

**“Our sports  
bodies need  
the best and  
brightest  
leaders.”**

EDITORIAL : Philippa Reed

## Revisiting the diversity game plan

### Sport and equal opportunity? It's a headline-grabber if it concerns our No.1 national sport but what does the picture look like behind the headlines?

Earlier this year, and prompted partly by an article in the *New Zealand Herald* (see p9) looking at gender im/balance amongst our sporting leaders, we decided to take a closer look at employment in sport.

The most striking change in sports employment over the last

statistics, there are now 1,512 professional sportspeople in New Zealand.

Supporting them, and also supporting amateur sport at all levels, are the organisations in which so many of us are involved as players, coaches and volunteers. People from all walks of life spend

Shifting the lens from participation to employment, the growth of professional sport has created more paid jobs across the board, not just for players but for coaches, administrators and leaders. Nearly 17,000 people were employed in sports-related roles in 2006 – fewer than in computer services, but more than in childcare or libraries.

But does the diversity of our players and volunteers translate into paid positions? Who is working in our local, regional and national sporting bodies? Lynette Adams, one of two women chief executives of our 17 regional sports trusts, says that as well as sports programmes which cater to the increasing numbers of Asian, Māori and Pacific peoples in the community, we need to create employment and leadership opportunities to draw on diverse perspectives.

It's not just about All Black selection policies; our sports bodies need the best and brightest leaders from the widest talent pool. So the next time your local sports organisation is looking for a leader or administrator, keep that diversity lens engaged.

### **It's not just about All Black selection policies; our sports bodies need the best and brightest leaders from the widest talent pool.**

decade or two is, of course, the number of sports codes which now have professional teams or representatives. Alongside the All Blacks, All Whites, Black Caps and Silver Ferns, individuals such as Valerie Vili, Sarah Ulmer, Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell, Dean Barker, Hamish Carter and Mahe Drysdale are important and visible role models for young New Zealanders. According to recent

time ferrying children to practices and games, standing on wintry sidelines at junior rugby, football, hockey or netball matches, or getting out of bed in the dark for swimming or gymnastic coaching sessions. Stand amongst those parents and children, coaches and organisers and it's plain to see that participation in sport reflects the increasing diversity of our population.

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## Aiming for the top

The career possibilities in sport are expanding but ethnic diversity in grassroots sport still isn't reflected in the sector's management and governance roles.

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D'Arcy Po can see himself sitting on a sports board one day. Studying for a diploma of sports management at the New Zealand Institute of Sport (NZIS) in Wellington, D'Arcy, 19, says he loves “the whole political side of things” and has learned a lot about leadership and governance since becoming leader of the

institute's students' association.

And there's no doubt the former Onslow College student has focus and determination. “I really wanted to be chairman, so I stuck notes saying so all over the wall in my bedroom and visualised being the chairman. I know that sounds lame, but it's my way of setting goals and

I think it's effective. I also kept telling people I wanted to do it ... and a couple of weeks later I was elected.”

The NZIS roll reflects the high participation of Māori and Pacific Island people in community and club sport. D'Arcy, a keen basketballer, finishes his two-year diploma this year but wants to continue his study in 2011.

Since 2000, the number of people employed in sports has increased by 44 per cent, compared with an increase of 21 per cent in all employees over that time.<sup>1</sup>

**“You can't really find a number of Māori and Pacific Islanders in leadership roles in sport.”**

Farah Palmer

PICTURED :  
D'Arcy Po



## “It's important that boards and management reflect the sport they represent.”

Ryan Holland

Nearly 17,000 people are employed in sports and physical recreation roles in New Zealand. That figure includes coaches and trainers, administration staff, outdoor guides and the likes but excludes 1,512 professional sportspeople.<sup>2</sup>

Those jobs might be in schools or tertiary institutions, facilities like gyms, golf clubs and swimming pools, in national sports bodies or in one of New Zealand's 17 regional sports trusts (RSTs), independent not-for-profits governed by boards of trustees which are largely funded by Government agency Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC).

