

Uitsig Squash Academy – 2016 Report

Concept

The concept behind the USA is to continue the development of players once they leave the Centurion Junior Squash programme so that they can represent Uitsig at first/reserve league level and ultimately, represent the Northerns Squash Association at Jarvis Cup.

Attendance

Attendance was poor in the first five months of the year with an average of five players attending each coach-run session. The squad size was increased in June by including Zander van der Merwe, Philip Earle, Damian Groenewald and Brenden Smit. Attendance in the last five months has averaged 8.5 players per session.

The addition of Zander and Philip was an excellent idea, as their maturity raised the standard and intensity of each session without forfeiting the youthful feel. The addition of Damian and Brenden added to the increased intensity by putting pressure on the players to keep training or risk being beaten by a junior.

Achievements

The USA played cross-border matches against Boys High and Western Rackets and won both of them.

Jonty Matthys, Carel Ras, Philip Earle and Franco Henning were selected to represent Northerns at Jarvis Cup; unfortunately, only Franco and Philip were available to take this opportunity.

It must be noted that Northerns was missing a number of their top players, which gave some of the younger players the opportunity to represent the province.

Learnings

My initial approach toward the USA was to use the same formula that I apply to my squad at Boys High, which is to constantly supervise training and control every aspect of the session. This approach did not work, largely because it removed the freedom from these players' games and, in so doing, removed the joy. This is shown in the poor attendance in the first half of the year.

Around the time of the addition of the new players my philosophy towards the academy changed, in that I started treating the players more like professional players and expecting them to maintain a high intensity without my supervision, which allowed me to spend more time on court with each player individually. I feel that this had a positive effect on the way the sessions were experienced.

Aside from this, I have felt that having two coach-run sessions per month is not enough to stimulate an active academy, since if I chose to get an external coach, then it could quite easily be four weeks between sessions that I have with the squad.

Craig Stephens
Uitsig Academy Head Coach