

Episode 3 - Glynn Harding

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Rich Hurst

Hello and welcome to spotlight on inclusive coaching podcast series brought to you by Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire and the University of Worcester. The series aims to inspire and inform aspiring coaches across all sports and disciplines who are interested in gaining knowledge about how inclusive coaching can have a huge impact upon the athletes and the differences and similarities about how it should be approached. So we're inviting coaches to engage with us, take away some tips, and see how they feel about inclusive coaching. There are six podcasts in the series covering a mixture of sports, ice skating, football, tennis, athletics, rugby, and basketball. In these interviews, we're going to discover how our coaches have adapted and rounded their skills to become more inclusive and what it requires, each time they step on the pitch the court or the arena with their athletes, and talked about the challenges faced and the incredible rewards. In this episode, we're talking with football coach Glynn Harding. He worked in youth sport after training to be a PE teacher with a particular focus on football. He's worked at academies in the area, including Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton Wanderers, and for the last 20 years, he's been at Worcester University to help people become coaches through their disability coaching degree. Here's what happened when we sat down for a chat with him.

Glynn Harding

My name is Glynn Harding, and as you can probably pick up from my accent, originally from rural mid Wales, and I've had a number of jobs in working with people in sport. Well, I went from Welshpool mid Wales, and I finally went to Manchester University, but I wanted to be a PE teacher because it was really job them days. You could say in sport and all sports development officers, no coaches, really, it was all voluntary stuff. And played football in Manchester played basketball in Manchester got my first teaching job in Shrewsbury. And just like what people and linking with people through sports, that was my kind of path. And I always felt that if you did a coaching badge, there's no coaches really them days, that was really where you got the technical information to become a better player. And I just felt that some of the coaches I'd had were ex teachers that were good, but didn't give you enough information. So my big thing was well, okay, I'm playing football now. Player manager of a team, how am I going to get information? So I went on a coaching course, I've done my level two, in Manchester with Manchester FA. And there weren't many of them around them days, you know, the 20 people did a course, probably two or three, would pass, so 17 failed, and then playing in Wales. So I did my Welsh senior badge, I was 26 I think at the time, so um, but I had this kind of thirst for knowledge. And the

best thing is, the course was good, but it was meeting the people in the evening and weekends ex professional players, and they were passing on good information to you. So that's kind of my background. I left teaching after three years and got into youth work. And You know youth work was in Telford, loved it. And we had a big club where a lot of the people from the local community, we played in the Telford premiere Sunday League. And it was fantastic, you know, experience and just for everybody, we're, footballers is here. And that was a that was a great learning experience. And trying to get those guys into coaching and staying in the game, despite, you know, work in bringing up a family. So I was a youth worker, but my way in was through sport.

Rich Hurst

So what specifically are you involved in now, which sort of inclusive areas are you involved in?

Glynn Harding

Yeah, so from youth work, I worked at a college of several education Telford college T-CAT. And again, we have football teams, basketball teams, women's football team. And then because I got my English coaching badge Shrewsbury town asked me would go along and help with our centre of excellence. The professional game, we're taking the best players, so Shrewsbury Town had a centre of excellence. And we did that for a couple of years and built it up quite nicely and a couple of the lads there got their YTS we've got in the first team, and then Wolverhampton Wanderers asked me to go across and work there. And so I left education and worked at Wolves Academy, and wonderful, great experience. But I felt that we didn't have the best coaches with an eight ,9, 10 year olds, not bad from 16 to 18. Not a problem. But we didn't have the best. And my big thing was of trying to get them. I couldn't so I thought well, I've got to move. I've got to do something different. So I came to Worcester University they got a job so I applied and got it and so for the last 19 years been working with young people to get into coaching and then they can go back into that whatever community - elite, special needs kids, grassroots elderly, and be the best coach they can be to get those people in the game have been quite lucky. Some of our students have got jobs at elite level, Leicester City Academy, etc, etc. Match analysis. But the big thing was, again, working in a youth service. Not many people work with people with disabilities, young men, young women, 15, 16 years of age, going through the, you know, life opportunities. And sport was a great way swimming, boccia, we used to go to festivals, and I drive the minibus and that kind of stuff. And I just felt that we need coaches now to be, well, we've always needed coaches to include people with disabilities. Because it's their right. You know, and my big mantra has always been if you can coach people with learning difficulties or physical disabilities, and you're good at it, when you then go and coach able bodied people, you've got far more skills. I wouldn't say it's easier, but you have actually learned things and you're more creative. And you listen to people and you work things out. They work it out for themselves, you act as a sounding board. So working with people with disabilities, I stumbled across it, summer work in the youth service, and carried on here Worcester University 19 years ago. And we had a module, special needs module really in sports or contributed to that ended up running that, but what you're going to learn in 12 weeks, so that became a very popular module here, then we put a second year module in to prepare them for the third year. And now we've got a degree in disability check now the BSC Honours Degree in how to coach people with disabilities or teach people with disabilities first year, second year and deliver independent study in it. And you become an expert really do your masters now in adapted physical activity. And again, we're preparing people to go and work in the community, whether it's in special schools or as a school, you