Sport Waitakere in West Auckland is a mid-size RST, with 18 full-time and four part-time employees. Chief Executive

Lynette Adams says that the growth of professional sport has led to more administration, management, leadership and coaching roles. High-profile sports stars have boosted children's participation and children are playing competitive sport at a much younger age.

Parents have greater demands and higher expectations, says Lynette, and are often willing to pay for good-quality coaching; the number of volunteer coaches is dwindling. In addition, the Government's Kiwisport programme to boost students' sports activity is giving \$45 million direct to schools and \$37 million to RSTs to distribute directly to their communities.<sup>3</sup>

However, the ethnic diversity amongst players and volunteers is not reflected at management

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and governance level, and that imbalance is now under academic scrutiny. “It's a bit of a worry,” says Massey University doctoral student Ryan Holland, whose research analyses Māori and Pacific Island participation in sports management. “It's important that boards and management reflect the sport they represent.”

His research aims to identify any barriers to participation and how they might be overcome. In 2009, he analysed 90 national sport organisation (NSO) boards, finding that of 625 board positions, less than five per cent were held by people of Māori or Pacific Island heritage.

Ryan is now surveying the NSOs to find out more about Māori and Pacific representation on their boards, and Māori, Pacific Island, Pākehā and Asian representation among coaching and management staff.

Ryan is also asking whether diversity policies and committees exist, whether there are programmes to boost Māori and Pacific representation, and what barriers might stand in their way. He says that these might include unconscious discrimination, lack of confidence, selection bias, practical barriers such as a lack of childcare, a lack of role models, and the expectations of others. Ryan's next step is face-to-face interviews.

## Some Māori and Pacific people feel that they can't put themselves forward for leadership, Ryan says, as their background teaches that people must be born into leadership, or that such a role is bestowed by others.

One of his supervisors, Farah Palmer, a former Black Ferns captain and member of the Māori Rugby Board, says, "Ryan's research is probably the first of its kind. People can easily rattle off the names of Māori and Pacific Islanders involved in professional sport, especially rugby and netball, but you can't really find a number of Māori and Pacific Islanders in leadership roles in sport."

In general, the sports bodies have been keen to participate in Ryan's research. With more than 75 per cent of the surveys returned, positive lines of enquiry are emerging.

Some Māori and Pacific people feel that they can't put themselves forward for leadership, Ryan says, as their background teaches that people must be born into leadership, or that such a role is bestowed by others. Ryan, who has Niuean heritage, says that role models and mentors for Māori and Pacific people appear to be lacking.

Ryan adds that boards can seem impenetrable. To encourage more diverse representation,

organisations may need to communicate about what boards do and how they do it, and explain why they seek a diverse range of officeholders.

Developing a pipeline of talent is important, says Farah. She has observed that many good Māori leaders are overloaded because they are snapped up

## "We need to grow the pool of people who would contemplate contributing to a board."

Farah Palmer

Also taking a keen interest in Ryan's work is SPARC and its Māori advisory group Te Rōpū Manaaki. One SPARC programme hoping to boost Māori leadership is He Oranga Poutama. The initiative's primary aim is to increase Māori participation in traditional Māori sports like waka ama. But an important long-term goal is development of Māori sports management and leadership capacity.

for a wide variety of organisations: "We need to grow the pool of people who would contemplate contributing to a board."

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- 1 [Statistics New Zealand Business Demography Survey, February 2010](#)
  - 2 [Department of Labour, Jobs and Tertiary Education Indicator Tool](#)
  - 3 [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/kiwisport+initiative+good+young+people](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/kiwisport+initiative+good+young+people)

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## Winning a place in the boardroom

The New Zealand Olympic Committee has launched a mentoring programme for women seeking governance roles in sport.

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New Zealand is known to punch above its weight in several international sports, but there is one arena where the International Olympic Committee wants us to do a lot better.

