



CLUB SUCCESS STORY

‘A WINNING COMBINATION: How coach and volunteer collaboration turned a club around’

Ackworth Tennis Club

Based at Ackworth School in Pontefract, West Yorkshire, Ackworth TC is a members-only club with a comprehensive coaching programme for all ages and abilities.

It is an exciting time for the club; this year’s LTA Development Coach of the Year Alice Robson and Volunteer of the Year Don Saul both hail from Ackworth TC. This is the first time two nominees from the same club have won in the same year, and Alice is the first female to win her category.

BACKGROUND

Despite repeated attempts to make the club successful, back in January 2018 the club had only 17 members and required a solid strategy in order to assure its viability. Establishing external partnerships and a comprehensive, accessible tennis programme, Don and Alice were key to the salvation of Ackworth T.C., transforming it into an inclusive, diverse and dynamic organisation.



ACTIVITIES

The positive relationships between coach and volunteers have been pivotal to success. Chairman Don built a team of committed, hard-working members with clearly delineated volunteer roles. Imparting his time, energy and knowledge, he worked with a myriad of partners including Ackworth School, The Tim Henman Foundation, BECSLink and Yorkshire Tennis to negotiate an alliance to transform tennis in Ackworth, raise funds and achieve the club’s strategic aims. This involved the appointment of a club coach in addition to a coach delivering outreach tennis into state primary schools.

Since joining in 2018, Head Coach Alice has continually strived to improve the programme and ways of working with the club and committee. She implemented a suite of LTA products from TFK to Tennis Xpress, Team Challenge to NVBTW, and the new LTA Female Fitness Pilot. She delivered six-week blocks of curriculum time to primary schools and taster tennis activity to over 100 residents across two NVBTW Open Days. She also set up team challenge competitions in conjunction with coaches from local clubs. Alice’s passion for growing tennis engagement amongst women and girls led to the successful development of female-only taster events and mentoring two new, young female coaches. Championing ClubSpark, Alice optimised the customer experience, supporting the introduction of flexible membership offers and maintaining an online presence for the full coaching programme.



OUTSTANDING IMPACT

Opening up tennis to new audiences and collaborating with external partners, Alice and Don are a winning combination and assets to Ackworth TC. The achievements are staggering, impacting positively on the community, school pupils and club.

Under Alice's leadership, the coaching programme has been at the forefront of the club's success, growing from 0 players to 87 per week. Through the effective delivery of TFK and NVBTW, over 50% of the coaching programme joined having never played tennis before. Alice is on track to engage over 1,800 pupils in tennis activity within the academic year whilst also supporting the upskilling of teachers around tennis delivery. 2,040 pupils have received a six week 'introduction to tennis' course.

Over 100 children have been introduced to tennis through 11 TFK courses and over 30 adults through the LTA Tennis Xpress programmes.

Alice has engaged over 2,040 pupils per year in tennis activity from 17 local primary schools, most of which had never played tennis before. She also supported the upskilling of teachers around tennis delivery.

The club has raised its profile and membership has grown exponentially from 17 to, currently, 210 - an incredible 1235% increase in the number of people picking up a tennis racket in the Ackworth community.

"We believe so much in integrity and impact. In assessing the impact of our funding, we see how many really deserving students are getting a tennis opportunity they would never have dreamed of having. This is evident every time Alice runs a programme in a local primary school."

Richard Garrett, CEO, The Tim Henman Foundation



THE FUTURE: From bleak to bright

By building partnerships and working tirelessly towards a shared vision, Don and Alice have helped make tennis in Ackworth accessible, embracing diversity, inclusion and safeguarding.

The club's transformation is outstanding, and they continue to develop their vision and facilities for both the club and school. Ackworth TC is a true teamwork success story, where the coach and committee are strong, and even stronger together.



CLUB HIGHLIGHTS

- Turnover has increased by 1700% from £1,000 to approximately £18,000
- Appointment of a Level 3 coach, in conjunction with Ackworth School
- Two young people have achieved coaching Level 2 and Level 1 Links with 'This is Ackworth', a community leaders' group
- Shared vision and minor financial support by the club to the host, Ackworth School to install a new wheelchair accessible all weather court
- Liaison with the LTA disability officer to allow wheelchair access to two hard courts
- A formal social prescription pilot scheme to move GP surgery patients from medication to exercise



"The programme at Ackworth is quality, and the people behind that programme are quality. Alice is a fantastic young coach and Don has played a wonderful and significant role. In addition, we celebrate our partnership with the LTA and successful relationship with the school leadership team. There are now over 200 members of a club that in January 2018 had 17 members. This is such an amazing achievement!"

Richard Garrett,
CEO, The Tim Henman Foundation

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