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Te Hāpaitanga's role in advancing women in high performance coaching

Theme:
Leadership

 Te Hāpaitanga's role in advancing women in high performance coaching

Co-authored by Luke Kirkness, NZ Herald

Te Hāpaitanga is reshaping New Zealand's coaching landscape and embodies hope for an inclusive future. Rooted in empowering female coaches, its impact reaches far beyond the sidelines, [fostering diversity and innovation](#) across sports. In the fourth part of our series, Luke Kirkness discovers the future trajectory of Te Hāpaitanga and its ongoing commitment to breaking barriers.

Te Hāpaitanga's strides toward gender equity are undeniable.

As it envisions a future [where every voice matters](#), the programme promoting women into high-performance coaching roles stands as a catalyst for change.

The timing of the programme couldn't be more critical.

It aims to cultivate the next generation of coaches poised to compete globally alongside upcoming athletes and is vital for [fostering inclusivity](#) within the industry.

Thanks to its emphasis on empowering female coaches, [Te Hāpaitanga](#) has increased female [representation in sports management and administration](#), female participation and leadership across all sports disciplines, and more female coaches are guiding female athletes.

Only four women were in high-performance director (HPDs) roles across 28 different national sporting organisations (NSOs) at the start of the pilot in 2020. Today there are 12 female HPDs across 48 NSOs.

Reflecting on its impact, former Tall Fern Jody Cameron, who heads Te Hāpaitanga, acknowledges the progress made and the [potential for an even greater impact](#) in the future.

"NSOs are really recognising its benefit... it takes everyone to make it work.

"The conversations are open, the mindsets and language are changing. People are trusting they are going to get back brilliant resources to enhance their environment and it's great for their athletes and their sport.

"The sports are aware this is something that takes more than just a programme or one person leading the move, it takes everyone to make it work."



Te Hāpaitanga dares to challenge the status quo, recognising that true innovation thrives in environments where voices from all walks of life are heard. Photo / Photosport

As a sport that for the past century has been traditionally for girls and women, the representation of female high-performance coaches within [netball](#) is already a standout.

But the sport has still benefitted from Te Hāpaitanga.

Temepara Bailey (MNZM), a former [Silver Fern](#) of Samoan and Māori descent, was in the first cohort and transitioned from playing to coaching as an assistant for the Northern Stars and leading the National Netball League (NNL) team Comets.

Another was Pelesa Semu, who led the Central Manawa in the NNL, and assisted Yvette McCausland-Durie with the Te Wānanga o Raukawa Pulse. Semu is the current NZ Secondary School coach and was the first Pasifika coach to lead an NNZ team at a national level.

Other coaches who went through Te Hāpaitanga:

- Julie Seymour, ex-Silver Fern transitioned to coaching, currently the NZU21 coach
- Tia Winikerei, MG Mystics coach
- Anna Andrews-Tasola, ex-Cook Island representative and Te Wānanga o Raukawa Pulse coach
- Jo Morrison, ex-Silver Fern transitioned to coaching, Ascot Hotel Steel Assistant Coach, NZSS assistant coach



Honey Hireme-Smiler and Julie Seymour at the Te Hāpaitanga retreat in 2022. Photo / Photosport

In a statement, a NNZ spokesperson said the programme “has had an enormous impact”.

“The holistic nature of the programme, which is set in different environments that allow freedom of thinking and being, is a key feature. Whether that be on a marae, on a mountain top or by the sea, it is purpose-designed to allow the diversity of thinking both independently and collectively.

“Our coaches have certainly appreciated being in spaces that are not only familiar and comforting, but also those that at times have challenged.

“The facilitation and mentorship provides for wrap-around support for each individual coach, to allow them to reflect, find their strengths, and to find clarity as leaders as they navigate through what can often be challenging and chaotic high performance sport environments.

“Over the 18 months engagement and beyond, our cohort of coaches have a newfound confidence and reassurance that they have a place in the high performance world of sport. They continue to grow a sense of strength, belonging and collegialism from the cohort whānau and facilitators/mentors and a deepened love for their coaching and life in general.

“They have their own ‘tribe’ outside of the bubble of their personal sporting environment whom they can share and confide in.

“The benefit to the athlete is that the coach continues to fill their kete with enhanced coaching and life tools that can be taken confidently back into their environments to ultimately help the growth of the athlete.”

