

MM: Hopefully it should have come up on your screen now that we are recording.

JB: It has.

MM: Awesome, on a Monday morning bit of a miserable Monday morning. Can I please just get you to introduce who you are, the sports that you coach and the environment that you're currently coaching in please?

00:21 JB: Yeah so, I'm Jen Barden, I currently work for Lancashire cricket, my role has literally just changed in the last six weeks so I'm now the regional senior talent manager for the North West for women's cricket which doesn't actually say that in my title but it's kind of key to, key to the role. So, working with female cricketers of the first time we have got five elite contracted players that we are working with who will, from November onwards, be training as full-time athletes for the first time at a domestic level which is quite a move forward for the women's game. So, my role is the academy just underneath those five pros so I will link in to the five pros, but my role is with the academy, which is players from about 14 upwards, there is no upper age limit but around 21 would be our kind of ish upper age limit but mainly that those juniors. So looking at linking those players into the senior environment, so prior to that role I was looking after the whole women and girls pathway in Lancashire so right from our all-stars program which is real have a go bean bag, tennis balls, sort balls, five-year old's running round in circles, more of that was strategic point of view but some hands-on coaching as well. All the way through the sort of club structure, developing our women's leagues, soft ball women's festivals which started off as 'prosecco cricket' and then ECB got hold of it and called it 'women soft ball festivals' so I'll be going for the copy right on that at some point. Then into hard ball cricket and then looking after our county age group programs from under 11's through to senior program. So that role was quite a big role and now I've kind of stepped into the full performance role. So, kind of wearing two hats before now actually been able to wear one hat and sit across the North West so covering Lancashire, Cumbria and Cheshire.

MM: Perfect, so that is a lot of cricket and a lot of cricketers that have been within your, your roles and responsibilities, over the last few years then?

02:32 JB: Yeah, indeed so it's quite a big pathway and its carried-on sort of developing and getting bigger at both sides right from the younger end and then going and adding on the kind of the professional game at the other side so it's been quite exciting to be part of for the last ten years.

MM: Yeah, and what is your experience with cricket in terms of playing experience, and then any coaching qualifications. Where is your background with that?

JB: So I played County cricket from the age of 12 until I , how old was I?, about 25-26 and then as my role within the game as a full time profession and took over, I wasn't able to carry on, kind of I was captain in the county side but arranging the empires and booking the hotels and I was like "I can't do this." and "this just doesn't work" because the game was moving on quite quickly and I wasn't able to kind of give it a time that it needed so I took a step back from playing and carried on with kind of my full-time job. But in terms of I played the game for quite a while captain played regional cricket and stared doing my coaching journey when I was about 16-17

sort of just volunteering at my local club once I get involved was always keen to kind of always help everyone else. Took my level 1 and level 2 within about 18 months of each other. As soon as I was 18 I got the certificate... doesn't quite work like that now anymore, but you could do the course beforehand and then get your certificate later once you've turned 18. And then I did my level 3 while I was at university, so I did Nutrition and Sports Science at Oxford Brookes uni. I did my level 3 in my final year which was a bit of a crazy idea but anyway we got through it and then I did my level 4 about 3 and a half-4 years ago, which is linked into Gloucester uni, so it's part of a post grad diploma, so you do your level 4 which is the elite coaching award and did that and did my kind of, viva and qualification and presentation with a 3 month hold in toe. So I decided to do them both at a very crazy time in life but it was a good challenge to see, and to see my journey I guess between sort of doing it when you're fully engrossed in university studies, it's a very different concept to do when you're fully engrossed in very new motherhood kind of get your head around referencing, presentation skills at the same time as doing all that, so it was an interesting journey. I'm just doing my masters in Sporting Directorship this year, because I've been very much cricket orientated from the word go. I did dip into other sports when I was younger so hockey, football, racing mountain bikes, ballroom dancing believe it or not throw that in the mix but yes so I've always, it's always been crazy to do everything at the same time but I was very much cricket from the word go so I now kind of have realised I need to broaden that mindset and that horizon even though I've looked at different coaching styles from a hands on perspective of different sports but actually looking at sort of the governance and the finance and the budgeting and working with staff and dealing with change that's all been kind of learned on the job so this masters will hopefully give me a little bit of background into all of that.

06:12 MM: Absolutely and that kind of brings us onto the final question of this introductory section really, so it certainly sounds like you've been juggling lots of things along the way, and we know coaching is a profession and a hobby, for want of a better word for some people that takes up a lot of time a lot of evenings a lot of weekends, late nights, early mornings, so what's your biggest motivation to continue coaching?

