



**FOOTBALL
AUSTRALIA**

LEADING OUR GAME

**Six tactics to address exclusionary practice
in the development of high-performance
women coaches in football**

JULY 2023



OPENING STATEMENT

Addressing the recruitment, development, and retention of women in high performance coaching

In August 2021, Football Australia initiated a High-Performance Women Coaches Project to address the ongoing underrepresentation of women coaches in football. The objective was to go beyond simply identifying the obstacles and instead create a roadmap for the advancement of high-performance coaches in football.

This white paper titled "LEADING OUR GAME: Six tactics to address exclusionary practice in the development of high-performance women coaches in football" is an important step in taking active measures to increase the participation and representation of women coaches. It further signifies progress within the Legacy '23 Leadership and Development Pillar which aims to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, including coaching positions. Legacy '23 is Football Australia's plan to deliver immediate and long-term community benefits and economic impact from hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023.

Football Australia engaged the expertise of Darlene Harrison, a performance coach and leadership consultant, to conduct this project in conjunction with Football Australia's Technical Department. We thank her for her contribution towards this significant piece of work.

By highlighting the barriers that exist and providing concrete recommendations for change, this white paper provides a roadmap for the football community to work towards a more inclusive and diverse future.

Rae Dower

Technical Director - Women's Football & Head Coach - Women's U17

LEGACY ' 23

Legacy '23 is Football Australia's strategic plan to harness the growth of women's football and deliver enduring benefits for Australia's largest community sport beyond 2023, including becoming the first community sport to reach gender parity in participation.

Formulated through a business case that included a cost-benefit analysis and case study analysis, the evidence-based Legacy '23 Plan outlines a strategy for delivering economic, social, physical and mental health benefits, and social and multicultural inclusion and cohesion for the community and the nation.

Featuring five pillars—Participation, Community Facilities, Leadership & Development, Tourism & International Engagement, and High Performance — the ambitious Legacy '23 Plan is helping ensure Football Australia deliver positive and enduring benefits before, during, and beyond the 2023 tournament as we seek to consolidate and extend Australia's strong women's football foundations.

The Leadership & Development Pillar aims to tackle the underrepresentation of women in football leadership roles, encompassing not only players but also positions in administration, coaching, refereeing, and media. This white paper specifically targets the coaching aspect of the pillar, aiming to promote diversity, inclusivity, and equitable opportunities for women in the sport, recognising its significance in bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront and empowering women in various leadership roles within football.



INTRODUCTION

Gender equity in high performance (HP) coaching has been a long-term problem for sport and around the world women are far less likely to be seen in HP coaching roles. Despite significant intellectual effort directed at understanding and addressing the low numbers and it being well recognised that work environments thrive on diversity, there has been little movement in the past 30 years [1,2].

We are now in an age of rapid social reform, where gender equity, diversity and inclusion are no longer considered a 'nice gesture', it is imperative for sport to get right. Society, our participants, sponsors, fans, and our coaching workforce expect it. There have been a range of inclusion initiatives, learning programs and individual appointments and promotions, but the levels of gender equity and diversity in coaching talent pipelines and leadership roles in football have remained relatively unchanged for decades. This suggests that traditional approaches to coach learning, education, development, and accreditation

are failing football as well as continuing to marginalise the women they are supposed to serve.

It is well documented that the HP sport context provides an environment rich in holistic learning and development opportunities that can prepare football coaches for the complexity of the role. However, research also confirms it is a unique workplace where HP women coaches and coaches of diverse backgrounds face several distinctive stresses and challenges [3].

Traditional approaches to coach development have had a focus on knowledge acquisition and application without adequately considering the wider systems, structures and environments in which HP women coaches exist. This has resulted in HP women coaches not being afforded the potential for more transformational development experiences which could support them to thrive in the role.



Football Australia Women's National Team Coaches (from left to right): Leah Blayney , Melissa Andreatta and Rae Dower.

INTRODUCTION

When development does not reflect the complexity of expert coaching practice it can become a process that constrains learning and maintains cultural status-quos. The status quo continues to be disproportionately low representation of HP women coaches in football with our recent study finding only 7% of all accredited coaches (across advanced coaching courses in Australia) are women. We also found that other diversity metrics needed to inform future decision making across all coaching processes are yet to be collected in systemic ways.

