

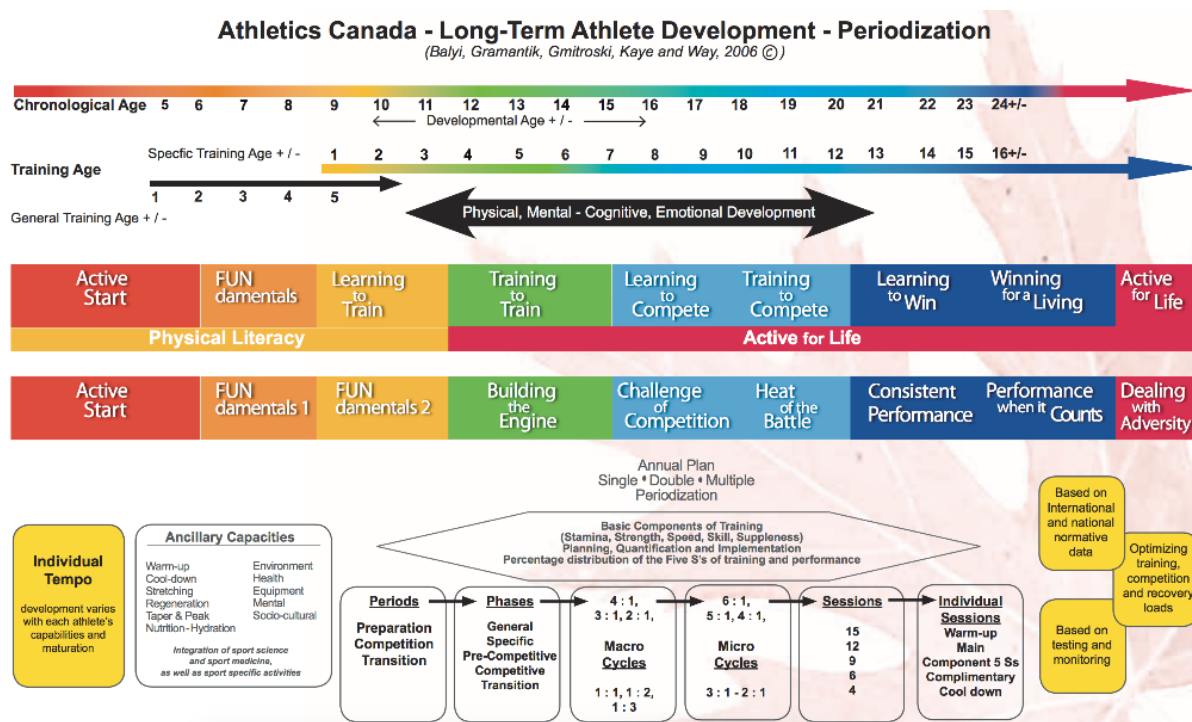
## An Athlete Development Model

*I know I seem to just be meddling again but with the new **UKA Coaching Development Strategy** underway it is important that everyone keeps on trying to make a contribution as each new step is taken. The words contained in the strategy are being driven to their destination by Mark Munro and Jackie Newton (I am guessing that there are many others behind the scenes as well). I applaud much of what is contained in the document but also know the difficulties that will surround just about every step forward. Some of these difficulties will be physical, some financial others human but most will require a deal of patience, adaptability and open-mindedness. Transforming words into action must always go through a process of 'interpretation' and so it is vital that everyone who is interested make enough contribution to ensure that the 'interpretation' is appropriate. I have already sent these thoughts through to the decision-makers.*

The strategy mentions, “Define and publish an Athlete Development Framework with clear coaching roles mapped.” This is of particular interest to me and many others who see the clear link between ‘what has gone before’ and ‘what is yet to come’ in terms of the progression of an athlete along their chosen pathway.

It is a very big step to consider trying to create a model that satisfies the demands of the 21st century and the demands of a fledgling coaching strategy. We have all seen hundreds of these in the past and it makes me think that if you are going to create a major change in things then maybe there are some questions to ponder before any decisions are made.

So far, every attempt at creating this model has led to a very nice-looking diagram / flow-chart as illustrated below.



