LONG TERM PARTICIPANT DEVELOPMENT
FOR EQUESTRIAN RIDERS, DRIVERS AND VAULTERS

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE BRITISH EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION
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COVER PHOTOS

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1. Objective

To provide insight into the key generic issues relating to Long Term Participant Development (LTPD) and identify implications for the equestrian-specific LTPD framework.

1.1 Terminology – points of clarification:

Participant – a participant is an athlete who takes part in either riding, carriage driving or vaulting, either as a competitor or for social or therapeutic reasons, whatever their ability.

Long Term Participant Development (LTPD) – This is a term that is inclusive of all previous work undertaken by BEF and partners on Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD). LTAD and LTPD are one and the same. Throughout all BEF documentation this will be referred to at LTPD hence forward.

(BEF aims to cause no offence to previous work carried out under the term LTAD and the use of LTPD is to help clarify this area and make it more understandable for the equestrian sector).
Towards the end of this section a brief critical reflection of Dr Istvan Balyi’s work takes place. It is based on both Dr Istvan Balyi’s work and the critical review that Equestrian LTPD model has been developed. LTPD itself emerged as a means of addressing sub-optimal developmental practices that Dr Balyi identified as common to sports systems in many countries. He described these practices as the Universal Gaps in Sport Systems. They include:

- Developing participants over-competing and under-training;
- Adult training programmes being imposed on developing participants;
- Training and competition programmes designed for male participants being imposed on female participants;
- Training of developing participants being geared to achieving short-term outcomes – winning – rather than the long term process of development;
- Training programmes being developed which do not take account of critical periods of accelerated adaptation;
- A general failure to develop core motor skill;
- The most skilful coaches working with elite participants rather than developing participants;
- Specialisation in a sport occurring too early.

Although not necessarily evident in all sports or countries, these gaps are seen as symptomatic of a general failure to understand and address some of the fundamental issues related to athletic development. Sport has failed to fully understand and address issues relating to:

- The amount and quality of practice required to achieve elite levels of performance;
- Specialisation in specific sports at appropriate ages;
- The establishment of ‘physical literacy’ at a young age;
- The structuring of practice around developmental rather than chronological age;
- The structuring of practice to capitalise on the ‘windows of trainability’;
- The establishment of appropriate competition structures and planning;
- The provision of an appropriate environment for developing Participants;
- The management of transitions between the stages of development;
- The role of coaches and family in the lives of developing Participants.

2. Introduction

The LTPD framework for equestrianism builds on the generic Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model conceptualised by world-renowned coaching consultant, Dr Istvan Balyi. The generic LTAD model brings together research from the sport sciences, from child development and from studies into the development of expertise to provide a comprehensive structure around which guidelines for optimal training, competition and recovery practices can be produced. The model can be adapted to take account of the demands of different sports and, once complete, can be used to inform the practice of participants, parents, coaches, trainers, sport scientists and administrators.
2.1 Specialisation

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to specialisation in specific sports or disciplines at appropriate ages.

Discussion

According to the generic LTPD model, sports can be classified as ‘early specialisation’ or ‘late specialisation’. The stages of LTPD based on these concepts are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Specialisation</th>
<th>Late Specialisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Active Start</td>
<td>1 Active Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fundamentals</td>
<td>2 Fundamentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Train/</td>
<td>3 Learning to Train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Train</td>
<td>4 Training to Train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Training to Compete</td>
<td>5 Training to Compete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Training to Win</td>
<td>6 Training to Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Active for Life</td>
<td>7 Active for Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These models are general in nature and require adjustment on a sport specific basis.

Since few sports can be categorised as early specialisation, the LTPD model tends to focus on late specialisation sports. Briefly, early specialisation sports should develop sport-specific models as a general model which would lead to oversimplification. The challenge is to combine the Fundamentals, Learning to Train and Training to Train stages and to amalgamate them into a single stage.

For late specialisation sports, specialising before the age of ten has been shown to contribute to:
- One-dimensional sport specific preparation;
- Lack of development of core components of athleticism;
- Overuse injury;
- Early burnout;
- Early dropout.

Implications for the Equestrian Long Term Participant Development Framework

- Equestrianism appears to be an ‘early start, late specialisation’ sport, with participants starting Learning to Ride by the age of three, but only specialising in a specific discipline around the age of 16.
- However, due to fact that specialisation does not tend to take place until later year (especially post the age 10), the sport could be viewed as a late specialisation sport.
- Age of specialisation appears to be a key issue for equestrianism because it is an early start sport, but also a sport where riders can go on to enjoy a career well into their 40s. Consequences such as overuse injury, burnout and dropout need to be carefully considered and managed in the sport.

2.2 Physical Literacy

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to the establishment of ‘Physical Literacy’ at a young age.

Discussion

‘Physical Literacy’ refers to the development of a number of core components of athleticism in the individual. The core components are:
- Agility;
- Dynamic Balance;
- Coordination;
- Spatial Awareness;
- Flexibility;
- Basic Endurance.

These core components are seen as key to the development of skill in any sport and according to the LTPD model should be developed before the onset of the adolescent growth spur. The LTPD model suggests that the core components of physical literacy can be addressed through participation in three types of activity: athletics, gymnastics and swimming.

