

MM: So, come up on your side now that we are recording

KP: Yeah,

MM: So, perfect. Kate, thank you for joining us on a Monday morning. If I could just please get you to give us a bit of an insight as to who you are, what you coach in the environment, that you do your coaching in, please.

KP: So, I'm Kate Porter. I coach hockey. I have coached hockey probably for 25 years. I started coaching when my, I've always played I started coaching when my children went to hockey. So, they were seven and eight, seven and nine that sort of age. And I, I just loved it. So, I coached at the club with them and then there wasn't a girl's section beyond. So, they used to mix the club up until under 11 and then after under 11's they said, "Oh no, that's it, girls can't play." And I was a bit I was quite incensed being a bit of a feminist. And so, I said, right, well, we'll start a girl's section then. So, we started the girl's section and then the county nominations came through and I thought, well, actually, I don't know what a county player looks like, so how can I nominate? Because I don't know who to nominate. And I think she's quite good, but I don't know who she is. You know how she compares. So anyway, so I said to the county, "Can I come and observe some session so that I know what I'm nominating?" And they said yes. And then I got chatting and they said, well, come on, you know, do some, you know, come in, assist, come and do some learning. So, and that's how I got into it. So, from then on, it's just been that that sort of pathway. And I said then I coached this was back when there was probably a bit more money around in sport. And I was able to be paid to go into primary schools. And I went into primary schools to coach hockey. And then I started to coach county sides and it's gone on from there. I now coach the England, I'm head coach of the England performance centre at Northwood U17 and U15 boys and that's sort of the level below national age groups. So, for those that don't know hockey it's sort of the regional side, the regions aren't very big so it's, there's about 16 centres in the country. So, I'm coaching one of those. I also coach at club and I coach in two secondary schools local to where I live. So that's me.

MM: That's a lot of hockey.

KP: It's a ridiculous amount of hockey and my family gets sick of it.

MM: And do you still play yourself or have you transitioned into coaching?

2:58 KP: Well, a bit, but I coach my assistant coach the ladies 1s at our club, and so it doesn't really work for me to play regularly. So, I played I actually played on Saturday, but I probably won't play for another few weeks now just because of the timings for the games.

MM: Yeah. Yeah. And do you have any coaching qualifications within hockey?

3:21 KP: Yes, I did my level one years and years ago, back when I started coaching then I did my level two, then I did a level three and then England hockey changed all the levels. So, they aren't levels any more than there's a description of them. And actually, I don't I still think, well, what does that mean? What does what does sessional coach mean? Because it feels a bit, you know, to the outsider, it's very difficult for them to say, well, actually, you know, what does that mean you can do? Anyway. So, and I've recently finished the England Hockey Advanced Coach program, which is a two year program for coaches who are in a

position where they run. So, run a run it like a performance centre or run a junior section or those sorts of things. And I run the junior section at our club. So, you know, they they're trying to get people who are in places and points of interest and influence that, you know, are in a in a more informed, you know, sort of the course is all about being driven by what you want to learn rather than previously. And I get why they changed it previously the level three was you had to do this, you had to coach for a year. You had to have all your records for a season, you know, and I came away with a folder this year and actually I never looked at it. So actually, it's, you know, it's that. So actually, the advanced coaching program is probably one of the best things I've ever done. So, yeah, I would I would recommend that if anybody ever gets to do it.

MM: Yeah, yeah. Sounds quite similar. So, netball is predominantly my sport and saying, like a level 3 coach, I came away with a portfolio that was the size of a door wedge that has been sat on a shelf collecting dust ever since.

KP: Yeah.

MM: So, you were saying there about, you know, it's been a twenty-five-year journey there's been playing, there's been a range of roles you've undertaken and still currently undertake. What would you say is your biggest motivation to keep coaching the late nights and getting up early to do your workouts, to fit your motivation is to keep coaching?