**Chronological Age**

Under 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24+ Active for Life

**Developmental Age +/-**

**Specific Training Age +/-**

**Training Age**

**General Training Age +/-**

**Physical, Mental - Cognitive, Emotional Development**

**FUNDamental** Age 6 - 9

**Learning to Train** Age 8 - 11

**Training to Train** U15

**Training to Compete 1 & 2** U17 U19

**Training to Win 1 & 2** U21 Age 22 +

**Double Periodisation**

**Multiple Periodisation**

**Centres of Excellence**

**National Teams**

**National Player Development Centre**

**Regional Player Development Centres (TASS)**

**Ancillary Capacities**

Warm-up  
Cool-down  
Stretching  
Regeneration  
Taper & Peak  
Nutrition-Hydration

Environment  
Health  
Equipment  
Mental  
Socio-cultural

Integration of sport science and sport medicine, as well as sport specific activities

**Basic Components of Training**  
(Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skill, Suppleness)  
Planning, Quantification and Implementation  
Percentage distribution of the Five S's of training and performance

**Periods**

Preparation  
Competition  
Transition

**Phases**

General  
Specific  
Pre-Competitive  
Competitive Transition

**Meso Cycles**

4 : 1,  
3 : 1, 2 : 1,  
1 : 1, 1 : 2,  
1 : 3

**Micro Cycles**

6 : 1,  
5 : 1, 4 : 1,  
3 : 1 - 2 : 1

**Sessions**

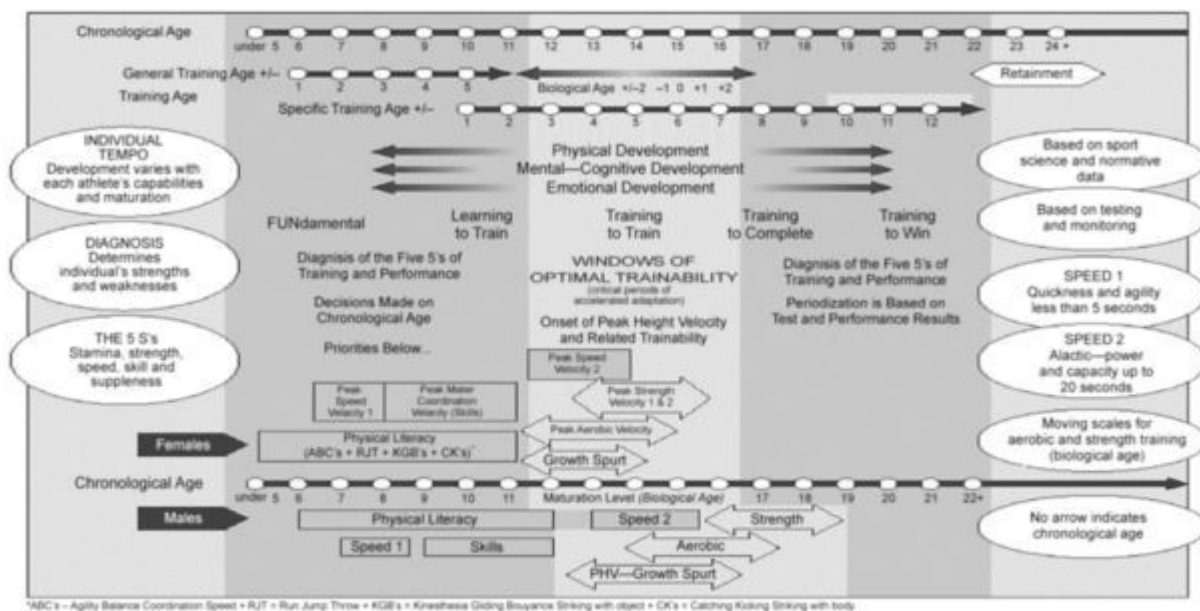
15  
12  
9  
6  
4

