



CLUB SUCCESS STORIES

PLAY AND STAY:

How girl-only sessions are increasing female participation in tennis

Recognising and celebrating remarkable women in the tennis community is essential, but inspiring the next generation is challenging. This case study highlights how one Brighton club, Hollingbury Park, achieved impressive results through a girl-only programme, increasing female participation in social and competitive tennis and coaching.



PROGRAMME EVOLUTION

Before the programme launched, there were less than five junior members at Hollingbury Park and no coaching available. Via the LTA Youth Schools programme, coach Sam Mills engaged with teachers, demonstrating his skillset and ability to develop female players in an inclusive and safe space.

He worked with pupils at four schools over several weeks. After just a few hours of coaching, hundreds of girls could rally, and many were interested in playing regularly and learning to compete. The teachers were very supportive and encouraged girls to join the new programme at Hollingbury Park. Sam adapted his approach to suit the girls' way of learning and incorporated tailored social elements to engage them.



When I advertised a mixed group at Hollingbury Park, only boys signed up. When I advertised an all-girls group, 40 girls came forward. These sessions are hugely beneficial for getting girls into the sport.

Sam Mills, Coach

ACHIEVING A GENDER BALANCED COACHING WORKFORCE

The LTA is committed to supporting and strengthening the female coaching workforce: Since 2022, we have grown the number of female coaches by 33%. However, it remains the case that less than a quarter of all accredited coaches are female.

As part of Hollingbury Park's programme, four University of Sussex women's team players were mentored through their coaching levels while assisting with the courses, resulting in more female coaches in the area.

RESULTS

The successes are staggering:

- 40+ girls have all improved their technical skills, learning how to serve, rally and score. They are gaining confidence that they wouldn't have in a mixed group
- Four girls have committed to playing in a programme three times per week and are keen to begin competing
- One girl with autism (ASD) from the coach's disability programme has successfully integrated into the girl-only group
- Two girls with hearing impairments have learned tennis in a judgement-free environment
- One teenage girl now uses tennis as a tool to help manage anxiety
- Raised awareness of the Hollingbury Park tennis courts and junior coaching opportunities, particularly for girls



My daughter has improved more in six weeks playing in Sam's all-girls programme than she did in two years at another club.

Parent



HOW YOUR CLUB OR VENUE CAN ENCOURAGE FEMALE PARTICIPATION

- **Host a female-focused tennis event**, such as a fun competition, team day or open day, to showcase your welcoming, inclusive environment
- **Introduce girl-only tennis sessions**: as Hollingbury Park has demonstrated, these can drive long-term (maybe life-long) engagement with the sport
- **Invite an influential female tennis player, coach or volunteer** to speak or coach a session. Celebrate your own female rising stars!
- **Emphasise the mental as well as physical benefits of tennis**, such as relieving stress from school or work, socialising, building confidence and feeling stronger and resilient
- **Help your coaching team gain expert insights into engaging female players** – through a webinar or CPD course. Why not start with **Coaching Females: Princess or Athlete?**

Research from **Women in Sport** revealed that 43% of girls who once considered themselves sporty drop out of sport after primary school. 68% say a fear of feeling judged by others is a barrier to doing sport. Hollingbury Park has proved that clubs, venues, coaches and schools can drive real change to achieve female representation at grass roots tennis, nurturing stars of the future.

40+ GIRLS — HAVE ALL — IMPROVED THEIR TECHNICAL SKILLS

The LTA is committed to securing a lasting future for tennis in Britain.

As part of this, a range of resources and support have been developed for tennis venues, which are available through our **Venue Support Toolkit**.



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