

NETBALL- Making a Difference

A glimpse into the life of a Netball Development Community Coach (NDCC- Birmingham)



Val Thomas

To be blessed with a gift of any kind is so rewarding but then, to be blessed with the opportunity to do something that you are passionate about every single working day and..... to be paid for it, is not only truly amazing but also very rare. The absolute icing on the cake is to be able to touch the lives of others, to influence and improve the quality, health and wellbeing of a community. Why not become a coach and experience it for yourself.

Local hair specialist and business woman, Cheryl Reid, galvanised a dormant community into action. She recognised some of the pressures and challenges within her local community and decided to make a difference by encouraging some of her customers, friends and family to take up a sport that they once loved; Netball.



Cheryl 4th from right, back row

BACK to NETBALL.

As the Netball Development Community Coach for Birmingham, I responded to the needs of the group that emerged from Cheryl's hairdressing salon (Ocean Beauty). We began a programme of weekly Back to Netball sessions at Action Indoor Sports, a local venue in Erdington and in a very short period of time the group, (via word of mouth) had expanded to the wider community. The ladies created a Whatsapp group to stay connected, to share amusing stories and to communicate attendances or not. The banter, (of a competitive nature) had the group constantly in stitches and everyone was eager for the next session.

A few participants brought their daughters along (15 year olds - not quite old enough for official B2N), and/or their spouses (from time to time) and whenever the numbers were low they took the opportunity to join in the session. One particular mother, (Jasmin Hamilton) attend with her two daughters Lenay and Tyra aged 20 and 15 respectively.



The Hamiltons: Tyra (L), Jasmin(Centre), Lenay (R)

The trio, a strong athletic family of beautiful women brought a different perspective to the sessions; unity and family cohesion. They were photographed together in their Back to Netball Tee-shirts on several occasions. One of those photos provides evidence of how far reaching and embracing our sport can be.

As this B2N group grew in confidence and skills they were able to play in their first Back to Netball tournament which was supported by a number of the participants husbands. Alongside others this support network included Jasmin's son and her husband, David. A true family affair! We watched some dynamic netball taking place on that day and the footage taken is evidence of this. It was wonderful to watch these B2N women test their skills and the amazing trio were no exception, together making up almost half the team. The group thoroughly enjoyed the experience and to top it off, they were runners up in that B2N tournament, each coming away with a silver medal. They expressed how elated they and that they were looking forward to the next tournament; where they would focus on coming first.



Tyra - (Ball in hand above)



Tyra, Jasmin & Lenay: ready for action

In May 2016 Tyra Hamilton celebrated her 16th Birthday.

Her proud mother Jasmin posted a picture and a message in the group about Tyra, her baby girl, reaching such a prestigious age. There were smiles, congratulations and best wishes all round.

Tyra was a picture of health, her smile radiant and her demure poise and graceful elegance plain to see, both on and off the netball court.



One week later, Tyra was admitted into hospital. She was very soon diagnosed with 4th stage cancer. She passed away on New Years Eve 2016, less than 4 weeks after her diagnosis. Her young life extinguished forever. I shall spare the details of the devastation that followed for the Hamilton family, friends and local community but will share with you the words of Tyra's inconsolable Mother, Jasmin.

'The Netball group meant so much to us as a family and Tyra loved playing netball. It played a huge part in her life.'

Along with the participants in this Back to Netball group, I am fortunate to have been able to play a small part in this child's life. The B2N netball group surrounded and embraced the Hamilton family during the weeks and months after Tyra passed away. The sessions came to a respectful halt leading up to and for some time after Tyra's funeral.

The community plan to have a commemorative trophy/cup to honour this bright shining light that diminished before it had the chance to sparkle.

Our very own:

TRYA HAMILTON.

(Just 16 years old)

R.I.P



The significance of the Back to Netball programme must not be underestimated. It means so much more than just a sport.

Thanks to England Netball, Sponsors and Partnerships!