THE SK ELITE

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ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

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AMMAN ELITE FOR PLAYER MANAGEMENT

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Foreword

When you see an athlete in full flow - moving gracefully across the pitch or the court; timing runs and strokes and kicks and throws with perfection; coordinating muscles with incredible speed in tandem with the information the sporting brain has collected – it's easy to think that what you are seeing is the simple product of an innate gift or a fortunate genetic inheritance. This couldn't be further from the truth.

When you see the world's greatest sports competitors in action what you are actually witnessing is the end in mind – an elite athlete built from years of running and turning and twisting and moving. An elite athlete assembled piece by piece from self-directed play, imagination, technical precision, emotional toughness, mental agility and physical guidance.

It takes a long time to build the simplicity and elegance of world class elite performance. It also takes expertise in coaching and mentorship, leadership and sport science. The incredible performances you see on TV as the final plays out in front of a global audience are constructed through the coordinated practices of coach and athlete and built on the foundation of rigorous science.

Bridging the gap between science and practice in sport (and in particular football) is something I'm passionate about. Having spent many years in the classroom learning the basics of coaching and psychological development practices combined with thousands of hours out on the training pitch working with players and coaches I know the importance of evidence based practice. I know that science informs world class coach delivery, but I also know that engaging athletes, improving their ability to learn effectively and helping them to high perform consistently requires a keen artistic coaching flare.

Saeed Al Karmi has written a book that provides the reader with a solid grounding in coaching science. Armed with this knowledge a coach can execute sessions and build coaching cultures that produce elite players. As Saaed writes “Everyone has the impulse to be elite” – I agree, but not everyone has the theoretical knowledge and practical ideas to build on that impulse. This book provides a framework for elite building performance.

As a sport psychologist working with some of the world’s greatest sports competitors, as well as some of the world’s best potential, I get to see up close the importance of applying a development process that sticks to a long term plan and is holistic in nature. Saeed’s SK Elite programme aligns itself with the scientifically rigorous long term athletic development model and offers the reader a step by step and age by age guide to help athletes manage their physiological and mental development. The programme covers the vital components of high performance – physical, technical, tactical,
mental, emotional and lifestyle – and gives the reader practical examples from all of these fundamental components.

From coaching the imaginative, playful six year old through to the champion in waiting, Saeed provides the reader with a clear, logical and concise process that can help bridge the gaps between age groups, between abilities and between amateur and professional.

Dan Abraham

Introduction:

This guide is designed to provide athletes, parents and coaches with guidelines for their sports development training. We will explore the various changes that the human being goes through during his life, and we will look to expose the biological development in the body to maximize athletic development in athletes.

This guide explains the method used at Amman Elite for Player Management. The method is called SK Elite and is a customization for development in athletes which takes into consideration the Long Term Athlete Development Program (Canadian), knowledge acquired from sport psychology workshops, interviews with neurosurgeons and specialized doctors, as well as shared knowledge and experiences with professional coaches, and sport psychology coaching references as well as specialized player development magazines.

Amman Elite is a diverse sports management company. Working with different sports, and concentrating mainly on Football. Established in Amman – Jordan, in year 2011, the company is rapidly establishing itself as one of the most dynamic entities in the business. Amman Elite provides, among other services, high level training as well as social activities and community service to integrate members to their current globalize environment.

Professional sport is growing rapidly now, and the pressure is growing on players to reach the elite level. We as Amman Elite provide support in administrative, marketing and logistical off field activities for the players, and we would like to introduce this guide to help the player develop and enhance their capabilities.

This guide is not only for aspiring professional athletes; this guide provides everyone with the chance to get involved in sports and stay active for life. We believe that “Everyone has the impulse to be Elite”,

and we are sure this guide will give everyone the chance to be active for life.

Since its establishment, Amman Elite has grown rapidly from a local Jordanian company to a well-known regional organization, while keeping its values and vision intact.

John Terry, a Chelsea legend, joined the Chelsea academy at the age of 14. Since then, he has enjoyed European and domestic success with his club, captaining the club during much of his career. He has spent his whole life playing for Chelsea and is regarded as one of England's finest defenders. Terry is not only known for his defensive qualities, he is the highest scoring defender in Chelsea's history as well.

Lionel Messi, one of the greatest players to have played the game, is known to meditate before and after every match in order to keep his mind fresh. Meditation is known to help and accelerate physical recovery, along with the mental edge, Messi sets himself apart while performing on the pitch. The mental edge gives Messi the strength to be immersed in the moment, fully focused on the task at hand. The aim is to provide the athlete with enough mental strength for him to reach "Flow".

Elite clubs and academies believe and understand the importance of imagination. It is often encouraged during the development of young players to introduce and integrate imagination; allowing the player to imagine the best solution, while having the proper technique to execute it. Creativity in sports can be defined as the ability of an individual to imagine, create, and execute new and advanced skills.

We will discuss and explain, as well as provide more examples, of how modern elite athletes such as Terry and Messi have grown to reach such heights in their specific sport.

Overview:

To win, you have to compete. To compete you have to train, and to train you have to learn. There are multiple ways an athlete can win; an athlete can win by actually winning games, or by achieving their goals, or by learning something new. An athlete can compete against one's own objectives, friends, schoolmates, local teams/athletes and/or professional athletes. An athlete can train alone, with neighbors, with friends, with schoolmates, with teammates (Academy or Club level). An athlete can learn from anyone; parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, managers, friends, etc.. but what makes one athlete different from one another?

Lets first assume that an athlete is a person who is physically active and competes (not necessarily for all ages) during certain times of the year.

Athletes' training differ during their development, from several months old until they decide to stop. One the most used models for athlete development is the Long Term Athlete Development model. We will be building onto this model for specific sports.

The LTAD:

Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) describes the things athletes need to be doing at specific ages and stages. Throughout their life, athletes go through changes psychologically and physiologically. The LTAD addresses the importance of achieving certain goals at certain times, and is described with a model. The model has seven stages:

1. Stage 1: Active Start (0-6 years)
2. Stage 2: FUNdamental (girls 6-8, boys 6-9)
3. Stage 3: Learn to Train (girls 8-11, boys 9-12)

4. Stage 4: Train to Train (girls 11-15, boys 12-16)
5. Stage 5: Train to Compete (girls 15-21, boys 16-23)
6. Stage 6: Train to Win (girls 18+, boys 19+)
7. Stage 7: Active for Life (any age participant)

The seven stages are also segmented into three segments:

1. Physical Literacy: Stages 1,2 and 3 seeks development for physical literacy and provide the foundation for pursuing elite training after age 12.
2. Elite Training: Stages 4,5 and 6 is providing elite training for athletes willing to specialize in one sport and compete at the highest level. These stages maximize physical, mental, emotional, technical and tactical development of each athlete.
3. Active for Life: Stage 7 is about staying active for life through lifelong participation in competitive or recreational sport or physical activity.