JB: The fact I hate sitting at a desk, so I've found lockdown very difficult I've been pretty much in work since the 1st of May so we were only furloughed for a month and then my role is 95% of the time in the summer is out and about I very rarely get chance to sit there in front of your laptop on a table it's always balanced on your knee or you're doing it on the phone or whatever it might be. So, to actually have the time to sit behind my desk and realize I do not want a desk job it has driven me to more figure that actually I want to be out coaching and that's probably one of the biggest motivators for me is that I hate sitting still. I suppose my other one is right from an early age I've always wanted to help others taken that kind of leadership role, in always seeking out those captaincy roles, kind of being the leader my mum always said I was the one in charge of the group, whenever I had friends around, I was always deciding what we were doing so I've always been that leader right from the word go so just think having that kind of desire to lead the way and influence others, get the best out of people, kind of kept me on the right track as we have gone through different charges, but I've definitely realized a big part of that is being outside and getting involved and not actually sit behind my desk.

08:04 MM: Yeah which then leads us nicely into the next kind of set of questions which is around your coaching philosophy, coaching approaches so I know a lot of coaches don't

like the word philosophy so how you would sum up you're coaching ethos, you're coaching values, coaching approach?

08:22 JB: Yeah I think so obviously I've been through quite a lot of different philosophy training sessions and you know 'what is your coaching philosophy' and yeah I wouldn't say I have one that I could actually write down and I think that's kind of a way important because it's always changing it will change depending the group you have got the player's needs, so very much depending on the player's needs, and the group and the environment your trying to create .For me working female athletes, who up until kind of 3-4 months ago were doing it because they wanted to be there not because they were being paid to be there. So, it was always important that the session was relevant to the players they had to see an outcome to it whether that was fun and enjoyable or they were going to get some real benefit from what might be a tough session but they could actually see a purpose to the session so it's always got to be relevant to the people that are in front of you. For me it's about creating that environment that engages all of the players in the room, it might not `do it for every single second of the session but you need to make sure there is a purpose to it, and that the payers feel like they can give something back into the session whether that something that really tough or were having a fun nice team building session and they actually get something out of it without even knowing they have been doing something that is quite valuable so I think for me writing a philosophy or ethos down isn't really my style. I quite like to flex what's needed as and when I think I have learnt that over time, I think it's quite easy, if u asked me when 10-12 years ago when I first started that journey from a proper perspective I'd wouldn't have been able to write you a philosophy a would have copied someone's from somewhere, and thought that will be mine but actually having worked in the game across variety of age levels and ability levels, that it's got to flex, the different environments that you come across, the challenges that you come across you know you have got to be just a little more flexible with your approach. So, I'd say the mains things, fun development, and making sure the environment is right for the players that are in front of you.

MM: And how much of and I appreciate we are saying there isn't a steadfast philosophy, how much of your approach to your sessions do you think is informed from your own personal experiences within the sport?

10:49 JB: I think it definitely, has a big influence, I think what stands out for me, is that now the players are so lucky with what they have got and the support they have got from looking back we used to have out coach turn up, and he'd have a bag of kit and if u didn't get there 10 minutes early you didn't get a top that fitted, and that just as it was and you know we hope that the centre would turn the heating on for the session, and we hoped there be enough cricket balls to go around and that was kind of how it was always seemed women cricket was the last thing on the list and we are making our way up that list now but it's still a challenge and we still have to shout really loud but I think it definitely has influenced I try and make sure whatever the men's programmed get we fight to make sure the women's program get just because we feel it's the right thing, that we should be shouted about the same as the men are, but its influenced me in terms of making sure there enough coaches on deck making sure there enough time spend on certain things be able to have a S&C coach around the group just generally being able to provide more support, more knowledge, more experience for the players, support for the parents, I don't think my mom and dad ever came to a session were ever spoken to about anything other than if you was late they was the ones who got the wrap, apart from that they were never engaged,

whereas now we make a big effort to engage to parents, make sure they feel involved, and a part of the journey with the players so I think that's something we have made a shift with.

12:26 MM: Absolutely so if I came to watch one of your sessions and see you and your values and approaches in action what would a session look like?