It is postulated that unless these core components are addressed at the appropriate time, the individual will have difficulty improving their performance in a specific sport. The importance of general movement literacy in early years, the importance of Physical Education, and involvement in other sports should not be underestimated in developing overall ‘Physical Literacy’ as a foundation for any specific sport.
Implications for the Equestrian Long Term Participant Development Framework

- As identified in the specialisation section, equestrianism appears to be predominantly a ‘late specialisation’ sport, although we should be aware some riders participating from a very young age.

- In the generic LTPD model for late specialisation sports, the ‘Fundamentals’ or core components of athleticism are developed between the ages of 6 and 9.

- So as not to limit potential, equestrian sports should consider carefully the importance of the core components of athleticism alongside the demands of riding and look at how they can be addressed in activity on and off the horse.

- Failure to address the core components of athleticism may result in the need for remedial work by riders later in their career.

2.3 Developmental Age

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to structuring practice around developmental rather than chronological age.

Discussion

LTPD requires the identification of early, average, and late matures in order to help in the design of appropriate training and competition programmes in relation to optimal trainability and readiness.

Chronological age, which refers to the amount of time elapsed since birth, is not a useful indicator of physical, mental or emotional maturity. Children of the same chronological age can differ by several years in their level of maturation.

(Note: Maturation refers to qualitative structural and functional system changes in the body’s progress towards its adult form).
A more useful way of relating practice to age is to consider ‘Developmental Age’. This refers to degrees of physical, mental and emotional maturity and can be determined by skeletal maturity, or bone age, after which mental and emotional maturity is incorporated. One of the most important ways of assessing maturation is to consider the use of indicators or ‘maturity events’ such as the beginning of the growth spurt and the peak of the growth spurt (also known as Peak Height Velocity or PHV).

Currently, most athletic training and competition programmes are based on chronological age. However, participants of the same age between the ages of ten and 16 can be four to five years apart developmentally. Thus, chronological age is a poor guide for the segregation of adolescents for competitions.

A major objective of LTPD is a holistic approach to participant development. This includes emphasis on ethics, fair play and character building across the various stages. To support this training, competitive and recovery programmes should consider the mental and emotional development of the participant alongside the physical. The tables on the following pages build on the information above, providing guidelines on all aspects of development throughout the maturation process. The tables are grouped around four generic developmental stages: late childhood, early adolescence, late adolescence and early adulthood. The tables show ‘General Characteristics’, ‘Observations’ and ‘Coaching Implications’ for each stage.

**Implications for the Equestrian Long Term Participant Development Framework**

- Equestrianism must consider the significance of differences in developmental age across age groups and for the sexes;
- That fact that males and females appear to compete on an equal footing in most disciplines indicates that developmental age may be less of a factor in equestrianism than in other sports;
- Differences may however affect the structure and content of training and competition between the ages of ten and 16.
### Table 2: Development Characteristics in Late Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Characteristics</th>
<th>General Observations</th>
<th>Coaching Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulatory and respiratory systems reach maturity</td>
<td>Circulatory and respiratory systems generally capable of maximum output</td>
<td>Aerobic &amp; anaerobic training can be conducted - sport-specific energy systems to be implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of increase in height &amp; weight slows. Stabilisation in the muscular system</td>
<td>Muscles grown to mature size but strength continues to increase (peaks in late twenties)</td>
<td>Strength training can be maximised. Neuromuscular training to be optimised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeletal maturation continues</td>
<td>Connective tissue still strengthening</td>
<td>Progressive overload in training to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult proportions reached: Females 17, Males several years later</td>
<td>Relatively females gain more weight that males</td>
<td>Aerobic training for females to be optimised. Awareness of how to manage weight gain important. Integrate technical &amp; ancillary components into training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MENTAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally brain has reached adult size by 16, but continues to mature neurologically for several years</td>
<td>Capacity to deal with multiple strategies growing</td>
<td>Refinement of skill possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking is developing</td>
<td>Capacity to self-analyse and correct growing</td>
<td>Development and integration of decision-making into training important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer group influence still powerful</td>
<td>Capacity for independent decision-making &amp; leadership growing</td>
<td>Strong direction &amp; discipline to be maintained but development of leadership &amp; responsibility important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for stable self image</td>
<td>Still susceptible to successes and failures</td>
<td>Coping techniques to be developed. Positive reinforcement of performance and effort imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with opposite sex playing a strong part</td>
<td>Male awareness of female issues of femininity versus development in sport. Female awareness of male issues of linking masculinity to performance</td>
<td>Mutual recognition of issues to be developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Long Term Athlete Development  =  9
## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Brain matures neurologically at 19-20
- Complete understanding & acceptance of the need for rules, regulation and structure

## MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

- Brain matures neurologically at 19-20
- Complete understanding & acceptance of the need for rules, regulation and structure

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Body reaches physiological maturity
- Skeletal maturation reached: Females 19-20, Males 22-23

