The Athlete’s Trajectory
6th German-Chinese Symposium

Coping with early specialisation and pressure

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Outline: **Coping with early specialisation and pressure**

- Talent identification, selection and development
- Early Specialisation
- Pressure
  - Peer pressure
  - Pressure to perform
- German competitive sport system and psychological support
  - Sport Schools
  - Dual Career
  - Olympic sports (BISP, DOSB)
  - Football (DFL, DFB; Youth Academies)
Understanding Giftedness and Talent
Route to Excellence

Guidance towards alternative sport if a person’s performance dispositions remain or become more appropriate for that sport.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Psycho-Behaviours, Psychomotor and Physical Factors that Facilitate Transitions between Stages:
- Goal Setting and Self-Reinforcement
- Planning and Organization
- Effective and Controllable Limpness
- Performance Evaluation and Attributions
- Psycho-motor, e.g. hand-eye co-ordination, balance
- Physical factors, e.g. height, muscle composition

Sampling Stage
- Participation Opportunities
- Positive Family Support & Encouragement
- Caring Coach Orientation
- Fundamental Skill Development, e.g. balance
- etc.

Specializing Stage
- Technical Coaching
- Family Commitment
- Increasing Competitive Success
- Recognition of Talent & Achievement
- Increasing Domain Specific Experience & Physique Development
- etc.

Investment Stage
- Moral Family Support
- High Quality Competitive Training
- Additional Financial Support
- Collaborative Coach/Athlete Decision Making
- etc.

Maintenance Stage
- Maintains Best Performance Focus
- Develops an Effective System for Dealing with Increased Demands, e.g. media, public appearances
- etc.

Fig. 2. The role of psycho-behaviours in facilitating the successful negotiation of developmental transitions within a multidimensional and dynamic concept of talent.

(Abbott & Collins, 2004)
Nature

Personality, Traits, Abilities

Talentselection

Antecedents

Nuture

Mental Skills, Life Skills

Talentdevelopment

Performance Outcome

Heuristics
A theoretical framework for predicting sport expertise?

**Simple heuristics in sport** (Raab, 2012)

**Adaptive toolbox approach for developing expertise**

(D`Oliveira, Lobinger & Raab, 2014)

Expert athletes are characterized by their optimal **adaptation** to situations/ problems in sports

Development of heuristics in the context of athlete`s natural abilities, past experiences, developed skills and situational context

**Expert decision making**
Research in the field of early specialization

- early diversification approach as an alternative to early specialization (Wiersma, 2000)
Research in the field of early specialization

Brenner (2016)

- when sports specialization occurs too early, detrimental effects may occur, both physically and psychologically

Little leagues, BIG COSTS

The Dispatch investigates the dangers in youth sports
Research in the field of early specialization

LaPrade et al. (2016)

- there is no evidence that young children will benefit from early sport specialization in the majority of sports
- they are subject to overuse injury and burnout from concentrated activity
- youth advocates, parents, clinicians, and coaches need to work together with the sport governing bodies

Background: Early sport specialization is not a requirement for success at the highest levels of competition and is believed to be physically unhealthy and mentally for young athletes. It also discourages unstructured free play, which has many benefits.

Purpose: To review the available evidence on early sports specialization and identify areas where safety data are lacking.

Study Design: Think-tanks, roundtable discussions.

Results: The primary outcome of the think-tanks was that there is no evidence that young children will benefit from early sport specialization in the majority of sports. They are subject to increase injury and burnout from concentrated activity. Early multipsport participation is important for young athletes from long-term competitive success.

Recommendations: Youth advocates, parents, clinicians, and coaches need to work together with the sport governing bodies to ensure that young athletes do not face long-term health issues yet support athletic competition at the highest level.

Keywords: early sports specializations, consensus, youth sports.
Pressure

Pressure to perform

➢ Components:
  • self-image and public image
  • Self and others expectations
  • Inner and social tension
  • Success and failure

Peer Pressure

➢ pressure that originates from (other’s) expectations

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How can we help by means of sport psychology?

Support Sport Psychology
- BISp
- DOSB/ ZKS
- asp

Giving Psychology away
- Athletes
- Parents
- Coaches

Wissenschaftliches Verbundsystem Leistungs-sport
Sport School System in Germany

- They serve to promote young athletes
- Charges: depending on type of school
  - Sport schools: 200-400/month
  - Boarding schools: up to 2000/month
- Cooperation between schools and sports associations
  - 522 base camps (193 national and 329 regional base camps) as well as all 19 Olympic training centers (OSP)
  - 235 schools
  - 99 boarding schools

Psycho-Education

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Nuture

Mental Skills, Life Skills

stress management
relaxation techniques
time management
Self talk
goal setting
mental training techniques
e.g.
Dual Career

About the project:
• to ensure that young sportspeople receive an education and/or professional training alongside their sports training

Relevance:
• to reduce risks that athletes missing out on high quality education that could help to prepare for a new career after they retire

Prof. Paul Wylleman PI
Support and coach parents

Psychological Support Youth Academies

parents

children

peers

coaches

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Sport Psychology in Coach Education

- Dt. Trainerakademie
- DFB/ Hennes-Weisweiler-Akademie
Summary and recommendation

- Research on Child Development
- Longitudinal Studies
- Psychosocial Support of Talents
- Support and Empowerment of parents
- Coach the Coach to Coach

Thank you!


Differentiations

- Biological age / performance age / high performance age
- Type of sport and training frequency

- **infancy** (0-23 months)
- **preschool age** (4-5 years)
- **adolescence** (13-19 years)

**early childhood** (2-4 years)
**school age** (5-12 years)

(after Erikson & Erikson, 1997)
Dennis Kudla, RIO; left home when he was 11 to concentrate on Judo
Out of the „movement diary“ of an ordinary primary school pupil

get out of bed | 10 min. way to school | 30 min. school sports | 30 min. break

7:00 | 8:00 | 9:00 | 10:00 | 11:00

10 min. back home | 120 min. playing inside | 25 min. home work

12:00 | 1:00 | 2:00 | 3:00 | 4:00

45 min. playing outside | 20 min. shopping/music lesson | 17 min. in sports club | 40 min. TV | going to bed

5:00 | 6:00 | 7:00 | 8:00 | 9:00