So, what role can learning and development play in progressing a more diverse and gender equal (40/40/20 – 40% women, 40% men, 20% gender diverse) HP coaching workforce in football? We asked HP women coaches in football what they need from learning and development to support themselves as coaches and their career aspirations.

The six tactics identified are by no means exhaustive of all that is important for the development of HP women coaches in football, however, an increasingly competitive landscape, rising complexity and a shorter shelf life for knowledge requires us to both zoom out and look at system opportunities and zoom in on the design and culture of learning and development [3,4].

THE SIX TACTICS IDENTIFIED:

- #1** Focus on Facts - data keeps the focus on the issues and not the women coaches
- #2** Multiply the Alternatives - creating alternative pathways leads to greater and more diverse talent pipelines
- #3** Invest Strategically - opportunity to unite stakeholders by a larger objective and goals
- #4** Learning Design - recognising importance of gender, gender differences and cross gender respect
- #5** Coaches as Leaders – design of safe spaces for leadership identity work
- #6** Culture & Environment - addressing gendered football cultures by approaching via environment.

TACTIC #1 - FOCUS ON FACTS

Good quality and accessible data keeps the focus on the issues and not the women coaches.

Increasing the focus on facts requires taking a systemic approach to the collection, analysis, and storage of data on HP coaching and HP women coaches in football. Good quality data builds trust with stakeholders and supports evidence-based decision making.

Workforce

There is a lack of quality, accessible data across coaching and in particular on the current and future HP women coach workforce, what they bring to the role when they arrive and how and what they develop across their careers.

Research suggests Gen Z and Millennial women will be the most influential generations of women to have ever existed (economically, socially & culturally) and they have already arrived in our football landscape.

They are the most diverse generations to date, believing diversity is not inclusive enough, wanting to connect with organisations which accurately represent their ideals concerning social justice, equity and community initiatives and are highly engaged in learning and development [5].

Our study of women coaches with advanced accreditations found that 70% of respondents were under the age of 40, 66% were predominately European in origin, and 92% hold a tertiary qualification alongside their advanced coaching accreditation.

This data suggests our HP women coaches are largely Gen Z and Millennial women, highly engaged in coaching and learning and are well credentialed. These shifts in workforce will only increase focus on the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our women coaches are here for both learning and HP outcomes.



Melissa Andreatta, Assistant Coach - Matildas & Head Coach - U23 Women's National Team.

TACTIC #1 - FOCUS ON FACTS

Data & Biases

Insufficiently informed and biased decision making across all HP coaching processes in football are creating a number of clear opportunities for substantial competitive gains.

While there is a reasonable amount of peer supported literature which discusses concepts concerning coach development, much still appears anecdotal, and there is an absence of longitudinal studies on the development of true international HP coaches across their careers. The lack of empirical evidence of what it takes to be a HP coach and what a HP coach looks and acts like means coach development continues to be delivered from the perspective of what is believed to be known, and unknown and what is observable in training and competition environments.

Addressing biases that are built into normal routines and practices, like learning, development and accreditation can show that standard practice might not always be best practice.

And while bias itself is hard to change, it is less difficult to interrupt. The best ways to interrupt bias in HP teams and environments are to pay attention to data and evidence and to think critically. Research has shown consistently that cognitive limitations result in us very quickly and very easily predicting on the bases of what we want for ourselves and our limited experiences rather than a satisfactory examination of valid evidence [6].



TACTIC #2- MULTIPLY THE ALTERNATIVES

Creating alternative pathways to the role of HP football coach would lead to greater and more diverse coach talent pools.

Football stakeholders need to be supported with a process to think strategically about the full range of accreditation and development options available to them. It would include how these options and alternative pathways support a more contemporary and inclusive HP coaching paradigm and how they interface with new and emerging coach career and work models. And it would position learning as the central consideration for the delivery of effective coach education and development.

Defining terms

The status quo in football is a single pathway to HP via a traditional accreditation system. This single pathway does not clearly define the role of learning, education, training, and development in relation to HP coaching outcomes.

Clearly defining the role of learning, education, development, and accreditation in relation to HP coaching in football will help to clarify the issues at stake and empower coaches, teams and clubs to achieve their objectives using the most appropriate strategies available. The confusion surrounding the terms 'training', 'education', 'development' and 'learning,' is at a point where they are often used interchangeably.

While the terms are best viewed as interconnected, defining and delineating each term starts to clarify the associated activities and the desired outcomes we are wanting for our HP women coaches.