### Table 3: Development Characteristics in Early Adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Characteristics</th>
<th>General Observations</th>
<th>Coaching Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body reaches physiological maturity</td>
<td>All physiological systems fully trainable</td>
<td>Training programmes to employ highest-quality monitoring information to facilitate maximal adaptation &amp; minimise injury. Optimal body alignment, muscle balance &amp; flexibility important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeletal maturation reached: Females 19-20, Males 22-23</td>
<td>Stability in musculoskeletal system</td>
<td>Regular medical monitoring to be organised. Blood tests for female athletes (anaemia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MENTAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain matures neurologically at 19-20</td>
<td>Capacity for skilful self-analysis and regulation. Capacity to analyse and conceptualise sport. Capacity for skilful information processing</td>
<td>Focus on winning. Principles of adult learning should be implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete understanding &amp; acceptance of the need for rules, regulation and structure</td>
<td>Rules, regulation &amp; structure must be perceived as fair</td>
<td>Involve in planning &amp; development of training activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be self-directed and independent. Self-actualisation and self-expression important</td>
<td>Ready to assume responsibility &amp; accept consequences of actions</td>
<td>Treat as adults – with respect. Direction &amp; structure provided still important. Goal setting to be emphasised to focus attention, direct effort and stimulate strategy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant decisions on career, education &amp; lifestyle become a priority</td>
<td>Significant changes in interests, hobbies and physical activity may occur</td>
<td>Guidance should be given regarding off-season &amp; educational pursuits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with opposite sex continue to be a priority</td>
<td>Lasting relationships developing</td>
<td>Opportunities for independent social interaction to be created</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A ‘window of trainability’ refers to a period of development in which training of a specific capacity has an optimal effect.
2.4 Windows of Trainability

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to structuring practice to capitalise on the ‘windows of trainability’.

Discussion

‘Trainability’ refers to the responsiveness of individuals to a training stimulus at different stages of development. A ‘window of trainability’ refers to a period of development in which training of a specific capacity has an optimal effect. The stimulus must be timed to fall within the window of trainability to achieve optimum effect. The body’s trainable systems and their associated windows of trainability are:

- **Endurance**: The optimal window of trainability occurs at the onset of PHV. Aerobic capacity training is recommended before Participants reach PHV. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate declines.
- **Strength**: The optimal window of trainability for females is immediately after PHV or at the onset of the menarche, while for males it is 12 to 18 months after PHV.
- **Speed**: For males the first speed training window occurs between the ages of seven and nine, and the second between the ages of 13 and 16. For females the first speed training window occurs between the ages of six and eight, and the second between the ages of 11 and 13.
- **Motor Skill**: The window of optimal motor skill development for males takes place between the ages of nine and 12, and for females between eight and 11.
- **Flexibility**: The optimal window of trainability for flexibility for both sexes occurs between the ages of six and 10. Special attention should be paid to flexibility during the adolescent growth spurt.

**Implications for Equestrian Long Term Participant Development Framework**

So as not to limit rider potential equestrian sports should consider carefully the significance of the ‘Windows of Trainability’ and look at how optimal training can be achieved through activity on and off the horse.

2.5 Planning & Structuring Competition

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to the establishment of appropriate planning structures for training and competition.

Discussion

The LTPD model sets out a strategic framework for a ten year development process, the aim of which is to optimise the physical, technical, tactical and mental preparation of the participant for competition. While FUN-based and skills-based festivals are valuable in the Active Start and Fundamentals stages, annual and quadrennial planning are the operational structures which support the LTPD model.

Annual planning is based on specific, identified periods of athletic preparation, competition and transition whilst quadrennial planning refers to planning for the four year Olympic and Paralympic cycle for elite participants. Plans must be structured around development and competition priorities taking into account the time available to bring about required performance improvements, while promoting progressive tactical improvement and retaining a healthy underlying sense of fun. Optimal planning is critical to overall participant development.
A key component of the planning process is the competition phase. Competition planning and structures are the factors which determine the content of plans. The rules of competition determine the type of training that participants do and the competition structure and plans determine when and how much training is done. To promote optimal development, competition structures and planning processes should reflect the physical, mental and technical development needs of the participant. At certain stages, development of these capabilities may be required to take precedence over ‘winning’ whilst later winning becomes the focus. This is reflected in the recommended ratios of training to competition for each of the generic LTPD phases, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Ratio (Training:Competition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Start</td>
<td>No specific ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentals</td>
<td>No specific ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Train</td>
<td>70:30?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Train</td>
<td>60:40?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Compete</td>
<td>40:60?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Win</td>
<td>25:75?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active for Life</td>
<td>No specific ratio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The competition structure is the most powerful tool a sport has for determining what, when and how much riders train. Levels and lengths of competitive seasons should be aligned with the changing needs of the developing participant as set out in the Equestrian LTPD framework.

Where schedules are set by leagues or organisations, or determined by riders, parents and coaches, the Equestrian LTPD may be used to provide guidance around which planning for optimal development can be promoted.

2.6 The Talent Development Environment

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to the provision of an appropriate environment for developing participants.

Discussion

Extensive research into the development of talented performers tells us that ‘talent’ is not entirely innate, but is also the result of the continuous influence of the environment. Optimal development relies on our understanding of how to provide an environment that promotes rather than constrains the development of the performer.

