

## **General to Related to Specific – some answers**

I am trying to answer several questions arising from my thoughts on the **General to Related to Specific (GRS)** journey for athletes and how a movement vocabulary development can help. Very hard to do this by writing stuff down. Far better when everything can be demonstrated and experienced by the coaches in a workshop/course setting.

The philosophy is quite easy to describe. At the moment, in most cases, the activity toolbox for young athletes is heavily focused on event-specific actions and postures. This is also compounded with the additional focus on the competition-specific elements of the event. This is not catastrophic in the short term because young athletes are usually keen to explore the events in a competitive environment. After all, they probably got interested in the event by what they saw on TV. It is often the event actions and postures in a competitive environment that attracted them in the first place so don't burst this bubble. Keeping them involved in the sport is going to be a devil of a problem when they get to secondary school age. These early teenage years are the first critical time when we lose them so we need to present the experiences of the sport in such a way that keeps them attending.

What I am suggesting is a new strategy. In a way, it is also a reaction to some of the ills of the 21st century. As more than a decade of research illustrates, the current generation presents with much lower physical qualities as epitomised by their mechanical (movement) and metabolic (fitness) capabilities. Physical Education has lost its ability to make up for these results of a sedentary lifestyle. No longer are physical qualities a priority in PE as the curriculum has narrowed to one of competitive games. If the school setting and recreational (staring at screens) time no longer provide robust physical experiences sufficient to provide children with a high-quality work/play capacity then the sport must step in to take on the responsibility.

This will mean that all coaches must be proficient in delivering those missing physical qualities of movement efficiency, consistency and resilience and metabolic efficiency, consistency and resilience.

At the moment, in our event-specific centred program, we sometimes (if we are lucky) see the physical (movement) qualities being bolted onto the program as a second thought. My recommendation is to develop coaching so that the event-specific actions and postures grow out of a wide, deep and effective movement vocabulary. This is not to say that the event-specific elements are completely ignored, far from it. Each session should contain general, related and specific movement pattern learning, each emphasised in a ratio appropriate to the unique needs of each individual athlete. For the less physically competent the prescription will have to be more general and related than specific. For those who are progressing appropriately in their physical competence, they may be able to spend

a little more time in the related and specific areas of the prescription. Think of this balance between general, related and specific as being repeating cycles of work where each cycle can see the emphasis changing to suit the time of year.

Under these new circumstances no longer will physical competence be a bolted-on second thought, but a major journey of physical efficiency, consistency and resilience. Let me tell you – when you are chasing the outer reaches of high performance you are going to wish that your athlete had bought forward from their development years **no limitations** in their physical qualities. The intensity, density, frequency and complexity of training at the high-performance level demands that there are no such limitations.

The journey is truly relevant to the engagement/development years from 4-16 years of age. Straight away I have lost some people by classifying 15–16-year-olds as being ‘development age athletes’. Perhaps this is where we should start more brainstorming – but, alas, never enough time when the question was all about the GRS movement vocabulary journey.

The first step is to be brave enough to not solely present event-specific actions and postures for the athletes to learn during the session. If you see yourself as solely a Throws Coach or a Jumps Coach or a Running Coach then I can understand your desire (and confidence) to only travel the journey that is event or event-group specific.

This is where I am hoping that the new UKA Coach Development Strategy is going to make the biggest changes and create language, vocabulary, systems, strategies, processes and protocols devoted to the Children and Youth layers of the sport. Especially important is the creation of resources that guarantee that every coach of this layer of the sport is armed with a toolbox that allows them to deliver a vast layer of general, related and specific movement actions, postures and experiences to every athlete, regardless of their ability.

Hopefully, there will be layer upon layer of activities (physical actions and postures in a variety of settings) that open the door to the more specific nature of running, jumping and throwing. At a stage of the journey, each athlete will then, in their own time, be able to choose which one of these three journeys is for them. Even if they decide on an event very early in their journey it does not mean that the depth and width of the movement vocabulary needs to narrow and specialise in the actions and postures of their chosen event.

The coach may consider having a series of ‘movement breaks’ within the session as the vehicle with which to deliver this journey. The exposure can start in the Warm-Up with action and learning being shared. There can then be a period of event-group related activities (some general, some related, some specific); this can then be followed by more physical competence activities (some general, some related, some specific; this section can then be followed by another round of event-group

activities; a second round of general, related, specific movements can then occur, and so on.

#### Example – Throwing Event-Group

Warm-Up	Event Group Activity	Physical Competence Activity	Event Group Activity	Physical Competence Activity	Event Group Activity	Physical Competence Activity	Warm Down
No Laps	Pushing	Hybrids of:	Pushing	Hybrids of:	Pushing	Hybrids of:	
General locomotion	Slinging	Squat,	Slinging	Squat,	Slinging	Squat,	
Pulling	Overhand	Lunge, Pull	Overhand	Lunge, Pull	Overhand	Lunge, Pull	
Pushing	Throwing	Push, Brace,	Throwing	Push, Brace,	Throwing	Push, Brace,	
Rotating	related activities	Rotate,	related activities	Rotate,	related activities	Rotate,	
Bracing	Related Games	Hinge,	Related Games	Hinge,	Related Games	Hinge,	
Coordinative Locomotion		Landing		Landing		Landing	
Faster Locomotion		Related Games and Relays		Related Games and Relays		Related Games and Relays	
Faster related actions							

For those of you well versed in the role of the ‘Keystone’ actions and postures, you will immediately see the huge number of opportunities that such a system offers. Whether they are activities in the event / event-group section or the physical competence section, there will always be an opportunity to seek out the learning of the general, related and specific ‘Keystones’.

I am hoping that the new UKA strategy will be able to create resources and workshops that allow the learning and sharing of all those mentioned facets of the session e.g. Event-Group / Event activities in Push Throwing, Sling Throwing, Overhand Throwing; Physical Competence activities in the foundation movement; etc. If these hundreds of activities could also be available on handheld devices like smartphones and mini-tablets, so the opportunity for precision, progression and variety within the session could nearly be guaranteed.

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