Learning as a developmental process would be the overarching concept encompassing training, education, and development, all of which could be defined in practical rather than theoretical terms such as - training is 'learning by doing', education is 'learning by thinking' and development involves learning, thinking, doing, and feeling. The 'learning by doing' element of training is assumed here to lead to specific skills and is arguably the most valuable of all, since it equips coaches to critically engage with their surroundings, solve problems, and make decisions which is the skill of thinking. Aspects of each are necessary to ensure the full potential of our HP women coaches is realised. See diagram 1 – Defining learning, training, education, and development [7].

New HP coaching paradigm, career & work models

The single pathway to HP does not provide coaches with more transformational development experiences to support them to guide teams to perform at the highest level.

In order to guide teams to perform at the highest level, HP coaches must have many talents in the areas of leading, coaching, training, guiding, managing and facilitating.

TACTIC #2- MULTIPLY THE ALTERNATIVES

A more contemporary and compelling job paradigm would promote strategic and relational elements of coaching alongside technical and tactical elements. This new coaching paradigm would also be supplemented by a strong coach capacity for learning and leading.

Hybrid work models, shared coaching roles and coaching teams are emerging with a new focus on non-traditional coaching success factors and KPIs that drive long term sustainability such as innovation, collaboration and wellness. This new focus provides an opportunity to re-examine the current coaching paradigms, coach environments and coaching processes.

Alternative learning and development pathways are essential to ensure football can continue to support the right coaches working with the right teams and players at the right times. Alternatives that can recognise the expertise, skills and experience a HP coach is bringing to the role from a multi-career or external credentialling perspective and the football

Intellectual Property (IP) a HP player transitioning to coaching is bringing to the role ensures football can continue to attract the right coaching talent [8,9].

This last point is important to consider when HP football coach and manager roles globally are almost exclusively the preserve of former players. And that these coaches value practitioner knowledge and informal learning over formal coach education.

The benefits also include the ability to challenge gendered norms around remote work and flexible working and develop new norms, practices and supporting technologies that enable effective coaching whether in person, remote or hybrid.

Key Takeaway

Multiplying the pathways to HP coach using a gender sensitive eye will enhance gender equity, health, and wellness across football. Providing alternatives and updating outdated policies, paradigms and practices has the potential to engage with untapped coaching and leadership potential across football.

CONCEPT	DESCRIPTION
Learning	Learning is the overarching concept – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or attitudes through experience, study, or teaching. Training, education, and development all involve learning.
Training	Training is aimed at teaching immediately applicable knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be used in a coaching role. Training may focus on delivering better performance in a current coaching role or to prepare for a future coaching role.
Education	Education is a more formal way to broaden one's knowledge. Education is often non-specific and applicable for a long time and is especially relevant when a HP coach has little experience in an area.
Development	Development is aimed at the long term. It revolved around the broadening or deepening of the knowledge. This must fit within a HP coaches' personal development goals and/or the (future) goals of an organisation, club or team. Development usually happens voluntarily.

Diagram 1: Defining learning, training, education, and development

TACTIC #3 - INVEST STRATEGICALLY

Investing strategically provides an opportunity to unite diverse stakeholders around a larger objective, creating common goals and buy-in for HP women coaches and coaching in football.

Inclusive HP coach development requires stakeholders to drive alignment, coordination, and a collaborative approach to investment in learning and development. Agreeing a shared direction and common objectives and goals in the form of a learning and development strategy alongside the traditional coach accreditation system would support an increased focus on gender equity and reduction of duplication across all HP coach development processes.

Learning & Development Strategy

Learning and development is a limiting factor in the progression and retention of HP women coaches in football due to inconsistencies in availability, disparate systems utilised across stakeholders and associated costs and financial issues.

A strategy guides the development of policies and programs, identifies priority areas of cooperation for investment and clearly articulates roles and responsibilities of key partners and stakeholders – giving everyone a stake in the greater outcome.

Our study found women coaches are looking for more coordination across football stakeholders, organisations, courses, and programs.

They articulated a need for increased structure and support in purposefully intersecting HP women coaches at different levels across football, with different genders and across different HP environments to add value to their learning and development experiences.