got one or two learners who happen to have a disability and our students, I think, are market leaders in it, you know, they're confident, competent, because you've had lots of experience. So it's a knowledge in the lectures, but also the work placement, where you're trying it out. And we're here to guide and to mentor them, in it really.

Rich Hurst

So, I want to focus on three particular areas that you work in. So there's a veteran side, there's work with the Albion foundation in West Bromwich Albion and also with the disability football club. So let's start with that veteran side. And what's unique about that, what the challenges there and how are they overcome?

Glynn Harding

So a number of years ago, I hit 50 years of age, and I thought how am I gonna keep fit. And what about football, and there was walking football, I said well, I think I can still do a bit of jogging. So we've got a team going Sunday morning on the 3g put an ad for anybody interested 2, 3, 4 got up to 10 just training. Any chance of the game Glynn? I said why don't we play one here, So kept going, built up numbers. And we found that it was a league in Oxford. So I thought, well, surely, we can get the league go anywhere in Worcester. So we got one team, then two. There was always a good little team in Droitwich. So now 10 years later, we've got a league with 12 teams in, in Worcestershire, and what couple of our lads were played for England now. So all of a sudden, it's got a pathway and tha's on Sunday's.

Rich Hurst

I was just gonna say the challenges with a with a veterans team, because obviously you're playing with people who I'm guessing, have been playing for a long time or used to play and get back into it. How do you work out who is the who's the leading voice in that? Who's the one that makes the calls? Because you've got a lot of experience there haven't you?

Glynn Harding

And yeah, it is. And it's, I mean, the only positive is, I don't have any problem with the parents, that's one thing however, some people are living their dream and trying to play like an 18 year old. So, it health managers a little bit.

Rich Hurst

And does it does it take a manager I suppose to be a manager at that, that league you know, you like you say you haven't got the...you've just got a lot of experience. You've got a lot of people who are you know, for want of a better phrase believe they know best. So how do you manage that? How do you tell those people what to do without the come back?

Glynn Harding

I think that's coaching. And I think, you know, whether you're working with elderly people, or senior players, very young players, people with disabilities and or deaf players, blind players, it's about communication skills, and it's about negotiation. But at the end of the day, sometimes not saying we have a vote but it's about convincing people as another way to do it, etcetera, etcetera. But yeah, so

we're the 50s, because I'm 63 Now, I haven't played much of the 50s football at all because someone has to be on the touchline responsible, calling the subs roll it rolling subs, come off for 10 minutes, go back on, etcetera. So that is crucially important because...got to have a qualified coach with a medical, always take a walkie talkie on the pitch so you can get the defibrillator down, you know we played it at Worcester University. It's well protected, you know, then it's footballs, football. You know, people say well, what about heading the ball? For young kids? What about heading the ball if you're 60? Well, a game is a game. You can't dilute it down much kind of thing. But you definitely need a manager at the end of the day to make certain decisions.

Rich Hurst

I hope you are enjoying the spotlight on inclusive coaching podcast so far and taking some inspiration from our guests. We'll get back to that conversation shortly. But we just wanted to make you aware of the other episodes in the series, there are going to be six interviews with the different coaches, plus an introductory episode where we sit down and discuss all of the coaches chats with the people behind the podcast, the Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire partnership, and the University of Worcester. That episode is available right now, along with our chat with Rebecca Foster MBE, who coaches across athletes in a number of different ways, including at three different Olympics. She taught us about the importance of relationship building.

