

Reinga Bloxham - Southern Steel



Reinga Bloxham knows how to keep going in the face of adversity.

Last season, the Southern Steel lost all 15 of their games, their last by an agonising one goal.

“When you’re losing each week, it can sometimes feel like there’s lots of things that you aren’t doing as well as you should,” Bloxham says.

She ended up simplifying things, and choosing one or two things to work on every week.

“As things unfolded and we knew that we weren’t going to win the premiership, we just had to revisit what we were hoping to achieve and just change our expectations a little bit,” she explains.

“But I think the driving force behind everything with the team last year was that they had a really strong work ethic, and we were always driving for improvement and wanting to be better.”

The Steel changed their focus, and worked on improving every week, rather than only striving for those elusive wins.

“It just meant that success was going to look a little bit different,” Bloxham says.

“It wasn’t about winning the ANZ Premiership, it was just about small gains like keeping possession more or looking after your teammates or doing your centre pass better than you had the week before.”

Bloxham believes sometimes the challenges can also be the most rewarding.

“When you see people gel together and they talk about building a connection that’s invisible - I think when you are able to see that out on court, that’s the stuff that keeps me coming back I suppose, that’s the stuff that gives me joy.”

The Steel fans are known for their loyalty, and showing up to their home games.

“We’ve got a really strong connection to our community and to our fan base,” Bloxham says.

“One of the things that I pride myself on is I have a very strong work ethic, and I know a lot of the players that I’ve selected over the years, they fit that mould, they’re prepared to go that extra mile and work really hard.

“It’s an absolute honour and privilege to be able to play in front of our fans, because they just wholeheartedly support you, and they have done through thick and thin.”

Bloxham started working as the Steel’s assistant coach under Janine Southby, and then Noeline Taurua - two people who went on to coach the Silver Ferns.

“I’ve been really lucky with my coaching in the ANZ, I’ve had some really quality coaches that I’ve been able to observe and learn from,” Bloxham says.

Other netball mentors include Southland legends Robyn Broughton and Georgie Salter, but sporting mentors from different codes are just as important for Bloxham.

Rob Beveridge, former coach of the Southland Sharks, has a long basketball coaching career, and Bloxham frequently caught up with him for coffee and a chat.

“He was a really great person to touch base with, and every now and then I still get messages from him which is good,” she says.

She’s also been working with Don Tricker for over two years.

“I feel super lucky to have somebody of his calibre helping me out. He has this really great ability to keep things really simple and always goes back to a couple of key things to work on and I find it really helpful,” she says.

“I’ve had lots of different people over the years and I think it’s really important to have those support networks around you, especially when things get tough.”

Bloxham also believes in staying true to yourself as a coach.

“Hold strong to your own personal values and make sure that you don’t change who you are, no matter where you are or what you’re doing, that’s probably the most important thing,” she says.

“And never be afraid to never keep learning and growing what you do.”