

mpdale · Dec 15, 2023

'Don't give people a reason not to play squash'



This case study is part two of a series on Daisy Hill Squash Club in Brisbane. You can see part one, which focuses on the importance of its community, [here](#))

Bradley Hindle has a set of principles which underpins how he runs Daisy Hill Squash Club. The most important one is this: don't give people a reason not to play squash.

At Daisy Hill, south of Brisbane, Australia, all possible barriers to people participating in squash have been deliberately removed. These barriers might include cost, accessibility, perceived lack of skill or fitness, age or lack of confidence. Bradley has worked hard to create a culture where none of these factors prevent anyone grabbing a racket and enjoying the game.

This inclusive ethos is founded on having a packed calendar of programmes to suit every type of player, run by a coaching team (pictured above) with a diverse set of attributes.

Unlike other clubs who may revel in the kudos of producing elite players, Daisy Hill prioritise the welcome that it gives to beginners. "New players are your economy," states Bradley - and the coaching set-up at the club reflects that.

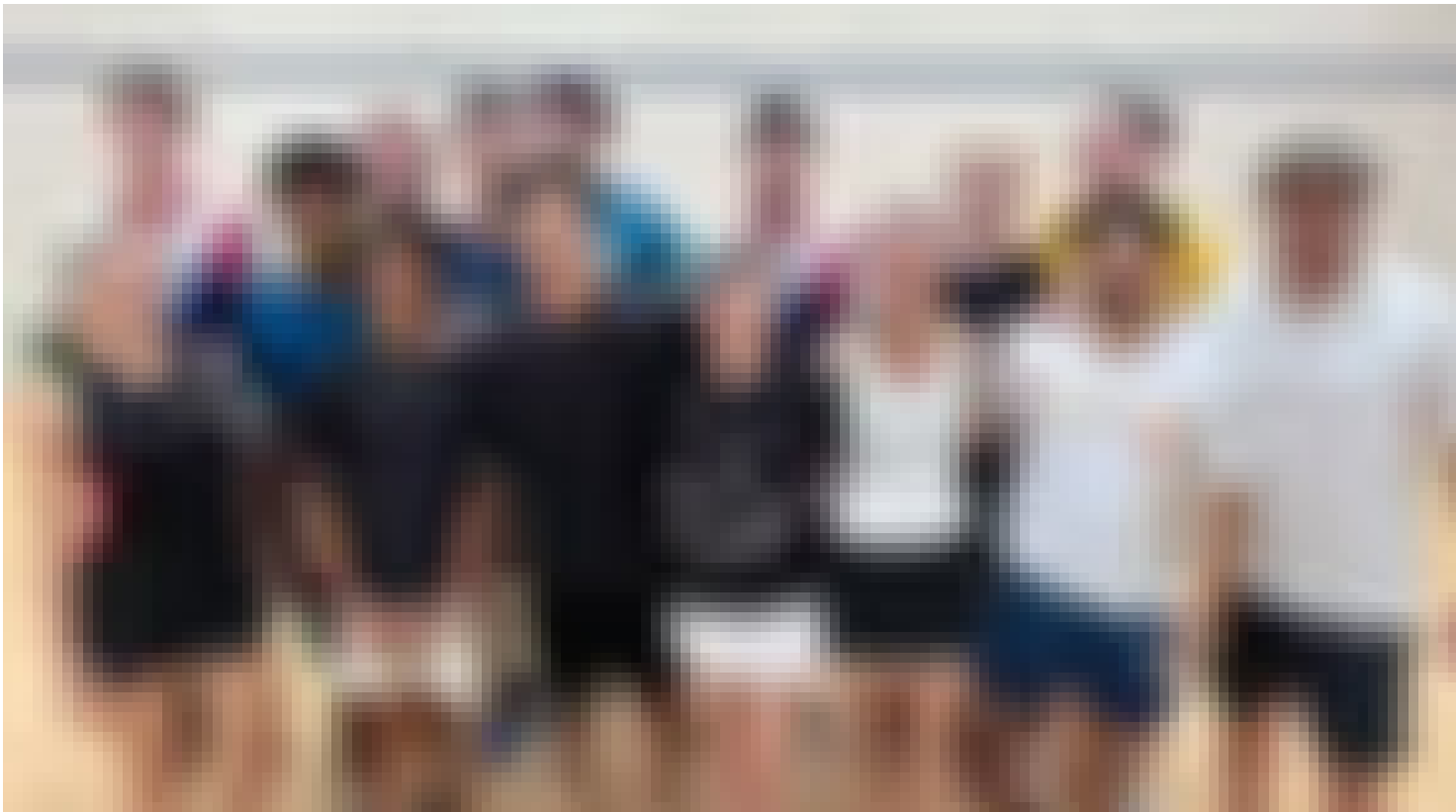


