

Chanel College support student leaders

Take 8 year 9 and 10 students and add 4 year 13 coaches. This might sound like a recipe for disaster but in this case, not unlike a typical episode of Masterchef, it is an unlikely combination that has been surprisingly successful.

Chanel College Seniors, Lucy Britland, Maxine Christensen, Janie Grevatt and Berenique Erasmus are four students who co-coach Chanel Hearts junior netball team. They are all members of their college's Snr A team and this is the second season coaching the team for all but Maxine. I had the opportunity to speak to them and discovered the impact this experience has had on them and those around them.

One could assume that having four coaches could be confusing. It's hard enough to put a training session together when there's only one coach. How did they manage to do it every week with four coaches having input? The answer is collaboration and understanding each other's strengths. Their session is pieced together on a weekly basis after game analysis. They ask the girls for input as well. "This is our second season with some of the girls so they're used to having more than one coach and hearing more than one voice," says Janie.



Student coach, Maxine Christensen, works on eye-hand coordination with a player

This May all four girls attended the Getting Started in Coaching course delivered by Sport Wellington. They immediately instilled the learnings from this course into their coaching style. Lucy says, "We ask the team more questions. We want feedback on games and drills so we can gauge the level of their understanding and the girls are comfortable enough with us to respond honestly." It is this honesty that has made the coach/player relationship a strong one. "We looked back on what we did last year and wanted to build on that by improving things that didn't work both on and off the court," says Janie, "and we knew we had to challenge them. It took a bit of effort but now they're winning games and they realise it's worth it. Now they're having fun taking challenges head on."

When it comes to drills they use some from their own Snr A training. "If needed we simplify them and try them out on the girls. Sometimes they still don't manage to do the drill so we ask them to tell us what they need to adjust so that it works for them," says Lucy. "They are pretty pleased with themselves when they realise they are doing the same drills as the senior netballers. We've learnt that you can learn a lot from having fun activities so we incorporate games into most of our warm-ups."

Wairarapa Coaching Hub Coordinator, Barry Hislop, emphasises the importance of having a coaching philosophy. "It provides clarity of goals, team culture and develops strong relationships. Each of the girls has their own coaching philosophy, if not a formally recognised one. When asked why they coach the common factor is their love of sport and a desire to be involved in developing someone in

a positive way. "I love watching the team do what you've asked them to do and watching them succeed," says Berenique. Maxine adds, "I want to be the kind of coach that I wanted to have when I was their age."



Janie Grevatt adjusts the bib on one of the players

The big question 'Why do you coach?' was summed up by Janie. "They've improved so much. There was one game where they played a team that had beaten them in an earlier round. The score was close and we looked at what they were doing on the court and realised it was everything that we had taught them at training. We were so proud of them and ourselves. A friend asked us why we were so excited and we couldn't explain it to them." It is obvious from the looks on their faces that all four girls recall the exact moment this happened and how surprised they had been by their reaction on the day.

When asked what values describe their team and their coaching the words persistence, respect, honesty and fairness are used. They have witnessed many times how supportive the team are of each other. Lucy says, "They'll help each other out if someone is having trouble. They run together so nobody gets left behind. They know how important it is to be a good team mate." The repercussions of not turning up for training are understood. Team unity means they have expectations of each other and themselves. "It's all about being fair and giving everybody the same opportunities," Lucy adds.

When it comes to student coaches it's important that they receive extra support from parents and school and, pleasingly, this is the case in this instance. They have a good relationship with the parents who are willing to step in when the girls Snr A commitments clash with those of their charges. The girls speak highly of their sports coordinator, Shona Duncan. Berenique says, "Shona does a fantastic job of supporting us. If an issue does pop up we know we can always go to her and she'll sort it out in her usual calm way." Maxine recounts one occasion when they all happened to be sick on the same day. "We cancelled training but for some reason the message didn't get to the girls. The team ended up doing their own training session and the PE teachers kept an eye on them."

A major component of current coaching courses such as the Getting Started in Coaching is physical literacy. Physical literacy is "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding required by participants that allows them to value and take responsibility for engaging in physical activity and sport for life." The Sport NZ Physical Literacy Approach takes a holistic view of the participant that considers their physical; social and emotional; cognitive; and spiritual needs.

The girls approach their coaching plans with an innate understanding of the physical and emotional challenges of teen girls. Lucy says, "We know what it's like at their age. We can recognise when they're not feeling great or they're a bit self-conscious about their body. We know girls don't like doing squats properly but if we are out there doing them like no-one is watching us then they might do them properly too – and sometimes they do. Depending on how they are feeling, their 100% today might not look like their 100% tomorrow." Despite only being a couple of years older than the girls they coach they are not afraid to ask if they sense someone is not coping as they should. "We

don't make a big deal of it but we just want them to know it's ok if you're having a bad day. We adjust our expectations accordingly," says Maxine.

Like most coaches, each of the girls had someone or something that has inspired them to coach. For Lucy it was her year 6 coach, Gaylene Malcolm who is involved with the Carterton Netball Club. "She was really friendly and at that age it's important you have a coach you like."

For Maxine, her two-season stint playing for Martinborough Netball gave her the opportunity to play under the tutelage of top netball umpire, Tai Pirato. "He gave clear instructions. I was never confused about what he wanted us to do." Both Lucy and Maxine have both experienced less than inspiring coaches and this encouraged them to do better.



Lucy Britland, left, says "We know what it's like at their age."

Janie's inspiration of choice was from the movie, Rocky. It is one of her favourites and, although it drew some laughs, we all want to see the underdog prevail against the odds. "Rocky's coach was teaching him to believe the impossible." Janie's dad has also been a big influence. "He was my wrestling coach and I admire his values – persistence and hard work. To be honest I draw inspiration from all of my life experiences."

Berenique had three netball coaches taking her in year 10. "They were really organised and had structured training plans which I prefer. I've done athletics as well so I've received 1 on 1 coaching and I like the fact I'm getting information specific to my needs."

This is their last year at school and so they face some big decisions next year. Will one of them be whether to coach again? They look at each other and appear to be undecided. I think Maxine sums up what they're all thinking. "It's a big change so I don't know about coaching but we love our sport so we'll be involved somehow."

Oh, and just in case you were wondering about that one game with the special moment? They won.

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