The Complete Player:

The complete player must have six attributes that are interrelated. These attributes are:

- Physical
- Technical
- Tactical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Lifestyle

Physical:

The physical attribute can be divided into two categories:

1. Energy Sources:
    a. Aerobic Endurance: is the ability to perform repetitive, moderate to high intensity movement for a prolonged period of time. Aerobic endurance improves the function of the heart, lungs and blood vessels.
    b. Aerobic Power: Maximal oxygen consumption (also called maximal oxygen uptake, maximal aerobic power, aerobic capacity, functional aerobic capacity, or simply VO2 max) is regarded as the criterion measure of cardio respiratory fitness. It is the highest rate at which oxygen can be consumed during exercise or the maximal rate at which oxygen can be taken in, distributed, and used by the body during physical activity.
    c. Anaerobic Lactic System (Speed Endurance): is the ability to prolong the amount of time where a near maximal speed can be maintained. During activity such as this, accumulation of blood lactate disturbs the excitation-contraction coupling and cross-bridge formation. The muscle's mechanical properties are disturbed, resulting in a decrease in force production, peak force and velocity. Speed endurance training can improve the clearance rate of lactate and reduce early lactate formation. Speed endurance is crucial to a multitude of athletes and a lack of it will result in reduced sports capability.
    d. Anaerobic Alactic System (Speed): Speed is the ability to perform a motor skill as rapidly as possible.

2. Muscular Qualities:
    a. Strength Endurance: High-intensity (strength) endurance reflects the ability to sustain high-intensity muscular contractions.
    b. Speed Strength: Speed strength is the ability of the neuromuscular system to produce the greatest possible impulse in the shortest possible time. The two aspects to speed strength are starting strength and explosive strength. Starting strength is the force developed in 30ms from the start of a concentric contraction. Explosive strength is the ability to continue the initiated force as fast as possible. The time period is approximately 150ms. It is the maximum rate of force development (RFD) in a maximum isometric contraction.
    c. Maximum Strength: is the maximum amount of force that one can generate in a specific movement pattern at a specific velocity of contraction.
    d. Agility: is the ability to change direction rapidly without a significant loss of speed, glance, or body control. Agility fitness combines power, strength, balance, flexibility, reaction time, coordination, anticipation and muscular control.
    e. Balance: is the ability to maintain equilibrium. Balance can be static or dynamic. Static balance means that the athlete is not moving. Dynamic balance means that the athlete maintains equilibrium while moving.
    f. Coordination: is the ability to move smoothly and efficiently. It is specific to each sport skill. Gross motor coordination means performing large muscle skills with good technique.
    g. Flexibility: is the ability of a joint to move freely through its range of motion (ROM).

Technical:

Technical ability can be defined as the ability to use sport specific skills during any circumstance. The better the technical ability, the more adequately performed the skill needed.

Technical ability can be divided into four categories:

1. Basic Skills:

   Basic skills are the foundation of the sport specific skills and are the building blocks for developing the athletes' technical ability. Basic skills in football are segmented into four parts:

   a. Passing : to move the ball to another teammate.
   b. Controlling the ball: receiving the ball and keeping it in the players' possession.
   c. Shooting: directing the ball towards a specific target.
   d. Running with the ball: moving with the ball and keeping it in the players' possession.

2. Variants of Basic Skills:

   The variants of the basic skills are foundations of the sports specific skills as well, and are basic techniques for the sport itself, they are a different, somewhat more advanced skill than the basic skill itself. In football the variants of basic skills are:

   a. Headers: controlling and/or directing the ball towards the goal or a teammate or away from the area by using the head.
   b. Volleys: striking an aerial ball without controlling the ball.
      i. Volley: before touching the ground
      ii. Half-volley: just as it touches the ground

c. Defending: the ability to retain the ball from the opponent.
    i. Dispossessing an individual opponent
    ii. Intercepting the ball from the other team
    iii. Challenging an opponent for the ball (within the limits of the laws of the game).
d. Feints: performing a dribbling skill or a quick movement to bypass the opponent. Feints can be done with or without the ball, depending on the situation.

3. Advanced Skills:

Advanced skills are of higher difficulties than the basic skills and the variants of basic skills. Advanced skills need to be developed after the athlete has the ability to perform the basic skills adequately.

In football, some of the advanced skills are:

a. Passing under pressure
b. Holding or beating an offside
c. Defending while out-numbered
d. Defending crosses
e. Creating space

4. Individual Skills:

The ability to individually bypass an opponent, or perform a difficult skill to shoot, pass or retain the ball. Such as:

a. Overhead (Bicycle) kick: is a physical move made by throwing the body up into the air, making a shearing movement with the legs to get one leg in front of the other without holding on to the ground.

b. Scissors kick: performing the overhead kick sideways.
c. Diving header: diving to an elevated ball of the ground and meeting it with the head.
d. Sliding tackle: pushing or retaining possession of the ball by sliding on the ground and stretching one leg towards the ball.
e. Dribbling skills: maneuvering the ball that is in a players possession and/or the body to overtake a defending opponent.
f. Special technique: such as shooting, passing or crossing with the outside part of the foot.

Tactical:

Methods of play that a manager trains his players at, in which his players perform during a competition in that particular method.

In football, tactical training involves decision making and the game plan. The game plan is about describing the defensive and attacking positions and roles of players during the competition.

Mental:

Mental strength or mental toughness is what separates good from great athletes when physical, technical, and tactical skills are equal. Mental strength is a very broad subject but can be simplified as the ability to perform trained skills under pressure as well as recovering from personal failure or loss.

With our minds clear, nothing seems to matter; times seems to slow down, actions become automatic and instinctive, and everything looks

easy – this mental state is called Flow. Flow is full absorption in an activity, task or challenge we face. During this phase, we feel like we are very much connected with our environment; the rain drops, the fans, the referee, the smell, everything. We feel huge energy flow and our focus increases significantly, when we reach flow, our performances is often exceptional.

