

Student Coaching and Sports Leadership Day

On Friday April 9th, Harbour Sport and Auckland University of Technology collaborated to deliver the Student Leadership and Coaching Day for the committed young leaders in our secondary school community across the region. The theme for the event was to connect, inspire, and empower.

Over 80 students and their respective Director of Sport and/or Sports Co-ordinator from 12 schools were present on the day. Students were given the option to choose four of eight sessions available, allowing our young leaders to take ownership of their learning.

Schools that attended: Albany Senior High School, Carmel College, Hobsonville Point Secondary School, Kingsway School, Mahurangi College, Northcote College, Orewa College, Rosmini College, Takapuna Grammar School, Wentworth College, Westlake Girls High School, Westlake Boys High School, Rangitoto College.

After an official welcome to AUT Campus, the event kicked off with Guest Speaker and recent school leaver, Anna Leat. Anna arguably has a higher profile than most Kiwi footballers after her heroics at the Fifa Under-17 World Cup in 2018. By then, she had already made three appearances for the Football Ferns, after making her debut off the bench as a 15-year-old against Austria in 2017.

Anna spoke to the students of her own experiences in sport as a young athlete to inspire, connect and empower. She highlighted that 1) leading others starts with yourself; 2) it is important to identify your why; and 3) adopting a strengths-based approach has immense benefits.

The day then transitioned into two 45-minute sessions running simultaneously. For the morning, students were able to attend a coaching workshop or a leadership practical. The first coaching workshop of the day was 'What makes a good coach?', facilitated by Simon Walters (AUT) and Scott Lewis (Sport Auckland). In this session, students were exposed to the 'Heads, Hearts, Hands' concept – what we know, how we communicate, and how we self-reflect. In addition to that, students learned that effective coaching is more than the technical, tactical, and physical elements.

"I found it helpful working in groups and discussing with other coaches about different methods of coaching. We also discussed our why and how important it was to understand the players why. I learnt a lot from the workshop that I will be able to use for my own coaching".

At the same time, Laurinda Howarth and Stef Burrows from Harbour Sport ran a mindfulness and meditation practical. Students learned about why mindfulness is important and how they can implement practices in all walks of life. On top of that, participants were exposed to breathing techniques, muscle relaxation, as well as using our senses to help ground ourselves in the present.

"I think (that mindfulness) is one of the most important skills an athlete can have. It is often overlooked...this activity combined the practical and theory of mindfulness so that we could all understand the benefits".

The second workshop of the morning was 'Developing a positive team culture', facilitated by Shaun Matthews (Harbour Sport) and Georgina Gatenby (AFLNZ). Student coaches were given the opportunity to discuss what team culture is, the characteristics of a positive environment, and how to create and develop team chemistry. The group agreed that team culture should be practiced, with everyone heading in the same direction.

"This workshop was really relatable for myself and the others in my group. It provided a good opportunity to actually reflect on our own sports and further how we can make a positive impact".

The second leadership activity of the day was an Amazing Race, facilitated by staff from Harbour Sport. For this practical, students were put to the task of supporting and challenging one another with unforeseen barriers while progressing through four activities across the AUT campus. Students then reflected as a group on the leadership qualities they portrayed and/or witnessed throughout the challenge.

"The Amazing Race was interactive and was a chance to get to know others outside of our school. It was also great for team building and communication development".

After lunch, students were able to attend a leadership workshop or a coaching practical. The first workshop of the afternoon was centered around the topic of the Value of Sport, presented by Roger Wood (Sport New Zealand). In this session, students discussed the value that being active brings to themselves and their friends, their school, and their community. Participants also learned that if we want to realise the value that is inherent in physical activity, we need to understand what value people are seeking.

"I think that both as a senior player and a coach, often we forget the intrinsic values sport has not just on ourselves but on the community. This workshop reminded my why sport is so important and how to bring those underlying values into a personal/team culture".

At the same time, Sarah Kate Millar (AUT) delivered a practical on Skill Acquisition. Students learned that movement depends on what is happening around a person - if we change the environment, the movement will change. In this inquisitive session, students were also promoted with questions such as 'if we want someone to move in a different way, how do we coach that?', 'what skill emerged? what did you have to do to be skilful?' and 'what skills are being used in this activity? how else can you coach this?'.

"I was able to take lots of information from this activity and apply it to my own coaching".

The final workshop of the day was Leading Through Change, facilitated by Kelly McCallum and Louise McGrath from NorthTec. Kelly and Louise shed light on how leadership itself is challenging. Students learned how to recognise a fixed mindset and how to develop useful tools to help facilitate change.

"I really liked the workshop on leading through change, because I gained valuable knowledge on how to 'nudge' someone in order to find common ground... I think that this way of thinking and interacting with others is valuable and will be useful for me in the future".

The second coaching activity of the day was facilitated by Shaun Matthews (Harbour Sport) and Ryan Ward (Takapuna Grammar School/North Shore United AFC) on the concept of Games-based Coaching. In this practical, students were exposed to a game scenario in which they had to find solutions to a range of problems. As the session progressed, students began to understand the benefits of shifting from drill focused practices to a more game-centered approach, where training is fun, creative, tactical, and accommodates for all levels of skill.

"I learnt how to make sure kids were learning new skills and practicing while having fun at the same time. I also learnt how to adapt different games based on how easy or hard the participants were finding it".

Over the day, students were exposed to a range of coaching and leadership workshops and practical activities, based on their learning needs. It was an incredible experience to see students interact, learn, challenge and support one another. Thank you to those students who participated from 13 Secondary Schools across the region. Thank you to all the wonderful facilitators who helped run the event and to Auckland University of Technology for supporting our Harbour Sport mahi.

