

A REGION BENEFITS



Name: Darran Wrighton
Qualifications: Master Club Professional
Club: Momentum Tennis - Copper City Regional Tennis Centre, Mount Isa Queensland

Darran Wrighton may not have any personal outstanding centre court memories, but the joy he receives from helping others experience the sport is reward enough.

Back in a local town in North Yorkshire, UK, Darran Wrighton was exposed to tennis by his grandfather – a local coach in the area.

“For many years, he was responsible for the running of junior inter-club fixtures and coaching of many club juniors in Regional Northern England,” Wrighton says. “As a teenager I was an assistant coach to my Grandfather and I helped him to deliver club and holiday coaching sessions.”

At 16 years of age Wrighton was given the opportunity to move from the countryside in Yorkshire and undertake an apprenticeship at the National Training Centre (at the time) at Sutton in London.

“It would help me work on my game as well as gain the skills and knowledge to become a qualified coach,” he says. “It was during this apprenticeship whilst training part-time with players who were on a full-time squad that I found myself wanting to be involved with the coaching of players rather than being coached.”

Now a qualified coach for more than 16 years, Wrighton has experienced a vast array of coaching assignments that included a lot of travel.

“I feel lucky to have worked in most tennis environments from tennis academies and summer camps in the US, to tennis resorts in Europe as well as indoor centres and private member clubs in Australia, New Zealand and the UK,” he says.

Wrighton settled in Prahran in Melbourne’s east, and completed the Tennis Australia Master Club Professional qualification, delivered in partnership with Deakin Prime. But after three years he decided to leave the leafy suburb and travel 3000 kms to a remote part of north-west Queensland – Mount Isa.

“I became a regional partner when I was offered the contract as the coaching provider for the centre. I had to kick start the coaching program,” he says. “Momentum Tennis was established as a business in June 2010. Forming part of my contract as head coach was to be the regional coach for north-west Queensland.”

In the short seven months Wrighton has seen the uniqueness of the Copper City Regional Tennis Centre – the first of five regional tennis centres opened in 2010.

“It is run by a dedicated and amazing voluntary committee. This committee has been instrumental in obtaining the funding that was necessary to redevelop the venue into the facility it is today,” he says.

“I am in the enviable position of being able to run my coaching business from the centre in unison with the committee. I know that this is a rarity in the coaching industry but I hope that we can be used as a case study showcasing how coaches and committees can work together to achieve successful outcomes for the club and the community.”

The community pride is second to none and Wrighton feels that the local population

has embraced him. “The fact that you are the only coach servicing a population of 22,000 people with the closest opposition some 700 kilometres away, I potentially have a very captive audience.”

“I am particularly passionate about giving rural venues the assistance and knowledge to make their own internal programs a success so that generations may continue to use their facilities. To me a town with tennis courts being unused is a travesty and I always will have an internal need to find a way to utilise them in a way that benefits that local community.”

But with the multitude of sports available to juniors, a number of things need to be considered.

“Planning in advance to avoid clashes is paramount while conscientiously ensuring the service you are providing doesn’t just meet expectations it exceeds them while constantly creating an awareness of how a quality coaching program should be delivered.”

Wrighton offers junior coaching, matchplay programs, the tennis in schools outreach program as well as catering for adults.

“We fully embrace the coaching revolution brought about by modified balls and equipment and these features heavily in all that I do,” he says.

“My first intention was to have a clear and concise coaching and competition pathway that parents could follow with ease. At any time players are able to enter any of my programs irrespective of age and ability.”

If you are interested in completing the Master Club Professional course please visit tennis.com.au/tacourses or contact your local Coach Development Coordinator.