A strategy should explore content in the context of both HP football and HP sport making the learning experience for women coaches more relevant, meaningful, and engaging, and developing their capacity to transfer and apply learning to novel and unfamiliar contexts. The ability to evolve with the role has become a prerequisite of success, along with the ability to continually absorb new information and translate it into productive, creative work with players and teams. The pressures over the past few years have forced all HP coaches to think differently about what it takes to stay relevant and stay ahead.

Those who have the capacity to adapt their learning and development processes to ensure they meet the expectations and learning needs of our future coaching workforce, particularly Gen Z and Millennial women will have the edge over their competitors.

Learning Network

The current notion that a single method, single pathway, or single person (coach developer) is an effective approach to the development of Head Coaches/Managers in football is highly pervasive across development systems.

TACTIC #3 - INVEST STRATEGICALLY

The literature suggests that for HP coach learning and development to be most effective a variety of learning approaches and a network or team of developers is the best approach [10]. For a coach to be high performing in their role they require access to a network of varied knowledge bases, skillsets, and perspectives. Skillsets which range from technical through to executive, from skill knowledge to mentoring on expression of behaviour. Given the employment-situated nature of the context in which coaching practice functions (particularly at the high-performance level), the inclusion of those responsible for the direct line-management or organisational oversight of coaches would seem paramount as well.

This is supported in our data where our women coaches are asking for increased diversity in experts and speakers (broad HP environments through to HP sport and football specific), mentors (for different development & career stages and needs), knowledge

acquisition and skill application opportunities, women only and intersecting to mixed gender development opportunities (for exploring mutual cross gender support, growth, and respect).

Being conversant in gender dynamics and comfortable engaging in challenging and controversial discussions that can often arise in learning environments should be a prerequisite for teaching, facilitating, or managing any learning network in football.

Key Takeaway

Investing strategically, guided by a learning and development strategy and a learning network has the potential to align stakeholders, agree aspirational goals for football coaching and ensure limited resources are delivering the greatest possible coaching impact.

Practical Supervisor	Role is to provide support during the application of learning in the training and competition environments and will often be a HP coach. They ensure you can execute safely, provide feedback and are the first point of contact for questions.
Learning Coach	Role is to support the HP coach to reflect on their personal development as a coach. They are the first point of contact for planning and progressing the personal development plan.
Core Teacher / Facilitator	Role is to provide the coach with detailed feedback on the formulation, delivery and content of any projects or tasks they develop with the practical supervisor and the learning coach. They seek help from experts in response to specialist questions generated by the HP coach and engage the experts as specific inputs into the learning & development program.
Mentor	This is a process driven by the mentor and shaped by coach needs. The role is to observe, video, challenge, guide, signpost and facilitate.
Peer	Trusted counterpart where the process is mutual, team coaching and two way. The role is to share and support, check and challenge and to engage in a two-way learning relationship.

Diagram 2: Example Learning Network

TACTIC #4 - LEARNING DESIGN

The design of all learning and development opportunities for HP women coaches in football should recognise the importance of gender, gender differences and cross gender respect.

Intentional learning design can be used to increase inclusivity and move away from individual solutions for issues disproportionately caused by systems of discrimination. Learning design for HP women coaches must focus on gender, gender differences and opportunities for mutual cross gender support, growth, and respect, developing in women coaches a sense of agency in their careers.

Design Principles

Learning design in football has mainly focused on two approaches: #1: the same programs to women as to men - an 'add women and stir' approach effectively ignoring gender or #2: the path of trying to 'fix women' which highlights gender and locates the 'problem' in women. Neither of these approaches have addressed the systemic realities (biases and discriminations) women face in HP which do not foster sustainable coaching and leadership capacity.

Research recognises the need to employ specific design principles for the development of women [11]. The deployment of these design principles in football would provide our women coaches with a framework for understanding how second generation gender bias manifests in football and can derail their coaching transitions; how a holding environment can provide a safe and needed space to discover, recover and sustain a sense of agency;

and how connection to their sense of purpose can support them to remain authentically themselves when inevitably faced with challenges in the HP coaching role.

Principle #1: When designing learning situate coaching and leadership topics and tools in an analysis of second-generation gender bias.

Principle #2: When designing learning create safe spaces for development and experimentation and for building a community of peer support in which the women coaches can experience a sense of belonging and identification.

Principle #3: When designing learning, connect women coaches to purpose, values, and coaching philosophy.



