Background
TagFIT is a prototype sports program developed in late-2017 by Queensland Oztag, a not-for-profit community sports organisation that is making a difference. Sport is a social institution with a complex ecosystem that involves a wide diversity of stakeholders including participants, clubs/leagues, attendees, viewers, governments at all levels, corporate sponsors and philanthropic organisations (RSR, 2014; Skinner and Engelberg, 2018). The community building capacity of sports should not be underestimated. Indeed, the sport is an invaluable lynchpin central to communitarianism—community-building, community regeneration, community resilience, social inclusion and enhancing (e)quality of life (Jarvie, 2003). Community sports create social capital (Adams et al., 2018). Sports facilitate relationships and connectedness between people and groups assisting with social cohesion and population-level wellbeing (Taylor et al., 2017). As such, sports are increasingly central to pro-social initiatives (Sheth and Babiak, 2010; Morgan and Parker, 2017).

What is Oztag and who are Queensland Oztag?
Oztag is a limited contact sport involving passing, catching, tagging, evading and kicking skills. Each game of Oztag is played over two 20-minute periods with eight players on each team. Oztag is offered throughout Queensland at 32 clubs including clubs in rural and remote regions. Queensland Oztag Incorporated is a not-for-profit organisation that is proactive and passionate about bringing Oztag as a sporting opportunity to all communities as an accessible, healthful and fun activity. The remit of Queensland Oztag is to support the sporting community by promoting the inclusive, lifelong and active practice of sport for enhanced physical, social and mental health. Beyond bringing the sport to communities, Queensland Oztag subscribe to an innovative Community Employment format that allows the Development Officers in each venue remittances, helping to create employment within their own community’s sports industry. Oztag Development Officers are paid positions, which carries significant weight in reginal and remote communities where employment, especially within the sports industry, is rare.

Participating in organised sport can mitigate overweight and obesity
The individual benefits of participating in sport are well documented. Engaging in regular physical activity, even of moderate intensity, can reduce the risk of developing a range of adverse medical conditions and assist with managing stress and improving mental health.
(Stewart and Wild, 2014; World Health Organisation, 2017). Physical inactivity is a global public health priority (Varela et al., 2017). In Australia, physical inactivity is problematic at all ages, with physical activity guidelines developed by the Population Health and Sports Division of the Australian Government Department of Health providing benchmarks for physical activity and ways to achieve this (see www.health.gov.au). Around 26% of Australian children and adolescents (2-17 years) are overweight or obese with girls more likely to be obese (9%) and boys (7%) (ABS, 2015). Loosing as little as 3 kg for the average person of average height would substantially reduce the overall health impact of overweight and obesity in Australia (AIHW, 2017). Organised sport is one way to increase physical activity to assist with reducing weight. In Australia, around 4.7 million (26%) young people and adults play a sport (ABS, 2016).

Females participate less in organised, club sport than males
In 2016, the Queensland Government launched the social marketing initiative Join the Movement, which encouraged girls and women to become more physically active. The Join the Movement initiative was part of a more extensive campaign called Start Playing Stay Playing to address findings that more than 40% of Queensland women to not getting enough physical activity (Queensland Government, 2016). At the same time, the Girls – Make Your Move national campaign was launched. The Australian Sports Commission (2017) reported that Australian women spend 4.1 hours per week participating in a sport with the top three motivations being 1) physical health or fitness; 2) fun and enjoyment and 3) social reasons. The top three barriers to participation in sport include 1) poor health or injury; 2) not enough time/other commitments, and 3) don’t like sport/physical activity (Australian Sports Commission, 2017). Women participate more in non-sport-related physical activity such as walking or going to the gym than men and, conversely, participate less in sports-related activities than men, mainly team sport and club sport at all ages (Australian Sports Commission, 2017). As sport-related activities are more physically intense than non-sport-related activities, the Australian Sports Commission (2017) recommends that women would benefit from targeted sports products. Ergo, Oztag developed TagFIT sports product specifically for girls and women of all ages and all fitness levels.

TagFIT sports product: Aim and ‘pain point’
The aim of TagFIT was to improve participation in Oztag by females of Oztag across junior, senior and community sports teams. The ‘pain point’ that challenged TagFIT was that Oztag like all other football sports had not reached its share of female engagement as it is wrongly perceived as a male sport. Unlike many other football sports, Oztag is a non-contact sport played by both males and females at all ages in either mixed or gendered teams.

TagFIT sports product prototype
The TagFit sports product was to be informed by the motivations behind female sporting participation as outlined in the Women in Sport UK (2015) report What Sways Women to Play Sport. The six critical elements identified by Women in Sports UK (2016) that were integrated into the TagFIT sports product prototype included:

1. **Possibilities – opening her eyes to what she can do.** Inspiring women with real stories they can relate to can help to prime participation.

2. **Togetherness – sharing her intentions increases commitment.** A friend’s invitation makes sports participation more attractive, and there is also greater safety in numbers. Socialising with friends is rewarding, and bonding becomes a robust external motivator.

3. **Support – ensuring she has behind the scenes support.** Support from the people in her everyday life (mainly family) is critical to sustained participation.
4. Progression – giving her a sense of direction. Progressive improvement, positive reinforcement and setting realistic goals help sustain participation.

5. Belonging – making her feel included and valued. Participation in sport must be enjoyable and provide an experience worth repeating; personalised contact that underlies respect and recognition.

6. Internalise – helping her reflect on her achievements. Focusing on feeling good about oneself and the sporting experience, internalising her own behavioural journey.

The TagFIT prototype was framed by five attributes being: holistic, accessible, fitness, fun and friendship.

TagFIT was designed to follow a progressive structure, encouraging sustained engagement.
Fees, teams and timetabling were, anecdotally, concerns that inhibited participation. To address these, the TagFIT prototype:

- Participants did not have to pay upfront for the season but instead paid on a per session basis at a rate commensurate with other team sports.
- Players were not organised into teams at the beginning of the season, but rather teams were formed with participants who were present at the sessions.
- There were no training sessions, and sessions were held at the same time on the same day and in the same location each week and aligned with school terms.

Other key elements:

- Having fun was central to TagFIT with music played during games and referees/trainers keeping the game light-hearted.
- Related health professionals such as personal trainers, mindfulness practitioners and life coaches would be in attendance, alternating across the season, to provide short talks to participants before play, between segments and after cooldown.
- Participants did not need to have any sporting experience or skills.

A pilot of the TagFIT sports product took place in December 2017 with 15 participants and was deemed a success. Positive feedback was received, and suggestions integrated into the design. Facebook performance metrics demonstrated posts reached over 6000 people with a video shot at the pilot viewed over 2400 times. TagFIT will commence in 2018, and it is anticipated that this community-based team sports product will, albeit incrementally, improve female participation in organised, club-based sport and in doing so contribute to a remedy for overweight and obesity.

About the Authors

Scott Park
Scott has a background in Rugby League from grassroots to professional level. Scot spent 7 years in the National Rugby League Competition in 3 clubs – St George, South Queensland Crushers and Manly. While doing various jobs after his professional career, Scott passion for sport led him to Oztag. Starting Sunshine Coast Oztag in 2002 and eventually assuming role of Director, Sport Development in the Queensland Head office in 2009.

Brendan Powell
Brendan has completed a PDHPE degree and MBA. Sport has dominated his life competing at high levels in several sports. Following roles at the University of the Sunshine Coast as Indigenous Services Coordinator, and Research and Teaching Fellow he was able to follow his passion for sport in a career change to his role in Qld Oztag as Director, Business Operations.

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References