Rebecca Foster

If you're nervous about approaching someone who might be in a power chair, and they might not have eye contact with you. You might be worried that you might offend where you know, they'll let you know if you they offend you. Why not just try? And if you get the response from both ends, and it's mutual, then wow, what a great moment for both of you to recognise someone's existence as opposed to just walking past them.

Rich Hurst

That episode with Rebecca is available now. And remember, you can find more details and links to all the episodes at www.activehw.co.uk or search for Spotlight on Inclusive Coaching. For now, though, let's get back to this episode....

Let's talk about the Albion foundation. It's the West Bromwich Albion's foundation that they've got set up there. So what work do you do with them? What's the what's involved there?

Glynn Harding

The Albion is like, you know, like a registered charity. So Shrewsbury Town would have a club football in the community. So would Forest Green, I remember Worcester City, Kidderminster Harriers, they've all got this charity, and doing fantastic work, from grassroots to fun weeks that have term which we've obviously got this week. So the Albion foundation is our nearest up until a couple years ago Premier League football club. So they would organise for example in the city, and we'd run it at the university junior school teams would come in, have a tournament, the winning team would then go to West Brom and play teams from Sandwell, Dudley, etcetera, etcetera. The winning team would then play at Wembley against the other, so Liverpool, Everton's champions kind of thing. So again, it's this pyramid. So Pitmaston school a few years ago, won the local one, and I think they actually won at Wembley, so

that's if your the Premier League club, now they're in the championship, they would play press the north end those and it would be at Coventry is ground, so it's wonderful for the kids for that. But they also do fantastic work like the other 91 clubs with say, for example, children with learning difficulties that they go into schools to in PE lessons, etc. Work with the elderly, those with dementia, they've got a fantastic reminiscences session on a Thursday morning at the club and again we've got involved with that with our association for dementia studies. But what I'm really pleased about we've probably got at the moment, 8 ex-students working their career is at the Albion foundation. So it's a great way of students getting a degree and then getting employment. Haley James, for argument's sake, he's a senior member of staff at the Albion Foundation having worked their way up. So it's having great impact across the West Midlands in the target areas where coaches can make a difference, mental health, unemployment, etc, etc. And football for fitness. So, it's a great, it's a really good link for us to work. It's a partnership, I think, Richard.

Rich Hurst

And how different are the challenges in preparing those students for saying go into work with the Albion Foundation or go into work in any other areas of inclusive sport?

Glynn Harding

Yeah. I think a lot of young people come in and think they're going to be getting a job at Everton football club or Aston Villa as a coach with the young 15, 16 year olds and ultimately, maybe the first team as they develop through the bit of realism kicks in, but there's very few jobs at that level and they usually for ex-players, however, they can have more impact. Going to coach the under thirteens or the under fourteens. And it's actually a full-time job. Or when I first came you might get a young person who's going to be a PE teacher might be head of PE and a school and works two nights a week at the Albion and worked with the under fifteens on a Saturday or Sunday. So it was actually not all the time, but it was an additional parallel thing to their main career. So, I always say the PE and Coaching as a mixed degree was a good one, because your not sure which one, which route your going to go down in the end. So many jobs at many football clubs and rugby clubs because they're trying to do the same sort of thing and your trying to say to as many young people, work out in the three years you're here and if you do a fourth year masters what you're best at. So try working with girls try work in the lads try work with elite players, go and coach a deaf team. And you might find that your forte, your gift. And that's and that's where, you know, that's where you should concentrate, really. But it's Yeah.

Rich Hurst

And it brings me on to the other element that we want to talk about Worcester Disability football club. So how is it how's that? How's that different to what we've spoken about already?

