

Horses for courses

PAUL TAYLOR

THEY can be obstinate and highly-strung, fiery and overbearing, or just lazy and scared.

So it's not difficult to deduce why Sport New Zealand believes working with horses can help its top coaches.

The psyche of professional and top amateur sportspeople is much the same – no rule fits all, and a squad is a collection of diverse personalities.

Six coaches on High Performance Sport NZ's coach accelerator programme spent two days in Queenstown last week learning the vagaries of horse handling with one of the country's premier horse trainers, Andrew Froggatt.

Horse whisperer Froggatt relocated to Queenstown 18 months ago and teamed up with long-time local and Wakatipu Riding Club president Sam Glazebrook to form new venture 'Leading the Way'.

It offers horse training courses designed to improve leadership, communication and relationship skills, at a spectacular Dalefield farm.

High Performance Sport NZ's Dr Alex McKenzie, the coaching programme manager, says while adapting to horses' personalities is a factor, the course is ultimately an exercise in self-awareness for the coaches.

"Horses are an emotional mirror," McKenzie says.

"They're very attuned to who's working with them. So the coaches have to use body language, energy levels – non-verbal communication skills to give clear instructions to the horse.

"Working with a group of athletes who are not doing what you want, it's very easy to say they're not listening. But the horse wants to please, so the coaches have to look to themselves."

Taking the reins last week were ex-All Black Scott Robertson, now Canterbury and New Zealand under-20s All Blacks coach, All Whites coach Anthony Hudson, Rowing New Zealand Waikato and under-23s coach Gary Roberts, Athletics New Zealand coach Raylene Bates, assistant coach of Black Sticks Women Sean Dunne, and Waikato-Bay of Plenty Magic netball team assistant coach Margaret Forsyth.

McKenzie says previous coaches who've been through the three-year programme say the horse course is one of its "most profound and memorable experiences".

Robertson agrees. He was appointed head



Hands-on: All Whites coach Anthony Hudson during the coach accelerator programme

coach of the next generation of All Blacks, the under-20s, last year after leading Canterbury to an ITM Cup Premiership title.

"It's been fascinating," he says.

"I've got no history with horses – they're big, strong, but they've just got personalities like us.

"So you've got to figure them out, what makes them tick, and how you can help them.

"There's some great lessons in it, especially about building relationships, and assessing strengths and weaknesses and what you can fine-tune to make them better."

Froggatt's worked with more than 6000 horses in the 20 years since he started his business helping owners with problem horses – from wild, untouched horses to pony club ponies and race horses.

He's been involved in the Sport NZ programme seven years, with an impressive client list – from All Blacks coach Steve Hansen and Black Caps

coach Mike Hesson, along with NZ Army officers and corporate bigwigs.

This is the first time he's held the course in Queenstown, with previous courses held in the North Island.

The two-day session ends with a confidence course in blazing sunshine, where the coaches coerce the horses to complete certain tasks, such as putting one hoof in a tyre, walking across a tarpaulin, or straddling a wooden beam.

"It's challenging and gets these guys right out of their environment," Froggatt says.

All Whites football coach Hudson says: "Do you know what, I've loved it.

"I wish I'd been on something like this years ago – it's been superb.

"It's opened my eyes to a new level of leadership and coaching – skills around creating boundaries and gaining trust, which is about self-awareness."

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SPORTSSHORTS

Tennis juniors star

QUEENSTOWN tennis player Miki Nobuzawa had great results in the recent national under-16 tournament in Christchurch. The 16-year-old fourth seed fought through five singles matches to reach the final, which he narrowly lost 2-6, 6-2, 4-6 to third seed Finn Reynolds, of Hawkes Bay. In his third-round match he saved six match points before winning the third set. "It was a fantastic result because he works his butt off," Miki's coach Lan Bale says. Miki then teamed up with Finn to win the doubles. Meanwhile, Queenstown Tennis Academy player Emilia Price, of Winton, and partner Monique Barry won the girls' doubles at the national under-14s in Auckland. Emilia lost her singles semi but only two days later turned the tables on her opponent, beating her 6-1 6-0 in the teams event.