Athletes should focus on the following mental attributes:

1. Visualization (Focus): the athlete must develop the ability to visualize different situations and scenarios. This will help in preparing for training and competition as well as developing and refining skills and attributes. In addition, focus training will increase concentration and will help develop the athletes' awareness and mental edge.
2. Breathing techniques: breathing techniques help in developing breathing to manage anxiety and breathing for ideal performance. Two techniques that help are:
    a. Diaphragmatic Breathing: According to the free encyclopedia (wikipedia), diaphragmatic breathing is breathing that is done by contracting the diaphragm, a muscle located horizontal between the chest cavity and stomach cavity. Air enters the lungs and the belly expands during this type of breathing. It involves slow and deep inhalation through the nose, usually to a count of 10, followed by slow and complete exhalation for a similar count. This process may be repeated 5-10 times, several times a day.
    b. Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique for reducing anxiety by tensing and relaxing the muscle. The physical component involves the tensing and relaxing of the muscle groups over the legs, abdomen, chest, arms, and

face. With the eye closed and in a sequential pattern, a tension in a given muscle group is purposefully done for approximately 10 seconds and then released for 20 seconds before the next muscle group.

3. Stopping and replacing thoughts: It is true that distraction during competition reduces performance, but immediately before the event, we could talk to our teammate or fellow competitor, read books and listen to music. All these things help keep the mind away from negative thoughts. Stopping and replacing thoughts can help during the competition as well; if an unexpected event happened (involving the player in active play earlier than expected) the player must focus on refocusing and integrating their new thoughts and strategy quickly to perform at his/her best. Recognizing negative thoughts when they first enter your mind allows you stop them before they take hold, so you can replace them with more positive ones.
4. Relaxing response: Relaxation techniques are helpful for reducing the physical symptoms of pre-competitive anxiety such as an increased heart rate, tense muscles and quick shallow breathing. These techniques can be use at anytime leading up to a performance or competition.
5. Goal Setting: Athletes should choose goals that are achievable but challenging. It is advisable to break task down with smaller parts with a series of short-term goals. These will help to keep them focus. The use for SMART goals is also recommended.
6. Cognitive Restructuring: Cognitive restructuring refers to changing habitual ways of thinking. In athletic performance, cognitive restructuring helps evaluate bodily arousal; for example elite athletes channel arousal into excitement and the ability to rise to the challenge. Changing the way one thinks about a competition can also be helpful. Planning to always do

our best regardless of how important we think a competition is allows us to attach less significance to major competitions, and in turn reduces pre-competitive anxiety. Being aware of your thoughts and feelings is also a key to managing the cognitive symptoms of pre-competitive anxiety.

7. Self Confidence: Sometimes it might be hard to imagine being confident in a competition if we usually crumble under pressure. However, athletes can be helped to take specific steps to help increase confidence. Athletes should be made to focus on past successes instead of failure. They should make practice and preparation a priority and continue until they have no doubt left about their ability to succeed.
8. Focus on that which you can Control: Athletes should not focus their attention on that which they cannot control. Whenever they find themselves warring about who is in the crowd watching them, or that other competitors are better than them, they should remind themselves that these are aspects of the competition that are out of their control. They should know that what they can control is their performance, how well prepared they are, and how well they implement technique and strategies such as progressive muscle relaxation and mental imagery.

Emotional:

The athletes' ability to control emotions and switch to the best emotional state to manage a specific situation. An athlete needs to develop the ability to recognize the different emotional states that are encountered during his development and/or performance, as well as assess the effects of the emotional state on their abilities and/or mental strength.

Lifestyle:

An athletes' lifestyle is very carefully studied and monitored. In order for an elite athlete to perform, sleep, nutrition, activity, training regime, as well as other aspects of the athletes' life must be distributed and observed carefully. A negative aspect in an athletes' lifestyle can have severe consequences on their performance. Accordingly, the athletes' lifestyle changes, as well as the necessities to perform, as the athlete gets older.

The SK Elite

The SK Elite:

This method of training is the product of intense research, application and monitoring. Amman Elite for Player Management was founded in 2011 to provide players with an edge in training by following through with this method. Players that have been studied and/or monitored from five years old for the past 11 years are practical evidence of this methods success. The method is a combination of studies in different ages, attributes, and abilities as well as a study that has been implemented and monitored. The SK Elite provide sports personnel with a methodology to form athletes with the proper lifestyle that are physically, technically, tactically, mentally and emotionally prepared for life. Each age group requires specific goals and training, the method explains the goals and objectives of each training and/or activity for each specific age group.

Phase One: Building the Foundation (0-6 Years Old):

From birth, babies start developing and having certain anatomical parts appear. For example, the Medial Forebrain Bundle (which is believed to cause sensation of pleasure and is commonly accepted to be part of the reward system) appears on day 33.

Brain is rapidly growing for the first three years of life. Any early years learning amounts for an increase of brain cell connections in later years.

According to the Canadian Sport for Life website, Physical activity during the early stages of life can have many benefits, such as:

- Improve coordination and balance.
- Increase efficiency in learning
- Help children learn to enjoy being active
- Create neural connections across multiple pathways in the brain
- Enhance development of brain function, coordination, social skills, gross motor skills, emotional development, leadership and imagination
- Helps children to build confidence and develop positive self-esteem
- Helps build strong bones and muscles
- Improves flexibility, develop good posture, improves fitness, promotes a healthy body weight, reduces stress and improves sleep
- Active play should be unstructured and should incorporate a variety of body movements.

Kids in the age between 0-6 years will develop fundamental movement skills through daily play and movement. These movement

skills will provide kids with the foundations to learn the fundamental sport skills later on in life. The ABCs (agility, balance, coordination and speed) are the most needed attribute to develop for kids at this age. In order for kids to develop a solid basis for physical literacy, focus should be on the ABCs, fundamental movement and sport skills. The active start will prompt and enhance balance, posture, brain function, physical coordination and gross motor skills.

During this stage, children look for activities that are fun in their perspective. They usually have their own rules and would like to impose them during play. Children are encouraged to learn through imagination, and their activity should involve them pitching in their idea of the activity. Boys and girls in the age of 0-6 usually do not have any competition between them based on gender, nor do they look to compete with one another. They usually complete the drill based on what they see the training should be done; they try to imagine themselves performing some sort of game and they apply it to training. Trainers should look to enhance and develop brain function by encouraging imagination as much as physical coordination and balance.

Psychologically, an active start also helps kids build confidence, social skills, emotional control and imagination, while reducing stress and improving sleep. This phase should be fun and exciting for kids, and children should look forward for them.

