



COVERDRIVE PROGRAM

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*“The Bradman Museum and International Cricket Hall of Fame, in its lovely setting will encourage and inspire young people to serve their nation with courage, honour and humility” – **Sir Donald Bradman***

*“The Foundation will strive to advance, promote and encourage, either directly or indirectly, the educational, cultural and intellectual welfare of persons within the community” – **Bradman Foundation Charter***



2021

Bradman Foundation

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THE BRADMAN FOUNDATION

The Bradman Foundation, a non-profit charitable trust, was established in 1987 with the full support of Sir Donald Bradman AC to promote cricket as a valuable cultural and sporting force within the community. The Foundation prides itself on being an advocate for playing the game as it should be played. It collects and displays the heritage of the game while delivering Sir Donald's commitment to the future; using cricket to aid the education and development of youth and the wider community.

The Foundation also regularly hosts matches and special events on the historic and picturesque Bradman Oval. A special focus of the Foundation is the development of young people through cricket. This goal is reflected through opportunities afforded by the Foundation which include scholarships, sponsorship of youth cricket and coaching clinics, such as *Coverdrive*.

THE KOLLEGE OF KNOWLEDGE KOMMITTEE FOR KIDS (4K's)

The Kollege of Knowledge Kommittee for Kids (The 4K's) is a Southern Highlands based charity. Established in 1989, the 4K's is committed to raising money and providing assistance for special projects that provide assistance for disadvantaged children. Ensuring ongoing support for families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, The 4K's are committed to ensuring everyone in the community has the chance to thrive.

Involved with *Coverdrive* since its inception, The 4K's are integral to the program's ongoing success.

COVERDRIVE PROGRAM BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE BRADMAN FOUNDATION'S COVERDRIVE PROGRAM?

Coverdrive is a modified sports program designed to provide outdoor activities during school time for disadvantaged children attending public schools within the Southern Highlands. The multi-sport program utilises activities to help teach and promote key social skills that facilitate successful classroom and social interactions. As it has continued to develop and grow, *Coverdrive* has been integrated into both Bowral and Moss Vale High schools support unit curriculum.

WHO IS THE TARGET GROUP FOR COVERDRIVE?

Coverdrive is designed for disadvantaged children – aged 12 to 17 – attending public high schools. The Bradman Foundation targets public within the Southern Highlands. We aim to support these children socially, mentally and physically.

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HOW EXTENSIVE IS THE PROGRAM?

In 2021, due to restricted travel (COVID) the number of sessions has doubled from 40 multi-sport sessions per year, to 80. The additional 40 will be delivered on-site at Moss Vale High on Tuesdays, while Bowral High continues to receive their Thursday sessions at Bradman Oval. This change allows for increased time, care and dedication to each student; ultimately increasing the value and reach of the program.

What the change allows, too, is an increase in the number of students who will be able to attend at Moss Vale, meaning the total reach of *Coverdrive* will be in excess of 80 students within the Southern Highlands.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF COVERDRIVE?

Through the program we aim to:

- Help the development of social skills which are crucial to every aspect of life.
- Give all students the chance to play sport and help them gain an appreciation for the lessons it provides.
- Use sport to help students with disabilities integrate more successfully into mainstream programs both in and outside of school.
- Develop confidence and self-acceptance by providing a safe and enjoyable experience where students are encouraged to have a go.

WHAT OUTCOMES HAVE BEEN OBSERVED IN THE FIRST ITERATIONS?

We are pleased to say that we have and continue to observe significant development in all of the students who have been part of the *Coverdrive* program. Some of the key program-specific benefits include:

- Embracing 'play' – this includes playing fairly, being part of a team and being gracious in both victory and defeat.
- Willingness to take risks and a preparedness to fail.
- Increased co-operation and acceptance of varying levels of ability.
- Creation of a positive group environment.
- Building of self-esteem and confidence.

WHAT IS THE KEY TEACHING STRATEGY?

The most fundamental aspect of the *Coverdrive* program is that it is consistent routine in both delivery and content. On advisement from the schools and based on experience through the first few years of the program, we are determined to ensure the sessions are delivered as part of a routine. Providing a sense of regularity – time, place and personnel – allows the students to become comfortable, meaning they invest fully.

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WHAT RESOURCES DOES THE BRADMAN FOUNDATION PROVIDE?

As we continue to grow the program and see the continued benefit it provides all of the students, we are more than happy to provide the following resources on a weekly basis:

- Bradman Oval, Pavilion and Museum
- One Level 2 coach, who is trained in managing children
- Two support activity supervisors – trained and with valid Working With Children Checks
- A range of equipment to allow for a full multi-sport program

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

It is crucial to ensure, when teaching children with special needs, that learning programs are customised to individual needs. We need to do everything we can to continue to promote learning and development.