Recent research by Prof. Dave Collins identified five generic features as significant in the Talent Development Environment:

- Individualised development;
- Long term vs. short term aims & agendas;
- Coherent messages;
- Emphasis on development NOT identification;
- Complexity and integration

Individualised Development

The principle of individualisation is grounded in the fundamental realisation that every human is inherently unique. In order to optimise development participants must be treated as individuals, on a one-to-one level, taking into consideration their strengths and weaknesses.

This is particularly important in light of the vast number of individual differences that are apparent and changeable, especially in adolescents and young adults. A systematic approach to managing the needs of participants ultimately leads to an increased chance of incorporating every important factor for the development of the individual.
2.7 Long Term v Short Term Aims and Agendas:

The effective Talent Development Environment must have a long-term emphasis running throughout. This includes the nature of the aims and philosophies of the programme and also the coaching required at certain stages of development. The aims and philosophies must be based around achieving success at the senior level.

In other words, the aims of development pathways are to equip Participants with the appropriate skill and experience to allow them to move successfully to the next ‘rung on the ladder’ and not solely to achieve short term age group success.

This principle also applies to the wider educational agenda which must be preparing young Participants not only to reach their potential in sport (at whatever level that may be), but also preparing them for life in the present and future.

Coherent Messages

There are many influences on young people, especially through their childhood and adolescence. The influence that certain people or groups have on individuals varies from person to person and at different stages different groups have a stronger influence. Essentially, problems arise when there are conflicting messages coming at the Participant from different parties. It is essential for, and far more effective and efficient if, every influence on a developing Participant is pulling or pushing in the same direction. In other words, there must be coherent and consistent messages coming from every facet of the Participant’s life.

Emphasis on Development NOT Identification

Talent development systems aim to prepare and produce Participants who will be able to reach, and be successful at, the senior level in sport. An effective development system will identify and develop those with the potential to develop and be successful at the senior level, not identify and select those who have the talent or ability ‘now’.

There are two fundamental problems with identifying ‘talent’ at a young age:

- The first problem is maturation. It is obvious and well known that children and adolescents grow and develop at different rates. This means that in selecting the ‘best’ performer in the period before and during puberty almost inevitably results in an evaluation of current maturity as opposed to the level of potential.

- The second problem is that a young participant who performs better than another young Participant may not hold the most potential but rather may show who has received most training. It is very hard to distinguish between the two influences (past training and potential) as determinants of present performance.

Although young participants will move through similar stages of development, and face the typical problem periods or transitions, they can and will respond in very different ways to all of these factors. They will breeze through certain issues and struggle at others. These different experiences can boost, delay or hinder development.

Individuals develop at different times, taking longer or shorter times to realise their potential. Talent is not static but influenced by maturation and interaction with the environment. Therefore it is important to emphasise the creation of the most developmentally appropriate environment aligned to each stage, for every individual participant.
### Table 5: Figure Model of the Stages of Talent Development
Adapted from Bloom 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Initiation</th>
<th>PERFORMER</th>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joyful</td>
<td>Process centred</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playful</td>
<td>Kind/careful/cheerful</td>
<td>Shared excitement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Notice child’s ‘giftedness’</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>Notice child’s ‘giftedness’</td>
<td>Notice mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/social orientated</td>
<td>Notice child’s ‘giftedness’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Transition 1        | Development of an athletic identity | Talent identification | |
|                     | Accelerated development             | Competition becomes yardstick of success | |
|                     | Introduction to more technical coach| Increased commitment | |
|                     | Becoming more achievement orientated| | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2: Development</th>
<th>PERFORMER</th>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hooked/committed</td>
<td>Superior technical knowledge</td>
<td>More moral and financial support (to maintain mentor relationship)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential identified</td>
<td>Strong personal interest</td>
<td>Restricted other activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More serious</td>
<td>Respected</td>
<td>Concerned for holistic development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task/achievement orientated</td>
<td>Strong guidance and discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected quality results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Transition 2 | Prioritisation of sport in life | Transition characterised by turning points perhaps stimulated by successful performance/key event | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------| |
|              | Psychological rebellion | Introduction of master coach | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3: Perfection</th>
<th>PERFORMER</th>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obsessed/dominates life</td>
<td>Master coach</td>
<td>Lesser role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally responsible</td>
<td>Feared/respected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Love/hate relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to dedicate time and effort required for highest standards</td>
<td>Successful/demanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complexity and Integration

The pursuit of excellence in sport depends on a large number of interrelated and interdependent elements. All factors influencing the participant’s internal and external environment may contribute to, detract from, or have no effect upon the pursuit of potential. The failure to give appropriate attention to any one aspect makes progress difficult. Therefore, priorities have to be established and detailed planning carried out in a variety of contributory sub-disciplines in order to design an appropriate performance plan. The objectives of such a plan have to be clear and unambiguous, and linked to an overall performance strategy. The plan needs to be clearly understood and accepted by everyone - managers, administrators, coaches, participants, parents and support staff and the plan needs to be flexible and adaptable.

