SCHOOL GAMES IMPACT AWARDS

The Varsity Series: Reigniting passion for sport in Year 9

Overview:
SGOs José de Matos Sharps and Adam Patten identified Year 9 as a pivotal year for children and young people (CYP), with many choosing to stop participating in sport.

Together they set out to create a new tournament for local schools – one that focused on non-traditional sports, like dodgeball, rounders, longball and korfball.

Titled the Varsity Series, this ongoing tournament aims to give Year 9 pupils a reason to stay interested in sport.

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The Varsity Series

Objectives

- Provide an alternative, fun option to engage with 'non-sporty' CYP
- Inspire CYP confidence through physical activity
- Encourage students that do not already take part in school sport to be a part of a school team

Who was the target audience and how were they engaged?

The SGOs identified that Year 9 was a turning point for students - one where they would either find passion for a sport or move away from taking part in physical activity completely. The SGOs wanted to develop a way to re-engage those who had drifted away. By consulting CYP it became apparent that 'non-sporty' pupils were happy to participate if centred on fun and inclusivity, rather than competition.

So to engage with this audience, the SGOs created a new tournament just for them - with a clear criteria given to schools that only students not already taking part in a school team could get involved.

Why was the activity unique?

The inclusivity of the Varsity Series is what makes it stand out. The SGOs chose easily-accesible sports that all genders could play together, even going as far as tweaking the rules to make it appropriate and meaningful for the CYP involved.

The series also slowly builds CYP confidence in competition, instead of leading with it. Through regular sessions within each school, the competition element is introduced organically. By the time the inter-school tournament comes around the CYP are fully engaged with the chosen sport. Any previous concerns around competitiveness were washed away, replaced by the value of working as a team.

What was the impact felt in schools and by CYP?

The Varsity Games created a new outlook for the target CYP around sport and demonstrated the many benefits of being active through fun and social games. The effectiveness of this project was through not explicitly explaining the rewards of sport and activity but letting the participants discover this for themselves.

The Varsity Series has helped re-engage uninterested pupils with sport and so giving them the benefits of physical activity. It is believed by the schools and SGOs that the impact on these students will be a lasting effect.

Varsity has given me a new group of friends and made our friendship stronger throughout the year.
-Year 9 Pupil

Why is this an example of School Games best practice?

The Varsity Series is a good example of co-creation. Not only did the SGOs work together to solve a school-wide issue, but they collaborated with schools and CYP throughout to understand the crux of the problem among their young audience.

Using this insight they then created an activity that directly overcomes those barriers to address their needs and motivations, and ultimately resparked CYP interest in sport.

For more information please contact the entrant on jsharps@swbgs.com