5:43 KP: I love. I love seeing the kids journeys and obviously because I see them from quite young throughout the club or even through secondary schools, if I, I coach the year sevens in one of the local secondary schools and then I coach in the other school, I coach the year nines. And so, you know, they and then I see them various different, you know, depending on which age group I'm coaching. And I just love seeing their journey. And I love the fact that they, you know, they go off to university being completely different people than they perhaps would have been if they hadn't had the sporting experiences. And I'm a massive fan of the fact that sport can give you so much in terms of life lessons that. You know, and that is that's why I do it, I don't I am ridiculously competitive as well. But it's not it's definitely definitely not about winning. It's, it's always about seeing these kids and seeing them come from sort of tiny little under 12's who can't hold a hockey stick to under 18's who are really confident and going off and hopefully playing hockey for the rest of their lives.

7:07 MM: Which leads us really nicely into the second section of this question, really, which is around your coaching philosophy and your coaching approaches. If you had sum up and I know of in coach education, they get you to do that all the time, don't they what your coaching philosophy. If you had to sum up your own coaching approaches or coaching ethos, what would it be?

KP: It's always about the person in front of me completely about where they are at the time and what their needs are. Sometimes their needs aren't necessarily what they need on the hockey pitch. It might be what they need in their you know external life or what they think they're struggling with on a hockey pitch, you know, and just talking them through. Well, actually, I think you can probably do that, you know, or you've been here before. And what did you do the last time? You know, those sorts of things. And so, for me, my philosophy is coach the child in front of you and just respect them as a person, whether they're 12 or 18 or 36. And that's it. Really. I just I just want them to love the sport as much as I do.

MM: So, again, almost leads imperfectly as to where do you fit that philosophy has come from? So, do you think your own experiences in the sport, do you think it's because you started with your children? Where do you fit that philosophy has come from?

KP: I guess I, I know how much I've had from sports. So, some of it came from, from there. Some of it came from I love I love the sport. And some of it came from, from me as a person. I was I haven't worked full time for a couple of years now, but I was a catering manager, so I've always worked with people and as part of a team. So, I think that actually that whole my whole personality is about people and about giving to other people and being part of a team. So, I guess that's where it all sort of comes back from.

9:29 MM: Yeah. Yeah. So, if I turned up to watch your one of your sessions tonight, how session being delivered by you look like.

KP: Ooh, so I'm coaching the under 18 girls tonight and they have got a game next Sunday. So some of it will be, you know, with the under 18 girls it's always a bit more I try and get them to lead it and try and be a bit more responsible for their own, you know, driving their own sessions, you know, whereas with under sort of 12's, 13's, 14's, you might say. "Right, come on, let's get going." You know, I'd say to them, "right when you're ready, off you go", you know, so try and get them to lead it and be driven by what they say they want to get out of the session. And if they aren't achieving what they've said, they want to get out of the session, then I will start giving them a bit of a prod. And so, it's definitely in terms of coaching, it will be game based. So, I'll give them a little scenario. But also, particularly by the time they're 18, we'll talk through things and say to them, right, okay. "So why didn't that work? Why do you think, you know, what could you have done differently?" Those sorts of things. And then, you know, finish with because it's their first game next weekend, we'll have to do some corners, which, you know, I'm lots of people spend hours and hours and hours doing corners because obviously they're the things that win games. But actually, I'm not a massive fan of spending hours because with hockey and I don't know how much you know about hockey, but there's so many things, so sort of so many moving parts in a in a penalty corner that can go wrong. The injection can come out wrong. The track can be wrong, the hit could be wrong. The you know, the runner you know, the number one runner or number two runner from the defenders can do something differently than you are expected. So, yes, get them to a point where they can do them and they're reasonably efficient. But don't overdo them. It's you know, we're not playing for Great Britain. You know, it's it's about giving them the confidence to deal with what's in front of them at the time. So. So, yes, that's what my I guess that's what my session will look like tonight anyway.

MM: Yeah. Which again, almost seamlessly Kate like it brings us onto that third section, which is around player learning and player development. And you're talking about some ownership that you give to your A teams and it may be slightly less or a bit more of a scale for your under 12's, for example, what do you think are the crucial elements required for your athletes to learn and develop within a session?