There are many factors in a Talent Development Environment that interact and integrate with each other in a significant way. The programme that is set up needs to be integrated, interdisciplinary and systematic in its approach in order to convert the ‘complex to the simple’ in an effective, useful and meaningful way.

Implications for Equestrian Long Term Participant Development

- Whilst the content, nature and timing of different aspects of training have dominated the developmental agenda, environmental factors have received little attention.
- Equestrianism may wish to use the Equestrian LTPD framework as a mechanism for addressing the key features of the environment as they apply across the sport as a whole, and to the individual disciplines.

2.8 Transition

The issue

Understanding and addressing issues relating to the management of transitions between the stages of development.

Discussion

The LTPD model shows that participants move through a number of stages as they progress towards careers as international competitors. It has been identified that rather than the stages themselves being the significant features of long term planning, the transitions occurring between stages are also crucial factors for successful development.

Transition refers to a discontinuity in a person’s life space where the person is aware of the discontinuity and requires new or different behaviour as a result of the newness of the situation. In relation to this discontinuity, UK and international research clearly reinforces what many participants, coaches and administrators in sport already know: transitions are problematic.

Examples of a problem specifically related transition is the high reported level of dropout in transitional periods between junior and senior representation. Indeed, the same observation applies to non-sport transitions, where drop-out levels have been shown to be significant as participants move from school to university.

This implies that, in addition to understanding the processes of effective development through the stages, understanding and managing the required processes during the associated transitions is crucial if successful and optimal development is to occur.

Individuals who may be particularly susceptible to transition issues may have the following characteristics:

- They may have little to no experience of sport transitions
- They may be limited in their general ability to adapt to change because of emotional or behavioural deficits
- They may be limited in their ability to form and maintain support networks
- They may have to make the transition with meagre emotional and material resources.

Recommendations for interventions to support Participants through key transitions include:
It has been identified that rather than the stages themselves being the significant features of long term planning, the transitions occurring between stages are also crucial factors for successful development.

- Enhancement of coping skill in relation to dealing with future transition
- Enhancement of social support pre, during and post transition
- Availability of formal lifestyle or counselling support, which allows participants to address issues before, during and after a transition.

**Implications for Equestrian Long Term Participant Development**

- In addition to understanding the processes of effective development through the Equestrian LTPD stages, understanding and managing the required processes during the associated transitions is crucial if successful and optimal development is to occur.

**2.9 The Role of Coaches and Family**

**The issue**

Understanding and addressing issues relating to the role of coaches and family in the lives of developing participants.

**Discussion**

Extensive research reflects the importance to developing participants of high levels of support from families and coaches. In a recent study with US Olympians, participants ranked ‘Family and Friends’ and ‘Coaches’ second and third respectively in the list of factors that contributed to their success, with only ‘Dedication and Persistence’ outranking these two factors. Conversely, participants ranked ‘Lack of Coaching Expertise or Support’ third in the list of
obstacles to success. Although parents did not appear explicitly in the obstacles list, both ‘Lack of Financial Support’ and ‘Lack of Social Support’ were mentioned and both of these emerge in other studies as significant in relation to the role of family.

UK research into the development of sporting talent identified that 56% of performers remain dependent on family for financial support well into their twenties, whilst research into transition suggests that social and, particularly family support are key variables mediating successful transition.

The parts families and coaches play change in line with the participant’s development. Benjamin Bloom’s three stage model of talent development sets out the characteristics of performers, coaches and parents over the course of the career of a talented individual – see opposite. Bloom goes on to suggest that talent cannot be developed unless it is valued by society and recognised and nurtured by parents, teachers and coaches.

Recent studies have shown that Participants who experienced success at World and Olympic Championships were found to work with excellent coaches during the ‘investment’ and latterly the ‘maintenance’ years of their athletic careers. Coaches assisted these participants in refining their skill and developing strategies for competition. They were described by their participants as extremely knowledgeable, trustworthy, well-respected, and caring. The coaches instilled confidence and trust and coped well with crisis situations. Intriguingly, members of less successful teams were found to have coaches who failed to develop trust and effective communication and were not consistent in their behaviours, particularly in pressure situations.

### Implications for the Equestrian Long Term Participant Development Framework

- Family and coaches are key ‘contextual factors’ in the long term development of riders.
- Systematically assessing the rider’s needs requires a thorough, consistent and organised approach to collecting information – input from family and coaches is an essential part of this process.
- The Equestrian LTPD framework should address the changing needs of the rider and consider the changing demands that will be placed on family and coaches as the rider develops.

### 2.10 Brief Academic Review of LTPD (participant development)

Richard Bailey, Dave Collins, Paul Ford, Aine MacNamara, Martin Toms and Gemma Pearce (March 2010) produced ‘Athlete Development in Sport: An Academic Review’, this work built on that of Dr Istvan Balyi and will shape the Equestrian Long Term Participant Development.

### Summary of Findings

Participant development is a central aspect of any sports development framework as it is concerned with the activities experienced, the pathways followed and the obstacles encountered by players during their sporting and/or physical activity careers. This review seeks to identify the main findings/principles associated with participant development, the methods used to generate this information, and the strengths and weaknesses of the supporting research. It does so by focusing on three broad areas of inquiry: the biological domain, the psychological domain and the social domain.