Attribute	Description
Physically	Active play should be unstructured and should incorporate a variety of body movements. Kids in the age between 0-6 years will develop fundamental movement skills through daily play and movement. These movement skills will provide kids with the foundations to learn the fundamental sport skills later on in life. The ABCs (agility, balance, coordination and speed) are the most needed attribute to develop for kids at this age. In order for kids to develop a solid basis for physical literacy, focus should be on the ABCs, fundamental movement and sport skills. The active start will prompt and enhance balance, posture, brain function, physical coordination and gross motor skills.
Technically	No technical training.
Tactically	No tactical training
Mentally	During this stage, children look for activities that are fun in their perspective. They usually have their own rules and would like to impose them during play. Children are encouraged to learn through imagination, and their activity should involve them pitching in their idea of the activity. Boys and girls in the age of 0-6 usually do not have any competition between them based on gender, nor do they look to compete with one another. They usually complete the drill based on what they see the training should be done; they try to imagine themselves performing some sort of game and they apply it to training. Trainers should look to enhance and develop brain function by encouraging imagination as much as physical coordination and balance. Psychologically, an active start also helps kids build confidence, social skills, emotional control and imagination, while reducing stress and improving sleep.
Emotionally	This stage should be fun and exciting for kids, and children should look forward for them.
Lifestyle	No specific lifestyle

Phase Two: Multi-Sport Involvement (6-9 Years Old):

Developing physical literacy starts from birth and continues for about 12 years (Puberty). During this phase, it is very important to focus on developing their balance, coordination and agility. According to the LTAD model, failing to develop physical literacy prior to the growth spurt in puberty, will cause children to have limited ability to develop sport specific skills at older ages and stages of training and development, thus significantly impacting their desire to continue in lifelong physical activity and limit their opportunities to develop as an athlete.

Children are very imaginative in that age and even if involved in competitive sports, focus primarily on having fun and playing with their friends, or even to build their self-esteem and confidence. Coaches and parents should make use of the imaginative ability, and willingness to play for fun to develop the fundamental movement skills through structured programs, while focusing on properly instructed, unstructured programs for skill development.

Specialization at this phase to a single sport will probably cause burnout later on in the athletes' life (depending on the sport). It is highly recommended that the player is involved in multiple sports at this age and is given the chance to explore and learn all kinds of sports and techniques. During this phase, children should be performing physical activities at least five times a week. If they have a preferred sport, they can train twice or thrice a week for this sport, but must have at least three more times a week for other physical activities or sports.

Physically, children at this age should focus on developing hand and foot speed as this is a very important window to develop speed. If players fail to develop speed at this age, body speed may be

significantly compromised later on in life. Through fun games and activities, children should look to develop strength (body weight) and flexibility. A good way to develop flexibility and ABC (agility, balance and coordination) is by getting involved in gymnastics, swimming and/or Taekwondo activities. Children in this age need to have well-structured activities to develop basic skills.

This phase is for boys and girls between the age of 6-9 years. During this phase, children must continue working on developing their fundamental movement skills, including the Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed. This will enhance the overall physical literacy and are the foundation blocks for developing fundamental movement skills.

Technically, children should be exposed to multiple sports and techniques and should learn the basic principles and techniques of the sport they are involved in, they should master fundamental movement skills before they develop sport specific skills.

Tactically, children should focus on the basic rules of the game as they are at an age where they are somewhat aware of what is “fair”.

During this stage, children should be exposed to multiple sports so that children can explore and develop their interest. This is also important to avoid burnout through premature specialization. This phase should have children participating in a fun and challenging multi-sport environment. This phase should continue to be fun, and maintain the focus on keeping the session fun. Formal competition should be minimally introduced.

Attribute	Description
Physically	Children in this age (girls 6-8, boys 6-9) need to have a well-structured activities to develop basic skills. This stage is for girls between the age of 6-8, and boys 6-9 years. During this stage, children must continue working on developing their fundamental movement skills, including the Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed. This will enhance the overall physical literacy and are the foundation blocks for developing fundamental movement skills.
Technically	Learn technical skills through fun games
Tactically	No tactical training
Mentally	During this stage, children should be exposed to multiple sports so that children can explore and develop their interest. This is also important to avoid burnout through premature specialization. This phase should have children participating in a fun and challenging multi-sport environment.
Emotionally	This stage should continue to be fun, and maintain the focus on keeping the session fun. Formal competition should be minimally introduced.
Lifestyle	No specific lifestyle

Phase Three: Introduction to Sport Specifics (9-Growth Spurt Years Old):

During this phase, children start to enjoy practicing and developing their skills as they can see their own development. This is due to an accelerated adaption period to skills training and fine motor control. It is recommended that children begin developing sport specific skills, but not specializing in a single sport. It is considered to be too early for specialization (except for early specialization sports such as gymnastics), and children must be involved in at least 2-3 different sports (preferably a mix between team and individual sports)

throughout the year, even if the child might have already had a preference to a certain sport. Diversifying and increasing the number of sports the child is involved in during this phase helps (among many more):

1. Avoid burnout and boredom towards a specific sport.
2. Increase confidence in children as they can perform multiple skills and can be involved in multiple sports.
3. Help in rehabilitation and recovery when the child is injured.
4. Improving the social and mental abilities of the child by participating in individual and team sports.
5. Improving emotional strength in children as they are expected to have different expectations when performing each sport (does not always win, lose, etc…)

As the growth spurt starts, it becomes more difficult to pick up and develop new sport skills because the coordination and motor control can be disrupted by rapid and uneven changes in body dimensions. Children who enter puberty later than their peers have an advantage of having more time to enjoy their skill development phase, unfortunately, late developers (children who enter puberty later than their peers) are sometime subject to inequality by coaches and the community because of the emphasis on winning; the late developers have smaller bodies and weaker strength which make a team susceptible to conceding or losing. It is highly recommended that the focus is not on winning at this phase, and every child should have his chance to compete, play and develop. On growth spurt, this phase ends.

Children should train at least 70% of their time on skills development and developing their motor skills, while spending maximum 30% of

their time enjoying healthy competition (formal games and competitions).

Physically, children should spend time working on their flexibility, along with developing their stamina and strength through games, relays and body weight exercises. Motor skills and fundamental movement skills development is also very important at this phase.

This phase will work on converting the fundamental movement skills into fundamental sport skills. This phase is considered “the golden age of learning” for specific sport skills.

During this phase, children begin training according to more formalized methods, but the emphasis should be on general sports skills that are suitable to a number of activities. Nonetheless, emphasis should be on practicing skills and training, rather than competing.

Technically, children should develop their overall sport skills and work on learning the basic skills of the sport they are involved in. During this phase, children must focus on mastering the basic skills of at least 2 sports as their brain is approaching adult size and complexity, and refined skill performance is easier to develop.

Tactically, children should start working on understanding more about the rules of the games, as well as understanding the basic principles of the tactical aspect of the game.