12:07 KP: They have to feel engaged in the sessions, if they're not engaged in the session, they'll go away thinking, "well, that was a waste of time, didn't learn anything," and they probably, probably didn't learn anything or they might have learnt something, but not anything that they'll perhaps put into place in another time. Erm the longer I coached, the

more I think it is about them engaging in the session and being mentally and physically engaged in the session. So, the session has to ask them, ask them questions that they have to work out on answer during the session. Now, some of that might be a bit scaffolded, you know, in terms of, you know, you're working on you might work on a skill, you know, particularly at the start, because, you know that they might need it during that session and then say when they're not using it, you know, particularly if with under 18's, if they're being really high pressed, then they could use an aerial ball over, you know, over the players to to get beyond them. And so, you know, if they can't do an aerial, then they can't get themselves out of that. So, it's those sorts of things. So, I guess it's about them engaging and taking responsibility for their own learning as well. You know, if they're if they don't want to learn. You some, sometime this I'm sort of thinking about one particular difficult under 18 boy and you have to sort of try and find ways of helping him learn, which might not be the same as somebody else, and this particular boy was very, very difficult. It was difficult with everybody, not just me, but I felt like we got an understanding in the end where I could say to him, "Oh, come on". And he goes, "Yeah, yeah, all right." You know, and then sort of try and engage in the session. But it's about them. I you know, you see sessions and you think, yeah, yeah, they're great, they're intense, they're you know, they're game based, they're, you know there but actually, are they thinking during that session and are they really thinking about what they're doing and why they're doing it ? And often if you say to them, "what are you doing and why are you doing it?" They go, "huh ?" You know, just because I've been told to put the ball there I've been told that playing the ball out down the line is the best thing to do and so I've done it and it hasn't worked. So, it's those it's that whole not just being physically engaged, it's being mentally engaged as well.

MM: Yeah. So what's your role then as as the coach, as the head coach, as the assistant coach within those sessions, what do you view your role as the coach being to ensure that learning is taken place?

KP: Well, I guess to set the tone for the session. So set a good example. I'm you know, I'm sort of massive even when, you know, when I worked full time, I was as a catering manager, I would never do, ask somebody to do something that I wouldn't do so that there's that sort of principle in the first place. So, you know, I would I expect the session to start on time and all of the things that go with that. But then during the session, I would say that I'm much more of a facilitator and talking to them and sort of letting the session run and then pulling them out as individuals and saying, "right, okay, so what happened then ?" Would that work? Could you do something different or what would you do if this happened or, you know, those sorts of things and those sorts of things are so, for example, with the under 16 girls last Thursday, they'd sort of in the previous game, they'd got really dwelled on the ball too much and got really close, sort of shut down early. So, the session was all about just keeping the ball moving. And I said to them, this poor little ball at the end of the day is going to have no legs left. It's going to run the whole pitch and it's not allowed to stop. And actually, that really engaged them because they thought that ball can't stop right on the ball, can't stop the ball, can't stop. And actually, then they passed it more. They ran with it more, you know. So, it's just something sometimes as simple as making that connection. With them, yeah, so I would say that it's facilitating their learning and getting them to understand. About why the ball can't stop and, you know, that sort of thing.

17:07 MM: Yeah, which brings us it in terms of then, what do you expect from your players when you're teaching them a new thing, whether it's a corner or a new skill or

even just in the session to facilitate and enable their learning? What do you expect from your players to bring to that process?

