

**Hopefully it has now come up on your screen, we are recording. Perfect**

Yes

**So Sarah thank you for joining us on a Friday afternoon, as you say in the mix of all the government changes to the sport of netball, but can you just provide a bit of an introduction as to who you are and a bit of your experiences and journey to date within sport, please?**

Yeah so, I guess my name is Sarah Green and currently I am the performance pathway coach developer in England Netball. But my coaching journey's primarily been just football based. So, um, I joined England Netball about 18 months ago, um, prior to that I'd spent 11 years at the football association doing like various different jobs so primarily went into the FA to work on a program called the FA Tesco skills program, which is 5 to 11 based program and then I finished the FA working in the PE unit, so I got primary PE specialism, because I thought I wanted to be a PE teacher at one point, because I didn't think being a coach was an option back then. And so I ended up being in a team where we were working with Premier League football clubs to help them and support them in their PE delivery. But yeah my journey started from playing football, my brother and my dad both played football, played lots of different sports, I was on every school team but football was just part of like our family so graduated kind of into that and then, like I say, I thought I wanted to be a PE teacher so just got into kind of helping at my local primary school, a bit of helping with the team and then just kind of escalated from there really I guess.

**And are you, so I know you mentioned your role in England Netball being a coach developer, but are you actually currently coaching at the moment? I appreciate covid-restricted, but...?**

Yes, so I am coaching at Derby County, so we play in Tier 3 of the Women's football so just outside the championship, so, we, but it's a professional setup so like the players that are paid and stuff. So yes, I'm a first team coach at Derby County Women.

**02:12 Perfect, and do you have any coaching qualifications in any sports?**

Yes so I've got loads of level 1's, got loads of level 1's, um but um, in loads of like various like, rugby and volleyball and stuff, netball, but I'm an A license football coach.

**Perfect, what got you into coaching in the first place?**

Like I said I thought I wanted to be a PE teacher, because that was the best way that I thought I could stay in sport, so I did like A level PE and biology and stuff and I thought you know what like I'll just go and be a PE teacher. I loved my PE teachers at school so I thought that "Yeah that's what I wanted to do." But then very quickly I kind of worked out that maybe that really wasn't for me, you know, I didn't think that that's where I'd end up,

so I just kind of was helping at a local primary school and then me and my brother used to do like football camps in the summer holidays. I kind of, um, I think it was one summer where I was like the oldest one, so then I just got helping out, and then I kind of did my work experience was at Notts County football club, helped out there, and I think I just kind of, I don't ever really remember having like 'ohh this would be a good idea', I kind of feel like I just fell into it and then I would think I was pretty good, I've always been pretty proactive at volunteering and like being in and around places, so I did quite a lot of stuff for like, when sport development units were really big, I did a lot of stuff for them like helping in festivals, helping run activities. Just some of it was generally about getting pocket money as a student and just, you know, doing that. Some of that was some of my motivation, and some of it was about giving myself like a wide variety of experience and stuff, but always kind of tend to follow the path of like working with young people. Never really thought I would end up coaching seniors to be honest, which is obviously where I am now. I always thought it would be like younger, younger people.

**Yeah and did you play football yourself to a, to a high level?**

04:18 Yes, so I played in the equivalent of the league I am coaching now actually. It was called the Women's premier league at the time, so I played football to a decent level and I've had lots of conversations whilst at the FA about whether that contributed to some confidence in delivering, but possibly, but I love coaching all sports and hence me kind of going into netball now. I'm just really passionate about coaching and teaching and helping people get better and just learning like, I'm just a bit of a massive geek to be honest, like I'm really interested in what, you know, how people learn, how, you know, helping people grow and get better so any environment that facilitates me being able to do that I just, I love, so...

