games but some of the resources provided are things you can also choose to do away from the court.

Let's break it down:

Overview of the Australian Physical Literacy Framework

Domains	Elements
 <p>Physical The skills and fitness a person acquires and applies through movement.</p>	Movement skills, moving with equipment, object manipulation, coordination, stability/balance, agility, strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, reaction time, speed.
 <p>Psychological The attitudes and emotions a person has towards movement and the impact they have on their confidence and motivation to move.</p>	Engagement & enjoyment. Confidence, motivation, connection to place, self perception, self regulation (emotions), self regulation (physical).
 <p>Social A person's interaction with others in relation to movement.</p>	Relationships, collaboration, ethics, society & culture.
 <p>Cognitive A person's understanding of how, why and when they move.</p>	Content knowledge, safety & risk, rules, reasoning, strategy & planning, tactics, perceptual awareness.

Learn more about the Australian Physical Literacy Framework:
Scan the QR code to view.



The Framework might seem overwhelming for some at first but just remember:

- You don't need to master all of the elements of physical literacy at once! In fact, you may find that some of the physical literacy elements are not relevant to your sport. Just pick one or two at a time and work on these for a block of sessions or across the course of a season.
- What you focus on will also depend on YOU and your current skills, circumstances and the goals you want to achieve with your team.
- Once you've got a grip on the idea of physical literacy try prioritising and combining a couple of elements in the one activity. For example, an activity that may help your players develop their relationships with one another (Social Domain) could also work on their cardiovascular fitness (Physical Domain) and tactics (Cognitive Domain). Remember that we're developing our player's 'whole self' not just working on how well they can catch and pass!

Most importantly, have fun with it! This is your chance to create the team environment you would love to be a part of where players feel included, valued and connected!





Drills 'n' Skills



Physical domain

Running, dodging, sidestepping, jumping, catching, passing... it's all about how we move but the key is to be creative! Don't fall into the trap of doing the same drill week after week. We definitely want to consolidate some drills/skills but we can't expect players to get excited about training and games if they do the same things and play the same position time and time again. Keep them guessing and mix it up.

Training sessions

Preparation is key! I get it. You're a volunteer and maybe you have no experience in coaching or with netball at all. Or maybe you're time-poor and just don't have the time to commit to planning every session. I promise you, just ten minutes of thinking through new drills will make a huge difference to your delivery and the level of enjoyment and learning that your players have.

Movement skills

- Running
- Skipping
- Jumping and landing
- Side-stepping
- Dodging

Object Manipulation

Throwing

- Chest pass
- Shoulder pass
- 2 handed overhead pass
- Lob
- Bounce pass
- Faking

Catching

- 2 hands

Agility

- Dodging

Reaction time

- Reacting to an opponent's movement
- Reacting to a whistle or team mate's call
- Reacting to the ball

Co-ordination

- Catching the ball in motion
- Landing on the outside foot when you catch the ball (when you lead to the left you land on your left foot first, when you lead to the right, you land on your right foot first)
- Pivoting
- Shooting

Stability/balance

- Pivoting
- Hands over the ball/shot
- Landing on one foot after the other
- Landing on two feet simultaneously
- Catching the ball on extension and landing

Speed

- Sprinting
- Leading on a 45 degree angle
- Changing pace from jog to sprint



You could consider:

- Using a session plan template to help you prepare.
- Having a theme for a period of time (2-3 weeks) which focuses on one or two key skill/s.
- What other activities/sports you can incorporate into your session to teach the skill? Think skipping ropes, footballs, tennis balls and racquets, cones, hurdles, obstacle courses, balloons, dance routines—make it FUN!
- Hold your session on a different surface or in a different space. E.g., balancing activities on the grandstands, dodging on grass so they learn to use their small steps in and out of the change of direction, wall work to help improve their reaction time.
- Using the Netball Australia Knee program! It's an amazing free resource that can be accessed here (knee.netball.com.au) and aims to help introduce you to exercises that can keep your players on the court for longer and moving more efficiently therefore preventing injuries...who doesn't love that!
- Another fantastic free resource if you're struggling for ideas are the Playing for Life activities (www.sportaus.gov.au/p41). There are over 50 games which you can modify and get creative with to suit your team!
- Join forces and share the creative load with the coach of another team of the same age/developmental level.
- Keep your players moving by avoiding drills or games that require standing around or that involve players being 'knocked out/eliminated'.
- Using the CHANGE IT approach to help modify your activities to be inclusive and meet the needs of all of your participants. Think about:



Coaching style: demonstrations, use of questions, role models, verbal or written instructions



Inclusion: everyone has to receive the ball before a team can score



How: to score or win in the activity



Time: e.g. 'How many can you get in 30 seconds.'