The IOC, the Olympics' governing body, has been so concerned about the lack of gender balance on international sporting boards across the world that it set a target of 20 per cent female representation on each national board by 2005.<sup>1</sup>

But New Zealand, for all its perceived egalitarianism, isn't in line for a gold medal yet. According to 2009 figures just released by the

**“It’s about awareness; they’ve never thought about it.”**

Susie Simcock



## “Some sports are most disappointing, especially when they have strong levels of female participation but very few or no representatives at board level.”

Susie Simcock



New Zealand Olympic Committee, just 53 per cent of the country's 46 NZOC-affiliated sports authorities have met that 20 per cent target.<sup>2</sup>

This is a problem, says the IOC, because unless women assume leadership positions at a national level, there is little chance they will be able to contribute at the international level.

“You've got to come up – you can't just suddenly arrive,” says former national squash player Susie Simcock, chair of the NZOC's women in sport working group, former NZOC board member and Emeritus President of the World Squash Federation.

“The good thing is that there are some sports taking the issue on board.” They include archery, badminton, gymnastics and ice speed-skating, all of which have increased the proportion of women on their boards over the three years since NZOC started doing its stock-take.

“On the other hand,” says Susie, “some sports are most disappointing, especially when they have strong levels of female participation but very few or no representatives at board level.” Biking and Paralympics have no female representation at decision-making level at all, she says, though they have plenty of girls and women taking part. Other

Olympic sports with no female directors are rugby, tennis, shooting, ski racing and table tennis. Overall, 18 per cent of sports boards have no women at all.

The new figures were presented at the NZOC annual general meeting in mid-May. Susie says the committee will be writing letters to praise those organisations which have improved their diversity. With the others, it will “draw attention to the benefits of diversity ... encourage them to look at the issue.”

The arguments for board diversity are well-known, and were canvassed in the Spring 2009 issue of *Diversity in Action*.<sup>3</sup> In short, says Susie, the reasons that women add value to corporate boards are no different for sporting entities, and she points out that diversity works both ways: netball and synchronised swimming need men, too.

Susie believes women can make a huge difference to a board when they make up at least a third the number. Her belief reflects research that found three or more women became a ‘normal’ part of a boardroom, mitigating the dynamics that might prevent one or two from being able to make a full contribution.<sup>4</sup>

Most New Zealand sports organisations are set up as incorporated societies. This

means they must have a constitution which specifies the appointment of officers, and typically those officers are board members. There is no legal requirement to make provision for gender.

Sports lawyer and NZOC board member Maria Clarke last September analysed the constitutions of the 90 national sport organisations (NSOs) recognised by major funder Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) and found that just five

The NZOC's research found that a lack of mentors was the top barrier to women assuming national roles,<sup>5</sup> and has set up a six-month trial mentoring programme. At the time *Diversity in Action* went to press, the NZOC had invited applications and was in the process of selecting 10 women from the Auckland region who wish to secure a governance role in the next two years.

The women will work proactively with a volunteer

have partners and children, and they are horrified to think there's a situation like that. It's about awareness; they've never thought about it."

So what's happening in the levels below governance roles? In the US, where sport and diversity is a much-analysed field, research has found that gender discrimination, career barriers, work-family conflicts and antagonistic workplace culture can work against women in sports organisations.<sup>6</sup>

While the 2009 NZOC research does not look in-depth at senior management roles, its 2007 study cast a broader net over 47 sports and found that men made up the majority of senior roles at national level. Men also dominated coaching and team management roles. Just nine per cent of the 47 sports surveyed had corporate policies or strategies relating specifically to women.

