Symposium Title: Towards a Shared Understanding of Athlete Development: Results of a Multidimensional Research Program

Symposium abstract

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It is now acknowledged in the literature, that the transformation of potential gifts into talent (expertise) across numerous domains (education, sport etc) is contingent on a favourable and dynamic integration of intrapersonal, environmental and chance factors (Gagné, 2003; 2009). A recent sport-specific conceptualisation depicting interactive micro, meso and macro level factors across development (non-elite, pre-elite, elite) is the 3D-AD model of athlete development (Gulbin & Weissensteiner, 2013). At the core of the model, the micro level pertains to athlete-centric attributes (i.e., sport specific skills, psychological skills and attributes, genetic profile, physiological capacity, morphology, practice and competitive investment), the surrounding meso layer to environmental factors (family, club, community, coaching, daily training environment, service provision) and the encompassing macro layer to system and chance factors. The relative weighting and importance of each factor and level varies over time and is thought to be sport and sub-discipline dependant.

This symposium presents current research emanating from a three year multidimensional project examining talent identification in Australia which was supported by a grant from the Australian Research Council. The research is comprised of four interlinked programmes of work. The findings presented here are from the programme dedicated to talent development and recruitment and emanate from a mixed methods approach. We present findings from the professional sports of cricket, tennis and Australian Rules (AFL) football. The 3D-AD model of athlete development provides the underpinning framework for understanding athlete development. This symposium will then feature: a) findings from an athlete developmental survey administered to non-elite, pre-elite and elite cricketers; b) research examining the key characteristics and factors underpinning international tennis success, and c) insight into the philosophy and current practices of talent recruitment personnel in the sport of Australian Rules football. Implications for future research and practice specific to the identification, recruitment and development of sporting talent will be presented and discussed.

References