Area: size or shape of the playing environment. Will making it bigger/smaller make it harder or easier?



Number: of participants involved in the activity, can you add defenders?



Game rules: are there a number of passes you need to make before you can score? Does a specific movement need to be made?



Equipment: different types of balls, cones, colour cards.



On game day:

- Build on the skills that you have been developing in training and have them as the key focus on game day.
- Rotate positions! Let's expose our players' bodies to all of the unique and amazing movements that different positions in our game require. In younger players this might mean wholesale rotations whilst in teenage players it will mean playing them in more than one of their preferred positions.
- Help all of your players feel valued by maximizing participation!







Mind over Matter



Psychological domain

Your players won't necessarily remember everything you taught them about netball, but they will remember the way YOU made them feel and how they felt about themselves when they were playing in your team. One of our biggest roles as a coach is to assist our players to draw satisfaction, self-esteem, confidence, motivation and enjoyment from playing our game. On the flipside, it's never going to be all smooth sailing. We're also there to facilitate the growth and development of resilient young kids who will persist and rise to challenges in the belief that improvement comes with effort and learning.



Feedback

Our communication as coaches to our players matters the most here. A child will form impressions of their own self-worth based on the types of experiences they have in sporting environments and the nature of feedback they receive about their performance. We need to build their confidence by helping players feel safe to make mistakes and turn them into learning opportunities.

What we know about feedback is that giving LOADS of encouraging, supportive and information-based feedback has the most positive effect on young sportspeople's self-esteem, self-determined motivation, positive affect, persistence and commitment to sport (Horn, 2019). So we need to tell our players when they did something well but we also want to tell them WHY they were successful or WHAT was good about it. Giving feedback in this way can help players understand when

they're doing things well without you telling them. This then reinforces their sense of self-belief when you recognize it too...it pumps their tyres up big time!

For example if a key physical skill you are focusing on is dodging, then your feedback might be, 'Awesome dodge—your small steps to help change direction were unreal!'

This type of feedback doesn't stop you from correcting mistakes and giving cues to improve execution of a skill as this is still really important to assist with learning. Just don't let it dominate your communication with your players. The more positive information-based reinforcement they receive, the better!



At training provide them with support by thinking about:

- Getting to know each of your players, how they think and what type of encouragement they respond to best.
- We want our players to remain engaged and enjoy coming to training, so ask what they love most about it to help guide your session planning.
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection.
- Help your players understand their personal strengths and areas for development.
- Everyone loves to win but for our grassroots players we need to shift your team's focus from 'winning' as the main reason for playing the game...emphasise the importance and value of personal and team progress as your primary purpose (particularly if you are focusing on a specific skill and this is achieved in the game). The win is viewed as the bonus!
- Help them to learn how to manage their emotions during a game—how to use self talk, how to deal with disappointment and how to manage their nerves.



On game day be their #1 cheerleader:

Before the Game

- Inspire them with enthusiasm and belief in their ability
- Keep it simple
- Give 1-2 key points that have been discussed in training during the week (there should be no surprises)

During the Game

- Celebrate the small things!
- Share the love around between your players—make them feel special out there!
- Be specific

During the Breaks

- Don't focus on the score—focus on your key skills and the processes the players are using
- You could use this script: 'What were two things we did really well?' and add your own positive/supportive/information-based feedback. 'Next quarter, we are going to focus on...'

After the Game

- Reflect on the 1-2 key focuses you spoke about before the game
- What could a key focus be to work on in training?
- Facilitate and model how players can give positive information-based feedback to each other
- Help your players understand that there is room for learning and growth, regardless of the outcome of the game
- Reinforce the element of fun and enjoyment from playing the game



These resources are provided at the back of this resource. They might be of help to you, as you work towards developing your team. Have a go!

- Positive Mindset and Self Talk: how to change the way we speak to ourselves.
- Growth Mindset: Introducing players to a growth mindset and learning from our errors.
- Personal Strengths: Helping players to identify and value their strengths.
- Team Reflection Task: What I love about our team!
- Self-Reflection: assisting players to reflect on playing/training performance.