[Hannah Porter](#), [New Zealand Rugby](#)’s (NZR) head of women in high performance, told the *Herald* four of its coaches had gone through Te Hāpaitanga and on to “bigger and better things”.

"If I look at Whitney Hansen, [she's] gone on to win a World Cup with the Black Ferns as an assistant coach and then move into a head coaching role with South Island Matatū, and similarly for Mel Bosman and Crystal Kaua both involved. Mel is an assistant [of Hurricanes Poua] and Crystal is a head coach of Chiefs Manawa.

"We didn't have any female head Super Rugby Aupiki coaches, certainly until that programme."

From an NZR point of view, Porter said it was "really thankful" for Te Hāpaitanga. Asked whether All Blacks fans could see a female coach at the helm in the near future, Porter said NZR wasn't thinking that laterally.

"The ultimate goal would be that you have a group of high-performing coaches within NZ Rugby - and (it) doesn't matter if they choose the male or female game - a group of great people with the skillset to coach either men or women, and (who) can jump between programmes."

Sports and Recreation Minister Chris Bishop reiterated the Government's commitment to promoting women in sport, adding he thought Grant Robertson as the previous minister nailed lifting NZ's focus on women and girls in sports.

"I expect this to continue under our Government."

Labour's sport and recreation spokesman Peeni Henare underscored the importance of initiatives like Te Hāpaitanga in advancing equity in sport.

"Fostering and developing talented female coaches to excel in high performance sport is vital for the future of women in sport in NZ. I am incredibly proud of the initiative and passion Grant Robertson had in this area, and want to continue his good work."

In a sporting world often dominated by tradition and hierarchy, Te Hāpaitanga dares to challenge the status quo, recognising that true innovation thrives in environments where voices from all walks of life are heard.

It continues to evolve and expand its reach, paving the way for a future where gender is no longer a barrier to success in the coaching realm.


As more women find their voices, seize opportunities, and break down barriers, the future of high-performance coaching shines brighter than ever.


Stay tuned for the final instalment of the series tomorrow, where Luke Kirkness provides his thoughts on Te Hāpaitanga, its impact, and its future.


Te Hāpaitanga series

- Part 1: [Inside the coaching revolution sweeping New Zealand](#)
- Part 2: [How female coaches are being empowered for greater success](#)
- Part 3: [Rewriting the playbook: Paving the way for women coaches](#)

[Luke Kirkness is an Online Sports Editor](#) for the NZ Herald. He previously covered consumer affairs for the Herald and was an assistant news director in the Bay of Plenty. He won Student Journalist of the Year in 2019.


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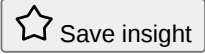
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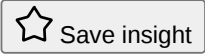
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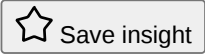
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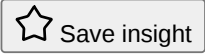
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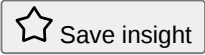
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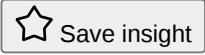
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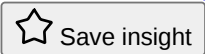
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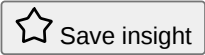
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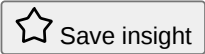
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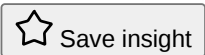
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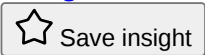
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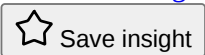
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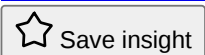
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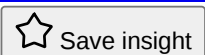
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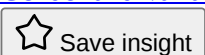
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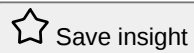


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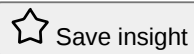
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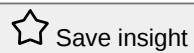
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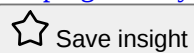
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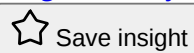
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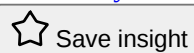
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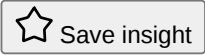
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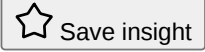
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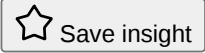
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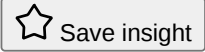
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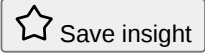
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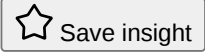
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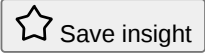
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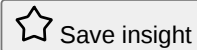
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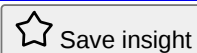
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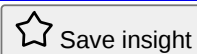
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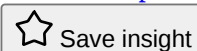
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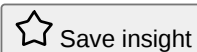
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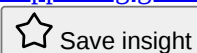
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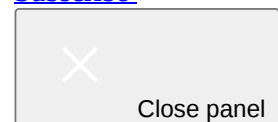
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