

INCLUSION IN SPORT: A SOFTBALL AUSTRALIA RESOURCE

Sport Inclusion Australia has a vision to achieve “Community Inclusion through Sport.”

This resource has been developed to assist Softball Australia to achieve successful inclusive outcomes at all levels of the sport. The goal is to create a positive sporting culture that embraces diversity and effectively includes anyone who wants to take part. Inclusion is reliant upon the sporting environment having positive attitudes, effective communication and appropriate access.

Sport Inclusion Australia identifies the following factors as important:

- Strong policies that address inclusion
- Principles of inclusion embedded from grass roots participation to elite competition
- Successful inclusion models are effectively shared within the sport
- A holistic approach to inclusion that is valued by all stakeholders within the sport
- Choice of membership is provided e.g. social member, participant, coach, or a volunteer
- Strong practices that represent an inclusive culture
- Inclusive pathways ensuring individuals reach their full potential
- Existing members are encouraged and supported to be welcoming of new members
- Open and flexible while developing ongoing inclusion principles
- Seeking external assistance if required to ensure sustainable inclusion

Issues to consider when addressing inclusion:

- Focus on the person first and their ability
- Speak clearly and concisely
- Check for understanding by asking questions
- Be patient and don't rush instructions
- Be adaptable and flexible in your approach
- Keep it simple where possible
- Talk using age appropriate language
- Seek clarification from the participant of their needs
- Be visually expressive with instructions, not just verbal
- Respect all participants for their individuality

Benefits for organisations committed to inclusion in sport:

- Increased membership
- Access to additional elite pathways
- Increased sponsorship and funding opportunities
- Increased networks
- Increased support and volunteer base
- Greater publicity and positive public image
- More cohesive and diverse sporting community
- Barriers and misconceptions allayed



Softball Australia: Our commitment to inclusion

Softball Australia is committed to ensuring safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for people of all ages, cultures, race, religion, gender, abilities, sexual preferences, orientation and identity.

Softball Australia, our Member States, clubs and associations will continue to provide opportunities for everyone to participate in softball at all levels and facets of the sport. This will be achieved through inclusive programs, accessible and welcoming facilities, trained volunteers, skilled coaches and officials as demonstrated through national programs, competitions and initiatives including Softball Batter Up, Sporting Schools, Social 7s, the Indigenous Softball Program, Softball Community Coaching Program, accredited coaching, scoring and officiating courses, National Affiliation Standards and the Strike Out Barriers to Sport through Softball program engaging with migrant and refugee communities.

CASE STUDY

Inspirational Jake is breaking down barriers

Jake Ballestrino, 25, softball player, umpire and coach was born with what he describes as upper limb deficiency or a bilateral deformation of the upper limbs. "I've never seen it as a disability, nor have my family, friends and anyone around me," he says.

Jake has been intrigued by the coaching side of sport as he has an interest in how the body works and imparting his knowledge and experience. "I've been adapting things my whole life through sport and other areas of my life from the way I brush my teeth to the way I pitch a softball, so coaching and adapting styles and techniques really interests me."

So when the opportunity came up to coach softball through the Sporting Schools Program on behalf of the Werribee Softball Association, Jake jumped to it.

"I've really enjoyed delivering the Sporting Schools Program, especially the current school I'm coaching this term at St Andrews Primary School in Werribee," Jake says. "The best thing about it is the children are well behaved and I've really enjoyed coaching two students in the group who have a disability.

"Michael is a Sudanese boy who has cerebral palsy, and another student I coach has Floating-Harbor syndrome. With any luck I hope I've shown them not to let their disability define who they are, they are more than capable of doing whatever they set their mind to."

Jake says he is working on modifying a glove for Michael with a rest to support his fingers. This will enable Michael to wear a glove and partake further in the catching activities.

Teacher Sally-Ann Taylor says "Jake inspired all the children he worked with over the last couple of weeks. He taught them a valuable lesson despite his physical disabilities and he doesn't allow it to stop him doing anything."

Jake's story is also an example as to why it is important for all clubs to be inclusive. "My advice to all clubs is to include everyone, look past their disability, you don't know what they are able to achieve unless you give them a go."

CONTACTS

Sport Inclusion Australia
4 Lowry Place, Benalla VIC 3672
(03) 5762 7494

sportinclusionaustralia.org.au

mail@sportinclusionaustralia.org.au



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Softball Australia
Level 1, Suite 2, 273 Wellington Street,
Collingwood VIC 3066
(03) 9417 0022
softball.org.au
info@softball.org.au