

Year 10 BTEC Sport Conference

WISE Campus 22 October 2009

The Year 10 BTEC Sport Conference comprised a range of activities including a key note speech from Heather Fell (silver medallist in the pentathlon at Beijing Olympics), workshops on the fitness and lifestyle and the Olympic experience, a speed-networking session, and a tour of the campus. In the afternoon, students completed an assignment using information from the morning's activities.

Student Evaluation

Feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive with 94% of students saying that it had further developed their understanding of the sports industry. Similarly virtually all students (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the speakers were interesting and informative while 69% thought that they had been challenged to develop and use new skills. Overwhelmingly students agreed they had enjoyed the conference.

“Heather Fell was brilliant – I’ve never held a real Olympic medal before”

“The best thing was meeting all the different people”

The vast majority of students (95%) agreed that the conference had made them want to work harder on their studies back in school while 92% agreed that they had collected information that they could include in their assignment portfolio in order to maximise their grades.

“Interviewing the people was really good”

Students were also asked how the conference had impacted on their thoughts about their future career. All students agreed that they knew more about the sports industry and had learnt about the knowledge, skills and understanding needed by employees in this sector. 89% of students also agreed that the conference had made them more aware of careers in the sports industry, especially careers that do not involve performance such as sports retail or sports journalism. However only 68% of students would now consider a career in the wider sports sector, although this figure varied between schools. The responses seemed to show that some students had chosen BTEC Sport even though they had no obvious interest in Sport.

“Talking to people from different sports backgrounds was the best thing about the conference”

Overall responses show that the students feel they have really benefitted from the conference both in terms of knowledge and understanding, and also in developing skills such as communication and team work. They also thought they had gained in confidence through the speed networking activity, where they interviewed a variety of employers and professionals from the sports industry.

“When they were talking to us I understood, and they were willing to answer any questions”

Meeting a real Olympic medalist and holding the actual silver medal was the best thing about the conference for many students giving them an insight into a totally focussed way of life. For many students (33%) the variety and range of speakers/volunteers was

the most informative and beneficial. A third of students explicitly stated that the insight gained into the different careers and opportunities in sport was the most valuable, 29% of students thought that meeting and talking to people was the best, while 35% students named the speed-networking session although there is clearly some overlap between these statements. Students also appreciated seeing the facilities and the range of activities.

“Helpful advice and a chance to see the great facilities”

Regarding what should be improved about the conference students wanted more interactive activities and 5 students also thought the networking session was too short as they would have liked more time to explore their careers in depth. For some students mixing the school groups was obviously a negative more whilst others liked meeting new people, although 4 students thought the groups were too large. These comments will be used to inform the planning of the next conference and we will endeavour to make the sessions more interactive. However these conferences are not about practical sport (schools can deliver that at their home centres) but raising the awareness of the sport industry.

Comments from teachers

The feedback from the teachers was very positive and they felt the opportunities for students to interact with the professionals could not be replicated back in school. Other comments include:

- It was great to see the students so engaged and enjoying the day
- It met all my expectations and it raised the awareness of the sport industry and the career pathways available to them
- This 1 event has given them the breadth and range of speakers needed to gain the knowledge and understanding to complete the assignment
- The event has developed my knowledge of the sports industry – as a teachers I have learnt loads!
- This has been a fantastic experience for students and teachers alike – it would be difficult to gain the information in any other way
- Many of our students have never had the opportunity to speak to anyone from industry before
- The students responded really well to the interviewing and gained in confidence as the session unfolded

Employer/Professional/Volunteer perspective

All the volunteers gave their time freely and were overwhelmingly positive about the conference and the students. Virtually all have agreed to attend the next event (business pressures permitting) and although the speed networking was exhausting for our volunteers, they found it refreshing talking to young people about their industry. Other comments included:

- It was a joy to be able to talk about my passion with young people who seemed genuinely interested
- I hope they now realise you don't have to be the next David Beckham or Serena Williams to work in the sports industry
- It was great for me to be able to give information that may help a young person to reach their goal

Improvements

As always there are comments about the time in the speed networking – more time with each professional means less professionals to interview. However in the next conference we will address this issue creatively! One workshop presenter commented that she should have made the workshop more interactive and this is something we will encourage. There are also logistical improvements that can be made including prompt arrival of students and an introductory presentation. The evaluation shows that pre-conference preparation for students is essential if students (and staff) are to gain the most from the conference.