

Increasing Female Tennis Participation



ANZ Victorian Community Tennis Forum #3 – Increasing Female Tennis Participation - Workshop Notes

The issue of decreasing female participation in tennis is one which is a concern for the sport.

This workshop looked at the influencers and motivations currently affecting female participation, what clubs, coaches, centres and tennis as a whole are currently doing to address the decline, as well as discussing/coming up with a variety of ideas and suggestions on what clubs, associations and coaches could do to address this issue.

The following is an overview of what was discussed at the workshop and some practical ideas on how you too can overcome the barriers currently facing girls and women by offering them more relevant, targeted and user friendly tennis opportunities

Trend – In Victoria, four times as many females (44%) are choosing to participate in non-organised or more flexible physical activity offerings compared to organised physical activity (9%)

Not all females are the same and some may experience different barriers and challenges to others. Certain barriers can affect a female more at different life stages.

Influencer/Motivation No.1. – Parental support and physical activity levels

This is particularly relevant for Girls and Adolescents aged 0-18 years, and links with ideas generated below under Influencer/Motivation #4 - family. By addressing both concerns concurrently, you're in a better position to engage both mothers and daughters.

Ideas

- Make sure your club/coach is part of the National Schools Partnership Program (NSPP), both at a Primary School and Secondary School level. Girls like to do things with their friends so by providing them with access to tennis in school, you're creating a pathway for girls to link to your club. For more information on the program go to <http://www.tennis.com.au/schools>
- Use mums as team managers of their daughter's teams – thereby increasing engagement of both and increasing involvement.
- Mentoring and Buddy systems. Do you link younger players up with older, more experienced ones to support and nurture? Eildon Park TC do and they've found it has helped to keep young girls active at their club.

Influencer/Motivation No.2. – Inflexible options, Time poor

Relevant for Women Aged 18-55 years and Mothers. Flexible physical activity options required in terms of schedule, cost, payment options and location, as well as the need to tailor the individual approach. Preference for unstructured over structured. Need to promote the benefits of short sharp activity linked to lifestyle.

Increasing Female Tennis Participation



Ideas

- Tennis's new *FAST4* competition format means short sharp matches. For more details on what *FAST4* is go to <http://www.gamesetmatch.net.au/ClubToolkit/CompetitivePlay.aspx>. For ideas on how to implement this format at your club, please contact Jake Dunn, *FAST4* Competitions Administrator, jdunn@tennis.com.au
- Statistics show that 71% of Cardio Tennis participants are female – if your club doesn't offer Cardio tennis then encourage your coach to sign up today! For more details go to <http://cardiotennis.com.au/>
- Conduct a review of what you currently offer female participants, including how easy it is to get involved and the commitment level required to play. If all you offer is traditional 14 week competitions you may need to think about other shorter, more laid back approaches to competition play, including pay for play and internal night competitions.
- Look at the times you offer access for female activities at your club? Are they appropriate? Do you offer something midweek, day, night and on the weekend? Before, during and after work? During school times? Do they clash with other sporting activities/groups in the area? A quick review and reschedule could be the answer.
- Can any of your programs be accessed as pay for play? Warrnambool Lawn Tennis Club just finished piloting a *FAST4* pay as you play competition with approx. 60% of participants being female. This is great news given current research tells us that only 30% of competitions players in Victoria are female.

Influencer/Motivation No.3. – Social, Social, Social

Women and girls across all age groups indicate that having a fun, social activity to participate in is one of the keys to physical engagement.

Ideas

- With any tennis activity make sure there is an opportunity for women and girls to spend some time together off court – whether that be by providing a morning tea, a BBQ or just a nice space for them to meet – it helps to create a social environment.
- Provide girls and women with access to female only and non-competitive activities that encourage them to spend time with friends and family, such as bring a friend day, Mother and Daughter tournaments, girls only team competitions, themed nights, ladies/girls glamour night out (including a nice lunch/dinner), elite ladies/girls to bring a beginner friend.
- Look at your scheduling. Instead of offering the traditional home and away scheduling, why not have all teams in the one section playing at a single venue in any given week? That way catching up with and making friends may be easier.
- Ask girls why they are participating? If it's to be with friends then make sure when it comes to team selection, friendship becomes a key selection criteria, rather than solely ability.
- Linking with a cause. Why not conduct a Pink Tennis Day? A fun, social day designed to bring friends together, all the while raising much needed funds for a great cause. To see what it can do for your

Increasing Female Tennis Participation



club, go to <http://youtu.be/AmZf88QB7YI>. To sign up to conduct your own day – go to <http://www.bcna.org.au/news-events/hold-an-event/>

- What do you offer your female members other than tennis when they come to your venue? Can you get a nice cup of coffee? If not, perhaps it's time to invest in a coffee machine, or let your local mobile coffee van know when there is lots of activity going on so they can service them if you are unable to – another revenue stream for the club too!
- Creating links with other clubs. You play against each other competitively so why not get together socially? Using any of the above activity suggestions you can turn a small event into an even bigger one. Also consider linking with other local sports and offer access to Cardio Tennis as part of their training program for netball or soccer?

