

Case Study 4



Squash Australia

Maternity leave, cover and return to work

A Smooth 3 Step Transition

1. Maternity Leave

Jenny Duncalf, previous professional squash player and current National Pathways Coach for Squash Australia, recently introduced her new son to the squash world, making her return to coaching at the Junior World Championships 2023.

Earlier on this year, Squash Australia management worked together with Jenny to plan her transition to maternity leave, communication plan and arrange suitable cover for the role in her absence which included the appointment of her role cover (Cassie Thomas) and a return-to-work plan to see her back courtside.

“Jenny has put in so much work with our junior athletes and she was keen to stay connected to the group while she was on maternity leave. Cassie did an excellent job of keeping Jenny connected to the team and this showed in our results at the World Junior Championships.

Lachlan Johnston, High Performance Director, Squash Australia (July 2023)

2. Maternity Cover

It was decided by both Squash Australia and Jenny that an excellent fit to move into the Pathways role for maternity cover would be Cassie Thomas, ex-professional Squash player and current coach within the Australian Squash system. Cassie worked remotely to cover Jenny’s role and responsibilities with pathway athletes on national team camps and events as required.

“When I was asked if I would like to be maternity cover, I was excited and didn’t hesitate to accept the offer. I was supported by both the HP Manager and National Coach on the transition into the role and throughout the period of maternity cover.

This helped me quickly get used to what the role entailed and helped me do the job to hopefully a high standard. I always knew that it was a temporary position so when the cover finished the transition out for me was smooth. I thoroughly enjoyed the



experience and was grateful to be asked.”

Cassie Thomas, National Pathways Coach Maternity cover, Squash Australia

3. Return to Work

Pivotal to the success of the return-to-work process, was the incorporation of a transition phase between the two coaches. With Squash Australia’s preparations to host the World Junior Championships coinciding with Jenny’s return to work, a seamless transition and continuity of coaching was essential to ensure minimal disruption for the pathways athletes in lead up to this key event. Both coaches worked collaboratively to support each other and the athletes. Taking a family friendly approach, Squash Australia supports Jenny’s decisions to have her son attend courtside as she wishes in the competition and training environment.

“As a first time Mum my experience with Squash Australia and maternity leave was a smooth and transparent one. We were upfront and open about options of how best to proceed in terms of timelines and personnel to fill my role and never had any issues with the process. As many parents will know returning to work is a difficult balancing act and I’m grateful that my workplace and colleagues have provided a supportive and understanding environment to allow my return to high performance coaching as a mother as manageable as possible. Finley is now a travelling member of the team!”

Jenny Duncalf, *National Pathways Coach*, Squash Australia



“It was as if Jenny hadn’t missed a day when she returned to full-time work at the event and her leadership saw our junior girls’ team have their best result in 20 years.”

Lachlan Johnston, *High Performance Director*, Squash Australia

Links

[Former World Number Two Jenny Duncalf talks about her career, becoming a mother, coming out & more #PrideInSquash - PSA Foundation](#)
[Duncalf to Receive 2020 ToC Women’s Leadership Award | J.P. Morgan Tournament of Champions \(tocsquash.com\)](#)