From left to right: Kelly Crew (Junior Matildas' Scholarship Coach), Rae Dower and Faye Chambers (Junior Matilda's Analyst and Football Australia Coach Education Instructor)

TACTIC #4 - LEARNING DESIGN

The Role of Emotions

A strongly held stereotype is that women coaches are too emotional but emotions are effective coaching and learning tools when coaches consciously access and deploy them.

In learning and development, emotions are both experienced as well as instrumental to personal growth and academic achievement. They are fundamental as they are integrated with key cognitive skills and psychological states such as attention, memory, decision making, motivation, interest, engagement, persistence, and social functioning [12,13].

Emotions can be leveraged to increase a sense of connection to the learning experience and inform engaging learning experiences for coaches, as one coaches emotional state can influence the emotions of others [14,15]. The experience of shared states can result in a deep sense of connection and facilitate a learning environment that is more cooperative, with pro-social behaviours and the building of group cohesion, trust and rapport. While this shared state can occur spontaneously through observation, imitation or contagion, it can also be engineered and designed by learning practitioners into the learning and development.

Key Takeaway

The HP sport context requires all coaches to be largely independent, self-regulated learners; an assumed capability many coaches are ill-prepared for.

Whilst emotions surrounding learning are highly complex due to their subjective nature, an understanding and appreciation of their role in learning can be leveraged to inform the design of engaging learning experiences.

The application of learning design principles highlighting the importance of gender and emotions offers insights that can expand the collective capacity of football coaching and have implications for learning and development that extends well beyond HP women coaches. For example, the kind of subtle biases that hold women coaches back in football are also likely to affect talented men who also do not fit the traditional model of football coaches and like women may go unrecognised.



Kelly Stirton, Head Coach - ParaMatildas.

TACTIC #5 - COACHES AS LEADERS

Positioning HP women coaches as both technical experts and as leaders in football requires the design of safe spaces for leadership identity work.

Leadership behaviours present themselves as one of the key features studied in professional coaches and reflects proportionately in the literature [16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23]. The leadership literature on HP coaching suggests there are no clear gender related differences when it comes to leadership trait-like behaviours. Some suggestion has been made that female coaches tend more to a mentoring leadership style, but this is highly speculative (and probably stereotyped biased) as empirical evidence remains ambiguous [4,24,25].

Leadership Identity Work

There is a common assumption in HP Sport that coaches have developed strategies around effective learning and leading and yet the reality is quite different.

Learning how to be an effective leader is like learning any complex skill, it rarely comes naturally and usually takes a lot of practice. Knowing how to evaluate and manage one's own learning and leadership is an important capacity central to positive learner outcomes. When HP women coaches are supported to consider the dynamics of gender in football and connect to purpose (larger than themselves) and coaching philosophies (broader than the technical and tactical), they are far better prepared to take up and take in HP coaching and leadership roles. This work requires coaches to identify and adjust underlying mind-sets, feelings, assumptions, and beliefs to reach new levels of performance [11].

Focusing on purpose and coaching philosophy also supports HP women coaches to take up activities that are critical to their success such as networking. It is important for coaches to understand they have a limited capacity in the number of networks they can



Leah Blayney, Technical Lead - Future Matildas & Head Coach U20 Women's National Team.

TACTIC #5 - COACHES AS LEADERS

actively maintain and so need to prioritise. For HP women coaches this often means a focus on what the team needs versus what they need as a coach and can be interpreted in the research as an avoidance of specific types of networking, in particular social networking [26,27]. Social networks need to be prioritised, even when there is a genuine lack of time as they are important in supporting coaches when under stress and for thriving in role.

Leadership Traits

Successful HP coaches, show higher adaptability in their expression of leadership style, and continued progression in the development of adaptability of that style, as well as the ability to change style under pressure (rather than revert to kind).

If we then adopt the philosophy that trait-like behaviours are more important to leadership success than traits themselves, then there appears to be a clear purpose for coach development because we can assume leadership and coaching effectiveness can be enhanced.

Traditional theories of emotions propose that traits are evoked in response to the perception and interpretation of a trigger, and this then leads to a physiological response that shapes behaviour. This can be problematic if the trait behaviour is 'less desirable' but may be mitigated with the expression of a 'more desirable' trait-like behaviour [4,13].

The coaches emotional state and behavioural response to triggers (positive and negative) can influence the emotional state of others (athletes,

support staff, peers & management) through processes of contagion, imitation, group affect, empathy, and self-representation.