### Biological Domain

During childhood and adolescence there are measurable changes in body shape and structure. These changes relate to an integrated natural development of genes, hormones, nutrients and environmental factors that bring anatomical, neurological, muscular and metabolic/hormonal adaptations. Consequently, this has a direct impact upon the development of specific fitness components. A significant amount of evidence shows that this biological maturation is non-linear and dynamic, meaning an active variance in the development of fitness components between individuals.

At present, the application of such information by practitioners to enhance athletic performance is poor. To date, the best-known model to include such considerations is the Long-Term Participant Development (LTPD) model. Participant development models must have the flexibility to account for individualised growth rates and by using physical measures, such as peak height velocity and peak weight velocity, the LTPD model advances practitioner understanding to some degree. It uses successful training ethos alongside a greater scientific basis for children and adolescents, and moves away from early specialisation in sport and
physical activity to optimise athletic development. The model also acknowledges the need for a balanced training load and competition reflective of the stage of maturation. It is commonly accepted that training can bring changes in participant performance. It appears there are natural accelerated improvements in overall participant performance in young people aged 5–9 years old, as well as specialised fitness-component developments during adolescent biological maturation. Moreover, from conducting training at appropriate maturation time periods, some research suggests accelerated development of athletic performance, known as ‘windows of opportunity’. However, participant development should not be driven by windows of opportunity as there is a lack of cause-and-effect evidence; therefore, practitioners should also be aware of the importance of training to advance all fitness components throughout biological maturation during non-critical training periods.

There is a need for long-term training studies to determine whether windows of opportunity actually occur. There is no evidence that failure to exploit these windows of opportunity with appropriate training will result in inhibited development and ceiling limitations later on. A fundamental question is whether these critical periods are included to help develop elite performance beyond an participant’s natural genetic make-up, or merely achieve optimal elite performance faster. Similarly, will misuse of the critical periods bring an increased likelihood of fixed or, more disturbingly, detrimental participant effects upon participation during adulthood.

**Psychological Domain**

Individuals are likely to encounter a range of long and short developmental stages and, perhaps more crucially and a greater challenge, transitions between these stages as they progress in their sport. Unfortunately, most existing models fail to acknowledge the non-linear and dynamic pathways that typify prolonged engagement in sport. Instead, they tend to suggest participants may progress towards either elite sport participation or may, instead, choose to maintain involvement through the recreational years. Alongside the goal of lifelong participation, the design of any effective system must adequately allow for a continuum between these two goals, rather than treating them as separate targets. Such a consideration is missing from these twin-track stage models, since they account for neither the many non-linear pathways inherent in development nor the ‘return routes’ that are characteristics of the path to excellence.

Although these models describe development as a progression through different stages, they offer little insight into how individuals move through or between stages and different development pathways. While ability can be seen as the building block or defining feature of talent, the process of talent development occurs through a period of structured learning - a process rather than a single event. Therefore, identification of potential must address both the ‘ability to get there’ as well as the ‘ability to be there’. Despite this clear and common characteristic, talent identification processes in sport have persisted with attempts to identify ‘talented’ Participants based on a limited range of discrete, outcome-based variables (e.g. Performance at age 12) that are tacitly assumed to underpin and, even, inevitably lead to, senior success. For example, many traditional and popular talent identification models (e.g. Talent Search) use testing protocols that are based almost entirely on a snapshot of current performance (i.e. How well an Participant performs at that particular moment in time) as opposed to an individual’s capacity to develop in the future.

In simple terms, effective talent development will recognise and cater for the varied pathways and different challenges individuals will face as they progress up the pathway. Crucially, many of these concerns will apply irrespective of the eventual goal, whether this is elite performance or lifelong physical activity participation. While reflecting upon certain psychological factors being characteristic of those achieving the greatest success in sport, it is important
to consider the role psychological factors perform within participation development models. These ‘psychological characteristics of developing excellence’ (PCDEs) include mental skills, such as imagery or goal setting, as well as the attitudes, emotions and desires young participants need to successfully realise their potential. For example, an individual must employ a variety of skills to optimise development opportunities (e.g. first-time appearances at a new level of competition, significant wins and losses, the ‘challenge’ of learning a new skill), adapt to setbacks (e.g. injury, slumps in performance, peer-group challenge) and effectively negotiate key transitions encountered along the way (e.g. selection, demands for increased practice, the push to conform to adolescent stereotypes). Without these important skills and the ability to negotiate developmental challenges, an individual may not maintain the motivation to achieve excellence at any level of participation, regardless of his or her ‘talent’.

Therefore it is recommended that participant development models include PCDEs as a key part of their recommendations for practice. Since psychological characteristics appear to be a consistent predictor of performance, regardless of domain or level of achievement, a model promoting the development of a range of PCDEs enables individuals to make unrestricted participation choices across the lifespan.