12:39 JB: I think I hope that you saw a fun and vibrant session, what was fairly organized, I'm a massive blue ISTJ which I'm very aware of, and I've defiantly flexed my style but also surrounded myself with people who aren't blue and ISTJ to make sure that they can help me out on my kind of blind spots a little bit make sure I'm getting some feedback on that so some of those traits probably do come through and that's it planned well ahead of time, if someone changes plans then that causes chaos but learning to be adaptable is something I have had to do you know everyone says you need to be adaptable and that's what a coach should be but that something I've had to work really hard with as my personality doesn't always allow me to be the most adaptable, I think I would definitely say it would be quite structured but then we then gauge that fun element using the physical size potentially. I think it will be pretty authentic, so I hope that people could see who I was right from the word go and then I was much better at giving some of me than in the past, you know being authentic to yourself, but being authentic to everyone else as well, which is really important to me, and creating a culture of everybody's important and everyone's got a role to play whether that someone just coming in for a one off session, or you know one on the contacted players we see every week making sure they are all valued and they all got a role to play that's session.

14:07 MM: Yup, perfect. Yeah, and in terms of you was saying there your planning aligning with your personality type in terms of session objectives, session goals, session content, is that driven by you as the coach is that driven or is there a process of how those objective or goals are created.

14:25 JB: Yeah so, we generally have some themes, so we have kind of a Lancashire or a North West Thunder way, that we have got sort of key bullet points that we want to see within those programs and session that run through the whole 12 months. But in terms of individual content that's play driven, they will be given challenges to help with their personal development program they have written alongside the coaches so they will direct their own session and we will have a structure, that would say you're doing fielding you're doing batting and you're doing bowling but within those individual session they will have their own little targets and own goals, and all own work ons that they will be working towards their collect their own video footage, monitor their workloads with bowlers. We don't really have a blueprint, we just kind of we want to see the players as the players, and see how far they can push themselves to get to the next level. I suppose you know we have got players who perhaps won't do as much bowling at certain times of the year and they have got a really high focus on fielding because they know that's one of their areas they need to get better at, so we will perhaps overload them at sometimes of the year when we need to get them off bowling, we will do a lot more feeling or batting and vice versa if we need a bowler to work on their bowling action, they will do more bowling that period of time so driven by them lead by us with a theme the red rose the red rose way.

15:54 MM: Yeah yeah, which leads us then really nicely into then that player learning and player development discussion. So what do you think of the crucial elements within a session that are required to enable your athletes to learn or develop or push themselves?

16:11 JB: I think it's really important that they get challenged but I think that challenge piece often gets thrown out and you need to fail you've got speed bumps to learn which I totally agree with but I think they need to understand the concept because it's very easy to provide a challenge or provide a fail session with support but if they don't understand the reasons why your challenging them or the reason why they are going to find it quite hard and with the younger end why the parents don't realize why your challenging someone and they're constantly failing and they keep missing the ball or they keep bowling the ball in the completely opposite direction to where they are supposed to be. I think it can look quite, can be quite a negative effect on the players particularly I find in the girls game, the girls like a challenge but they like to understand a bit more. They generally ask more questions, they generally have a lot more emotion attached to the outcomes so for us it's about creating a challenging atmosphere, get them to celebrate their successes so we find that the lads, bowler vs batter, you know the bowler gets the batter out they're shouting, screaming and cheering they absolute love that celebration piece where as we find that so difficult with the girls they don't necessarily celebrate their own success and they see getting their friend out can be almost a negative thing when they have achieved it which is a bit of a vicious cycle if you're doing a challenge session so we try and, really that is a really kind of important piece, I admit we haven't quite nailed yet it's something we are working on and really aware of that has to be right, and if it's not right it can be a really negative part of the session.

17:53 MM: Yeah, and how do you view you know you mentioned about planning and what do you view your role as being in helping to facilitate or support athlete learning, what specifically is the coach your responsibility or role in that process?

18:07 JB: I guess integrating everything, we've got different specialist who come in and do the batting or the fielding or strength and conditioning or the physio or the nutritionist sports psychology, just general logistics of when they need to be on the coach so for me that's pulling all those strings to be in the right place and at different time pulling them harder and being there, so the players can investigate and ask questions a little bit more so it, the head coach might often not do a lot of coaching at times so I find that I'm not necessarily on deck throwing a lot of balls sometimes but I'm making sure that all those bits and pieces are in the right place at the right time to ensure the player gets the most from that session it can be quite difficult if you are the one doing all of the doing and then suddenly the physio has not turned up and your whole session has gone to pot because the players aren't in the right place at the right time, so I think at times it's stepping back and watching how things happen and unfold and giving a little responsibility to the player as well to make sure that they are pushing me as a head coach to make sure we are getting the right people in the right places.

19:20 MM: Yeah which again....