Kym Tracey Patte is the club's Beginner & Junior Squash Coach. Her gregarious and friendly nature helps to add an astonishing 80 new players to the membership every year (overall membership is now 1,400 from just 40 when Bradley arrived as Head Coach in 2018).

Collette Sultana and Bryan Lim, from Malta and Malaysia respectively, are also key pieces in the puzzle. Both are former pro players - Collette has played in several Commonwealth Games and Bryan has won three PSA Tour titles. But despite their elite background, they embody Daisy Hill's ethos of making everyone part of the community whatever their ability with a racket. Both brim with energy and are always sharing advice, having a hit with members and welcoming new people into the club.

Cameron Darton is Junior Beginner Coach and runs the junior programme which takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays as well as the junior competitive fixtures on Saturday mornings.

This coaching team knows its role: to get members having fun and improving their squash - in that order of priority!



HAPPY AND LEARNING

Bradley states: "We have a saying in our office - 'if people are happy and learning they are always returning.' The magic is about making someone feel better on the court while learning the game.

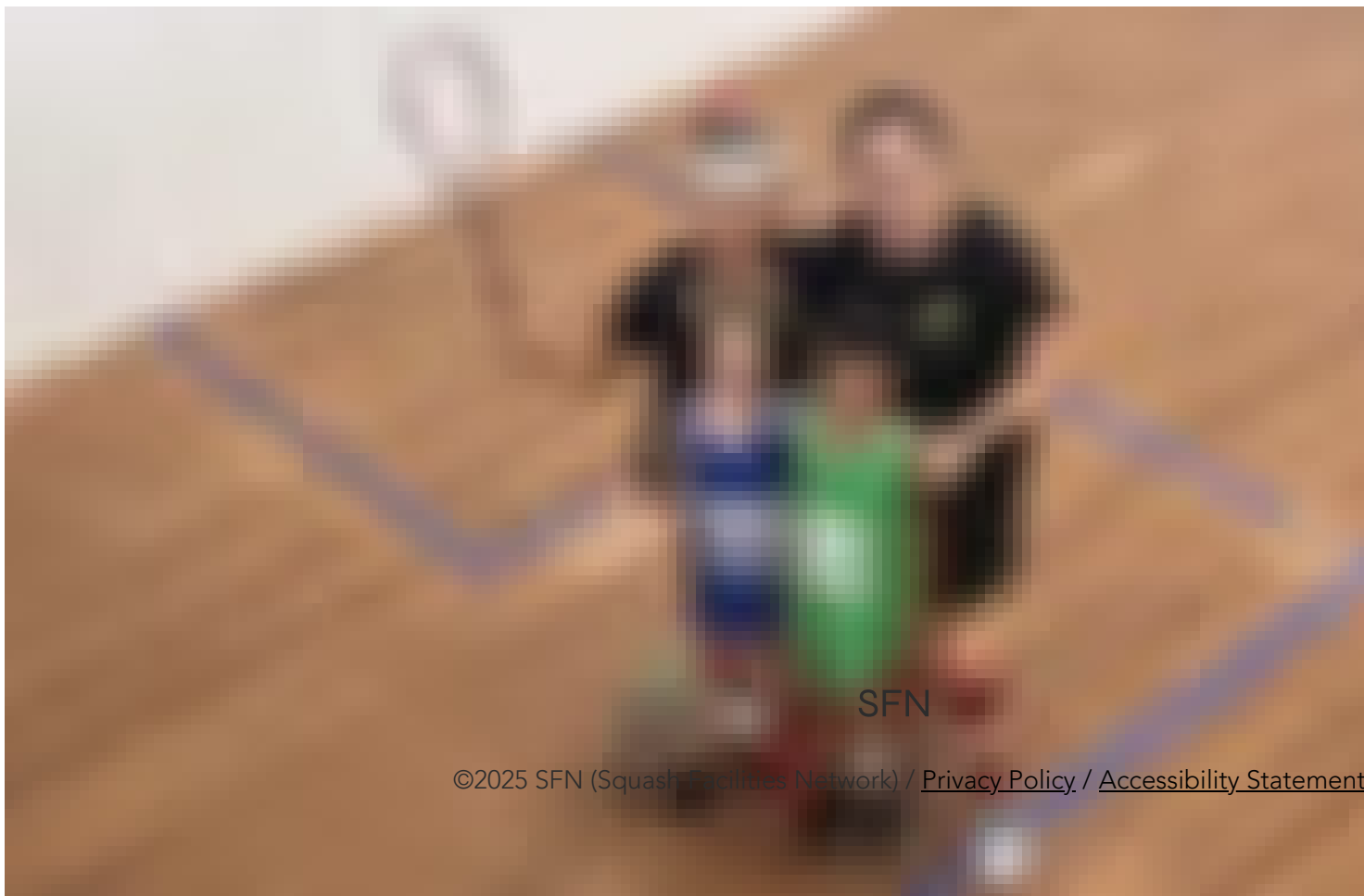
"My staff reflect that model of working. They know the most important thing is that people are smiling and having fun and creating their own social network."