However, the study found gains, too. Between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s, the proportion of female team officials at Olympic and Commonwealth games rose steadily.<sup>7</sup>

The best way to harness diversity in sports is through a long-term, cohesive strategy, according to researchers. American academic George B. Cunningham points out that trying to encourage greater diversity in sports organisations "with piece-meal, one-time efforts is akin to trying to move the leg of a table without moving the table itself – it simply cannot happen".<sup>8</sup>

George says that research into diversity in sports organisations has found that:

- Diversity initiatives that receive strong, reliable support from top management continually out-perform efforts that lack

## The IOC, the Olympics' governing body, has been so concerned about the lack of gender balance on international sporting boards across the world that it set a target of 20 per cent female representation on each national board by 2005.

sports, or 0.05%, explicitly take gender into account in their defining document – Bowls New Zealand, Diving New Zealand, Hockey New Zealand, New Zealand Cricket and New Zealand Golf.

In Bowls New Zealand's case, its constitution reflects the amalgamation of men's and women's bowls bodies and stipulates that the positions of president and vice-president are held by a man and a woman and that the appointments panel which assesses potential board members must have regard to gender, amongst other factors. Looking beyond the constitution, it also has an EEO policy covering employment, training and promotion.

So what action might get more women around the table?

mentor to identify goals and plan action, "reflect, respect and act", as the programme outline says, and contribute to evaluation. Says Susie: "I still passionately believe that we've just got to keep encouraging women. I mentor a number of women who are involved in international sport, on boards, in a very informal way, because I know how difficult it can be."

She adds that to bring real equity to the sports sector, greater awareness of the benefits of diversity and long-term, explicit commitments to its development are needed. In her experience, many people working in sport don't realise that an imbalance exists. "For example, when you talk to the regional sports trusts, the young guys there are married, or

such support.

- An increase of women in management positions within a sports organisation is likely to result in more women being employed at all levels.

George says, “Proactive sports organisations adopt a broad view of diversity and value diversity to the fullest extent; they have policies, procedures and practices aimed at developing a diverse workforce; and are characterised by flexible organisational structures with open lines of communication and power shared by diverse persons.”

Mentoring can also help women working in sport at the grassroots level. Recent research by Massey University sports academic Sarah Leberman has found the women defer to men in coaching youth sport and have little confidence in their own ability.<sup>9</sup> These results, Sarah says, suggest that women-only coaching courses run by women are needed, as well as mentoring programmes and improved awareness of the value of being a coach.

1 [www.olympic.org/en/content/The-IOC/Commissions/Women-and-Sport/?Tab=2](http://www.olympic.org/en/content/The-IOC/Commissions/Women-and-Sport/?Tab=2)

2 New Zealand Olympic Committee, 2010: Gender Representation in New Zealand Olympic Sports

3 [www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/newsletters/Diversity%20in%20Action%20Spring%2009.pdf](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/newsletters/Diversity%20in%20Action%20Spring%2009.pdf)

4 [www.ionwomen.org/pdf/news/criticalmass.pdf](http://www.ionwomen.org/pdf/news/criticalmass.pdf)

5 [www.zeus-sport.com/NZOC/Resource.aspx?ID=8488](http://www.zeus-sport.com/NZOC/Resource.aspx?ID=8488)

6.8 George B. Cunningham, *Creating and Sustaining Gender Diversity in Sport Organizations*, *Sex Roles* (2008) 58: 136-145

7 [www.zeus-sport.com/NZOC/Resource.aspx?ID=8488](http://www.zeus-sport.com/NZOC/Resource.aspx?ID=8488)

9 [www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle=why-coach-is-usually-a-bloke-05-03-2008](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle=why-coach-is-usually-a-bloke-05-03-2008)

### Sport's female power-brokers

A *New Zealand Herald* feature in January this year that listed the top 25 power-brokers in New Zealand sport found that just two were women – shot-putter Valerie Vili (for her potential influence on Māori and Pacific Island communities) and Raelene Castle (the head of Netball NZ).

The writer, Dylan Cleaver, said, “It is a list overwhelmingly dominated by white men. This is not a bias on this reporter’s part, but a significant imbalance that, perhaps, needs to be rectified.”