It is important for coaches, facilitators, and teachers to be conscious of this influence, and in particular how their own emotional state can highlight particular traits and how others perceive them. Development for HP women coaches should focus on managing emotions embedded in traits (particularly for traits considered less desirable in a given context or those seen as stereotypically feminine), and the expression of 'desirable' trait-like behaviours.

Over Mentored and Under Sponsored?

HP women coaches are over mentored and under sponsored and have networks which tend to be less effective, providing less development help and less access to influential colleagues.

For optimal development and opportunity, HP women coaches must have mentors and sponsors, balanced with advocates, coaches, peers and facilitators. These different inputs would form a coaches' learning network or learning team across their career.

In our study, our HP women coaches used the term 'mentoring' as a catch all for a range of development experiences and inputs they have had in the past and would like to have in the future. They are asking for more structure, more access to elite environments and more pathways to mentors at different stages of development and career. They were using 'mentoring' to describe a learning network of

TACTIC #5 - COACHES AS LEADERS

multiple inputs for different learning needs. This is important as experiential development opportunities are known to often come from a coaches' own network, where good mentors can assist in development and good sponsors can advocate for opportunity, progression, and promotion.

Mentoring and sponsorship is best viewed as a spectrum of behaviour that allows various types of commitment to meet different HP women coaches needs across their careers [28]. However, research suggests where women are concerned, sponsors tend to be comfortable with having strategic conversations and making network connections but less comfortable providing high-visibility opportunities or advocacy roles [28,29]. Football also needs to challenge the gendered view of mentorship, sponsorship and allyship which often perpetuates the singular narrative of 'men helping and supporting women' as this has the potential to reinforce the negative bias about the ability of women to coach at the highest levels in football and be successful.

Key Takeaway

Numerous experiential learning opportunities are integrated into HP coach education and development, but it is important for learning practitioners and HP coaches to understand experiential learning is different to learning from experience as the former is intentional, whereas the latter is largely unintentional.

Leadership identity work builds coach leadership bench strength, coach talent pool depth and ensures readiness of HP women coaches for key coaching and leadership positions in football as they become available.

Increasing sponsorship opportunities will increase much needed advocacy of HP women coaches in football. As part of increasing sponsorship football should also ensure access to more gender diverse mentors and sponsors.



TACTIC #6 - CULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Address gendered football cultures by approaching via environment.

In sport we often use the terms culture and environment interchangeably, when environment is about 'creating a space or place for people to thrive' and culture is 'the way we are and do things when in that space' or more recently it has been referred to as 'a sense of belonging'.

While culture is widely recognised as having an influence on the performance and wellness of teams and individuals, cultural descriptions are still often based on teams' results (e.g., winning teams have strong cultures and losing teams have poor cultures).

These after-the-fact cultural labels ignore the myriad of underlying factors that contribute to a groups culture including those related to motivation, communication, relationships, and leadership which all interact to represent the culture [30]. Football should, therefore, prepare HP women coaches to effectively intervene at an environmental level where they would be required to lead, facilitate, enable and shape culture as part of their role.

Environment

Environments across football do not currently foster a variety of coaching styles in which diverse racial, ethnic and gender identities are seen as high performing as the traditional coach and leader model. They lack diversity and often reflect gendered career

paths, make assumptions about gendered work and support men to advance into HP coaching and leadership roles across both the women's and men's games.

A high performing environment endorses practices and structures that support psychological safety and psychological freedom including sufficient awareness of, and confidence in, the channels available for people to disclose or report harm.



TACTIC #6 - CULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Delivering a secure performance environment for players and staff using an environmental model requires learning and development that prepares HP women coaches to:

- Provide leadership (vision, support, challenge) [31,32,33]
- Facilitate performance enablers (information, systems, incentives) [11,28,29,34,35] engage players & performance staff (attitudes, behaviours, capacity) [13,36,37,38,39,40]
- Shape cultural change (achievement, wellness, innovation, internal processes) [30,38]

A lack of paid coaching roles and a lack of secure environments were identified as important factors in our study of HP women coaches in football. Increasing opportunities for paid coaching roles and increasing confidence in how coaching roles are constructed (without additional non coaching or unpaid functions added), along with key skills across football in how to create these performance environments would provide the platform needed for HP women coaches to fully engage in coaching as a viable career option.

Secure performance environments also support HP women coaches to control self-doubt and withstand the stressors of the role. Understanding and being more aware of what happens to HP women coaches in the context of football environments from a gender and gender dynamics perspective will be important in truly evaluating the impact of environment.