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WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

UNITY, COMMUNITY AND INCLUSION

BRADMAN FOUNDATION'S COVERDRIVE PROGRAM A HIT FOR ALL INVOLVED

"Will you be on our team, Sir? Here, take this vest!"

As Riley, a year nine student from Bowral High School noticed me watching the action from the sidelines and subsequently demanded I join his team in touch rugby, I felt for the first time, the strong sense of inclusion and unity that characterises the Bradman Foundation's *Coverdrive* program.

The program, now in its fifth year, uses sport as a means to engage with high school students with disabilities. Promoting the unique and invaluable lessons that sport provides, *Coverdrive* works with the support units of Bowral and Moss Vale High Schools, to give in excess of 70 students the chance to participate and engage in a range of sporting activities on a weekly basis.

Coverdrive was designed and runs in partnership with the *Kollege of Knowledge Kommittee for Kids (The 4K's)* – a Southern Highlands based charity designed to support and encourage disadvantaged youth. Established in 1989, The 4K's works tirelessly to raise money and for and provide assistance to those who need it most in the Southern Highlands. Committed to creating a brighter and more enjoyable way of life for everyone, their role in *Coverdrive* is integral to its ongoing success.

The program evolved as part of the Bradman Foundation's ongoing vision to encourage and inspire young people; using sport as an avenue to foster ideals of service, honour and humility in the community. The Foundation was initially associated with [DreamCricket](#), a wonderful organisation that affords primary school children with special needs the chance to play cricket. However, the team at Bradman alongside The 4K's, decided to take it a step further. They realised it was incumbent upon them to ensure that for these students, the opportunity to continue a relationship with sport did not end when their primary school years did.

Rina Hore, Executive Director of the Bradman Foundation was adamant that this project was crucial. "There was an opportunity for us to address a need in the community – so we jumped at it," she said. "It is a community program where the Bradman Foundation can utilise its people and facilities to give back."

Happily, the Foundation had the perfect person to drive the initiative. Jock McIlhatton, Coach and Director of Cricket at the Bradman Centre, possesses a unique warmth and personability and with a passion for developing young people, he was quick to take charge of the new program. Sitting down with him in the Bradman Café after Bowral High's first session back for term 2, his affection for and dedication to the program is evident.

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“I felt we needed a more regular program for these kids, not just a once off,” he said. “The best fit for us was always going to be secondary schools and this way the kids can continue their sporting program beyond primary school.”

Initially with grand plans to run a cricket-only program, Jock soon realised that to give the students the most enjoyable experience, he would need to transition away from the leather and willow.

“After speaking with the support school heads, Amanda Sutton (Bowral) and Tim Vandervoot (Moss Vale) I got a better idea of what they would specifically like from the program.” A cricket tragic though he may be, Jock smiled and admitted, “we started with cricket, but pretty quickly it emerged that a multi-sport program would be better for the kids.”

So, the day I was privileged enough to join Jock and the crew – in stunning Autumnal sunshine – the picturesque Bradman Oval was set up with four different stations; giving the Bowral High students the chance to rotate through soccer, tennis, touch rugby and golf. A keen golfer and tennis player though he might have been, I’m not sure even Sir Donald could have imagined his former home ground would play host to such an eclectic range of sports. What he would understand – and fundamentally relate to – is the unfiltered joy that followed, as the students all settled into their own sporting rhythm. For some, the *Coverdrive* program is a chance to unleash their inner competitive streak; Abbey, who plays soccer outside of school manages to strike a balance between getting her football fix – making an impressive solo run down the wing – before looking to bring others into the game, crossing the ball and giving teammates the chance to score.

For others, the range of sports that the program offers gives them the opportunity to develop a skillset they might never have thought possible. Blake, who was more than keen for a chat, would stop talking intermittently to direct his focus to the golf ball. Eventually enjoying that unique feeling of making perfect contact, he was overjoyed to share the moment with his teachers and friends.

“That’s gone all the way to Mittagong!” Jock quipped.

Thrilled with his effort and the consistent encouragement, Blake decided to advance straight to a *Happy Gilmore* technique. Immersed in the sport, our chat took a back seat as his confidence grew and the delight of the sporting pursuit took over.

Dylan, who has been recovering from a dislocated knee over the last few months (an injury sustained as he gave his all on the football field) was eager to share what he loves about the program.

“I love coming to Bradman,” he said. When queried as to why, his answer was delightfully simple – and what underpins all of sport’s overwhelming success, “it’s fun.”

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If that question had been something of a full-toss, the next one left him stumped. Dylan's favourite sport to play at Bradman?

