

Harrogate SSP Volleyball Club – The journey so far...

Background:

In 2009 The Harrogate SSP began to support the development of Junior Volleyball in Harrogate. Prior to this, Volleyball activity within the District was limited to Harrogate Volleyball Club and was focussed very much on the senior game. Through the passion and drive of Helen Barker (School Sports Co-ordinator, Harrogate Grammar School) and Steve Matthews (Volleyball England Coach & Regional Coaching Administrator) plans were formed to support the formation of a Junior Volleyball Club based at Harrogate Grammar School involving young people from across the District. The coaching team of Helen, Steve and Graham Barker set about providing fun sessions to introduce Volleyball to young people that had previously not experienced the game.

Funding:

The Harrogate SSP allocated School Sports Coach funding to the club to run a 1 hour session on a Friday evening at Harrogate Grammar School. The first sessions started with around 12 young people but momentum quickly grew from there. By the end of year 1 (2009/10 academic year) the club was operating for 1.5 hours per week and had over 20 young people playing Volleyball every week.

Talent:

The formation of the Volleyball club unearthed some extremely talented young people. Added to this, the expert coaching of Steve, Helen and Graham ensured that their talent for Volleyball could develop and grow in a short period of time. A number of club players quickly progressed to train and play within the Yorkshire Talent Squads and beyond.

Year 1 Highlights (2009 – 2010)

- Club started in September 2009 with approximately 12 children mainly from HGS lunchtime sessions and St John Fisher players.
- Quickly developed numbers to a regular 16-20 per session.
- 3 of the year 11 girls attended the Yorkshire Regional Talent Development Programme squad training, and were subsequently chosen to represent Yorkshire in the Under 16's team at the Inter Regional Championships in Kettering. All 3 girls playing a key role in the region achieving the best ever performance for the age group to date.
- 3 of the year 8 & 9 boys also attended the RTDP and represented Yorkshire under 15 boys at the same event.
- 2 of the clubs outstanding players – Nicole Morgan and Elliot Barker were chosen to attend a national "high peaks" performance camp in Kettering, implemented by Volleyball England to nurture developing talent.
- Several of the juniors also played in the Yorkshire Volleyball senior leagues for Harrogate Volleyball Club.
- Involvement at many of the summer tournaments both on grass and beach with good results all round.

The success of the first year of the club secured additional funding from the Harrogate SSP for year 2 (2010/11), through the School Sports Coaching Programme with an expansion of the existing club and the formation of new sessions to allow more young people to participate and take up Volleyball.

Change 4 Life Volleyball Clubs:

September 2010 saw the introduction of the Change 4 Life programme across the Harrogate SSP. Three secondary schools were identified to receive Change 4 Life funding, resources and equipment. The C4L Volleyball Schools are Harrogate High School, King James School and St John Fisher Catholic High School. After school clubs were formed at each school with the support of Steve Matthews. Additionally, Ripon Grammar School, Ripon College and Nidderdale High school selected to receive Volleyball support through the School Sports Coach Programme for the 2010/11 academic year. C4Life clubs have allowed many more young people to experience Volleyball with those showing a talent for the game to progress into sessions on a Friday evening at Harrogate Grammar School.

Year 2 highlights to date

- Continuation of many of the more experienced juniors to compete in the Yorkshire leagues (both men's and women's).
- Growth in club membership to 45+ with most Friday sessions attracting 25-30 players
- Coaching offered at all levels from new players to Elite group
- Now operating on two courts with beginner/developing players one court, and Elite/Experienced players on the other.
- 3 of the year 10 & 11 girls attending the RTDP for this season (squad yet to be chosen).
- 6 boys chosen for the Yorkshire Under 15's squad for the Inter Regional's.
- A half term performance training camp in February with over 20 players attending a 1 day intensive training camp.
- Our own Under 15 boys team qualifying at the first attempt for the finals of the under 15's national championships (http://www.volleyballengland.org/National_Cups/U15-National-Championships/index.php) to be held in Birmingham in May. The team is made up of players from the start of the club plus new players this season from new C4L school clubs and first season players to the club. Beating established club teams from the North East and North West to qualify.

The Harrogate SSP is extremely pleased with the development of junior Volleyball within the District. The support and resources through the Youth Sport Trust has allowed the SSP to work with schools to form afterschool clubs, deploy coaching expertise and ultimately improve the opportunities for young people to play Volleyball to whatever level suits them. We now have a genuine Junior Volleyball Club which is giving young people the best chance to learn from experienced coaches and to progress through the volleyball levels. This year the Change 4 life programme has also allowed new players who have learnt the sport to then progress through the Friday nights and develop even further technically and tactically.

The development of junior Volleyball in Harrogate would not have happened without the passion, drive and determination from both Helen Barker and Steve Matthews. I would like to thank them for their input and expertise. The journey continues.....

Damien Smith, Partnership Development Manager, Harrogate School Sports Partnership



The U15 Harrogate Schools Boys Volleyball team

Back Row: 6 Rob Fawcett (King James School), 8 Josh Burton (St John Fisher), 15 Luke Clarke (Harrogate Grammar), 3 Patrick Viles (St John Fisher), Elliott Barker (St John Fisher)

Middle Row: 2 Callum McGlauchlin (St John Fisher), 1 Gareth Traynor (Harrogate Grammar), 9 Ross Dalby (Harrogate Grammar)

Front Row: 16 Frazer Chan (Harrogate Grammar)