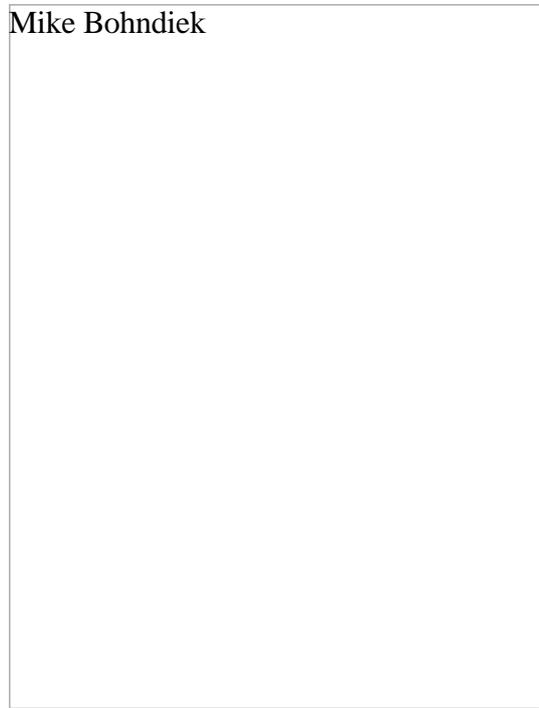


Howzat! simply does it for up-and-coming coach

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Mike Bohndiek



- **2010 England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and sports coach UK Young Coach of the Year Mike Bohndiek shares invaluable advice for coaches and would-be coaches**
- **His key philosophies for coaching remain the same today as they were five years ago during his first flush of success**
- **‘Cricket for All’ is North Middlesex Cricket Club’s motto and one which Bohndiek works hard to make happen in every aspect of his coaching strategy**
- **Bohndiek stresses that coaches old and new should strive to see all sides of sporting situations, to help make them more rounded and improve their skills**
- **He also emphasises the importance of making a good impression to new participants.**

[Mike Bohndiek](#) is a young cricket coach who has already made a big impression in a sport he clearly loves... and much of his success is down to a refreshing all-inclusive attitude.

Still only 27, Bohndiek, now Head Coach of North Middlesex Cricket Club, was earmarked as one to watch back in 2010 when he scooped two major awards. He received the ECB Young Coach of the Year title along with the sports coach UK Young Coach of the Year honour.

Here, he shares invaluable advice for coaches and would-be coaches that he picked up in eight fascinating and engaging years as a cricket coach.

Walking the walk

Bohndiek's key philosophies for coaching remain the same today as they were five years ago during his first flush of success:

‘Make the sport accessible to as many young players as possible and ensure coaching is tailored to encourage participants to stay in the sport, to thrive, and to have fun – and be the best they possibly can.’

He not only talks the talk, but certainly walks the walk coaching-wise. The path to his current role began when he offered to help out at his local club, Blackheath, back in 2008, putting something back into the game he loves, and getting on the first rung of the coaching ladder.

Among his first key achievements were successfully completing his Level 2 qualification and taking responsibility for coaching Blackheath's under-15 and under-16 age groups. In a short space of time he took both teams to championship success in the North Kent Junior League, signalling a winning mentality for his coaching and management style, and marking him out as an up-and-coming coach to be reckoned with.

The high-profile honours in 2010 alerted the cricket world to an impressive new coach in their midst, and Bohndiek is happy to admit they opened the door to new opportunities, giving his CV an extra accreditation and added value to his coaching badges.

After sterling work at Tower Hamlets and across the county, he was appointed to his current role at North Middlesex three years ago, and quickly began work on improving and developing the coaching philosophy across the club, at all levels and age groups.

All for the best

The cricket club's motto is an overriding message for everyone, and one which Bohndiek works hard to make happen in every aspect of his coaching strategy: 'Cricket for All'.

'This means exactly what it says,' he explains:

'This is a sport for everybody, at all levels. All our players wear the same kit, at whatever level, and all have the same guiding ethos and strive to reach the highest standard they can.'

The club continues to work hard in a move the coach calls 'closing the circle' to bring together all abilities and ages, and to create what he labels 'a one-club feel'.

Crucially, this involves giving girls the opportunity to progress in the sport, as well as boys, and also opens up the game for people with disabilities.

North Middlesex has around 240 colts, and 30-40 girls, but the air of equality and lack of a ceiling on success is one that Bohndiek and his coaching colleagues work hard to foster.

'Girls know that they have the opportunity to play in boys' teams, if that is the direction they want to go, and this is something we wholeheartedly support, as do the boys, as we make sure all pathways are open to all.'