**Yeah. It almost answers my final question of this, introductory section as it were, in terms of what is your biggest motivation to coach because I guess with working for England netball and Derby County you've got almost two full-time jobs running alongside there, so what's your biggest motivation to find the time to coach?**

05:20 Yeah, I guess, so I did actually take a bit of time out of coaching at the start of this year because my England netball job was really like chaotic and I thought "You know what, I think I need to take a step back." Now obviously this period has been a little bit strange, so I ended up not being able to go anywhere, but I realized that I kind of just, I missed the people, so for me when I go and do a session, so I've coached this week, I don't ever feel like it's me causing something to happen to somebody it's, um I feel like it's a very, kind of, interactive process, so it's about me and the participants and we're working on that together and I just really enjoy that, I really enjoy kind of understanding what I say and then how that's received, um you know did that, I could say the same thing 10 times and it'll be received differently 10 times and I'm just really curious about that and I'm really

curious about how the game evolves and peoples understanding of that, and so I'm just really like enthused by, you know, the games and learning and how people kind of, you know, the facilitation of it, I guess.

**Yeah, which leads really nicely into the section around your coaching philosophy, your coaching approaches, so, if you had to sum up your coaching ethos as it were or philosophy for want of a better word, how would you explain it?**

06:46 Well, I know it because when I did my A license we had to state what it was but to be honest it wasn't a very easy process, so I think thinking about it and trying to describe it, I think there's lots of people that would be "Oh my philosophy is this" And I've kind of had like 3 sentences, but if I'm being honest it was really hard because up until that point I didn't really know like and I passed my A license about two years ago, yeah two years ago now, and up until that point I don't think I really knew, like what type of coach I was. I've been coaching now for about, well up until that point I've been coaching for like 20 years, so 20 years of all of those experiences now thinking I don't know really what my philosophy is. But when I was forced to think about it and be open and honest about the journey I've been on as a coach, so some of that was about experiences of me being forced to be a coach that I didn't feel like I could be so, you know, some of that was that like "Oh you need to be louder, you need to be like this" and I know well that's just not who I am. It was about me growing up, maturing, having different experiences, a lot of those experiences being like "That is not the kind of coach I want to be.", so I think it kind of evolved, so definitely, you know, a part of my philosophy is about being a student of the game myself so being a good learner, because I am, you know, I am passionate about learning and getting better, so I always want to be a good student of the game. I want to help the players get better, and some of that is about them growing as people, not necessarily just about the game so I want to help them, like, be better. And then the second, the last thing, the third thing for me, what I constantly think about is making myself redundant so I want them to be able to make good decisions and adapt to the state of the game without the need for me, so a part of that is because of who I am, so I'm not the type of person that's on the side like shouting like "Pass, dribble, shoot, drop off, drop off!", that's not who I am, so if I'm not that person I need to be able to upskill the players, the athletes to make good choices and be confident to make good decisions without the need for me.

**09:01 Yeah, you have given such a comprehensive answer Sarah, you've almost answered that next question which was: Where did some of the foundations of that philosophy come from? So you talked about your experiences to date being all encompassing, but are there any particular experiences or rational you think that are behind that being who you are as a coach?**

Yeah just I think I can confidently say that who I am as a coach fully is who I am as a person and I can say that with confidence now because I understand that I am who I am, whereas before in my coaching journey I felt like I was just trying to be like a coach, and you know, It wasn't matched up to who I was because I think I was trying to be someone I wasn't, I was trying to be kind of overconfident, or trying to be too shouty, too dictatorial, and don't get me wrong one of the things I reflected on when, you know, these questions that you sent me was the challenge of being the coach that I am and sticking to my philosophy in all environments, because if I was to sit here and say to you like "I live in breathe that philosophy all day everyday" that I wouldn't be telling the truth because it is really hard, but yeah, I can confidently say that my philosophy and my coaching style fully reflects and that's not correct all the time because don't get me wrong, there are times where I think I'm a bit too soft or, you know, I'm definitely not cut out for, you know, match-winning scenarios, world cup finals, because I'm not a win at all cost type person but I accept that and that helps me choose roles as well so, you know, am I cut out to be a number 1 manager?, no, I don't think so, at the moment I don't, I think I'm better being the second in command, to the first team coach, the one that the players like, the one that the players can come to because I think that better suits my philosophy.

**11:00 Yeah, so how does then that philosophy actually look in practice? So you said you delivered a session this week or you've got a session..**

Yeah.