So he compiled a 10-person ‘female power list’. Following Valerie Vili and Raelene Castle at positions one and two were media handler Glenda Hughes, a former Commonwealth Games shotputter; sports manager Leanne McGoldrick; swim coach Jan Cameron; Silver Ferns coach Ruth Aitken; tennis tournament director Brenda Perry; Netball New Zealand president Dame Lois Muir; Hockey New Zealand chief Hilary Poole; and Silver Ferns skipper Casey Williams.

We can add three more to that list. Kereyn Smith and Liz Dawson are the only two female directors of super 14 rugby franchises, Kereyn with the Highlanders and Liz with the Hurricanes. Therese Walsh is the Rugby New Zealand 2011 Chief Operating Officer and was formerly a NZ Rugby Union CFO.

### Did you know?

Our sports boards are short of women

- 85% of sports boards are less than 50% female.
- Going up 2007-2009: Archery, ice-skating, ice speed-skating, rowing, squash.
- Going down 2007-2009: Bobsleigh and skeleton, canoeing, dance sports, equestrian, Paralympics, softball, tennis.

Source: NZOC, 2010. Gender Balance in New Zealand Olympic Sports.

Women in sports management work in fairly narrow fields

- Most national teams are coached by men.
- Two-thirds of all staff working with women’s teams are men.
- Women who coach tend to work with either individuals or small teams such as those for biking, bobsleigh, roller sports and table tennis.
- Women’s teams have a slightly greater number of paid coaches of both sexes than do men’s teams.
- Women are most likely to be team managers of women’s teams.
- Male officials – that is, coaches and managers – predominate in NZOC event teams.

Source: NZOC, 2007. Gender Balance in New Zealand Olympic Sports.

## Putting diversity on the sports agenda

Diverse perspectives bring creativity to the workplace and help improve customer service.

Sport Waitakere has a comprehensive EEO policy, and Chief Executive Lynette Adams is very clear about the benefits of diversity – and about making that commitment clear.

“It’s all about better servicing the needs of our community,” she says. “If you have a diverse staffing and board, you get a much richer workplace. I totally believe in cross-pollination and sharing ideas. With diversity, you deliver a much better service, and I also think we do need to be a mirror of our community.”

Lynette adds that when staff come from a wide range of backgrounds, there’s a ready source of advice on questions about the best way to approach, say, an ethnic group, and as a result, “your stakeholder relationships are better and outcomes much better. That’s how I see it”.

Among the regional sporting trusts (RSTs) with EEO policies are Sport Auckland, Sport Taranaki, Sport Hawkes Bay and Sport Otago. Figures from June 2009 show that women make up 62 per cent of RST staff; the boards aren’t so balanced, at 35 per cent female.

Lynette: “We have talked a lot about cultural awareness within sports clubs, and we ask the

question: How welcoming are you to people of other backgrounds? Do you have policies around diversity in your organisation? The answer would be no 99 per cent of the time.”

Catherine Taiapa, who looked at sports organisations for their 2009 report *Sport and Cultural Diversity*.<sup>1</sup> “The importance of having people from ethnic and immigrant

**“We’re hoping that diversity becomes one of the topical issues, because it can lift the performance of the organisation and its systems.”**

Nicky Sherriff

Lynette, one of just two female RST heads and a Bowls New Zealand board member, says a lot of clubs just can’t find the time to think about diversity and what it means from an employment point of view. “Frankly, most of the really grassroots clubs are struggling day-to-day just to get members in the door and make sure there are enough uniforms and coaches. They often don’t have time to reflect and be strategic.”

But they need to if they are to grow their player numbers in an increasingly culturally diverse Auckland, say Paul Spoonley and

communities involved in a sport as players, coaches and administrators cannot be emphasised enough, as they provide role models.”

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) would like to see greater awareness of EEO and diversity among NSOs. It’s going to start by raising awareness of the business benefits of gender diversity, says Senior Policy Adviser Nicky Sherriff, hoping that this will provide a platform for greater diversity awareness in general.

