



CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF CREATING A GREAT
JUNIOR EXPERIENCE

MANAIA SQUASH CLUB



SQUASH
NEW ZEALAND

OVERVIEW

Located within the Parua Bay Community Centre in Northland, the Manaia Squash Club boasts two glass-back courts and holds three tournaments each year. On top of their other programmes, the club also runs Kiwi Squash programmes both during term time and during the school holidays and these are well received. More than 50 juniors have received coaching over the past year through these programmes and additional workshops - with thanks to funding and support from the community. Over the past two years the club has seen phenomenal growth, especially in juniors, with many keen, talented and motivated players regularly competing and performing well in tournaments throughout the District and country.

CHALLENGES

Specialisation

There are few examples of athletes choosing a sport from a young age and excelling in it. More often than not however athletes burn-out, get over-use injuries and lose motivation.

Coaching

Quality coaching is critical to long-term athlete success. Quality coaches understand the performance needs of athletes and help influence the people and environment around the athlete.

Competition

Events provide opportunities for players to try and apply what they have learnt in training sessions into a more competitive environment. How to choose which tournaments will allow gradual, progressive development of skills?

SOLUTIONS

Fun learning

Many of the Manaia juniors play a range of sports. The club provides fun and diverse squash experiences so their athletes not only develop transferable skills, but gain greater creativity and have better decision making capabilities.

Coach development

All coaches who regularly support the juniors at the club have been through modules from the Coach Development Framework, utilise coaching resources and attend other learning opportunities to keep upskilling themselves.

Effective pathways

The juniors play regularly at local tournaments and are now starting to venture further afield as their age and skill levels increase.

RESULTS

6

Athletes in the top 10 of their respective age groups.

1

Number one ranked athlete.

60+

Junior members at the club.

CONCLUSION

Every athlete is different and each progresses in a non-linear way. Some show potential from childhood while others only develop and emerge much later. So far the Manaia Squash Club are doing everything that a good junior talent development plan suggests: they are appropriately challenging their athletes relative to their stage of development, they are making sure the athletes are aware of what it takes to work hard, they are encouraging decision making and they are clear that competition is a valuable learning tool. Most importantly, they are keeping it fun and focused on what the juniors want to do.

Club President Keri Rhodes says "the club has been developing a junior programme for a couple of years and the results are starting to show. Being able to offer coaching at the club has been very beneficial and will hopefully lead to even more Manaia players achieving honours in the future."