Influencer/Motivation No.4. – Involve the whole family, as family becomes the priority

This is particularly relevant for Mothers whose own physical activity become less of a priority (and seen as a luxury) and is also reliant on the level of partner, family and social support they have.

Ideas

- Provide child minding facilities or a launch pad type program for the little ones to undertake while mum has a hit on the court next door. Tennis Victoria's Mum's Tennis program combines these 2 elements for you. For more details go to <http://www.tennis.com.au/vic/clubs/attract-new-members/mums-program>
- Does your club provide facilities that are family friendly? Do females have access to clean change rooms with baby changing facilities? Do you have playground equipment on site that is safe for kids? Do you offer other activities for older (and big!) kids such as table tennis, a TV and games for them to play? If not, then start a list of what you may need to purchase in order to make this a reality. Nice, clean, welcoming environment for ALL is key.
- Offer family activities such as Club Tennis Days. For more details go to <http://www.tennis.com.au/vic/clubs/attract-new-members/club-open-days>
- Review your membership offering. Club's such as Nottingham-Pinewood, Mt Eliza and Melton South Tennis Club have recently changed their membership offering to now offer ANZ Tennis Hot Shots coaching participants access to the club before and after coaching, a great chance to have a hit with mum or dad and encourage the whole family to become part of the club.

Influencer/Motivation No.5. – Confidence, knowledge and perception of ability

Relevant for girls and women of all ages. Considerations should be based on not only what we promote as an activity but how we promote that activity.

Ideas

- Some women prefer to be coached by other females – has your club got a female coach working at the venue? If not, is this something that is worth looking into more for your club, along with valuing male coaches that work well with females?

Increasing Female Tennis Participation



- Using your existing female members as Ambassadors for the club. Creating a sense of belonging by ensuring other females can see themselves as participants at your venue. Conduct a review of all your marketing material and ensure you're using images of females from all age groups and abilities. Testimonials are a great way to promote your venue.
- Offer females access to other non-tennis activities at your venue such as yoga and pilates – a great way to introduce potential new players. Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre has the local Dance Studio using their facilities and has found it as great way to introduce females to the centre that may otherwise have not attended.
- Do people know what is on offer at your club? Create a "what's on for females" flyer and advertise in female friendly places such as local maternal health centres, playgroups and the like to attract new participants. If they don't know you have something to offer how can they get involved?
- Many females access social media to find out what's happening in their area. Does your club have a facebook page? Viewbank TC (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Viewbank-Tennis-Club-Inc/618663448175747?fref=ts>), Whittlesea TC (<https://www.facebook.com/whittleseatennisclub?fref=ts>) and Leisure City Epping (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Leisure-City-Epping/163037297055420?fref=ts>) are some examples of clubs and centres doing it well.

And finally....

The following resources may also be of assistance.

- Female Participation in Sport and Physical Activity, VicHealth Presentation @ Victorian Community Tennis Forum by Shelley White – Senior Project Officer , VicHealth.
- VicHealth research into barriers and motivations for female participation – study by the Centre for Social Impact – LaTrobe University.

Both these resources can be found at

<http://www.gamesetmatch.net.au/ClubToolkit/AboutTennisVictoria.aspx>

- Connecting Girls and Women to Tennis – presentation @ Victorian Community Tennis Forum by Karen Clydesdale – Community Manager at Tennis Australia
- Getting Girls into Tennis - A study on engaging adolescent girls in physical activities
- How to get girls into tennis – a "How to" manual with practical on court activities and strategies designed by teenagers for teenagers.

These resources can be found at <http://www.gamesetmatch.net.au/ClubToolkit/Participation.aspx>

Should you require help implementing any of the above ideas at your club, please make sure you get in contact with your Community Tennis Officer (<http://www.tennis.com.au/vic/clubs/resources/community-tennis-officers>) – they're here to help!