There are two adult beginner group sessions per week and a social beginners' competition. Every Monday night, there is the in-house social competition which has been running since 1985. That attracts 128 people every week. Gradually, players from Kim's beginners classes gain the skills and confidence to graduate and join in.

Every Thursday morning there is daytime training which costs AUS\$22 and players are allowed to play on afterwards for as long as they like. Coffee and cakes are laid on afterwards.

On Tuesday and Thursday nights, there are team fixtures - but these are not your usual inter-club leagues. The 'Southside League,' as it's known, includes around 800 players from four local clubs. Players don't represent their own club, rather everyone is mixed into a big social melting pot. From a base of four teams five years ago, there are now 32. Standards are high, with the Australia Nos.1 and 4 participating regularly.

There are junior sessions every weekday between 4pm-5.30pm, with all six coaches and volunteers involved. Well over 100 juniors get involved spread out over the week. Coaches also take some of the juniors for private lessons. Saturday morning is junior inter-club competition for all standards, from beginners to aspiring national level players.



On Sundays, it's family squash where parents and kids can play as much as they want for a nominal fee.

This hive of activity ensures no-one is left out. As Bradley says: "We have young kids on court and our oldest member is 87 and still plays three times a week - and we cater for everyone in between.

"It's all about having programmes and pathways for everyone - beginners, kids, parents, social players, competition players and the least important among them all is young adults that want to turn professional.

"They're least important because they don't make your club financially viable, but they are important because people need something to aspire to. Those promising players get the support of the whole club. They add to the sense of identity and belonging."

It costs just AUS\$10 (€6) to be a member of Daisy Hill and members then purchase day passes (which allow members to play for as long as they want) for \$20. Coaching programmes and matchplay are similarly priced. The Australian sport and leisure industry is founded on the pay-and-play model, so Daisy Hill follows suit.

"I don't just think, I know that squash is a good business," says Bradley. "I started here in 2018 and the business started making a profit the following year. You have to have a vision which the members want to be a part of - and your coaches embody that vision every day."