19:20 JB: We have a personal development plan for the players so they have responsibility of a document that they've created and we have a set page that they can use if they wish to but we encourage them to create their own some of them go down the lines of cutting pictures out or magazines old school style and printing off photos of their favorite cricketers and little bits like

that, which is quite nice, some of them have done a video PDP we encourage them to do some sort of writing description just because we need it to look back in 12 month, 12 to go, and 12 months past that and there needs to be a journey and that's hard if you have just got a picture of a cricketer that's great for them as an inspiration piece but there needs to be a few words behind it as well. But in terms of that PDP it's their responsibility but then all the coach link into it to make sure there giving them almost constant feedback

20:23 MM: Yeah, which actually answered my next question that I was about.

20:22 JB: Sorry

20:22 MM: No no, it's perfect in terms of the role the player in that process so that PDP is actually a really crucial document but also process for them to be acknowledging what they want to achieve, how they might do that and then be able to see the learning that has taken place over that time frame I suppose.

20:45 JB: It's something that we've not 100% cracked this and we have tried different ways of doing it in the past and making sure, because sometimes we might not see these players very often so it's important they feedback into the PDP's on a regular basis if they're being seen away from the central program, so I think the junior program some of the hardest to create those PDP with the senior players who are three times a week you seeing them regularly, they get used to it you've got the piece of paper on their coach on the phone etc., where the junior players you see them 2 hours a week where they want to just bowl balls, hit balls, and spending time on the piece of paper is the least of these issues, so they that sometimes can be quite difficult part. But we found so I laminated A3 sheets they filled them in on one side with their kind of goals of PDP's and work on and then on the other side was a weekly and a sessional diary so every session they came into they had, it's almost like a register as well so they registered what they were going to work on and how they was going to do it and then they had to do a 2 line review at the end of each session so that we could tell when they were in, what they had done, what they were working on and how they done it so if I wasn't there for whatever reason someone else could pick that up and crack on with it, rather than being like 'what did you do last week' so having to go through all those conversations before we even got started. So that has been something that we implemented last winter, and I felt it did really make a difference whereas winter before they created a PDP and they uploaded it onto their phone then it was 2000 photos earlier in their diary and they had no idea where it was and they never referred back to it and it was just like where you PDP... "what's a PDP" and I'm like 'uh no'

22:22 MM: inaudible

22:26 JB: Actually, having it physically on deck at all times made a big difference this winter like I like paper, but the girls don't necessarily like paper so making sure that it's accessible to them is something that has been very important.

22:39 MM: Yeah, this is just of a question from more like from a cricket specific, appreciate it's a team sport but there are lot of individual elements within that and you mentioned before about maybe needing to take somebody off the amount they are bowling or the amount they are batting, from a non-cricketer there is that stereotypical view that

there is a lot of repetition in technique within coaching in cricket. So is there a place for that, is there a place for that, when might you use that but then also do you then bring in some maybe scenario based in your games or fun sessions where you're using the game of cricket as the teacher as the coach, where's the balance within that?

23:24 JB: Yeah it's something we wrestle with quite a lot and that I think a good example is when you're trying to be fair at a younger age group and you're trying to expose as many players to as many different situations as possible. In something like football, netball, hockey you can rotate, you can have 20 odd kids on the sideline and can constantly rotate them in and out and they can role places around, is a high fives in netball where they move around every two minutes or whatever it is into different positions which is absolutely brilliant, and we have wrestled with the idea how you do that in cricket. We have pairs cricket at younger age group, where they bat for so many over and the next pair comes in where you're never out, everybody has to bowl, you can rotate the wicket keeper, but once you step into that perforce environment that's still an option, but they all become specialized, you can't force someone to bowl if they can't, wont , or don't want to so I think there's a balance between game play, because it is so important we see with the girls at the older end, their `tactical awareness is way behind their peers, so we say the girls are probably four years behind the boys at a similar age group in terms of tactical knowledge and experience and awareness simply because the boys play a lot more games. They generally playing 2-3 if they're any good on a performance pathway they will be play in two or three age groups at their club level, plus a distract program, plus a performance program so they're generally playing so many games they don't train as much they training is almost their game play, so to try to introduce that to the girls we've introduced indoor cricket during the winter so they play a competitive indoor format to one, drive the competitive side and two, to try and develop that tactical awareness. Cricket is quite unique in the way you only really play in the summer, you can only play a proper game on grass with a cricket pitch. It's quite difficult to change the rules, and change the concept in terms of making it, alright the 100's coming and it's going to be short sharp, but you still need a cricket pitch, you still need all the space, you still need the same number of people so to kind of create those tactical awareness pieces is quite difficult, but especially when you're doing it throughout when you spend half the time in nets and that drive to be very technique is driven by both player and parent at times that there understanding is you've got to change things to get better, well not necessarily . There is a bit of a repetition piece and I think that has a place for doing certain elements of the game and I'm sure in rugby they'll practice set plays and in football they'll practice set plays throw in and free kicks, throwing etc. In cricket we need to practice those set plays in those effects and should and they are classed as set plays and as much as possible we should play the game somehow even if you have to adapt that into a net situation where you have cones out or mini nets out, the pug nets, to create mini fielders or gaps to try and introduce those scenario plays as much as you possibly can as we can, because we could all look absolutely brilliant in a set piece, but then if you get in a game and you can't deliver it makes no difference.

