



## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Talent development in junior sport is often a case of team work which includes roles for the athlete, coach and parents. Parents are tasked with providing a stable home environment that is emotionally supportive while taking care of home organisation. Parents must schedule family activities around their child's training and competition plan, adjust mealtimes to maintain the family unit and be in a position to support offspring financially. Logistically it is no small task, added to which parents act as "Taxi" drivers, transporting young athletes to & from events. Parents are often the catalyst for stimulating the initial interest of children and making the chosen sport fun and interesting. The coaches role is more focussed on developing skills that will be required in order to reach the higher levels.

The level of coaching depends upon the current stage of the child's development. In the early years much of the time involved in sport should be "playful and fun" with coaching limited to engaging the child in activities that help develop the basic competencies. During this first period there is little pressure to perform but rather to enjoy the sport, this period has been called the "Sampling" 1 years (6-12 years old).

The next stage (12-15) is called the "Specialisation" 1 period when athlete interest increases and they become more "serious" in their pursuit of excellence. This is often characterised when the athlete wishes to improve their performance in competition, practice time increases and commitment to training and associated activities becomes much greater than other social activities. Other sports are often ditched in this phase and parental involvement increases with greater demands on their time.





Coaching at this level is often focussed on the technical development of skills necessary to create a strong platform from which to build future success. The athlete – coach relationship is built on trust with the athlete taking on the role of willing student prepared to follow the guidelines set out. The coach is tasked with developing a programme of activities that when carried out fully will move the athlete to a higher performance level, the work will be demanding and the coach must ensure that quality feedback increases motivation.

In later years, (16+) the “Investment” 1 period, the athlete takes on responsibility for their own training and development, coaches become supporting members of the team, a sounding board from whom advice may be sought and a source of confirmation and knowledge. At this stage the involvement of parents becomes lesser as the athlete is now better able to make their own decisions.

Recommended Reading: Côtè, J., & Hay, J. (2002) Children’s involvement in sport: A developmental perspective. In J. M. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological foundations of sport* (2nd ed., pp.503–519). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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