Children should develop mental and emotional skills by competing to learn and have fun, and not to win. They must also start focusing on their lifestyle; eating habits, sleeping hours and time, studying, other activities and time management. This can create a foundation for the future in which players find it easier to plan their annual program and learn to balance their objectives and targets.

Excessive single sport training or early position specialization in team sports should be avoided as it may lead to premature specialization and can be detrimental to later stages of athlete development if the child is playing a late specialization sport.

Premature specialization promotes one-sided development and increase the likelihood of injury and burnout.

Attribute	Description
Physically	This stage will work on converting the fundamental movement skills into fundamental sport skills. This stage is considered “the golden age of learning” for specific sport skills. During this stage, (girls 8-11, boys 9-12) children begin training according to more formalized methods, but the emphasis should be on general sports skills that are suitable to a number of activities. Nonetheless, emphasis should be on practicing skills and training, rather than competing.
Technically	Skill development is very important. This is considered the golden age of learning. Technical skills should be broad and not specific for a single sport.
Tactically	Learn the basic rules of multiple sports
Mentally	Excessive single sport training or early position specialization in team sports should be avoided as it may lead to premature specialization and can be detrimental to later stages of athlete development if the child is playing a late specialization sport. Premature specialization promotes one-sided development and increase the likelihood of injury and burnout.
Emotionally	This stage means kids begin to be competitive with themselves, each other or by gender. Educators and supervisors must be extremely careful with kids this age in what the kids are understanding from each training and activity.
Lifestyle	Children should learn what is important for them to eat, what is important for them to do, and how important sports and nutrition are.

Phase Four: Specialization (Growth Spurt-16 Years Old):

During this phase, the performance of the athlete is affected negatively and their movement abilities may be significantly impeded. This is due to the fact that physical changes take place faster in the athlete than at a younger age. It is very important to design a training program to develop the various attributes for the athlete, taking into account the rapid changes the athletes' body goes through. During this phase, monitoring is very important to understand the athletes growth progressing and maturation, and how they are affecting and are affected by their training program.

Peak height velocity is the period where maximum rate of growth occurs. Calculating the time when athletes reach peak height velocity is very important. This will reflect the physical capabilities and training program to be set, to effectively train the athlete. Athletes should be aware that during this phase, their movement abilities and sport specific skills may be significantly impeded, if not, the athlete might find intrinsic reasons that may develop later on negatively and have a huge influence (negatively) on the athletes' performance.

Physically, aerobic training should be a priority after reaching PHV, strength training should begin 12-18 months after PHV for males, while for girls, strength training begins with whichever of the following first occurs; the onset of PHV or the menarche. Athletes should focus on flexibility training to accommodate the rapid growth of bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles.

Technically and tactically, the athlete should optimize training and competition ratios and follow a 60:40 percent training to competition ratio. Too much competition wastes valuable training time and can cause athletes performance to drop significantly in later stages, while too little competition reduces the practical application and

development of technique, tactics, and decision-making skills under realistic competition conditions.

Mentally, the athlete should learn to cope with the mental challenges of competition. The athlete should develop his breathing techniques to manage anxiety and for ideal performance.

During these phase, athletes should focus on two sports, they might need help from a professional to identify their talents in order for them to choose the sports. The training program should have single and double periodization plans, the training sessions should also include competitive situations in the form of practice matches or competitive games and drills. Competition should be targeted to develop strategic and tactical understanding, while focusing on the learning process and not the result of the competition.

Phase Five: Professional Phase Rehearsal (16 Years Old- Professional Level/ Active for Life):

During this phase, athletes are now getting prepared for the professional level. During this phase, the athlete should look to maximize all their attributes; physical, technical, tactical, mental, emotional and their lifestyle. The athlete should also learn how to handle the elite levels' distractions; such as travel, weather, different venues, media, spectators and difficult opponents. The athlete should start focusing on performing during competitions, and even though the result is not the main objective, the player must learn to understand how their performance affected the result, and what can the athlete improve in their capabilities to improve the result.

Physically, the athlete must continue to work on refining their fitness and recovery programs. The programs should address the athletes' strength and weaknesses.

Technically, the athlete must have high emphasis on developing the individual skills and position-specific training through high intensity, year-round training. The athletes must develop their technical skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training.

Tactically, during this phase the athlete should consistently provide high performance ratings tactically in both training and competition. The athlete should be well aware of his position and individual requirements, as well as their role in the team plan.

Psychologically, the athlete should have a psychological preparation plan to develop and refine mental and emotional strengths, as well as improve breathing techniques to manage anxiety and to perform ideally.

This phase is a transitional phase to the elite level. Athletes should consistently use periodization plans and strive to deliver consistent high performance results in both training and competition. There should also be special emphasis on optimum preparation by modeling high level competition in training.

Athletes must also plan appropriately for tapering and peaking for competition to accommodate the large increase in training volume. Tapering means reducing both intensity and volume in training as athletes approach the date of major competition events. Tapering allows athletes to peak for major competitions, ensuring that they will perform at their best.

Phase Six: Professional Level (19+/ Whenever the athlete starts performing in professional competitions):

During this phase, the athlete is subject to extremely high training volumes. The training program should be carefully designed to allow the athlete to perform at a very high level, and to express their full

potential on competition day. This may require double, triple or multiple periodization plans.

This phase is not only concerned with providing the athlete with training that will express his full potential in training, but it also should, towards the end of the athletes' professional days, prepare him/her for the life after competition. The transition from professional, high intensity and highly structured programs which the athlete has been subject to in the past ten to fifteen years, to the amateur or recreational level. This transition is equally as important as any other development phase due to the fact that the athlete should stay active for life. "Retired" professionals should also be encouraged to enter support roles within their sport as coaches, officials, and sport administrators as part of Phase seven.

Training in this phase is specifically designed to peak during major competitions, and the main priority of the athlete should be on the outcome (winning). Training should be characterized by high intensity and high volume, with frequent preventative breaks to prevent physical and mental burnout.

During this phase the training to competition ratio becomes 25:75. The competition percentage includes competition specific training activities. The athlete should develop the ability to produce consistent performances on demand as well as maximize and maintain one's capacities.

Phase Seven: Active for Life (Any Age Participant):

This phase is for retired professionals or any participant that has stopped training in any of the previous phases.

This phase can be best achieved by the support of the community. Centers and clubs can help nurture the participants need to stay active, and thus help participants grow in this phase with ease.

After “retiring” there are multiple options for the athlete to adopt. Below we offer two streams that are adopted by the LTAD (Canada).

Competitive for life: participants may not be destined to go to the Olympics or the World Cup or Wimbledon, but they still want to compete at a relatively high level in competitive sport leagues at the community or regional level.

