

[front page](#)

[news](#)

[back issues](#)

[comment](#)

[letters](#)

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[subscribe](#)

[about us](#)

[contact us](#)

[back page](#)

## All systems go: a positive approach to Scottish coaching

Using the strapline 'Transforming Scottish youth sport so sport can transform Scotland's youth', the Positive Coaching Scotland (PCS) programme describes itself as a cultural change initiative designed to create a positive environment for young people in sport. Beth Macleod takes a look at how PCS is using sport to effect transformational change in children's learning and in the development of their life skills.

Sportscotland is leading an initiative designed to create encouraging environments in which young Scots can learn to enjoy sport and so want to continue doing it into adulthood.

The cornerstone of PCS is the Double Goal Coach ethos which is based on the two goals – the first being winning – not at all costs but through concerted effort and learning to compete effectively – and the second is one of teaching young people vital, character-building life skills. At the heart of the programme there are three principles which are critical factors in becoming an effective Double Goal Coach and ensuring that young people gain life skills which they can use in and out of sport.

The three key principles are:

1. Honour our sport (ROOTS)

It is crucial to teach young people how to honour their sport and teach respect for rules, opponents, officials, team-mates and self.

2. Redefine 'winner' (ELM – Effort, Learning and Mistakes happen)

PCS encourages young people to see beyond the scoreboard when taking part in their sport. True winning comes from giving your best possible effort, continually improving by learning every time you play, and maximising your potential by not being afraid to make mistakes and getting better by learning from them.

3. Fill the emotional tank (E-TANK)

Young people need to feel appreciated no matter what their ability within their chosen sport. As a Double Goal Coach it is crucial to fill the E-Tanks of young people by ensuring we encourage, teach, appreciate, provide non-verbal support and know how to praise.

By working in partnership with coaches, parents, teachers and club leaders, PCS can help enhance the skill and learning of all members to create clubs committed to excellence and to championing the PCS culture.

The process of transforming the culture of Scottish youth sport began with a two-year pilot phase – led by the Winning Scotland Foundation – and in April 2010 Sportscotland took over the lead role working with their local and national partners to deliver a phased national roll out. Supported by the Winning Scotland Foundation and the Wood Family Trust, the national roll out is now building on that initial success

PCS may be only one of a suite of support and development programmes that Sportscotland is leading on to help develop coaching and volunteering across Scotland but it is unique in that it involves everyone in the community – club leaders, coaches, parents and teachers – and sets new standards for these key influencers in their involvement with young people in sport. PCS is improving the quality of coaching through systematic training and development.

By taking part in Positive Coaching Scotland, partners in local authorities and Scottish governing bodies of sport are getting access to an approach which ensures that not only coaches and volunteers are supported to be the best they can be but that through the cultural change programme they have the skills and expertise to ensure our young people choose, and stay in, sport.

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The Scottish programme is based on the highly successful Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) model developed at Stanford University in 1998 to combat escalating health and social problems in the United States. The founder and creator of the PCA, Jim Thompson, recently visited Scotland to see the progress Sportscotland is making with the Scottish version. Summing up his trip, Jim said, "PCA is changing culture organisation by organisation in the States and that's already happening in Scotland."

Since the beginning of PCA, it has been used by over 1,100 sports organisations, has influenced over four million young people and is helping to create a positive sporting culture in the United States of America. In Scotland the pilot of the programme has already been rolled out across several local authority areas and Scottish governing bodies of sport.

The next steps for PCS include the creation of bespoke workshops and materials to support young sports participants and the key influencers in their sporting life, and for these materials to be used throughout the local authorities and governing bodies that are signing up to take part in PCS. Already the Scottish Football Association has piloted PCS throughout the Fife local authority area and had now developed plans to roll out PCS to all their clubs and young players through their coaches. Jim Fleeting, director of football development at the SFA, said of PCS: "The three words get you excited immediately. I coach in all aspects of my life, as a football coach, as a parent and as a grandparent, and if we could all do this the PCS way then this country would benefit hugely."

PCS can help educate young people about winning, success through effort and cooperation, while at the same time encouraging them to learn and develop life skills which can equip them for the future. You can help us to achieve this by finding out more about PCS and applying the philosophy and principles to your own involvement – as club leader, coach, parent or teacher – with young people in sport.

**Beth Macleod is lead manager at Sportscotland.**

**For further information visit [www.sportscotland.org.uk/pcs](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk/pcs)**

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