“We’re hoping that diversity becomes one of the topical issues,

**“The importance of having people from ethnic and immigrant communities involved in a sport as players, coaches and administrators cannot be emphasised enough, as they provide role models.”**

because it can lift the performance of the organisation and its systems,” she adds. And as outlined in SPARC’s excellent publication *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*,<sup>2</sup> “diversity is vital”.

“When directors are alike, they tend to look at problems and solutions the same way,” says Nicky. “When there are diverse perspectives and points of view at the board table, there is often more innovation, more outside-the-box thinking and ultimately, better governance.”

Rugby champ and academic Farah Palmer says that explicit diversity policies are a good way to start creating change. “It would be great if we didn’t have to, but it is necessary to start with, and as people go along it might not be necessary in the long-term.”

A ring-around found that a small number of NSOs included a reference to EEO, fairness or equity in their constitutions, employment policies or codes of conduct, among them Swimming New Zealand, Bowls New Zealand and New Zealand Soccer. Talking to NSOs, two things emerge: there’s plenty of scope to raise awareness, and for many, EEO tends to mean gender balance.

New Zealand Hockey has

board gender equity written into its constitution, but no formal EEO policy for the rest of the organisation; CEO Hilary Poole says that the board equity rules set the standard

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Nicky Sherriff

for the rest of the organisation.

At Gymsports New Zealand, says CEO Sarah Ashmole, there is no written EEO policy, but there is a general culture in the organisation of “bringing women through”.

Some NSOs are making plans. For example, Table Tennis New Zealand has identified as a strategic priority the appointment of a woman to its five-member board.

1 [www.arpas.org.nz/Doc/ARPASSfinalReport20Nov09.pdf](http://www.arpas.org.nz/Doc/ARPASSfinalReport20Nov09.pdf)

2 [www.sparc.org.nz/Documents/Sector%20Capability/Web\\_PDF\\_11.10.06.pdf](http://www.sparc.org.nz/Documents/Sector%20Capability/Web_PDF_11.10.06.pdf)

## Employee attributes: Grit, determination and perseverance

In a sector which reveres mental and physical toughness, people with disabilities could have an edge in terms of employability. Their academic and career achievements are often the result of outstanding creativity, staunch determination, and sheer hard work.

New Zealand has seen athletes like John Kirwan and cricketer Lou Vincent publicly acknowledging their struggles with mental illness, as well as increased media coverage of the successes of our disabled athletes. Does that mean that the sports industry is becoming more open to the talents of disabled people?

We know that in employment overall, people with disabilities fare

Executive Fiona Pickering would like to change. “Without any baseline data, you can’t start looking at how well we’re doing,” she says.

“It would be really useful to identify what the current numbers of disabled people working within the sports industry are and use this information to either maintain or increase employment accordingly. This may require further identifying the barriers, or perceived

and says society in general still doesn’t appreciate the abilities of people with disabilities and the sports sector is no exception.

“Administrators might think that someone in a wheelchair would have difficulty coaching mainstream sports, but in fact it comes down to the person’s grit, determination and perseverance,” he says. “The people with disabilities who do succeed are very motivated and have a strong drive. Employers have got to see past the disability and look at the person and their capabilities.”

Dave, who used to represent New Zealand in basketball, no longer plays competitively but is committed to creating opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in mainstream sports and recreation. He is one of 10 Sports Opportunity Advisors around the country, four of whom have an impairment.

Dave, who is based in Hamilton, has put a great deal of effort into building his career, training in business studies and sports management while he was competing at national level. He has been the national manager

**“The people with disabilities who do succeed are very motivated and have a strong drive.”**

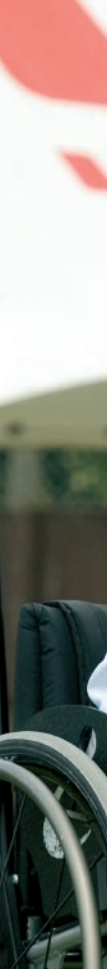
Dave MacCalman

badly. National data shows that they are less likely to be in paid employment than non-disabled people, and more likely to be working in poorly paid, low-status jobs.