The club's cricket for people with disabilities scheme is also proving successful:

'We have taster sessions and organise camps in summer, in association with the Middlesex Cricket Board.

'People can come along and get a feel for the game, or return to it after an absence, and this is proving a worthwhile and excellent initiative,' says Bohndiek.

Bohndiek is quick to underline the all-inclusive 'closing of the circle' in this aspect too:

'Absolutely, the opportunity is definitely there for players with disabilities to play in our other teams – we are one club, open to all, and this message is one we make sure gets across to everyone.'

At North Middlesex CC this initiative has been greatly helped, Bohndiek says, by coaches with key experience in the field of disability sport. One coach works at a disability school, something which has proved invaluable as a resource to drive the programme ahead to where it is today.

Word of warning

He has some further advice to fellow coaches, which he says was brought home to him, ironically, by his rapid rise in the coaching sphere.

‘There's a warning – and one which I eventually realise I needed to heed – for anyone who takes part in such a huge learning curve in a short period of time.

‘From taking my Level 2 coaching in 2008, progressing to Level 3 in 2010, and towards Level 4 two years ago, it came home to me that as a coach, I didn't know who I was.’

He explains in more detail: ‘Coaches who pick up so much so quickly, and I was definitely no exception, are in danger of becoming “flavour of the month” coaches. By this I mean that in their enthusiasm to learn and to teach, they pick up the latest techniques and are understandably keen to pass them on to their pupils, so one month it will be one aspect or style, quickly moving on to another, and so on.

‘You eventually realise that you have to take a step back, look at yourself, and ask the key question: “What do you believe?”’

This came home to Bohndiek after talking with colleagues, including Middlesex Head of Youth Cricket Alan Coleman.

‘He stressed that the key is to keep things simple. The challenge is to make sure that if you are coaching an 11 year old, for example, you have to think first about what would make sense to someone of their age group.

‘It sounds obvious, but it's crucial to tailor your requests to your audience and make sure they can understand. There's no point talking to an 11 year old the same way you would someone of 14 or 15, for example. The frames of reference aren't the same and the message will, at best, get diluted.

‘He suggested instead of my natural inclination to tell young players three or four things I'd noticed which might improve their game, that I should concentrate on just one – the simplicity angle again.

‘I thought about it and realised the wisdom of his words, instead of snowing them under with too many things to take on board, merely to concentrate on one could have fantastic results.

‘When I had put this into action, Alan said to me: “Brilliant. That was the one thing the kid needed!”

‘It was a valuable lesson – keep the message simple, in a logical order, and you'll often find that the one thing you've chosen to concentrate on to improve their game underpins all the other things you wanted to improve too.

‘One minute's worth of key coaching on an easy-to-communicate level can be worth so much.

‘It's all about how we communicate.’

Mike Bohndiek's top tips:

So what are North Middlesex CC Head Coach Mike's Bohndiek's words of

encouragement for young coaches, or would-be coaches, looking to enter the coaching arena?

‘This is quite simple – all I can do is thoroughly recommend it!

‘If you are anything like me then you will love it, it's one of the most rewarding things in the world to pass on knowledge and help people improve their games to be the best they can.’

Bohndiek stresses that coaches old and new should strive to see all sides of sporting situations, to help make them more rounded and improve their skills.

And how should we do this? It's quite simple, the coach says: ‘Expose yourself to as broad a range of environments as possible, not only in your own sport, but across the spectrum.

‘With young people, try and get involved from the youngest upwards, engage with the participants and their coaches, and volunteer for as many different levels as you feasibly can.

‘In my own experience, working with players from ages five to 18 – literally from the playground to the Test arena – could not have been more rewarding, or a better learning curve to improve my coaching skills – and to pass this on to pupils and fellow coaches.’

On his travels coaching in schools, Bohndiek is always careful to tailor his message to his audience. He explains:

‘When I go to a primary school, for example, most of the kids are excited to be off lessons, they are looking to have some fun and play some sport, but don't really want a big technical coaching lesson.

‘They want to enjoy themselves, to hit the ball over the boundary as hard as they can, or bowl out their classmates – and then go home and tell their mum and dad about the great time they had playing cricket!

‘Making sure we align with the ECB coaching programme we let them do just that, to experience the joy of the game and open up their eyes to how much fun it can be.

‘What we don’t want to do is blind them with science.

‘We need to ensure that what is often their first-ever exposure to cricket is a really positive one, and that some of them will want to come back and play it again.

‘Here we can begin a path to a fruitful life of playing the game – and maybe one day coaching it too – and all because they enjoyed their first session and it resonated with them.’

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