Social domain

Team sport is meant to be FUN! How will you bring the fun factor each week to your team and help them build friendships and memories together?

When I was growing up, team sport gave me a sense of belonging. It gave me the skills to work as part of a unit, understand the importance and value of being a part of a supportive team culture and to welcome and accept my teammates for who they were. It helped me become a leader. I've transferred all these attributes to my life away from the court.

As a coach, it's important to understand that the players in your team may come from various walks of life. That 30 x 15 metre space needs to have a place for

everyone regardless of cultural or religious background, socioeconomic status, body type, gender and sexual orientation. Take the time to learn about your players and their families... ask questions, show interest and model respectful communication for other players and their families to do the same.

Now as a retired player, my fondest memories from the sport aren't the premiership wins or Australian test caps (although these were awesome!) it's about the friendships and connections that I made with others.

Help players develop friendships by:

- Making time at training and on game day for friendships to develop—think of those activities that get the giggles and smiles going!
- Help your players to step outside their social comfort zones by arranging them into small groups and mixing them up for each activity so that they are working with different people.
- Show them how to give constructive feedback to each other so that they learn what it means to be a part of a supportive environment—helping each other to learn from one another and grow to be better!

- Get them to brainstorm and chat about what sportsmanship and fair play looks like. As a coach we want to reward and encourage those behaviours during practice or training but we also want our players to applaud each other when they see it too.
- Give a shout out to players who show leadership during training or game by:
 - Using their voices and body language to positively influence the group.
 - Showing respect for the other teammates, opponents and officials.
 - Having an awareness of the feelings, needs and interests of others.

Cognitive domain

Have you ever watched a group of Suncorp NetSetGO children running around the netball court following the ball around like a bunch of bees to a honey pot? Cute, but frustrating right?! These players are still developing their thinking abilities around understanding and making decisions and knowing how and when to perform particular skills on court. This domain is by far one of the more

challenging to grasp as a coach. How do we help our players to develop their thinking skills? If there is one element that I could encourage you to take out of this section it is to get ambitious and help your team and players learn how to set goals. It is such a critical skill to develop and it will potentially be a deal breaker to keeping our girls motivated and engaged in playing sport for life!