"Cricket. Or soccer. Maybe tennis – actually I love touch rugby."

The inherent beauty of the multi-sport program, of course, is that doesn't restrict any of the students from being involved. Samuel, who didn't particularly enjoy what he described as the "crash and bash" of touch rugby, was much happier devoting a quiet concentration to the golf rotation. He did, however, lament the lack of golf carts, suggesting it would add unrivalled authenticity; perhaps something for the Foundation to consider in future...

That the program has allowed the students to grow in confidence and continue to come out of their shells is what consistently impresses Amanda Sutton. Head of Bowral High's support unit, she has been involved in the *Coverdrive* program since the start. "Sport is important for every student, but especially for our kids it helps build their communication, teamwork and confidence," she said. "Where they might get intimidated playing sport with the mainstream cohort, they are more comfortable at Bradman."

Pleasingly, too, Amanda has observed an increased willingness and desire amongst her students to be involved; "the first day it happened, we had seventy percent of the kids sitting on the hill. They refused to take part," she said. Gesturing to a group who were running around before the rotations started this particular Thursday, she highlighted the program's development, "now they can't wait to get into it." More than that, she lauds the fact that the program has helped increase the unity between the students. "We don't just take one class, we take the whole unit; years 7-12, and they all get mixed, playing all together." As a result, many of them now play sport all together at recess and lunchtime back at school, one of the consequences of the program that makes Amanda most proud, "I'm not sure that would happen without Bradman, it definitely strengthens bonds between year levels."

As *Coverdrive* continues to foster a tight-knit culture amongst the school group, it has also become something of a foundation for those who are looking to take their next step once the school bell has rung for the final time. Brooke Norman, a participant in the inaugural *Coverdrive* program has gone on to gain employment with the Bradman Centre – working in the Bradman Café since finishing school. A tremendous success story, Rina is thrilled to have Brooke as part of the Bradman staff.

"Jock noticed that Brooke was a model participant in *Coverdrive* from the start," she said. Exhibiting key qualities of empathy and teamwork, she was always going to thrive in the program. "We invited her to be part of the team in the Café, she started out washing dishes but as she has grown in confidence and capability, her role has expanded."

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It is indicative of the quality of the program too, that students see it as part of their own continued success and development. Jock, who makes it a priority to form a connection – and indeed a friendship – with each of the students under his direction, remembers fondly one such occasion.

“One of the young blokes who had been through the program came back and told us he was going to start working in a local restaurant,” he smiled. “It’s so nice to think he wanted to come back and make a point of sharing the good news with us all.”

Touching everyone who is involved, *Coverdrive’s* beneficiaries extend well beyond the boundary rope and into the broader Highlands and NSW community. Long-term Bradman Centre volunteer, Paul Jennings, makes the hour-long drive from Kiama on Sydney’s south coast every week to be involved. Responsible for umpiring soccer matches, he has become a staple of *Coverdrive*. Imbued with a passion for helping young people with disabilities – his engineering business sought to employ all-abilities youth – Paul is content when discussing the program. “I enjoy it. You feel that when you are retired, it’s important to find a way to make a contribution in some way,” he said. When considering the greatest benefit of the program, he is quick to praise the students’ continued development. “I love to see their on-going improvement. It’s not always linear but the trend is always a positive one.”

Similarly, *Coverdrive* continues to engage the local sporting community. Mitch Harry and Susie Purvis, the specialist coaches for golf and tennis respectively, readily volunteer their time each week to give the students the best possible experience. Proud to have them on board, Jock is quick to celebrate the pair’s contribution suggesting their willingness to be involved is “a mark of the success of the program – it’s on a volunteer basis and they want to be here.” Indicative of the emergent culture of *Coverdrive*, it continues to attract and retain high quality people.

So, after four years of setting the standard in the community for involvement and engagement, the Bradman Foundation hopes this is just the beginning. “What we have done is complete a pilot version,” Rina said. Keen to take the program to the next level, she is hopeful that more and more students can be exposed to the benefits of *Coverdrive*, “I would like to think that we could package it and with government support, promote it to other schools both state and nationwide.”

A noble ambition, the Bradman Foundation’s tireless commitment to and vision for young people continues to materialise as a consequence of *Coverdrive*. That it has, to varying degrees, promoted increased confidence, student unity and even employment possibilities following graduation, is a testament to its all-encompassing success.

Heart-warming for all involved, *Coverdrive* – as demonstrated by Riley’s kind and considered offer to get me involved – typifies the limitless potential of sport when utilised in a nurturing and caring environment.



PHOTO COLLAGE
BOWRAL HIGH SCHOOL AT BRADMAN OVAL

(All images taken by Amanda Sutton 29/04/21)



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