8 ARTICLES ABOUT SPORT & TALENT BRIDGING THE SCIENCE & PRACTICE GAP

PLUS

DROPOUT IN SPORTS AND INJURIES
BY ANNE BENJAMINSE
Introduction to the topic

Sports Editorial: You are your own limit

In the last decades, the development of mass sports is undeniable with more and more people finding their way in participating either in their leisure time for fun or in a more professional way (1). Sports provide people the opportunity to have fun and maintain and improve their physical ability and skills. They have a great impact on people’s lives in different expanses. In the U.S., the term sport was even translated as “the second religion” with health and mental benefits becoming more known to society. This journal contains 8 papers written by students from the Sport & Talent course of the master Sport Sciences (University Medical Center Groningen, University of Groningen) on a variety of topics related to this theme.

The positive values of sports encourage parents to engage their children to a healthy lifestyle with physical and mental development being the most important contribution for them (2). Along the way, some of the children attempt to accomplish excellence in sport and aim to follow an elite professional career (3). Parental involvement plays an important role in youth sport participation and performance (4). It was found that parental pressure can negatively affect children and the purpose should be to make the children motivated and enjoy the process (5). A parental guideline for talented youth athletes is provided by Erik. Everts, Max. Snijders, and Lars. van Surksum in this Journal.

Several talented and gifted children stand out and make it to the top, yet it is important to mention that not all top athletes were the best in youth, and not all youth champions will be the champions of tomorrow. Along the way, right before that stage, there are several issues that talented athletes and coaches have to face to get to the top. Early specialization is an often discussed issue and people debate about whether it is more beneficial to limit the amount of hours in specifically one sport or instead explore a diverse range of several sports. Fabian. Klingner and Berdien Prins as well as another group consisting of Imke Soetekouw, Fieke Uwland, and Janjek van Vlijmen bring two novel solutions to this issue and they will make you realize why early diversification is more fun and may be a better recipe for success in youth sports.

Additional to the above matter, who knew that when your parents gave birth to you, the date of birth could already play an important role in your athletic career? This phenomenon is called the relative age effect. Being born at a specific time of the year, close to the cut-off date for youth competition, gives you a distinct advantage in sports success. Hence people born later in a year can have a temporary disadvantage because of their natural physical, emotional, and cognitive development compared to other children (6). Two papers written by Bart Nesselaar, Lars Gerrits, and Pim Weijtens as well as by Karlijn van Harten, Leda Maffei, and Sofia Serna provide the reader with innovative ideas on how the relative age effect problem can be “attacked” and minimized.
Elite athletes have productive years in which they amaze millions of people with their astonishing performances (7). They spend years on constantly practicing hard and performing their best. But what is happening when elite athletes retire or think about retiring from their sport? It was found that athletes who consider retirement record lower levels of performance (8). Retirement can be tough for professional athletes, which is a reason why top athletes may attempt comebacks in a new sport. Some examples include Usain Bolt and Michael Jordan. Usain Bolt continued his athletic career in football while Michael Jordan attempted a swap from basketball to baseball. On the other side, there are also athletes who are unable to reach the top in their first sport and make attempts on transitioning to another sport in order to reach world-class level. This is known as talent transfer (9). A paper by Bart Getkate, Rudi Niman, and Jakob Sikkes introduces a new app, which helps athletes to find a new sport minimizing talent wasting.

Another paper by Esther Kiel, Marie Repgen, and Iraklis Tsigkos is discussing a specific sport, soccer, which is one of the most popular sports worldwide. It requires to have abilities in different areas such as the technical/biomechanical, tactical, mental, and physiological domain; however, these areas are not required in an extraordinary capacity to have fun in playing the game, which is the reason that so many children and adults tend to choose it (10). However, to move on a high top level, athletes need to have high performances in most or all domains. Tactical creativity is one of the essential domains in players and it is hard to identify as well. The paper talks about tactical creativity and how this can be identified in players. The product that is introduced can help coaches to select players based on their creativity and how they react in different situations.

Unlike soccer, water polo is not as popular worldwide; however, it is a common sport in North America, Asia and some countries in Europe. In the Netherlands, water polo is not as advanced especially for the men’s team. Technical and strategic elements are quite important during the game; yet these elements are quite hard to identify as well. (11). The paper by Merle Matijsen, Ruud Mulder, and Bas Nijenhuis will guide you through a test battery, which will help coaches for talent identification in order to climb the Dutch national team in a worldwide level.

Unquestionably, there have been noteworthy changes in the sport world and in the athletic development (12); however, several concerns can be noticed such as early talent selection with multivariate approaches, belief about talent matter, talent selection decisions, and talent identification. Hence, it is very important to bridge the gap between science and practice. The most important thing as a coach or an athlete is to believe in yourself, set your own limits and then nothing can stop you from succeeding.
During the course, guest lectures were given by:

- Dr. Sanne te Wierike, SSIG
  Coordinator Sport Science Institute Groningen (SSIG)
- Prof. Dr. Robert Lamberts
  St. Ellebosch University, Cape Town, South Africa

The students had the opportunity to attend 2 PhD defenses, which you can see in the following pages.

References
2. NOVAK DJOKOVIC FOUNDATION. The Importance of Sports for Children [Internet]. 2015. Available from: https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/the-importance-of-sports-for-children/
4. RH H, SS L. The role of parental involvement in youth sport participation and performance. 1999;
Dr. Inge Stoter
Manager Innovatielab Thialf
Expertise in performance development in speed skating
Dr. Tamara Kramer
Expertise in physical and psychological skills in Dutch junior tennis players
One of the main reasons for drop out from sports is getting injured. Unfortunately, this predominantly counts for youth, also for talented young athletes who want to reach the top. For these athletes, an injury has even more impact. It doesn’t only impact their social life, for example not being able to play sports with their peers anymore or absence from school for quite a while, and their health in the short and long term. But also, their performance drops down and as a result, their career is at stake. Return to sports after getting injured is extremely challenging. Of course, attention needs to be paid to physical recovery but this period is also mentally challenging. Especially when the rehabilitation phase takes a while, intrinsic motivation is essential. Athletes who are able to return to their previous level of sport, unfortunately, still are at greater risk to get injured again. This means, an injury is one of the main risk factors for getting another injury. This is why we closely collaborate with the TopsportTalentSchool and Regional Talent Centers and we have primary injury prevention high on the agenda. Drop out from sports and school cannot be totally prevented. But by monitoring the development of the children at physical, neurocognitive and psychosocial levels, we are doing our utmost best to prevent them from getting injured in the first place.

Dr. Anne Benjaminsen

Anne obtained her Bachelor’s degree in Physical Therapy in 2004 from the School of Health Care Studies, Hanze University Groningen. After this, Anne started to specialize in sports medicine. In 2005-2006 she worked as a student researcher at the American Sports Medicine Institute in Birmingham, AL, USA. Anne earned her Master’s degree in 2008 at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences of the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh, PA, USA. She worked as a graduate student researcher in the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory from 2006 to 2008. In 2015, Anne finished her Phd and currently works at the Center for Human Movement Sciences, University of Groningen and at the School of Sport Studies, Hanze University Groningen as post-doc researcher and teacher. In 2017, Anne was awarded a NWO-ZonMw Veni grant and in 2018 an European Erasmus+ grant was awarded. In both projects motor learning to reduce the knee and ankle injury incidence is the central theme. Her goal is to deliver a useful contribution to the field of sports medicine in the community through innovative research, interventions, publications, presentations, workshops and teaching.
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