



LTAD

Sport Canada has come out with a new initiative which is the adoption by all sports of the Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD). This is in response to a number of issues the least of which is our poor performance at international competition and our growing social concerns and the health of the nation in general.

There are 10 key factors that are the cornerstones on which LTAD is built.

1. The 10 year rule

Scientific research has shown that it takes a minimum of 10 years of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. The trap is people believe that early specialization is what is needed to make this happen. The opposite is actually true. Most athletes only have ten years at an elite level. If you specialize too early the likelihood of staying in the sport is diminished.

2. FUNdamentals

All participants need to learn basic fundamental movement skills at the appropriate stages of development. This includes agility, balance, tracking skills etc. If children do not learn these at the appropriate time in their development, they will never reach their fullest potential in the future.

3. Specialization

Early specialization in a late specialized sport, like basketball, has been shown to lead to:

- One sided sport specific preparation
- Lack of the basic fundamental movement skills
- Overuse injuries
- Early burnout
- Early retirement from training and competition

4. Developmental age

We must recognize that not all children grow and mature at the same rate. Girls also mature faster than boys on average. There is an awful tendency to apply adult models of sport on children and to apply male models on females. Too often it is the early maturing athlete who gets to make the elite teams during the development stages. Research has shown that very often the late maturing child becomes the superior athlete since they have more time to develop the fundamental movement skills.

5. Trainability

People involved in youth sport must understand that there are windows of opportunity for the optimum training of stamina, strength, speed, sport skills and flexibility. If these windows are missed the child will never reach his/ her

highest potential. Also inappropriate training at the wrong time can seriously harm the child's development. A young child lifting heavy weights is a prime example.

6. Physical, mental, Cognitive and emotional development

More than just the skills of the game need to be addressed. All areas of an athlete's development must be included in sport programs.

7. Periodization

Periodization is time management. It provides the frame work for arranging all of the pieces in an athletes training. In order to develop 'elite' world class athletes we need to plan our training in a much more scientific way. One practice and three games a week will not develop world class athletes.

8. Calendar Planning for Competition

Our children are currently playing too many games without enough quality training. All sports must get a handle on this situation. His is the biggest challenge facing team sports in our country.

9. System alignment and integration

Groups cannot work in isolation. The government of Canada is challenging sports to arrange all delivery agencies of their sport to become aligned. Children do not remain in same delivery system throughout their entire sporting experience. Children, coaches, officials and administrators should be able to move seamlessly from one delivery system to the next. One rule set is the best example of aligning our system.

10. Continuous improvement

Sports must continue to respond to research that keeps them up to date. We need input from all partners. Sports are being challenged to form PET's (Performance Enhancement Teams). These are groups of world class experts who provide information to the coach on the most recent and up to date material. As a group decisions are made that will produce the best possible training for the athletes. No one can be the expert on all areas of a sport.

These 10 principles are also emphasized through the new NCCP and FIBA, which is the international organization responsible for basketball. In all of their coach education material these principles of LTAD are present. Canada Basketball has also adopted LTAD as its frame work for all coach, player, official and association development. In the near future each association will be asked to evaluate their programs on meeting the LTAD principles. Every sport has bought into this concept. The next action step is implementation.