Fit for life: where participants are certainly not planning to compete at the Olympics or the World Cup or Wimbledon, and they don’t even want to compete at the community or regional level. They simply want to develop and maintain their physical fitness with enjoyable physical activity at the recreational level.

The participants of this phase will serve and be served primarily by the community sports clubs, recreation centers, and programs offered through schools, colleges and universities. Their support can be invaluable and they can prove to be very efficient in support roles such as coach, officials and sports administrators.

Physical activity is not only for elite athletes, and it is very beneficial for all participants. Athletes that have gone through all previous stages and are adopting this phase can be very beneficial for their own community, and even nationally. Athletes may adopt important strategic roles as policy makers in governments, corporate sponsors, educators, or recreation professionals, and they can develop this concept and provide an insight for future athletes, which can be invaluable for the whole nation on the long run.

This phase is for everyone. Administrators should consider the following:

- Participants can be from any age.
- Apply sport experiences to life skills.
- The environment should be very positive and encouraging for everyone to join.
- Competition and participation should be balanced.
- Programs should be designed for athletes with disabilities.
- Participants should have the freedom to choose and change sports.
- Participants can choose to have a supporting role for the disabled.
- Participants can change from competitive to recreational sports.
- Participants should have the opportunity and help to smoothly change from athletes to coaches, officials, sport administrators, small business entrepreneurs or media.
- Participants can be volunteering to be coaches, officials or administrators; they might wish to help and not take it as a profession and this phase should help them move on.

Examples on the SK Elite Method:

Four players have been carefully studied.

Player A is an athlete that has started playing Taekwondo at the age of five, and has been introduced to other sports like swimming, football, basketball, and running up until he reached 12 years old. He started focusing mainly at football, while playing basketball and Taekwondo in certain periods of the year as well as the summer “play swimming”. He is now 15 years old, training 9-12 times a week, with football as the primary sport, he is very focused on developing himself

as a professional football athlete, he is sacrificing his own time in order for him to find time to study and train, and he is developing at a faster rate than any other player. He is very enthusiastic in training, and always looking to learn new skills and develop. He is following the schedule well and has been offered to play in clubs but wishes to develop his abilities to the max before studying offers from clubs. He is one of the brightest talents for the future, and he is patient about taking it one step at a time.

Player B is an athlete that has had his main focus on basketball. He played basketball since he was five years old, and occasionally, he played football. He had swimming classes as well, and learned horseback riding. At the age of 13, the player had grown with his focus on both football and basketball; even though he was technically better at basketball, he really wanted to play football as well. At the age of 14, the player was under pressure from basketball coaches, his parents, his siblings and some of his friends as they were all pressuring him to play basketball, but he leaned more towards football. He was advised to stop playing for several months, and after five months, the player decided to play football. The player was the first in his age to request to be trained on a professional level, and was subject to substantial changes in his lifestyle. The player is now training 9-12 times a week, and has convinced his peers to follow through on his schedule. His schedule is very intense, especially as he is in the IB program and it requires a lot of studying. The player has special tutoring daily for 3-5 hours, and trains around 18 hours a week. He is also very enthusiastic about training, he overcame the extra weight he gained during the stoppage of his training mentioned above (five months), and has improved dramatically. The player is very closely monitored by clubs in and around the region and looks to have a very bright professional future ahead of him.

Player C is an athlete that has not participated in sports, especially team sports, as a child. He grew up being minimally involved in sports, and was not subject to intense specialized training in a specific sport. He slowly progressed and was not an influential team player. He did not participate in competitions much and was mainly benched as a player. When he reached the age of 12, he started to have a more structured training, and he started to show interest in football. He joined football academies to improve his technical abilities, and was able to force himself through to the starting line-up. At the age of 14, the player decided to change venues and train with a different team, and a different mentality. He had a tough time adapting emotionally and was subject to stress to some extent. He started training and gradually intensified training to eventually train 9-12 times a week. At the beginning, the player struggled physically and mentally to cope with the intense requirements of the training regime, but eventually, he was able to overcome his obstacles and grow as a player and as a person. He is now showing signs of improvements, and has been contacted by a club, but refused to go, as he is willing to complete his training program, and work towards reaching higher limits. He is showing potential, and there seems to be no signs of burnout or loss of interest in the sport. He is expected to be one of the future stars for his country.

Player D is an athlete has played football since he was five years old. He had structured training at an early age of five, and consistently trained in academies and school teams till the age of 13. He started showing signs of fatigue and burnout, as well as starting to have deteriorating aspects of his lifestyle. The player still likes to play football sometimes, but his level has been deteriorating and is technical ability has been suffering. He is also suffering from huge mental and emotional pressure as he feels that he is pushing himself too much, but is failing to reach his peers level. Unfortunately, he is

not expected to continue playing football, even though he had tremendous talent as a child, but he is now showing signs of overtraining and burnout due to early specialization. His parents are not trying to change his attention to tennis, as he started playing tennis at a later stage, and he seems to be improving more as a tennis player. It is expected that he will have more success as a tennis player as he was not subject to early specialization in tennis, and he is expected to gradually leave football, and focus on tennis.

Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Xavi Hernandez are all familiar names to the world of football. Their stories show the value and importance of this method to develop world class athletes. The story of a young player named Rhian Davis is also a very valuable mention for us.

Rhian Davis is an Australian based youngster that signed for Manchester United at the age of nine. He was destined as the wonder kid, the future star. Quotes such as *"you can just tell by the way he carries the ball that he's got massive talent though, the last kid I saw with that kind of talent was a young boy called Joe Cole (he grew up not far from me) and although he never fulfilled his full potential, he's still an England regular. I'll put money on Rhian Davis playing for England in the future".* At 15 years of age, several reports showed that the player has lost his scholarship and was released by Manchester United. No details are found on Rhain, and he is no longer listed on the internet as a Manchester United player; whether first team or youth. Rhain's story is not new, back in the early 1990s a seven-year-old who played with Leyton Orient's kid's team was signed by Ajax – then one of Europe's premier sides – after showing prodigious talent. Sadly for Sonny, he didn't make the grade and drifted out of the

game, the pressure of too much expectation leading to the divorce of his parents.

At 15 years of age, Gareth Bale was not scoring well on his physical tests. He had grown a bit (late adolescent) and was not performing as he was when he first entered the Southampton Academy. He was considered one of the fastest players, if not the fastest a few years earlier, but became the seventh fastest at the age of 15. His coaches were torn, whether to keep the player, or let him go. The deciding vote went to the chief scout at the academy, and he eventually decided to keep the once late adolescent Gareth Bale. The chief scouts decision proved to be vital as the player was then signed by Real Madrid for a record breaking fee of 120 Million US Dollars.