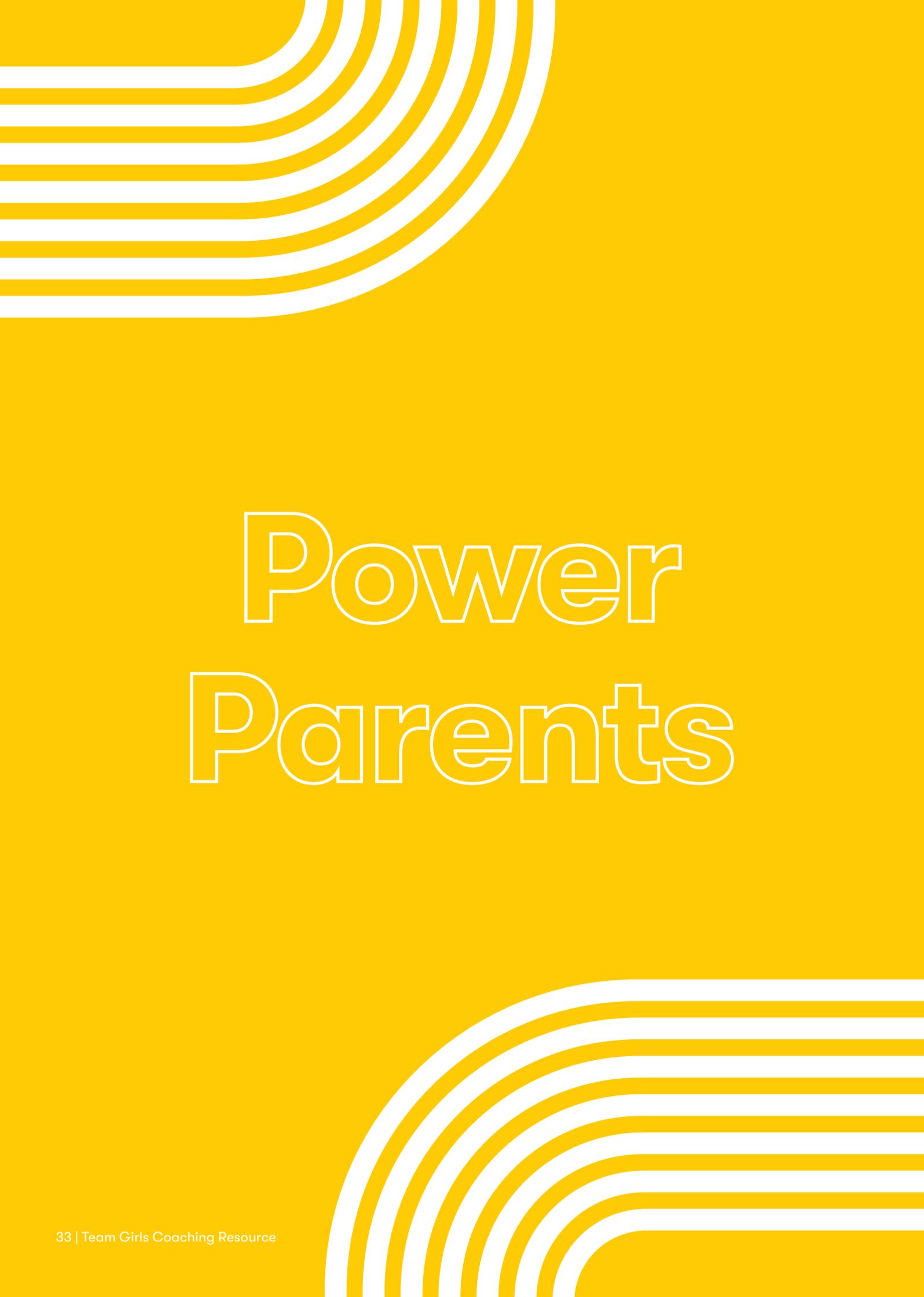




Other simple things you can try to get their brains ticking over are:

- Start every single training session and game by explaining what your key focus is, HOW and WHY it is used on the court.
- Get your thinking caps on and problem solve together. Talk about different ways you could overcome particular challenges or scenarios on court, workshop these as a group. Recognise that as the coach, you don't have all the answers.
- Empower players to solve problems during the game and help them to analyse their own movements and those of their opponents. This can be a hard skill to acquire—asking your players reflective questions about how they performed a particular skill in real time at training is a good starting point.





Power Parents





Parents: how can we get them involved?

Sometimes as coaches we spend all our time thinking about our young players and forget that having a supportive, enthusiastic parent community is a huge benefit to you and the team. At home, parents can help reinforce your key messages and values and remind players of your team goals (performance over wins). So how do you create a positive coach-parent dynamic? Here are a few tips:

- Don't shut them out! Communication is the key! Work with your team manager (usually a parent volunteer) to keep the lines of communication open. Whether it's training times or team expectations, a weekly email to the parent group can keep everyone on the same page. Keep them informed- share the key skills that the team have been focusing on each week.
- Re-shape their expectations of their children and the group. This can be tricky for some parents but your goal as coach is to shift attention away from outcomes and instead to be on progression of skill and growth as an individual.
- Set the tone about sidelines! Promote positive support from families as spectators at the game by circulating a 'What we want to hear from the sidelines' memo, which the players complete based on what they have done at training.
- Invite parents to attend the final part of training and have your players teach them what they have learnt.
- Keep them informed—share the key skills that the team have been focusing on each week.



Let's bring it in!

Being a volunteer coach can be an incredibly rewarding experience and your role should never be underestimated. Not only will you be directly helping to raise confident tweens and teens, you'll experience the immense satisfaction of watching kids learn and grow both on and off the court.

A great coach isn't the one who takes a team to Finals (as amazing as that may be). It's that adult who believes in you, who gently pushes you when you need it, who offers advice and support when things don't go your way and who is always there to remind you that you have it within in you to succeed. And that's the win we're all looking for.

References: Horn, T., (2019). Examining the impact of coaches' feedback patterns on the psychosocial well-being of youth sport athletes. Kinesiology Review, 8(3), 244-251. <https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2019-0017>



Self-reflection

My highlight of training/the game was...

I wanted to focus on...

Did I achieve this? Yes No

Next game training I'd like to...

Something kind I did for my teammates was...

Growth mindset

What mistakes have I made that I learned from?

What are 5 new things that I'd like to try?

What advice could I give a friend that tried something new and wasn't successful?

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What I ♥ about our team

When I'm around them I feel...

They make me want to...

When I make a mistake my teammates...

