A SERVES PROJECT JOURNEY: 
Tyrone & Hat-Trick – from Walker to Wimbledon

How the Tennis Foundation, StreetGames and Hat-Trick came together to bring tennis to new people and places in Newcastle – and the transformational opportunity this SERVES project has given one young Tennis Activator

Background

Hat-Trick is a project that was set up in Newcastle in 2005, through a partnership between The Football Association and Newcastle New Deal for Communities. Originally, based exclusively in the West End of Newcastle to deliver football, Hat-Trick has now evolved to working across the North East and delivers a mix of sports.

Hat-Trick works with some of the region’s most disadvantaged young people, using sport as a hook to engage young people and aid the development of transferable life skills. This includes raising the confidence and aspirations of the young people they work with, as well as impacting on educational attainment, skills and employability, together with health and community safety.

Tyrone – the beginning of a personal journey

Tyrone would eventually become a SERVES Activator, but he started his Hat-Trick journey as a football player in 2014 when he attended one of their Doorstep Sports Club sessions taking place at his school, Walker Technology College. He had come across as a very sporty character and loved the opportunity to play competitive games with fellow participants – but, he sometimes showed some immaturity. He was however, still very well-mannered and loved to support his fellow participants.

Hat-Trick thought Tyrone would make a brilliant volunteer and encouraged him to engage in their volunteer programme. He began volunteering aged just 14, mainly refereeing football matches in schools leagues – a very daunting task for a young person, but he excelled and became a familiar, friendly face for the participants.

Tyrone has gone on to complete 136 hours of volunteering with Hat-Trick and has helped deliver some fantastic sessions during the summer in their Local Heroes programme – devoting his own free time to these sessions and making every session fun and interactive.

Becoming part of SERVES

In September 2015 Hat-Trick was approached by one of the Tennis Foundation’s national partners in the SERVES project, StreetGames, to deliver the SERVES programme in Newcastle. Initial meetings with Hat-Trick and their LTA Regional Manager, Joanna Cunliffe, were set up to shape the SERVES programme and how they could utilise Hat-Trick coaches and volunteers to deliver tennis, with the support of a Level 3 LTA coach.
When recruiting SERVES Activators, Hat-Trick thought Tyrone would be an ideal candidate and approached him about the programme. He expressed his interest in being a part of it and took part in the Tennis Activator training that is provided by the Tennis Foundation as part of the SERVES programme. Mentoring from the Level 3 LTA Coach allowed for Tyrone and other coaches to build their confidence in delivering tennis.

A successful pilot

Having worked with the Tennis Foundation and StreetGames to put the foundations in place, Hat-Trick delivered a SERVES pilot in 2016 within two primary schools, St Lawrence and Byker. The pilot was used to gather views and explore levels of interest in tennis amongst young people and review the impact of delivery.

Hat-Trick engaged with 102 young people aged 8-13 years through 17 hours of delivery. The feedback was overwhelming, with many young people who would never have had the chance or confidence to join a tennis club saying they loved the activities and wanted to play more.

Securing funding for roll out

The success of the pilot led to the Tennis Foundation and StreetGames supporting Hat-Trick to link with OAKS consultancy to successfully apply to the Big Lottery Awards 4 All fund for a grant to support the delivery of the SERVES programme.

The grant has allowed Hat-Trick to roll out SERVES further across Newcastle, as well as the opportunity to up-skill Tyrone and other volunteers to gain LTA coaching qualifications. As a result, Tyrone is now a qualified Level 1 coach and is in the process of undertaking his LTA Level 2 qualifications.

Tyrone - ‘A role model for young people’

Tyrone has now been volunteering for Hat-Trick for 22 months and has shown great development as a coach. He has matured rapidly and has gained many personal skills including the ability to connect with those under his guidance as well as colleagues in the coaching world – his professionalism is great to see in someone his age. His social skills have also developed and he has a good relationship with staff as well as the young people he is delivering to – he has progressed into a brilliant role model for the young people around the East End of Newcastle.

Creating a future tennis workforce

Through the SERVES programme and the link to British tennis, Tyrone has gone on to volunteer at Tennis For Free sites at Gosforth and Exhibition Park where he volunteers for two hours a week and is paid for an additional two hours. After his first time at the Tennis For Free sites Tyrone told Hat-Trick: ‘My first time coaching at Tennis For Free was amazing! A lot of fun and soon I’m hoping to be running the sessions.’

Following on from this, Tyrone has also started tennis coaching at the David Lloyd Centre where he receives free access to the gym facilities in exchange for his time.
A special reward

To thank him for his commitment to the SERVES programme, Hat-Trick contacted StreetGames who liaised with the Tennis Foundation for a racket cover to be signed by Paralympic wheelchair tennis players. Hat-Trick purchased him a racket to go with the cover which had his name engraved on the handle. The Tennis Foundation also provided Tyrone with a letter of recognition for his volunteering and a key ring.

Tyrone said:

“SERVES has really helped me, not just from a tennis point of view, but also with increasing my confidence. Before, I would rarely talk to people, however, now I try to speak with everyone and get them involved.

“Being involved has changed my life, I have enjoyed every moment of it. SERVES has opened so many doors for me and enabled me to do so much – currently I am on a Level 1 tennis coaching course. I love it because it encourages kids to have a chance at a new sport which is how I was introduced to tennis.”

From Newcastle to Wimbledon

As well as Tyrone, four other Hat-Trick volunteers have gone through the progression pathway from being players in their own community to becoming leaders. Through SERVES they were given the opportunity to visit Wimbledon in 2017 – the first game they watched was the all British battle between Kyle Edmund and Alex Ward in their first round game. Unlike the weather in the North East, Wimbledon saw warm temperatures with the sun shining throughout the afternoon. Taking in the sights of Wimbledon, the volunteers also took in the action on Centre Court from the famous Murray Mound, and did a bit of star spotting with John McEnroe and Sue Barker.

Such a trip to Wimbledon is great recognition for the young volunteers involved in the SERVES programme at Hat-Trick, who are not only very excited to work in partnership with the Tennis Foundation and StreetGames to take tennis anywhere, but to also work with more young people like Tyrone to follow in his footsteps through tennis.