MM: Yeah absolutely and you know that's one of the discussions that we, so we have quite a lot of cricketers and we do have that wrestle of how much is done in nets that is purely technical, then where's the transfer of that to the potential of the place in a innings in the game or how the fielders are set up how does that relate to the work that's being done almost in isolation in the nets each week, I appreciate what you're saying a lot of that comes

down to facilities that you have available, the elements, the environment your able to create because it's pretty hard to replicate yeah a nice sunny day outside in a sports hall on a wet and windy Wednesday morning.

27:23 JB: Yeah I think it's always important to have a purpose we will never have just a batter vs bowlers net which you often see at club level so often they say right you put your pads on you'll bat for 10 minutes we will bowl at you until the next person comes in. And that basically only really provides an observation session so you only ever really watching and that's about it , that's all anyone is going to gain from the session so even as much as getting the bowlers to set their field on a white board then set some cones down for the batters, and saying right so if you think it's a quick one you've got to make it that quick one. So making sure you always put a decision making element into that play is for us really important, that we try and develop that as much and as many times as we possibly can then adding on pressure and pace. So there's still an element of being able to do the basics you've still got to be able to hit the ball and bowl the ball but they have got to have their individual opportunities, so we work on a "do the basics well do the basics at pace, do the basics at pressure" so we work through that cycle, so if they're looking to change something technically because there bowling catching isn't safe or they want to increase their pace, we would do basics then we would look at "can you do it at under pressure at pace, can you do at pace can you do it at full match intensity", so they would be the cycle "hey work through we'd try and get out the basics phase as quick as we can and they might sort of do ten minutes at the beginning of the session doing basic so just hitting balls, with good shape then go into a pressure or a pace situation.

28:57 MM: Yeah, I find cricket so fascinating because there are so many different little nuances and positions in yeah you do have to specialize in one, and I appreciate you do in a number of sports, but I think in cricket I feel it's a lot more technically specific as opposed to just understanding areas on the court as well.

29:19 JB: Yeah, I think from my limited experience in hockey most people could play any position if they had to. In football, and in rugby they potentially most positions they could be rotated round, in netball you could rotate, but in cricket if you're the opening bowler, but actually they go "Could you do please do the wicket keeping today?" and you go "Ummm, I'm not so sure."

MM: That's what I was getting at I was a defender in netball, so I understood my role much clearer in that role but if I needed to I would be able to play any of the seven positions, and do you know what I mean and get through a game whereas in cricket you don't have that transferability as you said go from the opening bowler to the wicky today it's a completely different role and set of skills and understanding isn't it so yea, yeah so that brings onto my final question Jen as I'm caution of your time.

JB: It's fine don't worry.

MM: You've been involved in a number of different environments both you as a coach learning, you as a student, an as a player and the roles you're in now. What would you say is the biggest lesson you have learnt about coaching to date?

30:32 JB: I think I touched on it a little before, and not being to set in your ways, and thinking right we've set our philosophy this is what, how I'm going to coach and that's always how you going to do it, I think you're always going to keep learning and making sure that as a coach your constantly on a journey and you're never going to know everything and those session need to reflect that and make sure that you're constantly learning from the players and you don't get to formal, in terms of philosophy thinking. I think there's so much, so many things out there that you can go listen to, or watch, or read, it's quite easy to go read something and watch or go and read something or go and attend a conference or turn a session and be like "Right I'm going to go and influence every single thing I've just heard." and then the kids are like "wooooow you've just been on a conference", I think it's important you be authentic to what, who you are and how you then deliver those sessions, so the players and the athletes understand you as a person but where they are trying to get to as well that culture piece influencing that authenticity of you as a person.

MM: Perfect.

JB: I think I covered it then sort of ha-ha.

MM: That was great.