**If we turned out to watch you delivering in a session what does that actually look like, how does that philosophy play itself out?**

11:15 Erm, I, constantly am thinking about, like practice design, so a lot of my practice I think is around trying to really replicate the game, and I think that's really evolved as well over the past 12 months and some of that is, some of that is based on research I've done from like other sports and going into netball as well, so netball has really helped me with my coaching. Like in football, seeing and experiencing another sport, so it has really helped facilitate my broader thinking in football. But I think I always constantly try and just think to myself "Does this look like what the players are going to experience at the weekend?" so I'm trying to kind of, I won't, you won't see me do a lot of technical stuff, as in like, just relax, or this is what I want you to do now with the ball and stuff, but I will stop the practice, I will kind of go "Girls this is what I'm looking for.", kind of, we do a lot of patterns. So interestingly when I was reflecting on this, sometimes a lot of my coaching at the moment isn't always reflective of my philosophy because I'm in a performance environment so it's different, it's really hard and so sometimes my behaviors I feel like, feel a little bit unnatural to me, so the head coach would, there is 3 coaches, so she might contact me and say "Sarah we need to do a session on this" and I'd be like "I don't know, like I don't know about that", like "I'm not sure" or "What does that mean?" and so

constantly she'll send me a message and I'll ring her and be like "What do you actually mean?" like, and I am always thinking "How can I manipulate this to better suit me?" but it's difficult, like it is hard because winning matters, and it matters to me, because it matters to the players, it doesn't actually matter to me that much, like if we win, lose or draw because I just want them to have a good experience, enjoy that moment and get better. I obviously don't want them to lose 10-0. I don't particularly want them to win 10-0 either, I just want them to be successful, so it can be quite challenging but yeah mainly about practice design I think you'd see, the way that I communicate so I kind of try to keep it quite friendly. I think you'd probably see a lot of care and compassion, like you know just checking in with them. Sometimes I can be a bit sarcastic if they wind me up, but that's again just a reflective of my personality to be honest.

**Yeah, yeah, and that kind of brings you onto the final question then you know, you talked there about actually being in an potentially a little bit of a conflict from your philosophy, your environment but how you then work with your athletes and players, how do you think they would sum up you as a coach, your coaching approach, your coaching philosophy? How do you think you come across to them?**

14:22 Yeah I think if, I think they definitely recognise in me that there's elements of care and compassion, you know I...kind of connecting with them how should they be and stuff like that. I think they would definitely say that I could be a bit sarcastic to them, I think they would definitely say that but I also think there's an element of them recognising that I can be a bit disruptive, so I challenge their thinking a lot of the time and I was thinking about this today actually. We've probably got an age group of players at the moment that haven't probably had a lot of experience of really good coaching, like creative coaching, so they've probably had lots of experiences of coaching in football that's been quite traditional. So then if you coach them, when you're coaching them and stuff, a lot of them are very black and white "Just tell me what to do Sarah." and I refuse to do that. So then there are situations that I create disruption or whatever, so we played the game last week which was a multi-ball game where essentially I was the referee to some extent and we've got a bit of a problem at the moment where we don't think fast enough so I might blow whistle and give a free kick over here when they've just been playing over there and they are like 'uurrgghhh' "Oh God, oh my God" but they're not reacting and so they find that like really frustrating and annoying and I'm doing it because of that reason like "This is why we need to do it" and they're just like getting aggy with me, and whilst their getting aggy with me, the other teams like played the ball. But it doesn't bother me because I'm understanding...I will articulate to them "We're going to do this game now and this is what's going to happen". There are times when I might tell them why, there are times when I might not, because if I tell them "This is about to wind you up" they'll get even more wound up. But there are also, you know, I'll always explain to them after but it is, you know, it is challenging to kind of work with them, because they expect us to give them all of the

answers at times so, and that's not something that I'm prepared to do to get success. If we just said to them "Do this, do that." and moved them around about chess pieces we'd probably be more successful, but then I don't think that's the right thing to do.