**Individual Sessions**

Warm-up  
Main Component (five Ss)  
Complimentary  
Cool down

Based on international and national normative data

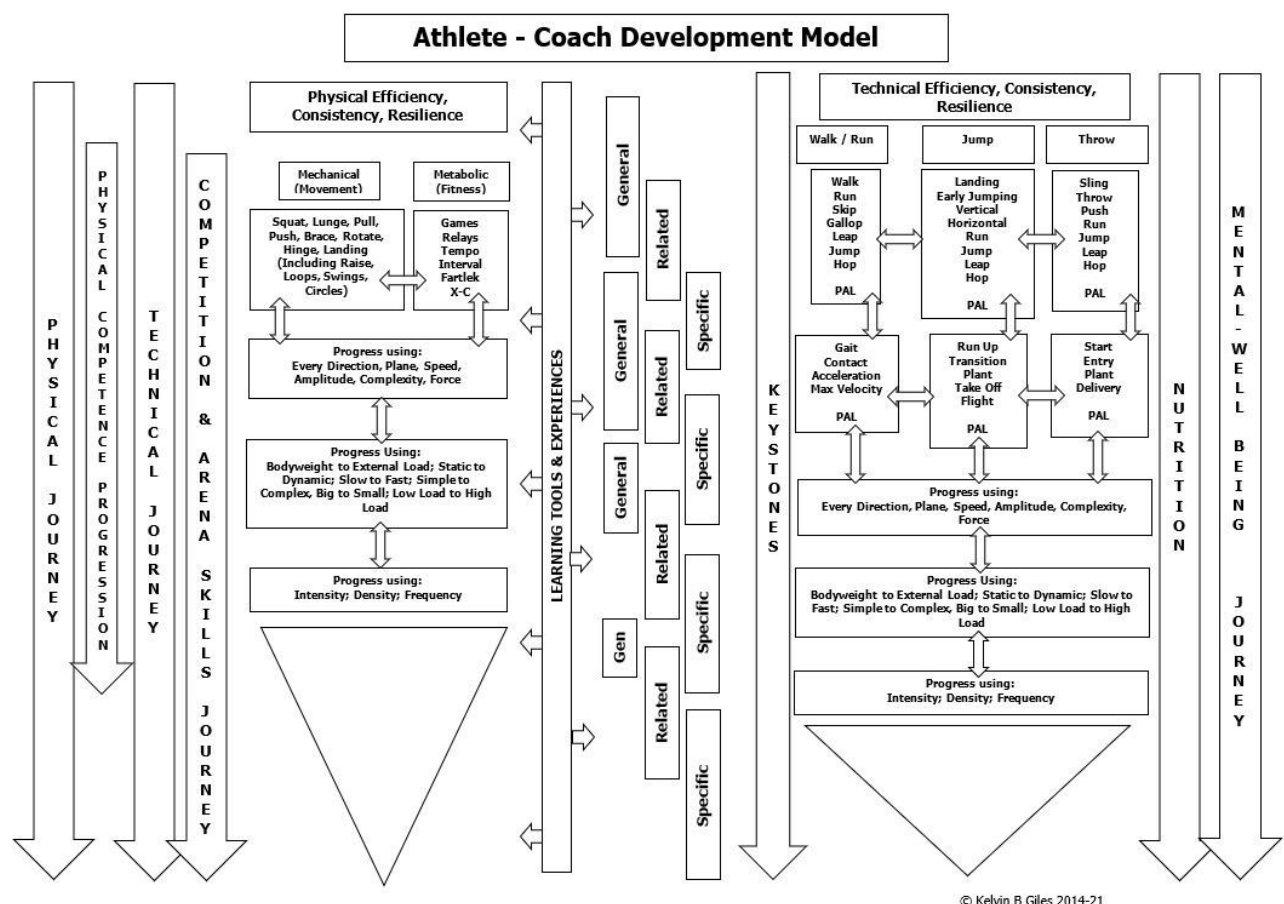
Optimizing training competition and recovery loads



Maybe it is appropriate to consider more than just another flow-chart. Don't get me wrong there is much to be gained by all coaches by offering them some type of diagram that makes things easier to understand. No doubt that without such an overview it is likely that coaches will continue to 'race to the right' as they succumb to fast-tracking, quick-fixing and 'winning at all ages'.

My point is that we have seen these diagrams since the mid-1990's and yet we are still facing all the limitations that the use and understanding of these diagrams were meant to eradicate. It begs the question of 'are there some smarter things to consider'?

Do we need to flesh out the flow-chart with initiatives that can make a difference? Do we need to see the journey in a different way? The following diagram was created to form the context of all those elements that form the journey of each athlete. I have always used this chart to act as a template for the courses and workshops I have delivered. Letting this template guide me reduced the chance of me presenting information out of context. It also helped me get things in the right order so that the athlete's journey was always one of progression and 'earning the right'.