Culture

When culture is gendered and behaviours are represented by masculine and hypermasculine actions, HP women coaches are positioned as bringing no value to the profession. As HP coaches, women face a double bind: feminine behaviours are often deemed not appropriate for coaching, while masculine or hyper-masculine behaviours are not becoming of a woman.

Learning and development can strengthen culture to support the inclusion of HP women coaches in football when a true learning culture is implemented in our teams, clubs and organisations. Learning cultures are still the exception rather than the norm with recent research finding that only 10% of organisations have managed to create them, with just 20% of employees demonstrating effective learning behaviours at work [41].

A true learning culture is defined as ‘a culture that supports an open mindset, an independent quest for knowledge, and shared learning directed toward the mission and goals of the team or organisation’.

Creating a learning culture in football would require, a commitment to rewarding continuous learning and those that display an effort to learn and develop; having the courage to give meaningful and constructive feedback often; and leading by example as what coach leaders do has a strong impact on the behaviour and performance of the team.

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A lack of paid coaching roles and a lack of secure environments were identified as important factors in our study of HP women coaches in football. Increasing opportunities for paid coaching roles and increasing



TACTIC #6 - CULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Research has also found leadership is a far better predictor of culture than culture is of the leadership. Coach leaders scoring high on transformational leadership (inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealised behaviors) were found to have significantly stronger and more positive cultures than coach leaders scoring low on transformational leadership [30].

A learning culture would focus on building capabilities to engage with gender dynamics and stereotypes that continue to impact role success and likeability of HP women coaches. The success-likeability research tells us that men and women leaders are liked equally when behaving participatively (i.e., including others in decision making), but when acting authoritatively, women leaders are disliked much more than men. In fact, it suggests we often don't really like women when they are successful and they are penalised when perceived as being successful by behaving in ways that violate gender stereotypes [4,42].

Key Takeaway

HP women coaches in football need to be supported to develop and be assessed for capabilities to lead and create HP environments that are safe and inclusive in regards to culture, gender and gender dynamics.

An environmental model takes us beyond an exclusive focus on culture to develop all the key elements required for a secure performance environment. It gives us a lens to understand culture as a process, alongside the leadership required, the individuality of players and staff and how to build the systems that enable performance. All these elements require consistent and intentional effort to develop and consistent intentional effort to sustain. The lack of consistency and intentionality in coaching and leadership are two key reasons why performance environments and culture can weaken or alternatively can differentiate themselves as higher performing.



CONCLUSION

Shifting football from a traditional coach development and coaching model to a more contemporary, inclusive and gender equal model is not a 'quick fix'. Together these 6 Development Tactics will go a long way to fixing the systems and processes that have excluded women for decades from HP coaching roles across football.

To work towards outcomes that are good for women, good for coaching and good for football, our actions and solutions need to be evidence based, coordinated across stakeholders, and purposefully co-designed with HP women coaches to ensure the greatest impact. Football needs a data driven mindset, where they focus on the facts, evaluate what works and what doesn't and are ready to adjust accordingly.

Systemic change requires policymakers and the football industry to bring in a wide range of learning and development reforms and reimagine the role of the HP coach in football. Wide ranging reforms that take the form of policies (long term strategic investment, structural & cultural metrics, gender diverse targets & quotas), standards (sponsorship, advocacy, data driven selection & retention processes, inclusive learning design, learning networks) and programs (leadership, unconscious bias, critical thinking, gender dynamics) that would work together at multiple levels to create change and ensure that every women in football coaching has the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

OUR LEGACY is to act now to shape the future of women in football coaching by overhauling the learning and development systems and environments that continue to exclude women and keep the numbers low. It is no longer enough to offer a single pathway to the role of HP coach or development initiatives for HP women coaches (even if they are of the highest quality) without addressing how inequality shows up in our HP football environments and teams. The opportunity is to tackle the root cause of ongoing under representation of women coaches and stop 'treating' the symptoms, if we truly want different outcomes.

OUR OUTCOME would then be increased numbers of high performing women coaches in football. Numbers that could then be included in a set of realistic metrics with which to measure the health of coaching in football. Metrics that prioritise contemporary coaching capabilities (critical thinking, ethics, wellness & leadership) and gender equal football environments that value, reward and support individual and collective coach difference.

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