



NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to our January 2009 newsletter. The aim of our newsletter is to not only keep people informed of recent developments at Movement Dynamics UK, but to continue to provide information to those individuals responsible for the 'practical' implementation of Athlete Development.

More Thoughts on Talent Identification

Talent identification (TID) is not a 'stand alone' process of simply finding the talent. If talent can be effectively identified then the more important question is what do you do once it is found? The 'ID' process must be part of a systematic plan that concentrates human, physical and financial resources on the long term development process that must be put in place.

There are two critical positions that are currently being taken by most National Governing Bodies (a) an attempt to find and encourage children into sporting activity from those who have no current commitment (b) to identify potential in those already in the sport and to service them towards excellence. The high performance sector of sport rightly concerns itself with the latter process as it seeks to improve performance in the international arena.

The critical issue in this plan is to ensure that the TID process focuses on the capacity to develop into an elite performer and not the quick fix decision that comes from reacting solely to the results on the day of the assessment. Central to this thesis is the content of the assessment itself. What do we currently do to assess the potential elite athlete? Invariably we expose the developing athlete to a series of 'end-stage' tests often taken from the advanced test battery given to the seasoned, senior athlete.

The first problem is that Speed Tests, Endurance Tests, Power Tests, Agility Tests do very little to find out what qualities the athlete possesses to actually carry out these tests effectively. These tests are 'end-stage' and they generally demand qualities that are only fully developed in adulthood. What we should look for are those underpinning physical questions that are being asked in addition to the measured component.

In the 10 – 40m Speed Test the athlete will be challenged to provide correct posture, hip extension, single leg strength, specific flexibility at the ankle joint, force production and reduction at ground contact, kinetic chain function, etc, as they execute the test.

***"Therefore, in designing and developing TI models, a key question is, 'which characteristics indicate that an individual has the potential to develop in sport and become a successful senior athlete?' Since the aim is to predict future accomplishments, the distinction between performance levels at the time of testing and the capacity an individual has to develop is essential."* (Abbott and Collins, 2002).**

What to Test?

There is nothing wrong with using the aforementioned 'end-stage' tests as long as we act rationally with the results. The developing athlete should be encouraged to enjoy the physical challenges and the competition that these tests bring. The key for the adult is not to make any final decisions based upon these objective test results. Knowing how fast or agile an athlete is today will do very little to ensure where they will be in 10 years time in their chosen sport.

Understanding the difference between sports will also help the coach assemble an effective assessment process. Some sports align themselves more clearly with repetitive physical actions and as such some physical tests are a good indicator of future potential. Sports such as Rowing, Weight Lifting, Archery, Sprinting and Swimming fall into this category. In most Field and Court sports, however, a layer of other important qualities get the upper hand in the success cycle. *"These are illustrated by such attributes as constant decision-making, response organization, spatial awareness, as well as a wide range of psychological, physical and technical abilities."* (MacCurdy, ITF Coaching, 2007)

Armed with this knowledge we may see a far more specialised TID process in the future. The key issue is that, regardless of what information we glean from these assessments, the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly activity schedule of the developing athlete is the most important resource and intervention we have at our disposal. (contd...)

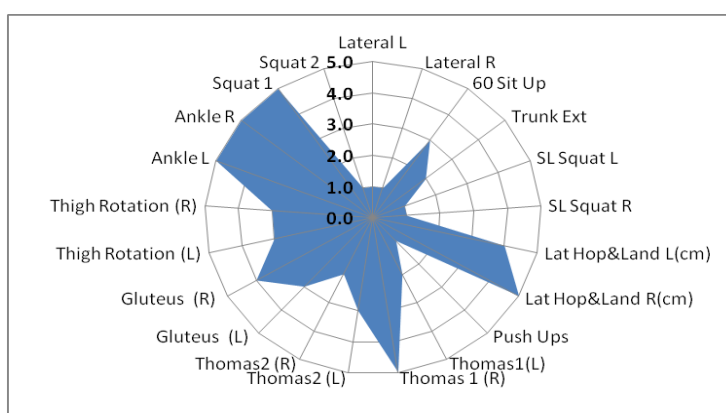
Example

14 year-old male Soccer player, chosen as being 'talented' and about to enter a semi-professional club Academy.

The Club currently expose the young players to technical and tactical activity delivered by the skills coaches and some 'fitness' work delivered by the intermittent visit of a S&C specialist.

This process is what they have been doing for a number of years. We offered them a 'snapshot' of the physical competence of this young man in an attempt to give them some guidance on 'What to do next'.

Competence Test Results



Some Observations

- **Ankle Range desirable** – reflected in the ability to **Double Leg Squat**.
- **Hip Range desirable on the R Leg** but less so on the **L Leg**.
- **Anterior Thigh range very limited** both R and L.
- **Decent balance upon landing** L and R.
- **Core strength limited**.
- **Single Leg efficiency limited**.

Our hope is that enough focus will be placed on the all-round athletic development of this individual using the test results as a starting point. The key is to establish a consistent program that weaves skill acquisition and tactical awareness with progressive development of the required physical qualities to carry out these sports specific tasks. Great care must be shown as the player negotiates all the physical, cognitive and emotional changes he will encounter as he matures towards adulthood.

My question to the National Governing Body of this sport is:

Does your coach education process contain sufficient information for all levels of coach to be able to identify and deliver the concepts outlined above?

RFU High Performance Conference, 2009

I am looking forward to presenting three components at this inaugural Conference in March. The chosen topics are – 'Modern Performance Attainment - A Multi-Disciplined Approach', 'The Role of Physical Competence in Player Development'. I will also be doing a small workshop to illustrate 'multi-joint, multi-plane and multi-directional movement development'.

I hope that I can play some part in supporting this organisation to a bright future both domestically and internationally. At the recent World Cup in Australia the national team has a somewhat difficult time against its southern hemisphere cousins and I am hoping that my experience in the game 'down-under' may be of some assistance.

TASS – Talented Athlete Scholarship Program

I am indebted to Nick Ward, who leads S&C for this very worthwhile operation, for the opportunity of presenting to the practitioners involved in the TASS process in April. Set up as a system to support talented athletes in the University environment this arm of UK Sport forms a crucial aspect of Athlete Development.

Apprentorship – 2009

Visit Vern Gambetta's web-site to find more about this unique annual professional development course. I highly recommend all practitioners to attend the 2009 course. Staffed by the very best practitioners and worth a lifetime of experiences, this course delivers the very best information on Athlete development across the entire performance continuum. www.gambetta.com