



NEWSLETTER

**Specialists in Athlete
Development**

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Welcome to our December 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.

Questioning Your Assumptions

In recent times I have had the privilege of meeting with practitioners and administrators who are responsible for development activities within National Governing Bodies. Each of these professionals, through their own observations, has recognised the cornerstone problem they face strategically – the 'lack of fitness' of the current generation.

This description covers a multitude of problems but none more so than the lack of physical literacy (competence) in the younger generations. It has been clearly stated by many of these professionals that this is not an issue solely to do with the teen-age athlete. Several practitioners have described this lack of movement competence as being prevalent in the current 'First Team' or international athlete levels. At this senior level the problem presents itself in the injury environment as well as the overall performance situation of skill acquisition and sports specific fitness levels.

During the last year at each of the workshops conducted there has been comment about Physical Education in our schools. One leading professional has called it 'irrelevant' in its current form. The call has been to the National Governing Bodies to take up the challenge and attempt to make up for what has been lost in our Physical Education delivery.

In many cases, particularly in the Field and Court sports, the qualified coach responsible for performance development has little knowledge and understanding of the delivery of athletic development. Their Coach Education journey has dealt mainly with the technical and tactical elements of the sport and it is no wonder that physical competence is viewed as an 'add-on' rather than a major component.

In many of the Football codes we see the 'physical' elements being delivered through small-sided games in an attempt to keep fitness specific. Some very exciting processes have been developed and practitioners such as Raymond Verheijen have created some worthwhile systems and strategies for the Soccer player.

The key question for all these specific modalities is - what are the underlying physical qualities that allow the player to (a) take advantage of and (b) survive the load created in the small-sided game? Are they capable of EFFICIENTLY overcoming the mechanical load being placed upon them or are they simply surviving it?

Simply repeating a skill, often under fatigue and pressure, when the player is carrying some physical competence limitation is foolhardy.

Question your assumptions and ensure that there are no unseen limitations lurking in the background. To the inexperienced (and experienced) coaching eye the player may look as if they are coping technically but one must never forget that the player may well be finding the answers by compensating in some way.

(continued)

.....Some Implications

Coaches cannot always pass the Physical Competence component onto a specialist Athletic development Coach nor should they. It is the responsibility of the coach to be in charge of the total development of the player. If you farm out things like Physical Competence, Speed, Strength, Flexibility and Nutrition then you are not a coach. One unfortunate circumstance of current coaching structures is that of specialisation. Today we have specialists for just about everything and to be honest it now takes an army of practitioners to cover the fundamental requirements for the athlete. This is, and always will be, the responsibility of the coach.

This costs money and time, precious resources in today's frantic chase for performance. Relying on specialists also creates a journey bereft of cohesion, continuity and consistency. Those head coaches who only understand technical and tactical stuff (usually the ex-player who has been fast-tracked to a decision-making position) find it easy to reject the other services. They simply don't get it.

Coach education structures must keep abreast of the ever changing culture we live in. Many NGB's still operate from a coaching curriculum created in the 1980's yet expect results from a 21st century athlete.

One innate problem with the 'specialist' issue is – how does the coach make the appointment? How do they know good from bad? Reading a CV is a nonsense when the importance of the appointment is so critical. This is why the NGB may have to consider a succession plan for these appointments. Create your own specialists through a robust and appropriate education platform. Stop listening to the 'guru's; get yourself an appropriately educated and experienced layer of manpower to bring your strategy into the 21st Century.

The 'Apprentorship' Course, 2010 (Highly Recommended!)

The dates for this course have been decided for 2010, June 18th – 24th, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA.

The presentation team will remain very much the same as for 2009 with the addition of Franz Bosch.

Last year the numbers soared and it is likely that this will continue in 2010 so keep these dates in mind.

Vern Gambetta has set out the details on his website.

(www.gambetta.com)

Today's Decision-Makers

In some sports the decision-maker, the person responsible for assembling the holistic process for player development, knows little but the technical and tactical issues of the sport. Often with a history of playing the game and a brief journey through a limited education course, this 'leader' is often the problem rather than being the provider of solutions.

'If all you have got is a nail then every tool becomes a hammer'

If all you know is the 'game' then all you can do is present processes specific to the game.

A successful long-term development of a player depends upon a series of ever growing facets – physical, psychological, technical and tactical.

**Fundamental Movement before Sports Specific Movement
General training before Special training
Function before Force, Speed and Volume
Static movements before dynamic movements
Simple movement before complex movements
Slow movements before fast movements
Unloaded movements before loaded movements
Movement resilience before intensive sports-specific work**

Recent brainstorming.....

Met Chris Barnes, co-presenter at the recent FA National Fitness and Conditioning Conference. Great mind and top-class work in measuring 'load' using GPS. He is not just a 'random-number-gatherer' but a practitioner immersed in finding appropriate training for all development age groups. We spoke about the possibility of tracking Physical Competence – Load – Injury frequency.

Dr Andy Franklyn-Miller – RFU – and former Melbourne Storm Rugby League doctor. A first class practitioner with a strong understanding of performance matters. We are looking into a research project that tracks Physical Competence for the developing Rugby Union player.

Craig Bellamy (Head Coach) / Frank Possini (Football Manager)/ Troy Thomson (Sports Science Coach) – Melbourne Storm Rugby League team. So good to meet up with Craig again after many years. What a successful year the Storm has had and there is no doubt that the Club has at its helm a group of smart, forward thinking staff. While Craig and I kept on getting lost in our reminiscing of the 'Raiders' days of the late 1980's we still managed to share a lot of good stuff.

Andy Taylor (Andy Taylor Golf at Kirtlington Golf Club, Oxfordshire). Had a brilliant day with a group of Golf coaches who did some great coaching of some visiting schoolchildren. We set up some Competence testing, exercise interventions and some golf hitting. Kids were great, coaches were great – we all learned a lot.