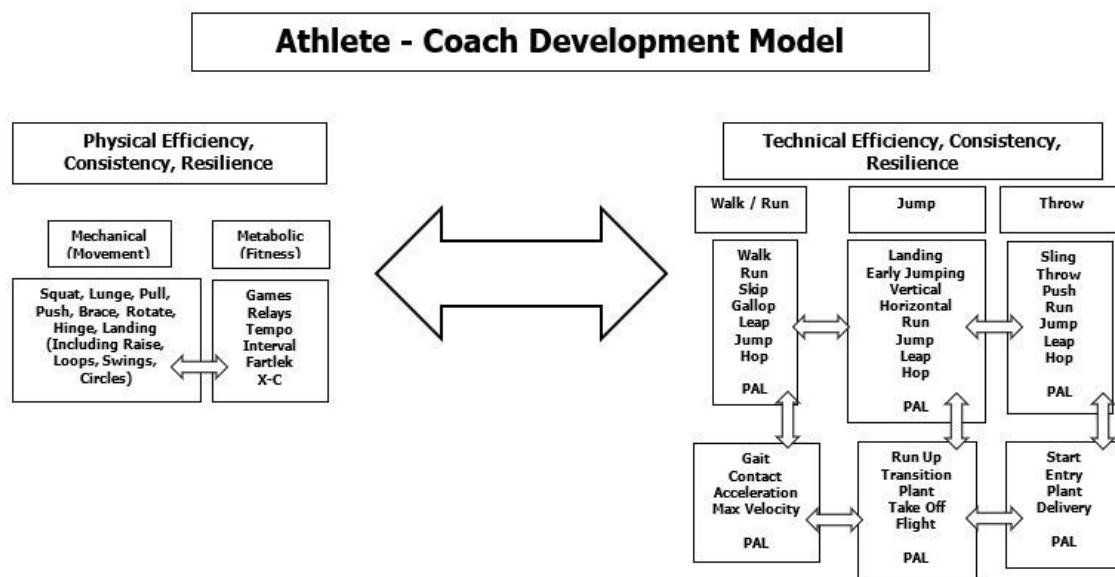


## Notes:

- I use this diagram to ensure that whatever courses, lectures, workshops are created, they are in a progressive context. Try to see each box as being the foundation around which the courses are being created.

- The vertical columns indicate the pillars that support the detail. The General to Related to Specific modules illustrate the ever-changing structure of training as the athlete progresses towards HP. The boxes illustrate some of the content detail.
- The right-hand side deals with the sports-specific technical journey while the left-hand side deals with physical journey. This is not to say they are treated as silos, far from it. Coaches will be taught how activities can be chosen and integrated into a valuable prescription.
- Obviously, the early stages that appear in the top half of the page are those that are applicable to the Children and Youth stages. As each athlete and coach navigates down the page so the content becomes more relevant to Talent and HP – but don't forget the ever cycling General to Related to Specific system.
- You will notice that there is no mention of chronological steps. While all the previous Athlete Development (LTAD) models link quite strongly to chronological age groups (and can offer a semblance of guidance to inexperienced coaches) such reference has done harm in interpretation at times. The Children and Youth sectors are dependent upon maturation / adaptation rates and not on chronological age.
- When considering the move towards a modular approach to the Coach Education / Development strategy I would suggest that enough time is spent on ensuring that before a coach can make the choice of which journey they wish to undertake they have completed the required introductory courses. "Get them to know what they don't know".
- My first recommendation is to deliver a course that outlines the full fabric of what the coach is about to experience. I call this the *Toolbox Course* where things like the Maturation Journey , Physical Journey, Skill Journey, Learning Journey, Behavioural Journey are outlined and experienced by the coaches. Added to these components are things like Planning. All in all they should leave this introductory course with the tools to conduct at least part of a training session.
- Obviously, this first step into the world of coaching needs to be immediately backed up when they leave the course. The development of handheld multi-media resources that they can turn to in their first-ever session would be an advantage. Housing appropriate resources (human and physical) at their Club will also be vital so that their first coaching steps are fully supported.
- Further support should be available locally by the national roll-out of supporting mini-workshops at Club level all coordinated by the future Club Coaching Directors. These are particularly important in the Physical and Technical components. One can envisage these workshops (30min to 120min) fleshing out the details of the activities designed for each sector. Consider rolling these out via handheld resources, online and via intra-Club mechanisms.

- Here it is important for me to make some comment about what you see on the right-hand side and left-hand side of the two journeys (Physical and Technical – two of the building blocks of all journeys)



- There is a continuous linking of both sides of this learning continuum.
- The ability to integrate elements from both sides into a coherent, progressive training session is vital.
- This is where the 'workshop' curriculum plays its part.

- I have a list of tried and tested modules in the form of courses, lectures and workshops that might be of value for you to scrutinise. If there is any value in them they can be examined by your experts to see if they fit into what you intend to have as the modular structure.

- I think it safe to say that some of the principles contained in these thoughts are applicable to the Talent and HP pathways also. The content may be different but the continuous link between the Physical and Technical must prevail and is a proven element of Talent Development and HP. The 'Competition and Arena Skills Journey' forms the backbone of the transition from Talent Development through to HP and this pillar will require the best minds to assemble the content.

- This link between the Physical and Technical journey will be a vital component for the Director of Performance to facilitate when the methodology of High Performance in the Tournament setting is examined. However, if the athlete and coach development model (Children – Youth – Talent) is created effectively then the HP pathway should naturally be enhanced.

Happy to share all this with everyone. I hope it stimulates much discussion and that more people add their thoughts so that your decision-making is enhanced. The

Coaching Forums that service the Event Group Advisory Panels will be a source of valued information from all coaches.

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