

***BACK TO HOCKEY CASE STUDY***  
***GOSPORT BOROUGH HOCKEY CLUB***



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# ***GOSPORT BOROUGH – HOW BACK TO HOCKEY STARTED***

Gaynor Toms coach of Gosport Borough Hockey Club's Back to Hockey sessions takes us through their story.

Gosport Borough Hockey Club embraced the idea of Back to Hockey. We wanted to attract women back to the hockey club who had drifted away from hockey due to changes in circumstances such as child birth or moving away from their home town.

The club believed that Back to Hockey would be successful and decided to enter a ladies 2<sup>nd</sup> team into the league.

After asking around the club I initially had 6 women who were interested in the programme. I decided to run with Back to Hockey and I am so glad that we did!

We advertised on the England Hockey website and our own club website and we were sent posters and a banner from England Hockey and we started to spread the word. We also used social network pages such as Facebook and Twitter and liked linked in with Slimming World through which we were able to advertise the sessions to local groups.

The word spread fast and we regularly received enquiries and contact from prospective players, with interest peaking at 54 players!



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# ***AN INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE CLUB!***

The outcome of Back to Hockey was a fantastic turn out of players during the 6 weeks of sessions. 44 women regularly participated and gave hockey another chance!

There was a big difference in skill level but one thing was for sure the players were all there to have a go and have some fun! From a coaches point of view it was lovely returning to grass roots hockey and starting with the basic skills again, refreshing!

The new interest had a fantastic effect on every aspect of the club. Not only has it boosted the number of women playing it has also increased our membership fees by £1,200! We have seen a new lease of life at the club, many of the new members have brought their partners and children along leading to all areas of the club seeing an influx of new players!

The club has also seen an upturn in enthusiasm! Socials are well attended, and believe it or not the clubs teams are sitting in the top three of their respective leagues.



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# GREAT PLAYER FEEDBACK

The best part of Back to Hockey for me as a coach is just seeing the players when they realise how much they love the game and how they have missed it! I cannot tell you how many times I've had players tell me they wish they had come back years ago!

Here are some of the messages some of my lovely Back to Hockey players have posted on Facebook!

“Another fab Back to Hockey training session, thanks” Sam Clelland

“Hey, practice was great tonight – thank you so much! Will do my best to be there...forever ;)! Thanks” Carolin Nairn

“Had a fab session, new skills, a fun first match and everyone is great. Can't wait for next week!” Miranda Lodge

“What a fantastic session tonight. Learned lots during the Back to Hockey hour and then had so much fun during the coaching session/match with the ladies team. Thanks to Gaynor and the Gosport Borough ladies for being so supportive and encouraging.” Jo Wilson



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# TIPS FOR OTHER CLUBS

Firstly and most importantly do it! It is great fun not only to the new players but it gives your whole club a boost.

## Session set up

Make sure you keep your Back to Hockey sessions separate from your regular club training sessions so the women don't feel intimidated. After our Back to Hockey session I invited anyone that wanted to, to stay and play small sided games with existing players and then mixed everyone up! This allowed the women to grow in confidence early whilst making new friends, they tell me they felt part of the club right from the start!

## A different membership option

Look at your membership, do you offer a 'training only membership' for those people who are not quite ready to play matches? Some of our Back to Hockey players thought that they would never play full matches and did not want to pay for the whole season.

They signed up for a special membership deal (a reduced membership with a limit to the number of matches they could play in a season). This kept the women involved in the club and encouraged them to come to matches and watch games. We are already seeing women up their membership to full membership because they feel part of the team and club.



# TELL US YOUR BACK TO HOCKEY STORIES...

Is your club running Back to Hockey sessions? Tell us your Back to Hockey story and it could feature as one of our Back to Hockey case studies!

- Perhaps you have a great story about an individual player who's joined your Back to Hockey sessions?
- Maybe you've found a unique way to promote your sessions which other clubs could replicate?
- Have Back to Hockey sessions increased the number of women at your club?

Send us your stories and accompanying photos, videos and press clippings to:

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