

BUILDING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

When building a supportive environment for female players, there are a number of personal influences on a players experience at different stages of their football journey.

Below are some of the key influences on participant experience and how they can have a positive impact on females playing football.

ROLE MODELS AND INFLUENCES ON PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

COACH

- ▶ The coach is the number one influence on a players experience and is an explicit role model for players
- ▶ Selection of the right coach who is transparent and will encourage inclusiveness and enjoyment for all players is crucial. See coaches section for more information

PARENT

- ▶ Parents have a direct influence on a players football experience and journey because they are the ones who will select a childs sport at an early age, particularly mothers. They will also be a source of encouragement (as well as an outlet for frustration) and it is important that parents are well educated from the beginning of their childs football journey that the emphasis needs to be on fun, enjoyment and personal development (on and off the field) over performance and results

FRIENDS AND PEERS

- ▶ As players get older, the influence of a parent can diminish and the influence of friends and peers grows. Among females particularly, there is a desire for acceptance and there is the collective encouragement to seek activities associated with 'preferred perceptions' of femininity. As such, it is important to develop strategies to maintain the collective desire and promote your club and football in a way throughout this period that appeals to changing motivations of players
- ▶ Some ways that you can emphasis the impact of friends and peers at your club is to provide benefits/discounts to players for bringing players to your club, as well as go beyond football and organise social events for teams so that they move from team-mates/peers to developing friendships

ELITE PLAYERS

- ▶ Girls tend to idolise elite players far less than boys, however that doesn't mean that females don't require strong female role models who compete on the elite stage and as a club/coach/parent, it is important that you work hard to promote such female role models to help young female players realise that there is a true pathway for the game
- ▶ This can be done by organising team/club days at your local Westfield W-League club, or attending Westfield W-League games. You can also watch the W-League games on live TV or watch highlights on the internet

CLUB

- ▶ It is important that the club promote role models to their female players, who can take an active role in their development. This can be female coaches, senior players or ex players who come to training, games or other activities and engage and encourage young players

TEACHERS

- ▶ Teachers play a crucial role in the physical activity choices of all young people, not just females, and are integral to education regarding the benefits of lifelong physical activity, as well as encouraging behavioural patterns pre and during adolescence of regular physical activity
- ▶ To grow your club and take a holistic approach to female football development, it can be important to engage local teachers and schools so that they are aware of and can help promote your football club as an avenue to stay physically active in a safe environment

SIBLINGS

- ▶ Brothers and sisters, both younger and older can have a big impact on a females level of enjoyment in football, both inside and outside your club environment. Because siblings typically have a bigger role in spontaneous and informal forms of football (such as a kick around in the backyard or park), it is important that your club has a strong family friendly culture of encouragement and positivity which permeates all forms of football, so that when these informal kick arounds and games are taking place, your club participants are still enjoying football
- ▶ To set this precedent early on, you could host family days where brothers and sisters are put onto family oriented teams with their parents and set clear rules encouraging fairness and positivity

CLUB COACH COORDINATORS AND TECHNICAL DIRECTORS

- ▶ Club Coach Coordinators and Technical Directors, although not always having a direct influence on a player heavily influence the coaches and the environment for players that fall within their catchment and club. Having a positive and encouraging club coach coordinator or technical director sets the tone for the attitude of coaches and the playing environment

OTHER INFLUENCES

- ▶ It is important to remember that outside of personal influences, players football experience can be influenced by technology, digital experiences, homework, books and a myriad of other influences. Particularly with the growth of the internet and digital capabilities, individuals have so many options to consume football in some way that it is important for your club to embrace this opportunity

A number of people can be influencers on a players experience and environment – as a club it's your job to ensure that all of the people who impact a players' football experience make it as positive as possible.

The above are just some of the individuals who can influence a participants experience and on the next page are some ways that you can start to build a supportive environment for female footballers.