

## **Inclusive case study: Undertaking an LTA Qualification course with a visual impairment**

### **Jan's Story**

Initially I did not consider that I could be a qualified tennis coach. I unconsciously felt that a visually impaired person would not be the obvious person to coach tennis. Those views however changed after playing VI tennis for a couple of years. I thought that perhaps I could get into coaching because I felt I was one of the better players and had teaching experience from helping out.

At that time there were some VI coaches working in tennis, so I knew there were avenues to learn to coach. **After researching it, I found LTA courses would accept a VI person on a course. The LTA also made available an inclusivity grant that reduced the cost of the course significantly.** There were plenty of venues within easy reach to undertake the course, which is an important consideration for a VI learner.

Before the course started I was excited but also a tad wary; would I be able to negotiate around the venue? How would I fit in? Would I show myself up? Would I end up sitting alone?



I contacted the course tutor to say I was VI and we discussed the situation. It was the first time the tutor would have a VI learner on a course, but having made this initial contact, my mind was put at ease. **On the first day, the course tutor introduced me to everyone and said I had a visual impairment (with my permission). That was good because it got it out there.** He made sure I got to the court ok and I was orientated with the lay out. He had a selection of balls for me to try and I ended up with the orange tennis ball. We had two courts and he set one up that we called 'Jan's' court where everyone used the orange balls.

Over the course days, I had a very good experience but it's important to emphasise it was not without its difficulties. There were occasions and some exercises I could not manage due to eyesight e.g. close work such as practising volleying or agility exercises. I felt I missed out on a bit of the 'fun' aspects of the course and the bonding that happens there. However, as part of the course I prepared a small presentation which worked really well because the other coaches learned first-hand the difficulties faced by people with a visual impairment which most hadn't experienced before. People had an opportunity to ask questions about my sight and **I feel the group as a whole gained something from having a VI person on the course.** Delivering the presentation gave me a boost because here was something I definitely knew about and could really bring to the course.

After the course, I gained an official qualification, personal satisfaction and confidence from completing the LTA Qualification. I would recommend other people with a visual impairment taking the course if they feel they have enough sight and have good experience of playing the game. People on the course were very welcoming and I had a few people say how in awe of me they were as a VI person to have come on the course, which was a morale booster. **The tutor treated me in every other respect as 'one of the group'. He was helpful, considerate, and the overall course environment was inclusive.**



Jan – LTA Accredited Level 2 Coach