**No. Which brings us perfectly into then this third area of questions, which is around your viewpoints and approaches to that player learning and player development and, gosh I wish we could come and watch one of your sessions actually, but you know I'm just... What do you think then, you know, saying that actually telling them where to be and what A is and what B is, and why we're doing it isn't right? What do you think then is the crucial elements that are needed for your athletes or players to learn?**

One of the things that we could do better at are, you know, as a coaching team and stuff is really articulating on a much more regular basis what the end is, what the end in mind is. So, whether that's the game at the weekend, whether that's the next few months, whether that's the next few weeks, whether that's the end of the season, that's definitely one, and I say that because sometimes we are shifting the pieces quite a lot, so we're not always sticking to the structure to the themes that we set out and I feel like that's not helpful, because there needs to be some consistency. I also feel like one of the things we could really be clear about is "This is what it is about", so this is a learning journey for them, this is about us learning and understanding, not necessarily like training just to get your heart rate up so that we're fit for Sunday. I don't know if all the players understand that all of the time, but then again like, our coaching team is really diverse from a thinking point of view. If I think about that, the players probably have all that they need within the coaching team to be successful to some extent. You know, Sam the manager is probably a little bit more technical and worries less about if you've had a nice day with the players, but then I think that's why I'm there to kind of add that and to be creative so I don't... one of my problems as a coach last year was that I didn't want to deliver the same session twice and I'm thinking like "Why, what's the, that does make no sense for scaffolding learning Sarah, that makes no sense". Sometimes they need to do the same session 4 times, but I just like to kind of be creative and come up with new ideas. Fun is really important part of that learning process to me, so kind of playing little fun games and stuff that connect with them. One of the things I find interesting is whether the learning should be explicit or not, whether we should tell them "This is what, this is where, this is about." you know, and that's challenging because sometimes that, in football it is challenging because one of the other things that I battle with is, do we stay on the same constant learning journey or do you shift because of the opposition that you're playing at the weekend? That is really difficult decision so this is what we're about, so do you try to gain strength from your qualities or do you try to overcome the oppositions weaknesses?, you know, beat them and that's where, that's, that can be a tough decision because it's one decision that we've not always got right, you know, we've planned to play in a certain way

based on the opposition and then one of their players hasn't played or something so you're like "Oh well that was pointless.". So that's a challenge and yeah, but fun for me, but you know, being explicit about maybe what we want, but also being prepared to, to kind of, almost, kind of not be explicit and just let things happen to them sometimes, I think.

**20:17 Yeah, I was just, I had a lecture with these students yesterday and we were thinking about those decisions as coaches that we're making in practice, in the games and yeah what are we, what decisions are we making that we can control, so like your scouting reports, what formations you might play then you turn up and your opposition have got a completely different set of players to what they did last time so that whole process. So how do you view your role as coach in the learning? What do you need to do?**

20:49 Well, I guess like I say, I think I'm very clear that this is not a process where I turn up and make things happen to them. And that's difficult in itself because then they're not all doing and learning at the same time, which is completely annoying because you just put on a session you're like "Why don't you all get it at the same time?" that's really annoying. For me it is not so much about the learning as in making things happen, so I put on a session and they will learn how to play through, you know, play through and down the sides or something, try and penetrate between the lines, it's not about that. For me it's about the experience of it and I would like to think that an accumulation of experiences will make learning happen and that my job is to facilitate those experiences both on and off the pitch. You know I had a conversation with one of the players after training and it's just amazing how the little conversations that you have with them can spark a further connection with something that's happened. So I think my job is to kind of like facilitate that, look at experiences and be disruptive, to genuinely be positively disruptive, so it's not about kind of giving them the same things all the time, but trying to kind of disrupt that thought process a little bit, to shift them from the norms that they feel, they hear, to try to create their own thoughts, you know like "Oh Sarah's just said that" or "I'm not allowed in the area now so what do I do?" like, that's the point of it, to make things difficult, to make things hard, to make things challenging. Because in a way they do that to us all the time and, you know, they are really disruptive in the way that sometimes they get it, sometimes they don't and how annoying is that when you have players that can do it one week and then come back the next week and they just don't know what you're talking about, that's really disruptive. So I'm essentially doing back to them what they do to us.

