



## Interview with Sean Kilmartin

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*Sean Kilmartin has been the head coach of the Taiwan Tech basketball team, and a PE instructor at Taiwan Tech since 2018. The Irish national has had an international career as a professional basketball player in the US and in Spain. After an injury, he turned to coaching at the Canarias Basketball Academy in Tenerife. From there, he was recruited by Songshan High School in Taipei to train the basketball school team. After one season with Songshan High school, Sean joined Taiwan Tech.*



**Q:** Did you just finish a class?

**Sean:** Yes, I just finished the training the school team, we start 6:30 in the morning. I am training both, the men and the women team.

**Q:** Basketball has not been a popular sport for girls in Taiwan traditionally. What is your impression of the women players here?

**Sean:** Actually, the girls working really hard, and they are very focused and attentive. Although we have had only a small team for the last two years, they have been doing very well in competitions with larger teams. Also, in the girls' team, the language barrier is less of an issue.

**Q:** Is the language barrier a big problem in general?

**Sean:** My Mandarin is not yet good enough, so I am teaching my classes in English. There is language barrier, but I have managed to get over it. I am using a lot of visual materials such as videos, and I show moves for them to practice immediately. For the theory part, I would use translations. The great thing is, that students are becoming more and more confident with their English. It's good that they can use English in a relaxed atmosphere.

**Q:** You are also teaching regular PE classes. How popular is basketball with Taiwan Tech students?

**Sean:** I am teaching beginners classes. Taiwan really has a basketball culture, most students are into watching games, and most of them have played during their high school years, but not many of them had the chance to get instruction. My classes are always over-subscribed, but I never reject anybody, so I have classes with 60 -70 students. Fortunately, we have really good facilities here, with three outdoor basketball courts, and rooms inside the gymnasium.

**Q:** How has the current pandemic impacted you?



**Sean:** There was a lot of discussion within the sports department and with the school on how to deal with the situation. We decided to go on with the outdoor classes and with the training of the school teams, but we are taking precautions. We split students into smaller groups to reduce contact and make sure each group has got its own ball. We disinfect the basketballs after use, and we encourage frequent hand-sanitizing.

**Q:** Do you have student who are thinking about a professional career in basketball? What kind of advice do you give them?

**Sean:** Of course, I am happy about their passion for basketball, but I also tell them that it is education that will make them stand in the long run. Taiwan Tech is one of the best schools in Taiwan, students come her to get an academic degree. They have to understand that it takes a lot of extra to become a basketball professional.

**Q:** Are you also playing in a basketball team here?

**Sean:** Yes, Taiwan Tech has a great faculty team, every Thursday I am playing with the Taiwan Tech professors, some of whom are excellent players. And all of them are very ambitious, there's a real competitive spirit in the air!