Social Domain

A number of key social/environmental factors can affect participation, attrition and involvement in sport and physical activity during childhood and adolescence. While there is evidence of the importance of factors, such as the family, socioeconomic status, educational background, geographical location, gender, ethnicity, peers and identity, there is little consideration of any of these factors within existing participant development models. The most influential factor seems to be the family, and young people from a two-parent/carer family have far more opportunities and access to provision than those from a single-parent/carer family. This is often attributable to socioeconomic variables, as well as practical issues, such as work, transport and the requirements of siblings. With approximately one quarter of young people in the UK living within single-parent families, it is clear that familial support systems and networks are fundamental considerations. Socioeconomic status is also important as, for example, the cost of kit, fees, transport to and from training and matches is vital for involvement in many sports and more crucial as the performer gets older and wishes to participate at a higher level. Clearly, those from two-income families have a financial advantage.

A participant’s educational background (and opportunities afforded to participate in sport at and through school) is also important. Those attending fee-paying schools have an advantage of more physical education/sport time and, often, professional coaches over state-funded schools. So, time, opportunity and provisions are important. Linked to this is the emerging recognition of geographical location and the ‘opportunity’ to participate. Research has highlighted that the size of the area in which you live has an effect on access, opportunity and provision. A medium-sized city can be far more facilitative of participation than a rural or urban area. The issues of gender, peer influence and ethnicity also cannot be forgotten, however, these tend to be secondary factors, closely linked to family, socioeconomics, education and geographical location.

There is a need for participant development models to acknowledge and understand the relevance of the social person as much as the body within the sporting experience as without such awareness, it will be impossible to produce a coherent and comprehensive strategy. Furthermore, social and environmental opportunities impact upon involvement at every stage and level of engagement, so, unlike the biological or psychological domains, the thesis underpinning this area comprises a range of social and environmental factors, such as family, socioeconomic status, geography and schooling, which significantly affect participation.

In short, any future participant development models must not only acknowledge biological and psychological issues, but also reflect the social background of the participants. If future models fail to do so, they will be neither accurate nor effective.
Implications for Equestrian Long Term Participant Development

While the academic review acknowledges the work of Dr Istvan Balyi on LTAD as excellent in shifting sporting organisation, it does provide a critical review to a range of areas as identified above. Dr Istvan Balyi came from a biological perspective and his views were influenced by his primary knowledge set. It is important for British Equestrian Federation to consider in greater detail the Social and Psychological impacts that effect participation in order to provide a balanced LTPD framework.

Key findings of the research document that were highlighted and must remain at the forefront of the federation thinking are:

- Physical talent or anthropometric qualities alone are unlikely to lead to successful participation in sport or physical activity for either excellence in the form of high-level sporting performance or excellence in the form of participation and personal performance. Instead, prolonged engagement in sport and physical activity is underpinned by an array of factors (social, physical, technical and psychological).

- Fundamental movement skills are a prerequisite since they underpin the actual and perceived competence, which acts as a foundation for lifelong physical activity participation and the achievement of excellence.
3. The Equestrian-specific Long Term Participant Development Framework

Like the generic LTPD model, the Equestrian specific LTPD framework has defined phases of development through which the individual passes. The phases have been constructed to take account of the ‘windows of trainability’ and the physical, mental and emotional maturation and development phases of late childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Associated with each phase are key objectives which in equestrian sport must account for development of the equestrian participant, and the participant’s relationship with their horses.

Great care should be taken with applying the age bands specified below. For equestrian sport, perhaps more than most other major sports, biological age may be less of an indicator of appropriate development stages and activities, with holistic developmental age and mental readiness being more important indicators. The age bands are therefore only a guide in order to provide a basis for consideration regarding each individual participant.

3.1 Terminology

British Equestrian Federation working with expert’s in the field of participant development including Member Bodies, Sports Coach UK staff, Ian Stafford, Northumbria University has identified terminology that aligns to the seven phases of LTPD but are more appropriate to the equestrian environment, these have also been influenced by document ‘Athlete Development in Sport: an Academic Review’.

The federations will therefore use the following terminology:

In addition the above, two additional phases are to be presented for Participants with a disability. These are parallel phases that feed into the Fundamental phase:
- Awareness of Participants with a disability
- First Contact/Recruitment of Participants with a disability.

This has been built upon the excellent work undertaken by Canadian Sport for Life.

Table 6: Terminology and development phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr Istvan Balyi LTAD phase</th>
<th>Equestrian Federation LTPD terminology</th>
<th>Development Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Start</td>
<td>Active Start</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentals</td>
<td>Fundamentals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Train</td>
<td>Learning to Take Part</td>
<td>Adolescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Train</td>
<td>Training to Improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Compete</td>
<td>Training to Perform</td>
<td>Adulthood: Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training to Win</td>
<td>Training for Excellence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active for Life</td>
<td>Active for Life</td>
<td>Adulthood: Health/ Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long Term Athlete Development » 21
3.2 BEF LTPD Model

Active Start

Fundamentals

Learning to Take Part

Training to Improve

Training To Perform

Training for Excellence

Awareness

First Contact

Active for Life

KEY
Participation Excel/Performance
3.3 Awareness

Potential participants who may not have participated in the sport before or have left the sport for significant period of time need to be made aware of the sport and what it has to offer. This is especially true for people with disabilities or participant coming from non-traditional equine roots such as individuals from who would recognise their ethnicity as black or ethnic minority.

