

The power of sport

Henry Lamb, NQT teacher at Fulham Prep teaching geography and sport, shares his passion and personal experiences of how sport has an amazing role to play in the life of a prep or junior school

‘Sport and physical education play an important role at the individual, community, national and global levels. For the individual sport enhances one’s personal abilities, general health and self-knowledge. On the national level sport and physical education contribute to economic and social growth, improve public health and bring different communities together. On the global level, if used consistently, sport and physical education can have a long-lasting positive impact on development, public health, peace and the environment.’

(The UN website, 2005)

Sport has proved to be a vital part of our lives today and a powerful mechanism in shaping the world we live in. It has certainly been an integral part of my life and in this article I am going to focus on the power of sport at the individual level. An active lifestyle with regular sporting participation improves personal health and fitness. Taking exercise gives

you a ‘feel good factor’ due to the releasing of endorphins; it makes your heart stronger and will allow you to live longer.

The technological revolution of the 21st century has given rise to an ‘obesogenic environment’ in the UK as children are regularly favouring sedentary activities, such as playing on game consoles, over physical activities. I found evidence of exactly this during a Year 7 fieldtrip to France where nearly every boy had some form of iTouch, iPod, iPad or iPhone. The net result of this change in lifestyle choices has led to an advent of obesity in the UK as energy intake is significantly greater than energy expenditure. It is now reported that one in five British children is obese by the age of 11.

Sport and academia are often seen as separate entities; however I believe this not to be the case. I was always a quiet pupil in the classroom who would ‘come alive at games time’ (as my old



prep school Headmaster noted in an end of term report), however through continued sporting success my academic confidence grew exponentially. This connection between sporting success and academic improvement is something that I strongly believe in, having experienced it firsthand during my childhood and now as a teacher of geography and sport. This pattern is evidence of just how powerful sport can be.

The camaraderie induced by team sport is something that cannot be rivalled in any other field at school, particularly secondary. I recently spoke with a parent at Fulham prep who explained that they were not concerned about their son not being too academic, as long as his opportunity to play sport competitively and improve his sporting ability continued at senior school. Their rationale behind this was that they felt this was where you build the strongest





friendships. I know I certainly made my best friends at Sherborne while playing for the 1st XI cricket over two years.

Sport undoubtedly teaches you many valuable lessons. It teaches you to be gracious in both victory and defeat. It teaches you to be polite and it allows you to be social. I believe tennis epitomises the social side of sport as it is a game that offers an equal playing field for both boys and girls.

The great thing about sport, particularly tennis, is that hard work allows you to reap rewards. Yes, it is probably fair to say that some children are more naturally talented in terms of hand-eye co-ordination; however I firmly believe informative and experienced coaches can develop the skills of any youngsters regardless of original ability.

As you can probably guess sport is a real passion of mine and what I really

enjoy doing is running my holiday business, which involves tennis and football courses for 7-14 year olds in the south-west of England. The main emphasis is on making sport fun, catering for all abilities. Experienced and enthusiastic coaches are the key, allowing children to work hard in a disciplined environment and consequently progress. This is hugely rewarding for both the coach and the learner. www.menacesports.co.uk

