



#PassOnYourPassion

CASE STUDY - Tracey Sample

'Tracey Sample is synonymous with sports coaching in Northumberland. Tracey inspires, leads, instructs, advises, consoles and motivates all she coaches. She also organises events aimed at beginners to get them into competition. Tracey's life evolves around coaching others to take part in sport, for which a great many of Northumberland's residents are hugely grateful.'

Tracey Sample is **Head Coach** at **Alnwick Tri Club**, but she also coaches for three other clubs in the area, **Alnwick Harriers, Alnwick Swimming and Lifesaving Club and Alnwick Dolphins**. Across these clubs she coaches both adults and juniors. In total Tracey has been **coaching for 30 years** at the Swimming Club, coaching lifesaving, 12 years at the Tri Club, 9 years at Harriers and 1 year at Dolphins.

When asked about how she got into coaching, Tracey said 'I wasn't given a choice! As part of doing my own **lifesaving qualifications** as a 16 year old, my coach made me teach the kids as a way of ensuring I knew what I was talking about and so it was a culture I was always accustomed to. I gained my **first teaching qualification at 17** when I could drive to the course.

I got involved in coaching at Alnwick Tri Club in 2005 when I sustained an injury so couldn't swim for a while but still wanted to be part of the club. I was very lucky that the club coach was very supportive when I asked to help out.'

Coaching has **always been natural** to Tracey but as she gained more qualifications, she became more nervous because she realised that the more she was learning, the more she had to learn! But eventually she managed to get over those fears as she **built up her confidence** in her ability to coach. She found a great boost in confidence when she would drop in on a session that she didn't normally coach, and the kids would tell her they were looking forward to a **'Coach T'** session! This reaction really helped her confidence!

Tracey coaches everyone! Coaching both adults and juniors in 3 clubs and 3 sports and the juniors in another club means she coaches a lot of people regularly, so she genuinely coach **all age ranges from 6 years old to a few in their 60's**. She also helps coach the **NE Development Squad for talented triathletes** from 11-14 years old who are on that first step to the olympic programme within British Triathlon. Her first love is coaching the juniors at Tri Club. She set the Junior section up in 2012 with the help of one parent and there were 7 kids that year. Now they constantly have a waiting list and have to limit our numbers by the amount of pool time they can get.

As Head Coach Tracey oversees 15 coaches and helps them plan and staff **over 1000 coach hours a year** so she has had to step back a little bit from the face to face coaching due to time constraints but she still tries to coach 5-6 sessions a week with a mixture of ages and abilities so that she get to see as many of the club members as possible.

In 2014, Tracey also started my own **coaching business**, coaching athletes for Triathlon and she has a full range of abilities from complete beginners up to Ironmen and triathletes who represent Great Britain as Age Groupers.

We asked Tracey, what is the thing you enjoy most about coaching?

'The thing I enjoy most is the interaction with people. I am very lucky in my life that my passion is also my job, so I get to talk to people about how they are doing in their sport, 7 days a week. Different from enjoyment is where I gain the **most satisfaction**. I get the satisfaction of seeing an athlete improve. That could be one tiny little point of understanding, which usually comes as a "light bulb" moment, allowing them to progress more quickly. Or when an athlete does their first park run, or tells me about how great they were at a race, or even a well executed training session by an athlete.

Tracey believes that it does take a special type of person to become a coach. **You have to be patient and selfless and have a genuine passion for wanting to help people but the satisfaction levels as you get thanked at the end of each session are amazing**, especially in the junior clubs, the kids become your family and you are privileged enough to **live through their trials and tribulations** but also through their successes. It is a great way to give back to the community and most of the time there are so many experienced coaches to help guide and teach you, that you are never left to coach anything outside your comfort zone without the back up of higher coaches. If you are contemplating coaching, speak to a coach, help out at a session and talk to the athletes about what they get out of being coached, you will soon know if it is right for you!

Most people that she encourages to become coaches initially suffer from anxiety and think that they are not good enough. Not good enough to tell people who are better athletes than them what to do. Not a good enough coach to deliver good sessions. Not good enough to project and control the sessions. **When you then go back and talk to them a year down the line, they are very confident in their ability to coach.**

Tracey knew one coach had cracked it after she had done a year of coaching, which she took up to help the club out when her son joined the junior section. At the end of that time she was very proud of herself that she had been able to confidently correct the swimming style of a junior who was the son of an ex-Olympic swimmer despite the Olympian being on poolside. That is a step change in confidence in your own ability.



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If you would like more information about #PassOnYourPassion in Northumberland, please contact **Joanna Tooley, Participation Development Officer, Northumberland Sport** by email: jtooley@activenorthumberland.org.uk or telephone: 01670 624767.