**And then I guess that kind of brings us onto the almost final question around this player learning. What is their role in the process then? Is it to challenge and be disruptive within their role, again that positive disruption or, you know, how do you use the learners or what do you want from the learners in this whole process of development?**

Yeah, and I think that that's just a really, really good question because I think I can say to you "I know what I want" but I couldn't sit here and say to you "This is actually happening in my coaching sessions at the moment" because I don't think... We've got so many players at so many different points, you know, we've got players who are like 19-20, I've got some players in, you know, 30, early 30s. They've had such a various different experience of coaching. I don't think we ever set out very clearly "This is what learning is with us" it's just like training, "This is what training is.", so we've got a lot of bystanders in this learning process that believe that we are making learning happen to them by osmosis or something weird like that. That they just think that whatever comes out of my mouth is going into them and that's just going to happen, and it's clearly not. So I wish, I wish that we were, you know, if I was going into a new situation or what I try to establish now with at netball because I have much more greater control over it and the coach development program that I've been running is to kind of be in a situation where I'm not a resource to them, I'm a person that is part of this learning path, this learning connection. It's not like "If you don't know what to do, come to me" that's not the method that I've used in netball as "If you don't know what to do, what could you do, like what are your options, how can we work this out, or what happens if you get it wrong, like what's the worst that could happen, how can we resolve this, what did you learn from that?" We haven't really got that at coaching and I think to some extent...I can't see that happening in Manchester united, Man city and Liverpool either to be honest, because at the level that we're working at winning matters and sometimes you don't have time to be like that, you just got to say "Listen, when the ball goes there, get there." and that's the end of the story. And so that's where it compromises me a little bit, but then it's an enjoyable compromise and conflict because it forces me to recognise "Ohh that doesn't feel comfortable, why?", and you know what is the challenge for me as a coach.

**Which then brings us onto my final question for the day Sarah, which is: What would you say your biggest lesson that you've learned throughout your coaching so far has been, or maybe a challenge or a hurdle or a lesson?**

25:45 I think, if I just reflect on own my personal coaching journey I think it would be just, I wish, I wish that when I was really, you know, doing a lot of coaching like in my early days at the FA, I would've worried less about what other people's opinion of my coaching was in a sense of not, you know, not their feedback, or anything like that, because that's valuable, but just worried less about the type of coach that they thought I should be and being a lot, being a lot more strong-minded about "This is who I am though." and I still feel like I've got a lot to give as a coach being who I am. And I think we probably weren't in a position to do that at the FA with the coach education pathway as it was because it was very much like "to pass you need to be this type of coach." and, you know, I'm confident even though, even though I've left the FA, but I'm confident as a tutor of FA courses that the courses are in a really good place that allow people to be that type of coach. But for



me context is everything so I think it's a really interesting thing now to kind of observe coaches and try to work out what their philosophy is and like you say if you were to come to watch me what would people, or even from this conversation like, what are people going to pick up on the type of coach that I am because to me context is really important. So you can go and observe a coach in one session, so for example I passed my A license, the week after I did a session and I quite frankly if I was a tutor I wouldn't even passed me on the level 1 to be honest, it was terrible. But the context is so important and I really learned that on my A-license because one of the tutors, I had 2 tutors, one of the tutors said to me "Oh Sarah you didn't play that ball in behind the fullbacks head, so we never really got to see how you would deal with that situation". And I was really confident in being able to say "but that that wasn't the scenario that we were dealing with". We were talking, in the session we were talking about a ball being delivered centrally and dealing with it in a central area with the 5 and the 6 and the 4, that's the scenario in the situation so I'm not really bothered about the number 2 and he was like "Okay great" and so you could watch someone and our interpretation of them might be, "Oh, you know, this is how they are behaving or they missed that opportunity" or "She's really, like dictatorial." or "She hasn't got a lot to say she's obviously not coaching.", but context and understanding is so important for me about understanding like what's led that coach to deliver the session that they were delivering that day "Why is their behavior like that today?" you know is it because the players need more, is it because the players need less so I've learned that, I wish I'd learned it earlier, but then I probably wasn't in a position to have learnt it earlier so I'm kind of just happy that I've got to that point now to be honest.

**Sarah that is absolutely perfect, thank you.**