

Tia Winkerei - Northern Mystics



Tia Winkerei has every right to be confident, coaching the reigning champions and a fairly unchanged team roster. But that's not how she works, adamant the Mystics aren't complacent.

"Within this group, I don't feel a sense of complacency, it is something that we check all the time," she says.

"One of the biggest things is to keep them challenged no matter what's happening, and we didn't win games without fight last year at all.

"So we're nowhere near sitting in a comfortable position, where we walk into every game and go 'this is going to be easy', that's not the mindset. The mindset is we can win but we've got to work hard if we want to do it."

Winkerei took charge of the Mystics last season, leading them to their second ANZ Premiership title. She had previously worked under head coach Helene Wilson and assistant coach Rob Wright, so was familiar with the environment.

"Probably the hardest thing or the biggest step up is figuring out how to lead all components of the programme and how to set up the frameworks and structures that you need to be successful for your people," she describes.

Winkerei spent 16 years in the police force, working her way to be a detective sergeant, but returned to her love of netball, and won the league with the Mystics last year, defeating the Stars in the final 74-56.

"The real highlight or the gift that I felt like we had was the real unity amongst the group and the performance culture that we drove together," says Winkerei of the championship-winning team.

"I was grateful for the contribution that everybody made, and we won the final because we everybody had a part to play in that, and the biggest highlight was bringing everyone on that journey, and not allowing anyone to be left behind."

Winkerei says the unity of the team was key to their success.

"The way people are with each other is critically important to the success of the group, particularly on a long-term basis," she says.

"You can win without culture, there's no doubt about that, but I don't think you can get sustained winning without a strong positive culture within the group."

Being an authentic leader is one of the most important aspects of being a coach, Winkerei believes.

"The biggest strength that you have is the way you do things," she says.

"Doing it the way you see it is a really important part of being successful as a coach, because you have the confidence to do things the way you think they should be done.

"But the other part that comes with that is making sure you're reflecting and listening enough to what feedback you're getting...you'll never be the right way to everybody but as long as you're yourself, I think people see you for you and then they understand how to work with you better.

"So be you, that's your superpower."