But there is no data on the numbers of disabled people working in the sports industry in New Zealand, a situation that Paralympics New Zealand Chief

barriers, to employment within the sector.”

Dave MacCalman is a Sport Opportunity Advisor for the Halberg Trust, which aims to provide opportunities for young disabled people to participate in sport and active recreation alongside their non-disabled friends. Dave uses a wheelchair





of both wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby, so has had practical experience on and off the court.

Another Sport Opportunity Advisor, Stacey Roche, represented New Zealand in boccia, which looks like a cross between petanque and indoor bowls, at the Sydney Paralympics. Based in the Auckland region, one of her roles is to educate staff at recreation centres and other facilities so they can better cater for disabled people.

“It’s all about inclusion and modifying activities so that disabled people can be fully involved. It’s vital that the skills and knowledge are provided so people understand that it’s not that hard to include disabled people in sport and recreation.”

Stacey believes that disabled people, too, need to take advantage

**“Sport is seen as a young, hip, fit, healthy person’s place, so we need to change that mindset amongst disabled people as well as non-disabled people.”** Andy Roche

of the opportunities available to them, both in sports and in the sports industry.

Andy Roche was also employed by the Halberg Trust to establish the Sports Opportunity programme and is now a senior advisor at the Trust.

He believes that disabled people need extraordinary determination to gain employment in the sports sector. “Many disabled people don’t think to put up their hands for jobs in the mainstream sports sector, so the disabled people that do work in the larger sporting organisations are incredibly motivated.

“Sport is seen as a young, hip, fit, healthy person’s place, so we need to change that mindset amongst disabled people as well as non-disabled people. Sports administration is not that different from other administration, so there shouldn’t be any particular barriers to disabled people.”

Andy believes that employers need to be proactive about employing people with disabilities, explicitly stating that they will consider applications from them.

Mike Gourley, who produces and presents the Radio NZ programme about disability issues, One in Five, has worked on disability issues for the past 30 years. While he says he’s a “couch potato”, he was a Senior Advisor, Disability, for Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) for three years, creating opportunities for disabled people.

He believes that employers in the sports sector, like other employers, jump to conclusions based on one good or bad experience of employing a disabled person.

“There’s the group of employers who are highly resistant to employing a disabled person, another group who’ve had a negative experience, those who haven’t thought about it and others who already do it,” he says, “My approach is to work with the latter group to win over the employers who have an open mind.”

Dave MacCalman agrees: “Employers need to look at the person, their talent and their attitude and go from there.”

PICTURED :  
Stacey Roche

#### Did you know?

- 17% of the working age population had a disability in 2006.
- Disabled people are less likely to be employed – 60% in the 15-64 age group compared with 80% for the age group overall.
- Disabled people are less likely to be employed in skilled occupations than non-disabled people.

Source: Disability and the Labour Market in New Zealand in 2006. Statistics NZ 2008.

## CoachCorp – Combining work and play

Employees involved in workplace initiative CoachCorp bring new skills back to the workplace.

Arthur Clark didn't exactly volunteer to coach his daughter Cherie's secondary school touch rugby team. She did it for him, then came home and told him about it.

Actually, Arthur didn't mind – he has a lot of experience as a player and is a qualified touch and league coach. But he needed to rearrange his hours to make after-school practices, so went to his manager to ask about it.

And that's when Arthur, an embroidery manager with NZ Safety, specialists in safety and protection in Wiri, south Auckland, got a pleasant surprise. In 2005, parent company Wesfarmers Industrial and Safety NZ Limited had joined the CoachCorp programme, a Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) initiative.

Companies agree to allow staff members two to four hours a week paid time off or flexible time so they can assist school and club-level sport as coaches, managers and officials. The idea is that as well as creating sustainable relationships between business and community sport, employees spend time in environments that develop leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

So for the three years from 2006, while Cherie was finishing secondary school, Arthur taught

the 20-strong squad how to get that rugby ball over the line. He learned from the experience, too: "It taught me people management and it taught me how to communicate better with other people."

