

Wellington City Council Talent Development Programme welcome event

If you were dropped in the jungle blindfolded, could you survive?

This was the question over 70 athletes faced as they attended the Survivor-themed Welcome Evening for the Wellington City Council Sport Talent Development Programme Seminar Series on Thursday, 21 March 2019.

The event, hosted by the Sport Wellington Performance Hub, split athletes from nine sports into eight tribes and asked them to work together through a series of challenges designed to push their comfort zones and test their limits.

The “jungle,” was an obstacle course laid out on a terrifying stretch of grass at Kilbernie Park outside the Toitu Poneke Hub. Athletes were blindfolded and guided through the eight obstacles by their one designated team leader.



The Sport Talent Development Programme, funded by the Wellington City Council, is designed to empower young Wellington athletes to be successful, both in sport and in life. The programme, which is overseen by Sport Wellington’s Performance Hub, grants money to a handful of regional sporting organizations to assist them in developing systems and structures that support the creation of a talent development programme or pathway within their respective organizations.



“We are proud to be associated with the Sports Talent Development Programme; it is a fantastic programme that any emerging athlete in the region can aspire to become a part of,” said Councillor Simon Woolf. “Since our involvement in the programme we have seen more and more athletes from Wellington representing New Zealand at an international level.”

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As well as the sport-specific initiatives implemented by each sport, such as strength and conditioning sessions and skill-development camps, athletes are also invited to attend the Seminar Series, run by the Performance Hub. These seminars are designed to provide engaging learning environments that take a holistic approach to athlete development.

Thursday's Welcome Evening was the first session in this Seminar Series and aimed to foster connections between athletes and introduce them to the theme of the programme for 2019, Strength in Vulnerability; Discovering your inner strength.



As athletes left the “jungle” they were transported to a “deserted beach” where they had to work together to successfully complete a series of games designed to challenge them both mentally and physically. They had to clear some “toxic waste”, cross a “raging river”, and finally steer their “magic carpets” away from the island and back to safety. Thankfully, everyone made it off the island and home for dinner, with no athlete being left behind.

Over the last five years the programme has transformed from being an outcome-based investment to become a process-lead investment associated with developing talent and effective talent development environments. It focuses on creating effective learning environments that enable athletes to gather information that they can then take into their context, practice it, reflect on it, and ultimately grow as athletes and people.

“The impact of this approach is starting to come to fruition with athletes, parents, and coaches now fully integrated into this process alongside staff associated with the Regional Sports Organisation’s (RSO) performance programmes,” said Mark Watson, Sport Wellington’s Performance Hub Senior Advisor.

In 2018, 13 applications for the programme were received with eight sports being successful in securing funding to support a range of initiatives. These initiatives include; research into performance measures, development of processes for individual performance planning, as well as access to specialist services such as athlete life advice, nutrition and strength and conditioning.



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The sports selected for the 2019 Sport Talent Development Programme are; Dynamites Sport Climbing, Wellington Basketball, Capital Football, Wellington Hockey, Netball Wellington Centre, Central Rowing, Volleyball Wellington, and Swimming Wellington. Sport Wellington are also working with Hutt Valley, Wellington and North Wellington Badminton Associations to create a unified badminton talent programme.



Also associated to the 2019 programme, Sport Wellington will continue to work with Wellington Golf, Fencing Central, and Wellington Softball in developing their athlete development programs by continuing the great work that has been going on within these sports over the last two to three years.

For more information about the programme, go to www.sportwellington.org.nz/support-and-development/athletes-and-coaches/performance-hub/wcc-sports-talent-development-programme/.