My strengths

My friends and family describe me as...

One thing that makes me unique/different to others is...

I'm proud of myself when...

I feel happiest when I...

What we want to hear from the sidelines!

Enlisting Parent Support

Providing this clear information to parents will hopefully help them to identify how they can positively reinforce your messaging. Cheers and applause provide the supportive environment children need to learn, grow and succeed. A clear and easy way to assist parents in understanding how best they can support their children at a game on the weekend is to provide them with a weekly 'What we want to hear from the sidelines!' memo.

After you've completed your training session and are conducting your review with the team, talk about the key focus that you had as a group and ask your team what they would like to hear from their parents when they take the court this week in relation to what they've been working on. Remind your players that it doesn't need to just be about skills, it can be in relation to behaviours and attitudes that you might have been focusing on too.

Once you've brainstormed a few points you can complete the template provided and email it out to your parents as part of a weekly email.

Providing this clear information to parents will hopefully help them to identify how they can positively reinforce your messaging. It can also emphasise the importance and value of personal and team progress as the primary purpose of the team and shifts the attention and focus away from winning as the main reason for playing.

As a team this week we have been focusing on...

What we want to hear from the sidelines this week is...

Let's set SMART goals

Goal setting is easily one of the most valuable skills that children gain from being involved in sport...it transfers from the court to the classroom and beyond. Knowing how to set SMART goals is a critical skill for children to develop and it will potentially be a deal breaker to keeping our girls motivated and engaged in playing sport for life.

Get ambitious with your players and help them to learn how to set goals, identify who can assist them to work towards them and how to monitor their progress. Ensure that you are encouraging your players to focus on their whole self when setting the goals too...they might have one goal relating to a physical skill (i.e., improving their one on one defence) and one which focuses on a particular behavior (i.e. positive self talk, making more friends, speaking up more in group situations).

SMART Goals Are:

S

SPECIFIC: The goal needs to have a specific result or outcome...make it clear.

M

MEASURABLE: Do you have a way to measure your goal and whether you've achieved it?

A

ACHIEVABLE: When setting a goal it needs to be within your capabilities but still challenging enough to motivate you to work towards something.

R

RELEVANT: Is this goal relevant to YOU, does it have meaning to you?

T

TIME BOUND: Goals need to have a time frame attached to make sure that we're keeping on track and staying accountable.

Goal setting can be a tricky process to complete independently, especially if you are new to it. Players might like to chat with you as their coach, their team mates and parents to help with the process. Once they have realised and set their goals, it's also important for them to share the goal. Sharing with a coach is likely to give the best form of success, but sharing with family and friends is important too.

Goals rarely go to plan and a few hiccups along the way can often steer us off course. It's important to check back in on the progress of your players goals regularly (I would suggest trying to do this a few times throughout the season) to identify if adjustments need to be made to the goal to help them remain positively engaged in their learning and progression.



My goals

My SMART Goals for this season...

The behaviours that I can control to achieve my goal...

The people who can help me achieve my goal...

I will review my progress...(give a date/s to check back in with yourself and your coach)...

My dreams and goals

1 amazing thing I did last year was...

My dream is 2 be...

3 things I aim to achieve this year...

4 behaviours I can control...

5 people who offer support...

Session plan

Date		
Key focus	Fun factor How will you bring the fun to this session?	
Coaching cues How will you keep your players motivated, feel valued and included throughout the session? What information will drive your feedback?		
Duration: 1 hour	Equipment	Group size
Introduction Explain the aim for the session/key focus areas and why you are working on that particular skill, attitude or behaviours.		
Warm up 5 minutes Make it FUN! Can you start to introduce your key focus during the warm up?		



Session plan

Skill development | 20 minutes

Drills and Games relating to your key focus (You can usually get through 1-3 activities during this time, or have 1 activity that you continue to build on by using the CHANGE IT principles). Draw pictures to help you visualize what they will look like!

Court application | 15 minutes

Help the players understand how they use this skill in a game like scenario. This is a great way to get them thinking about the game. A centre pass, throw in or penalty pass set up...get them to try it in different court areas and in specific positions.

Matchplay/half-court | 10 minutes

Cool down & reflection | 5 minutes

Slow their movement down, do some stretching and evaluate the session. Wrap things up by asking questions... What was fun? Review the key points, what they did and didn't like, what they would like to do more of, what they learned and how they can implement it in their game or in the next training session.

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