

# Sporting Communities Case Study - Ruben



Ruben, aged 62 from an African background, has always enjoyed playing sports. At college he played table tennis, however after moving to Derby from London in 1980 he was unable to find a local table tennis club so began playing football which was more accessible locally.

He later joined the hospital football team where he was working as a nurse. After sustaining an ankle injury in 1991, Ruben began physiotherapy at a local hospital where he met an England badminton player. Ruben recalled, "He said to me football is full of injuries so why don't you think about doing something different like badminton." Initially Ruben was not interested, but after being invited to a trial session he found that he enjoyed his first experience.

Ruben is now an accomplished badminton player with competition experience. He coached for Derby City Council at an adult education evening school until the sessions were discontinued. This led to him joining the England Badminton line-judging group 8 years ago and becoming an international line-judge. Just before the first Covid-19 lockdown he also joined the umpiring group.

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He stated, "There are good African players but maybe they haven't had the coaching or the opportunity to get to that level of the game." He recognised that he needed a suitable qualification and a commitment to getting out there if he were to make a difference.

Ruben did not hear about the Coaching For All programme until the day of the deadline, but fortunately was able to secure a place after contacting Sporting Communities.

## Why Coaching For All?

Whilst line-judging Ruben noticed how coaches communicated with the players and mentored them both on and off the court and thought this was something he might be able to do. He commented, "To be able to coach people you need to be recognised as a qualified coach." He also observed that while there were several international Asian teams there was not one African country.

## What have been your highlights?

**"I can't say one thing because the whole programme has been quite an eye opener for me."**

Whilst Ruben has had the opportunity to develop his skills, he has enjoyed learning about the broader aspects of coaching. He highlighted the unconscious bias and



safeguarding training which he feels will help him to be a better coach and in supporting people.

Ruben also enjoyed the interactive and engaging approach of the course leaders. He commended, "They were very encouraging and were always readily available to provide support." This helped participants to remain engaged and interested in the learning even though it was all online.



## What have been the benefits?

**“There are transferable skills from other sports that you can use in your own sport.”**

Ruben has had some coaching experience and previously completed a 2-day coaching course, however the Coaching For All programme has been much more detailed, and Ruben has benefitted from being in an environment where he has been able to listen and learn from coaches from different sports. He has gained insights into coaching from the perspective of boxers, cyclists, rugby coaches and the other sports represented on the course.

## How could the course have been improved?

**“The course has been well set-up, however, we did not have the face to face interaction.”**

Due to lockdown some aspects of the course could not be delivered as originally anticipated. Ruben felt that more face-to-face interaction and group activities would have been exciting but stated, “It would be very unfair of me to say what needed to change because I haven’t had that interaction.”

**“They were very encouraging and were always readily available to provide support.”**

## What do you plan to do next?

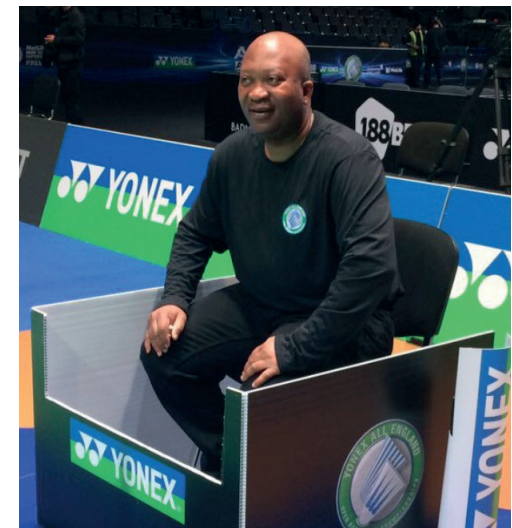
**“In the long run I want to set up a badminton school for beginners and improvers in the local area.”**

Ruben would like to establish a badminton school in the longer term. In the first instance he would like to hold an open day for children and the local community at his own club where he has been attending since 1991. This will give an opportunity for people to be introduced to the game.

## Sharing the news

**“You need the support and certificate behind you to be recognised as a prominent coach that is the complete package and not just someone who can show you how to hit a shuttle.”**

Ruben would encourage others join the course if they want to develop as a rounded coach with both the technical and mentoring skills. He feels as a coach it is important to be able to support people through their journey incorporating the principles of safeguarding, fair treatment and avoiding bias and relating to others as equals.



## About Coaching For All



Founded on 8th May 2012, Sporting Communities is an ethical, not for profit Community Interest Company committed to helping to develop communities and delivering cost-effective, timely and professional services. The Coaching For All project is a Sport England funded research project to help identify and understand the underrepresentation of paid coaches from ethnically diverse communities within the industry. The one year project is designed to develop aspiring coaches from ethnically diverse backgrounds with the skills, knowledge, qualifications and experience in coaching whilst understanding the barriers involved. The project partnership consists of Sport England, UK Coaching, Loughborough University and Sporting Equals.