Jamie romps home

UNITED States-bound Queenstown golfer Jamie Anstiss won the Otago men's championship by five shots last weekend. The 19-year-old, who's secured a three-year golf scholarship to Southeastern Louisiana University, finished five under par after 72 holes at Dunedin's Balmacewen course. Anstiss played No.2 for the Otago team which finished second in the interprovincials in Hamilton last month. Fellow local Mark Brooks tied for third at Balmacewen.

Battle for cricket comp's top spot

TWO century-makers have propelled Frankton and Jack's Point to the top of the Mountain Scene Twenty/20 cricket league table.

Frankton batsman Jack Gilbert blasted 112 last Friday to enable his team to surpass Wakatipu's 178 for six with four balls to spare, for the loss of only three wickets – Steve Ridley top-scored for Wakatipu with 85.

After six rounds, Frankton and Jack's Point lead with eight points apiece.

Jack's Point last Thursday surpassed Arrowtown's 178 runs, also with four balls to spare, thanks to 116 runs from Otago Country cricketer Sean Windle, who leaves soon for Wellington.

The following night, however, Boydton beat Jack's Point by 21 runs. Boydton scored 175 for five, Rhys Collins top-scoring with 63 not out, then restricted Jack's Point to 154,

despite 68 from Ants Webb.

Four-time defending champion Arrowtown recovered from Thursday's loss to beat Kelvin Heights.

After making 178, including 61 from Tim McCormack, it held Kelvin Heights to 152, Blake Lindsay taking three wickets from three overs.

Arrowtown and Boydton lie joint second on six points.

Central Queenstown, Kelvin Heights and Wakatipu languish on two points each. The first two are due to play each other in a catch-up game.

In the final round at the Events Centre tomorrow, starting 5.30pm, Boydton plays Central Queenstown and Jack's Point plays Frankton.

The scheduled game between Arrowtown and Wakatipu is likely to be played later.

Following a weekend off, the semi-finals will be played on February 13 with the final on February 15.

– PHILIP CHANDLER

Nine-holer enters new era

PHILIP CHANDLER

AS the Queenstown Golf Club celebrates its centenary this weekend, its former Frankton nine-hole course is entering a new era.

The Queenstown council is spending \$175,000 to add a dedicated short-game practice area to Frankton's existing nine holes and driving range, as well as other work.

Removing question marks over the future of the course, the council took over the course from the golf club two-and-a-half years ago.

Allan McKay, the club's former head pro and more latterly head pro at Millbrook Resort, near Arrowtown, joined the Frankton Golf Centre as assistant pro to Jamie McIsaac, of Inspire Golf, early last month.

He says the council should be applauded for its investment in the course, which he says will significantly enhance it as a training centre.

Due to open in April, the new 800 square metre practice green, including two bunkers, will



Improvements on course: Frankton Golf Centre assistant pro Allan McKay at the new practice green by the state highway corner which will be ready in April

allow golfers to improve their chipping, pitching and putting, he says.

Since October the course has also become the main training ground for the new Wakatipu

Junior Golf Club, formed from the former junior divisions of the Queenstown, Arrowtown and Millbrook golf clubs.

Currently 30 to 50 junior golfers are turning up to free coaching at Frankton every Saturday morning.

"Ultimately, what Jamie and I would like to see, with council consent, is a dedicated golf academy [at Frankton]," McKay says.

McKay – a life member of the Professional Golfers' Association of New Zealand – is also looking after the golf centre's state-of-the-art workshop, which is being renamed Golf Repair Queenstown.

He says it's the only facility in Otago and Southland, outside Dunedin, where clubs can not only be repaired, but technical improvements like regripping and changing shaft lengths can be undertaken.

"A lot of people, for example, are changing their putter grip to a thicker grip, which dramatically improves their ability to make shorter putts."

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