Glynn Harding

Yeah, well, it's community. It's local here in St. John's, all the players are from Worcester to we haven't got anybody coming from, you know, Sandwell because the Albion do that kind of stuff. Fantastic, voluntary club headed up by a guy called Derek Cunningham. And Derek's club has been going I'm gonna say 16 years on our 3g pitch. And it's a great avenue for our students to watch coaches working with people with disabilities, very young children to 40 year old guy with Down Syndrome who plays for argument's sake. So we do modules where the guys can do a work placement 10 hours in the first

year, 12 hours in the second year, and, and so forth. So they go along and help, they assist, the more experienced coach and an end up running sessions. They end up going to a tournament every six weeks, they're go to play in Telford or Oxford or somewhere, so they're go on the bus off they go. And then we host a tournament here to run the three counties league they call it, it's a joyus celebration, it's fantastic. They use the sports hall, they use a gym, and they use the 3G, and, but it's a pan disability group. So you might have a couple of players with learning difficulties. A player with CP, cerebral palsy, and a goalkeeper with hearing loss in the same team. But they all play for Worcester disability football club, or the Worcester All-stars as it used to be called. And there's really good little video, which I know Simon or Bronwyn will put on the website for people to click. Ultimately, some of the young people get really get enthused and say I don't want to coach to the Albion, I don't wanna coach and I want to, this is where I see my forte. And they're just good at it. The friendship, you know, they come out of themselves that form great friendships. And the thing that I suppose is really impresses me I've got a couple of ex students are Chloe and Jacob, who have got careers and special needs teaching Chloe, Jacob is a junior school teacher. And he has cerebral palsy he is a top CP player himself but they coach every Sunday morning even though they've left the university four or five years ago. So now they mentor the next generation of young students. They've got a great and they both got their FA level two coaching badge they don't know a game inside out but their people, persons so I can trust students go into them to learn from them and to coach that group.

Rich Hurst

So is the landscape now more encouraging. In that way for coaches, when you're looking at people who come to become a coach, you can technically say to them, there are many more different avenues than you probably thought were there. But they're all gonna involve different skill sets.

Glynn Harding

Yeah, or you could argue the same skill sets which is good communication, good preparation eye for detail. Be a people person, but the people you think your going to coach with it's a wider landscape in whole walking football, the dementia group. But try everything, and then find out what you're really good at, you know some students go off to America in the Summer, go and work for the summer camps, for Camp America. But they might choose to go work for a camp, which has disabled children in, so they transfer the skills here to abroad and they might get a job abroad. So, the skill set is, it's important they find out about themselves first, be confident in your own ability, upskill yourself, but try and find the avenue that's gonna have the biggest contribution and job satisfaction. But football, basketball, whatever gym work that's your key, that's your way in to what you do.

Rich Hurst

Is that a thing you'd say to people looking at becoming coaches who can see those inclusivity, routes that there are, like I say, it starts with them, and how they're going to end up going out and becoming an individual in any of those areas.

Glynn Harding

Yeah, I think, and the only thing I think Richard we can prepare people for in coaching, is we know it's gonna change, we're preparing them for to be robust, and go with whatever change comes, comes along, have the confidence that you're competent, keep up to date with new literature, new ideas from

the government, you know, when you're working with people, you know, we, we weren't talking about COVID, three years ago, was a huge challenge now to get back where we were. So keep current, keep learning you know we talked about mentoring before, go and work with other people, pick their brains, but when you do the session, you think your going to copy what they did, but you won't, because you'll do it through your filter, with the group your coaching. So it's always a unique situation you going to be in, but go back to your skill set, in the past. You know I love it working here, because I'm learning from the young people of today and I'm around a load of colleagues that have got different ideas, and I'll say, I like that. And I'll learn and what's it's all about. Learning is lifelong, it's a ride and sometimes we know it's a bit more difficult, you have do dig in and show what you can do and what you can't do. It's always would of, should of, could, of, well ok, but you know that, what can we do? In a little rural county like Worcestershire, we're doing some good stuff I think, you know so, we need to celebrate that and to share our practice with other people.

Rich Hurst

Brilliant well said. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time today. Great to hear your experience. Great to hear your thoughts. Yeah. And I think that's been useful for everyone. Thank you.

Glynn Harding

Okay, thank you.

Rich Hurst

So there we have it a huge thanks to our guest and of course to you for listening to this episode of Spotlight on Inclusive Coaching. Remember, if you want to know anything about the coaching academy or get more support on your coaching journey, then go to the Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire website, which is www.activehw.co.uk We'll see you soon.