Xavi Hernaandez was quoted once saying "I'd love to be faster. Physically I am limited, but I have survived using my head." Intelligence and awareness are what separates Xavi from many other promising technical central midfielders. Xavi, one of the best central midfielders of all time, born on January 25th 1980, joined Barcelona's academy (La Masia) when he was 11 years old. His first competitive match was on August 1998 (18 years old) against Mallorca in the Super Cup Final, where he also managed to score a goal. Xavi, still playing for FC Barcelona, is considered a player that, as he said it, physically limited, but he managed to excel with his high awareness and intelligence.

Christiano Ronaldo, born on 1985, agreed with his mother to focus entirely on football at the age of 14. He started training professionally with Sporting CP in Portugal in 1997 (12 years old), and then moved on at the age of 18 to play for Manchester United and later on, signed for a record fee for Real Madrid. George Best, one of the best British players and was described as "*the greatest player to ever pull on the green shirt of Northern Ireland*", once said referring to Christiano

Ronaldo: “There have been a few players described as the new George Best over the years, but this is the first time it’s been a compliment to me”.

What does Cristiano Ronaldo, and Xavi Hernandez have in common? What did Ronaldo and Xavi have that Sonny and Rhian did not? Well, Cristiano and Xavi were not subjected to early specialization, and eventually, burnout. They started sport specific training at a very appropriate age (12 and 11 respectively), as for Rhian and Sonny, they were subject to very high pressure at a very young age (9 and 7) which eventually led to burnout.

Looking at Gareth Bale’s story, we find that coaches need to focus on developing players, and not on winning youth tournaments as this might cause players that are late developers to be forced out of the sport for not being strong enough, fast enough, strong enough, etc…

Coaches, administrators and parents looking to develop an athlete must constantly consider the following:

- Develop athletes, do not look for winning: you never know who might surprise you eventually when he/she fully develops, sports is for everyone, and you should look to develop every player, not the ones you “feel” are important players at that moment.
- Every age group has its own unique physical, technical and tactical requirements and abilities, be aware of what you want to develop and its effects on the athlete.
- Try not to miss any development windows for your athlete; for example, speed training is highly effective between the age of six and eight.
- The psychological aspect of the game is as important as the physical, technical and tactical aspects. If you are not

authorized and/or able to help your athlete psychologically, look for professional help.

- Psychologically, each age group has its own characteristics; kids at different ages think and learn in different ways. Find out what the best suitable way to teach your players and understand what they are actually learning through your program.
- Get the athlete involved in multiple sports; the athlete should eventually have a primary sport that they are focusing on at the age of 12 (plus or minus one year depending on the athletes' abilities and psychological state, as well as maturation rate) and a secondary sport.
- Sport is not only sport specific skills; there are other attributes to develop in your athlete to reach his/her maximum potential. Agility, balance and coordination are foundations of any sport.
- Focus on developing an athlete that can perform on very high standards and can be involved in sports for their entire life; athletes are human, and they should not be considered other than that, if the athlete is giving you his/her trust to develop him, develop an athlete for life, not for 5-10 years.

Our Method:

Age 0-3:

What do they need to develop?

- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Involvement in Sport
- Perception of Fun in Sport

How can they develop it?

Through unstructured play. Kids can be supervised in an open space with all kind of games and obstacles. Children should be enjoying their play, and it should be uninstructed.

Please note that from 6-7 months the child starts differentiating between strangers and familiar faces. He/she may cry if they are put in the arms of someone they do not recognize.

Age 3-6:

What do they need to develop?

- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Involvement in a Variety of Sports throughout the year.
- Perception of Fun in Sport
- Flexibility
- Speed
- Catching
- Gliding

- Sliding

How can they develop it?

Through unstructured play. Kids can be supervised in an open space with all kind of games and obstacles. Early specialization sports such as Gymnastics can be very helpful to develop most of the above, involvement in Taekwondo, Judo, Swimming can also be very helpful. Training should be minimally instructed and kids should enjoy participating and creating their own games.

Age 6-9:

What do they need to develop?

- Speed
- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Involvement in a Variety of Sports throughout the year.
- Flexibility
- Strength (through body weight exercises)
- Rules of the Game
- Basic Techniques

How can they develop it?

Through involvement in activities they enjoy, children should train at least five times a week. If the child has a preference to a certain sport, training should be 2-3 times a week in this particular sport, and the child must spend at least 3 more training sessions playing other sports. All movement fundamentals training (Agility, Balance, Coordination, Speed, Flexibility, Strength) should be structured, while skills training should be unstructured (plays with friends for fun).

Age 9-Growth Spurt:

What do they need to develop?

- Speed
- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Involvement in 2-3 Sports throughout the year.
- Flexibility
- Strength (through body weight exercises)
- Stamina (through Relays)
- Basic Rules of the Game Application
- Skills development in more than one sport
- Introduction of competitions for application.

How can they develop it?

This is considered the golden phase for skill development. Children should work on developing their skills in more than one sport and should be involved in 2-3 sport activities.

Training should be structured and movement skills should begin to be integrated into sport skills.

Movement skills training and sport skills training should be at least 70% of the total time spent on activities.

Competition should not take more than 30% of the total time spent in activities. Competitions should target application of learned skills and rules, not the outcome of the competition.

Introduce injury prevention drills that help improve joint stability. As joint stability improves, the risk of injury and recurrence of injury

decreases. Joint stability drills also helps in giving a clear idea of the athletes' readiness to be reintroduced to training.

Growth Spurt-16:

What do they need to develop?

- Aerobic training
- Strength training
- Flexibility
- Introduce competition
- Decision making
- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Speed

How can they develop it?

Aerobic training should begin once the athlete reaches PHV. Endurance, aerobic power and speed endurance should be introduced for the athlete and developed in a carefully planned schedule to improve the athletes physical abilities as well as their cardiac cycle.

Strength training should begin 12-18 months after PHV for males, while for girls, strength training begins with whichever of the following first occurs; the onset of PHV or the menarche. Athletes should develop their strength endurance, and at a later stage, focus on developing their maximum strength and their speed strength. Supervisors and coaches should be very careful not to train the athlete on any of the strength attributes too early to avoid risk of injury or developmental problems.

Flexibility training is a priority at this phase to accommodate the rapid growth of bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles. Athletes can do flexibility training daily but should ask a professional to avoid over stretching and injury.

The athletes' technical attributes will most probably suffer during this phase. The athlete should focus on developing tactical awareness and decision making instead, and can try and maintain their technical abilities during this phase, this can be through 60:40 training to competition ratio. The main goal of the competition is applying and improving tactical and technical skills.