Cherie's team was the first female group Arthur had coached. "With the guys I could be forceful or whatever, but with girls ... I

by the school's head of touch.

Arthur is happy to help, as he sees the positive ripple effects of youth sport. "There are so many things that can get kids into trouble ... if you can turn them towards sport, they've got something else to occupy their minds."

CoachCorp was devised to help address a shortage of coaches in community sport because people

**“There’s an interpersonal aspect to coaching. You’re dealing with different groups and people and it all helps to create a better-rounded individual.”**

found they got a better result if I asked them the question and they kind of helped solve the problem. They would accept [instruction in this way] more readily."

Arthur, who lives in Papatōetoe in Auckland, has had a break from CoachCorp over the last year, but is about to sign up again in order to coach his 13-year-old twin sons' school team. It wasn't in the game plan – he was quite happy to watch Trent and Dalton from the sideline – but was roped in

were increasingly short of time, says Trish Ross, SPARC's adviser, community sport. CoachCorp "formalises a structure around taking time off to coach" but also teaches personal and organisational skills.

Once a company signs up, employees can register to join the programme via the CoachCorp page on SPARC's website. They are linked with the CoachCorp coordinator at the relevant regional sports trust and the chosen sport's



**“It taught me people management and it taught me how to communicate better with other people.”**

Arthur Clark

PICTURED :

From left, Trent, Arthur and Dalton Clark

national sporting body, which provide the support and training needed and can help place volunteers with a team. No money changes hands.

So far, 74 companies have signed up, among them Crown research institute ESR, banks BNZ and ASB, engineering firm Beca Carter, HP Enterprise Services (formerly EDS) and Waimakariri District Council. There are currently 356 coaches, covering sports from netball and rugby to lawn bowls, waka ama and equestrian sports, says Trish.

Former Silver Fern Bernice Mene has lent her profile to the programme since the beginning; she now works part-time as a CoachCorp coordinator for Sport Auckland.

The employees who get involved are important role models for children, she says.

Many of the employees who sign up for CoachCorp start by working with the teams in which their own children play, says Bernice, but a good number get

“really enthused” and stick with the role long after their kids have left.

One example is Dean Pritchard, a sales and business development manager for another Wesfarmers company, Safety Source. Dean was in a national touch team a decade ago but had never coached until daughter Alyssa volunteered him for her under-7 school touch team in 2007.

Coaching has sharpened his planning and management skills, as well as his communication skills.

Dean has now moved on to coaching the Counties-Manukau Touch Association’s under-9 elite mixed team. “Without a doubt, I get a lot out of seeing a child grow,” he says.

But he acknowledges that “without the time off, it just wouldn’t happen. I am reasonably flexible in my hours, but I would not have started doing this without CoachCorp. That’s the only reason I’m doing it today”.

Eric Haslam, HR manager for Wesfarmers Industrial and Safety NZ, says the 700-employee

company values sustainable community activities and signed up to CoachCorp in its first year. A dozen employees are involved.

“There’s an interpersonal aspect to coaching. You’re dealing with different groups and people and it all helps to create a better-rounded individual.”

#### Did you know?

- For every person with a paid job in the sport and recreation sector in New Zealand, there are eight volunteers donating their time.<sup>1</sup>
- Parent helper and coach are the most common roles among sports volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

1 [www.sparc.org.nz/Documents/sport%20development/Finding\\_and\\_Keeping\\_Volunteers\\_2006\\_Final.pdf](http://www.sparc.org.nz/Documents/sport%20development/Finding_and_Keeping_Volunteers_2006_Final.pdf)

2 [www.activenzsurvey.org.nz/Results/2007-08-Active-NZ-Survey/National-Report/](http://www.activenzsurvey.org.nz/Results/2007-08-Active-NZ-Survey/National-Report/)

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