



A different way to play...

putting coaching and officiating at
the heart of sport in the RAF

by RAF Sports Federation

For many, sport or activity in the RAF is an evening run or a gym session; for others it's competing at the highest level possible. But there are other sporting opportunities for those who want something challenging but a little different. A coach or an official can make a huge difference to the development of others and importantly, to yourself. Many RAF sports associations also now recognise they need good coaches and officials to grow their sport. My colleagues and I are increasingly seeing this first-hand at the RAF Sports Federation.

Many who participate in sport will have coached at a certain level,

34

maybe officiated a children's match or encouraged colleagues to improve. After all, athletes of all ages often need a voice to push them on to be the best they can be, but many stop short of gaining a coaching qualification. As a coach, you are central to the achievement of others, but your impact goes beyond the field of play. You will develop their physical and mental health and help them through many

challenges. In doing this, you also develop yourself.

As a sports officiator in the RAF, you can continue to develop skills in management, organisation and teamwork after you have finished playing; all of the qualities that a promotion board or future employer will look for. It is also a way to continue to enjoy sport at a time when you either do not want to or cannot participate in sport as a player.

The RAF sports associations also rely on officials to improve the sporting experience. Taking a lead in organising and officiating a sporting event or occasion, regardless of level, will give you a unique insight, experience and satisfaction that's hard to replicate. Coaching and officiating have extensive pathways that can lead to international competition and in some cases, professional arenas. After all, the RAF has already produced a Premier League Referee's Assistant, an Olympic equestrian official and a Commonwealth Games boxing referee, among many others.

Coaching and officiating are fantastic opportunities to grow your skills in the RAF and improve your career, but they have a monetary value to both the RAF and society in general. According to the Join In Trust, in its widely respected 2015 report, the total value arising from sports



In the Blue corner...

participation by one volunteer is calculated at £16,032. These are the reasons why the RAF Sports Federation and RAF Charitable Trust have joined forces.

In 2018, we partnered with the RAF Charitable Trust creating a development fund to increase numbers of RAF home grown coaches and officials across the service. This fund enables more personnel to train as a coach or official without the expense of having to fund the course in full. For individuals, it is a way to improve your development beyond what is already available from standard learning credits. So why not take the chance to push yourself in ways you may not have thought of? So far, more than 50 individuals have taken the opportunity to receive funding for their training in the first year but there is much more to do. To grow sport, we also work with RAF sports associations to develop their coaching

strategies, helping to ensure they can get the most from the available resources. So regardless of whether you are a trustee of a sports association, athlete or passive observer, go on, give it a try and get in touch.

Our partnership with the RAF Charitable Trust is just one example of our commitment to improve sport in the RAF. By working with our RAF Sport partners and fellow charities, we continue to provide a range of professional services to the vast majority of sports associations including financial and charitable governance, training and human resources.

Karl Whalley – Chairman of Royal Air Force Boxing and Head of Development, England Boxing



*Karl Whalley
– RAF Boxing
Chairman*

The RAF Boxing Association prides itself on the development of athletes from grassroots to international standard. Within this cadre of sportsmen and women, the requirement for talented officials is a challenge that is equally met. Our successful approach to recruitment and training has led to a national reputation for the honesty and absolute integrity of our boxing judges and referees. This has resulted in our service being the proud sponsors of world standard referees and England representatives. The tiered system of officiating within boxing means that keen fight fans have the opportunity to start their judging and officiating career after 4 days of intensive training. Our officials are then mentored through the England Boxing officiating structure to ensure all potentials are exploited.

Within a season these hard-working sportsmen travel across the country supporting both military and civilian boxing. Our officials always support our touring boxing team and over the past boxing season have enjoyed maintaining the rules of the sport in Cyprus, Tenerife and Bermuda as well as venues such as Manchester, RAF Odiham and RAF Brize



RAF Equitation Team

Norton. If you are interested in being part of one of the services fastest growing sports, please contact Joel Sweeney at boxing.offsec@rafsportsfederation.uk

Russ Gleeson - Chairman of Royal Air Force Equitation

I joined the RAF Equitation Committee about six years ago when I noticed there was a lack of opportunity for riders who were just starting out and no real pathway to take them to the level needed to represent the RAF. We managed to organise some really great courses and activities that saw people develop over a short period of time. For me seeing that sense of achievement is huge. Sport is all about growing our people, making them keen to take on challenges and stretching themselves. When you see someone, regardless of rank, literally stand up, dust themselves down, climb back on the horse and face a challenge again and achieve something, it makes all the hard work and behind the scenes efforts worthwhile.

After a year or so I volunteered to take on the organisation of our annual championships and move it back 'home' to RAF College Cranwell. The sense of achievement building the facilities from nothing and delivering a safe and enjoyable event for over 100 riders is, to coin a phrase, second to none. At the moment we mostly buy in the professional coaches and officials to build our courses to National Governing Body standards, my hope is that with the RAF Charitable Trust and the RAF Sports Federation fund and their support, we can start to build a pool of individuals to take on these duties internally. We have already benefitted from their support and have run a successful first aid course. This helped our aspiring coaches and volunteers cope with the specific injuries that can unfortunately happen when training and competing in equestrian events.

My vision, which we are

on path to achieve, is for an association that helps our people go from never having ridden through our grassroots activities to hopefully convince them to ride more often. In time they will then join our development scheme and hopefully progress toward the RAF Squad or beyond to UK Armed Forces. Of course, for many the journey itself will be the challenge, but we hope that the experiences we give them will enable them to grow both as individuals and as members of the RAF – if we achieve that (as well as beating the Army in the inter-services!) then I will be a very happy Chairman!

If you are interested, please contact us on equitation.sec@rafsportsfederation.uk

We have a range of initiatives launching in 2019, including increased access to first aid courses and a range of Easy Guides. But while we continue to grow our services and impact, we would welcome further insight from our colleagues across the RAF on what more we can do, so please, get in touch. We want to hear from you. For more information on coaching or officiating, or just what we do, visit: www.rafsportsfederation.org/grantfunding or email us on info@rafsportsfederation.uk

Edited by Rachael Lee