KP: Energy and enthusiasm and all of the things that go with it, but also to say to me, "I don't get that. Tell me about it. Tell me, what do you mean what, what do you mean?" And so and I and I say to them that they if they don't get it, they must say to me, they must engage, not just go, oh, well, you know, I don't get this. Yeah. And so and again, it's that responsibility to say, I don't understand that. And I would never say to them, you know, I'd never turn around and say, well, you weren't listening or, you know, whatever it would be more about. OK, so why haven't you understood it, you know, maybe I didn't explain it properly, maybe then it's beyond their understanding at the moment, because sometimes I think I've seen coaches coach under 12's and and particularly under 12 girls who haven't had a huge amount of experience of sport. You know, they maybe don't watch it at home because they're not encouraged to watch it at home, like sitting down with Dad and I was always used to sit and watch rugby with my dad, but, because he was a massive rugby fan and he had two daughters, so I didn't have a lot of choice, but if you've got a brother, probably dad and the brother sit and watch football. So, you know, girls get really sort of sidelined in terms of how much sport they've seen before they get to those, have those experiences. So. Sometimes the language you use around 12-year-old girls is very different from the language you would use around 12-year-old boys or 14-year-old boys. And it's and some of it has to be what they understand and what the concepts that they will will will sort of motivate them. And one of the phrases I use with under 14 girls because they understand it is, you know, not to say stay in the contest because they don't know what a contest is, you know, but I just say be annoying because they understand what annoying is. You know, everybody understands what annoying is don't they, you know if somebody is annoying you by just constantly running alongside you and trying to make a tackle and sticking with you, or that's just. Oh, frustrating and annoying, and and they get that. But if I if I said to them, you know, stay in the contest, they go, whoa, what do you mean stay in the contest, which is a phrase that's used in hockey all the time. And then you might introduce the phrase, well, be annoying is the same as stay in the contest. So, if you hear somebody say stay in the contest, it's about educating their languages as they grow up as well. I don't know if that answers the question actually. Sorry.

MM: Right back round one of the first things I wrote down here about your coaching ethos, which was coach the person in front of you. So, you that change of wording or terminologies because that best suits the group that you're currently working with. Yet unscripted question, really, but you start to put it there. So much sports on netball football. So, I always coached netball. I always coach, boys' football. I definitely noticed the difference between the approaches to learning environments need to be creative because, yes. The fact you're teaching the same sports to both genders. Would you say there is a clear difference in the way you have to approach learning in your sessions in the environment between the girl athlete and the boy athlete?

21:11 KP: I think early on there is, yes, certainly under sort of under 12 under 11 where there's they're learning the sport. There's quite a difference in in there with where they're coming from, the base of where they're coming from. So later on, I don't think there is. I've coached I coach under 18. Two years ago, I coached the under 18 boys at our club and obviously coached boys at Performance Centre. I guess the only thing that although actually they do secretly like it. So, with my under 18 boys at the time I was coaching the under 18 boys, I was also coaching the under 14 girls. And so, I sort of do stuff with the under 14 girls on the team building and, you know, those sorts of things. And so, I sort of try it with the

boys and they they were like, oh, don't bring your under 14 girls stuff here. But in the end, we got we got to a national final with the under 18 boys that year. And they the two of them, before the game, before the final went into the changing room and above every peg. For each player put a little low down on them, which was about how positive they were or, you know, how they play, you know, and they and they've done one for me as well. And and that is what they considered under 14 girls stuff. But actually, they secretly liked it, so I think. You have to dress it up slightly differently, but no, I don't think there is a huge amount of difference. So that's yeah, that's sort of where I would say I come from.

MM: Yeah, absolutely. And then just final question Kate. If we've got the time then, what would you say your biggest lesson that you've learned has been through your coaching?

KP: Not to get stressed, which is really difficult because it is you know, coaching is stressful and it is frustrating and, you know, those sorts of things. But when, early in my early days on the sidelines, I used to get really stressed and and really affected by decisions that umpires made and things like that. But my experience now, has told me and reflecting because I always go away and reflect after a session, even if it's not formally, I'll sort of think, well, why didn't that work what were you know, what was made that so good ? And I would reflect. And I know that if I start getting stressed with an umpire, then the players reflect my behavior, so my behavior has to be really positive and an independent and, you know, and umpires get things wrong and, you know, some of them aren't very good. But if you let it affect you, then it probably will affect the result. So that for me is that is not to get affected by things that I can't control.

MM: Yeah, so. Yeah. Yeah. Kate, thank you.