During competitions, the athlete can also work on breathing techniques to manage anxiety and develop a proper breathing technique for ideal performance. This also needs to be developed during training and must be focused on at least six months a year.

During each periodization (preferably two not one), the athlete should also play once a week a second sport, preferably on a day on its one, to avoid burnout, and to help with the athletes active rest.

Focus on joint stability drills to improve the stability. In case of injury, test the athletes' readiness by performing the drills, and if there was no sense of pain in any of the drills, the athlete can rejoin training.

16-Professional Level:

What do they need to develop or refine?

- Speed
- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Sport Specific Skills
- Endurance

- Aerobic Power
- Speed Endurance
- Strength Endurance
- Maximum Strength
- Speed Strength
- Flexibility
- Mental strength
- Emotional strength

How can they develop it?

During the athletes' training program, the focus physically should be on developing their endurance, aerobic power and their speed strength. The athlete must first build a strong endurance foundation, and then work on improving their aerobic power, and eventually maximizing their speed endurance. Speed development should be continued during this age to improve and maximize the athletes' maximum speed.

The athlete must work on developing their ABC as well by also increasing the difficulty and integrating the ABC with their respective sport specific skills; one should develop team coordination and increase situational agility, balance and coordination. Flexibility will help the athlete improve sport specific skills as well as avoid injury and improve their physical abilities.

During this phase, it is extremely important to work on maximizing the athletes' technical abilities. Position-specific training should be done through high intensity, year-round training, as well as a variety of competitive drills and competitions. These competitions should also help in improving the athletes' tactical abilities and individual requirements, as well as integrating the training drills with the team plan. Competitions should be targeted on performing and improving

the performance, and not the outcome. The outcome can be reflective of the performance, and can help on giving an idea on what to improve, but the main focus should be on improving the performance, and not the outcome.

The athlete must work on getting accustomed with the elite levels' distractions and lifestyle; such as performing under different weather and venues, nutritional schedule, media, etc.

The athlete should work on improving mental strength through visualization, focus, and breathing techniques. They should also work on improving their emotional strength and learn how to cope with the elite levels' mental and emotional requirements. The emphasis on the mental and emotional training is very important, the athlete must consult a professional in this area.

Athletes should also get accustomed to tapering (Tapering means reducing both intensity and volume in training as athletes approach the date of major competition events). Tapering allows athletes to peal for major competitions, ensuring that they will perform at their best.

Focus on joint stability drills to improve the stability. In case of injury, test the athletes' readiness by performing the drills, and if there was no sense of pain in any of the drills, the athlete can rejoin training.

Professional Level and/or Active for Life Phase:

This is when the athlete reaches the professional level or moves on with his life without participating professionally in a specific sport.

For athletes that are moving on to become professional athletes, they will be subject to a very high intensity and high volume training, but they will be well prepared to the program since they have built a very strong foundation since day one. The professional level will only

change the fact that the athlete is now applying everything he/she has learned with the goal of winning. Athletes will have a very clear idea of what they should do in order to perform, and everything that was in a controlled environment is now real life. Preparation is the key, whether it is physically, technically, tactically, mentally or emotionally as well as living the lifestyle and under the demands of an elite athlete.

As the athlete grows older, and is more mature, he/she will be learning along the way the adversities in its real form; they will no longer be training to face the media, distractions, bad weather, change of venue, or travelling, they will be living it, and with time, the athlete will have a stronger experience through application of what they have trained. The end of the athletes' professional career does not mean the end of his/her sporting career; it only means the athlete has moved on to the final phase of his sporting life.

Upon retirement, the athlete now has a very good understanding and application of how to reach and deal with the demands of the professional level. They can be very useful in support roles such as coaching, managing, refereeing, or teaching in sport roles. Their experience and knowledge, as well as their name, will help children focus more on developing their attributes by phase, and growing as athletes for life.

As for athletes that have skipped the professional phase, they move on to the seventh phase, the retirement phase. This phase, as mentioned earlier, is for everyone. Athletes that have moved on from the previous phases and skipped the professional phase for any reason, can help in supporting roles as well, especially administrative roles, since they have already applied the program and know how to pass on their knowledge and experience to the younger generation.

These athletes can also provide support as coaches or assistant coaches, managers, referees or sports teachers.

Retired professionals does not mean athletes that are no longer involved directly in physical activity; on the contrary, retired professionals can and should carry on with their physical activity, whether through playing their specific sport (preferably not) or through diversifying and playing other sports. Athletes can carry on playing any sport they wish to play, and should be involved in sports at least three times a week.

Conclusion

This guide is simply a general guide to help aspiring athletes and their supporters build a scientific program for the athletes' development. Past experiences have shown that intensive concentration on their technical abilities and providing specialized training in a single sport in an early age does not create elite athletes in the future.

Talented athletes might develop faster, but they will not develop at all if they are not committed. Later on, commitment will not be enough, the athlete must show coachability; which is the ability to be coached effectively. Some athletes might be talented, they show up to every training session, but they do not listen to instructions, or they seek to train on their own terms or methods. Athletes who lack coachability will eventually be left out and will not improve as there is not one single individual that is greater than an institute or a club. Any institute that gives a single athlete more authorities than an athlete should have will lose its administrative authority and eventually, other adequate and important athletes, which will cause the institute to fail in their development process. Even athletes that are talented, committed and show coachability, need one more attribute to reach the elite level, they need to have the edge and motivation to play every competition to the fullest, some call it competitive fire, others competitive edge, or competitive fight, no matter what you call it, the athlete must have the ability to perform in every competition like it is his/her most important. If the athlete, during one's development, show commitment, coahcability and competitive fire, they are sure to perform at an elite level, the better their talent, the more the added value for the player.

Some professional players have a life that we see on TV that most of us would envy them for. Some just value sports for its health benefits. Regardless of your intentions for getting involved (or getting your kids

and/or loved ones involved), developing an athlete for life, someone who can stay active in sports and physical activities for life.

The professional athletes have gone through lots of stages and hard work so they could reach the level they are in. Aspiring athletes that look to “train the professional way” are sometimes under-developing since they are missing a very important window of development (according to their phase) and substituting it with other training drills that might injure the athlete or affect his development negatively. This guide mentions each phase and its “golden development attribute” and the athlete must emphasis one’s training on this in order for him/her to maximize his ability; for example, from nine years old until growth spurt occurs, it is of vital importance to concentrate on their sport specific skills, while also diversifying in sports, the six to nine years old must focus on developing their speed as it is the best time to develop speed.

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