



NEWSLETTER

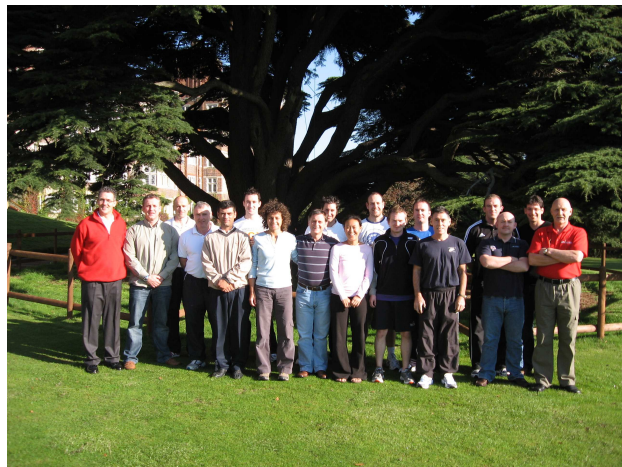
**Specialists in Long Term
Athlete Development**

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Welcome to our November 2007 newsletter. The aim of our newsletter is to not only keep people informed of recent developments at Movement Dynamics (MD), but to continue to provide information to those individuals responsible for the 'practical' implementation of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD).

Recent UK Courses

'16 of the Best'



'Multi-Joint, Multi-Plane, Multi-Directional efficiency'



The inaugural **Level 1 LTAD Course** took place at Selsdon Park Hotel and Golf Club, Croydon and, above all else, the interaction and comradeship of the entire group made the trip very worthwhile. The enthusiasm and discussions were stimulating and we trust that we were able to present some answers to the theory we have all become accustomed to in recent years.

Further courses are intended for 2008 and details will be available on the website.

Talent Identification and Development

Studies (Soccer) indicate, however, that increased selection opportunities favour older and physically taller boys. Proportionally fewer later maturing boys are represented on soccer teams after 13 years of age (Brewer, Balsom & Davis, 1995).

Furthermore, players born early in the competition year tend to dominate national soccer leagues (Dudink, 1994; Musch & Hay, 1999)

In the Football Associations School of Excellence, of the 106 boys selected over a six year period for the School, 67% were born in the first quarter of the selection year and less than 2% in the last three months (2). Since then this observation has also been noted in other sports e.g. Tennis, Swimming. An explanation of this is that older individuals who are bigger, stronger and faster than their younger counterparts are selected because of these attributes and receive more coaching leading to greater success. (Williams, 2006)

The above statements hold the key to our many problems. Early maturing athletes attract the adult who is hell-bent on winning something with all age groups. Bigger, stronger and often faster, the early maturer tends to create two environments –

- (a) Their immediate 'winning' results keep them at the centre of all training and competition activity. The coach focuses on them, gives them more coaching time, creates more opportunity and amasses greater resources for them. The late developer is often ignored.
- (b) Their immediate 'winning' results actually stops their development as the coach focuses on the next game or competition and in essence stops coaching them. Their talent to out-perform the opposition becomes their only tool. The coach stops developing the fundamentals and focuses on 'end stage' activity.

Are Talent I/D systems based solely upon the "he / she can play" focus or is there more to the process?

If the identification process is only focused on the recent competition results or ranking then we have missed the point. In the more advanced systems we see 'end stage tests' such as Speed, Vertical Jump, and MSFT playing a part in talent identification. Although this information is valuable there are many more components that we should be examining. What is the level of Physical Literacy? What is the level of Physical Competence? These factors are the 'glue' that holds the Skill, Speed, Strength and Endurance capabilities together.

Taking Care of the Future

In recent meetings and presentations the subject of the availability of suitable Athletic Development practitioners (aka S&C Coaches) was regularly raised. Current S&C education courses, Human Movement and related degree courses and sport specific Coaching qualifications do not contain enough relevant practical work on 'how' to support the developing athlete through the rigours of their maturation and onwards to their senior potential. Very few practitioners are exposed to the required mentoring they deserve as their careers unfold yet organisations continue to seek them out to play a vital role in today's multi-discipline performance environment.

The Australian Strength and Conditioning Association has taken steps to address this issue and, through the extensive work of world renowned practitioner Dan Baker and his colleagues, changes have been made to the content of courses.

This is a substantial step but it will take a generation of change to reap the benefits. I have recommended to many entities that they commit to their own succession planning in this respect by creating an 'in-house' process of S&C (Athletic Development) Coach education and recruitment. This will require infrastructure change to allow for a substantial mentoring process to be put in place.

The Australian Institute / Academy network and the English Institute of Sport have created a 'traineeship' system in this respect and should produce a layer of practitioners far more suited to the environment they find themselves in. Much is still to be done in these two systems to ensure that the content of the 'traineeship' is sufficiently focused so as to achieve the desired outcome.

Most National Federations, directly or indirectly, recruit large numbers of Athletic Development practitioners to deliver 'best practice' at all performance layers ranging from talent identification and induction levels through to the international arena via the Club and High Performance structure. **A specialist department or external service for mentoring this vital human resource is the way of the future.** Such a move would allow for a smarter recruitment and development of these professionals and improve greatly on the 'CV' or 'word of mouth' process currently in use.

Not only would it produce the next generation of specialist practitioners but would also be a professional development opportunity for existing practitioners within the Clubs and High Performance units. The competitive nature of the elite Club structure often fails to allow the practitioner the opportunity to 'question their assumptions' and interact with fellow professionals.

This recommended mentoring process would not simply be a 'chalk and talk' setting but a comprehensive process where the participants would interact with other professionals in an atmosphere for the open interchange of ideas. Created and delivered by 'neutral' experts in a manner where the individuality and integrity of the Club is protected, the practitioner would be in a stronger position to deliver 'best practice' in their working environment. In a profession where secrecy predominates under the misapprehension that there are magic programs, spells, potions and gadgets, the benefits on both a local and national scale would be immense.

The first steps taken by organisations currently considering this plan is to have an Operational Review of their performance system and network. In this way the focus is specific and the outcomes relative to the individual needs of the organisation.

In recent times when I have conducted these reviews and interventions I have witnessed a renewed focus, a heightened enthusiasm of the staff and a palpable confidence in the future. In many cases there is the confirmation that many of the plans and strategies currently in place are effective and well thought out, requiring only some small adjustment. In others there has been a more tangible requirement for change over a longer period and this allows for the administration to make their contribution to assembling the needed human, physical and financial resources.