The awareness stage informs the general public and prospective participants of the available opportunities. Equine activity providers need to make their offering and resources known.

For individuals with a disability:

- Those who acquire a disability generally experience great change and transition. Some of their previous physical activities may no longer be as they were. These individuals may not be aware of the many sporting and physical activities that are available to them.

- Awareness plans and effective communication can help to ease this transition and foster awareness among parents and people who work with people with disabilities.

The awareness stage allows the sport to look wider and ensure has the processes in place to reach more potential participant from every walk of life. It is imperative that venues and coaches understand their local community and market the centre appropriately and openly.

3.4 First Contact

The first contact stage ensures that coaches or centres/clubs first contact with participants or those retuning to the sport have a first positive experience in order to keep them engaged.

This is especially true for people with disabilities or participant coming from non-traditional equine roots such as individuals from who would recognise their ethnicity as black or ethnic minority.

Organisations need to ensure that the whole workforce, especially coaches who will engage with the participants, can offer a tailored introduction and customer centred approach to every participant. Specific training may be required for dealing with different demographics including age, sex and ethnicity, as well as training to support the introduction of people with a disability.
3.5 Active Start

This stage is important:
- To install a love for the sport and being physically active (with specific interest in riding and the horse);
- Introduce equestrian with the appropriate sized pony;
- Promote self confidence in an enjoyable, safe environment;
- Introduce fundamental motor skills (agility, balance, coordination and reaction speed).

From two-six years, boys and girls need to be engaged in daily active play. Through play and movement, they develop the fundamental movement skills that will provide the foundation for learning fundamental skills at older ages.

Children need to be introduced to unstructured active play that incorporates a variety of body movements. Children this age needs to develop the ABCs of movement – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed.

An early active start enhances development of brain function, physical coordination, gross motor skills, posture and balance. An active start also helps children to build confidence, social skills, emotional control, and imagination while reducing stress and improving sleep.

Children in Active Start stage should see physical activity as a fun and exciting part of everyday life.

Boys Aged 2-6
1-4 hours of all sport including equestrian activity.

Girls Aged 2-6
1-4 hours of all sport including equestrian activity.

3.6 Fundamentals

This stage is important:
- To further develop fundamental movement skills;
- To further develop fundamental motor skills;
- Explore the optimal window of trainability for speed and suppleness (flexibility);
- Develop basic equestrian skills (technical /tactical)
- Acquire psychological skills (ability to focus, emotional control, positive attitude, commitment and effort);
- Introduce basic rules of the yard, centre or school.
- Introduce decision-making

From Six to nine year old boys and six to eight year old girls in girls, children need to participate in a variety of well-structured activities that develop basic skills. However, activities and programmes need to maintain a focus on fun, and formal competition should only be minimally introduced.

This is a critical stage for the development of physical literacy. It is during this time that the foundation of many advanced skills are laid down.

Skills development for children this age is best achieved through a combination of unstructured play in a safe and challenging environment; and quality instruction from knowledgeable coaches within the equestrian school, centre or club.

Skills development during this stage should be well structured, positive and FUN, and should concentrate on the ABCS – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed, plus rhythmic activities.

Hand and foot speed can be developed especially well by boys and girls during this stage and if this window of opportunity to develop speed is missed, body speed later in life may be compromised.

This is a great age for children to take part in a wide range of sport – this should be encouraged.

It is important that all children, including those with a disability, master fundamental movement skills before sport specific skills are introduced.

Boys Aged 6-9
4-8 hours of all sport including equestrian activity.

Girls Aged 6-8
4-8 hours of all sport including equestrian activity.
Strength, endurance and flexibility need to be developed, but through games and fun activities rather than training regimen.

Children should not specialise in a single sport. Although they may well prefer to participate in equestrian activity this should be limited to once or twice a week.

**Physical**
- Conditioning skills through movement:
  - Body Self-control (balance, laterality, body awareness);
  - Movement through general coordination exercises (skipping, running and jumping);
  - Hand eye coordination, time space orientation;
- Speed and Agility, to be able to:
  - React quickly at one signal;
  - Have good linear running techniques;
- Coordination, to be able to:
  - Throw with both hands;
  - Follow a rhythm;
  - Keep balance.
- Flexibility, general flexibility using global postures;
- Strength, introduction to strength-endurance exercises without additional load (i.e. body weight)
- Endurance, be able to:
  - Run 5-10min (by 8-9yr old)
  - Skip 1-2 min (by 8-9yr old)

**Technical**
- Core riding technique and safety;
- Symmetrical movement patterns;
- Symmetrical steering left & right.

**Mental**
- Enjoying playing and practicing;
- Is able to focus on task (i.e. knowing the drill);
- Is developing emotional control;

**Personal and Social**
- Displays good sportsmanship;
- Cooperative with other riders;
- Gives best effort;
- Maintain a positive image and attitude while participating;
- Demonstrate ability to make friends.
This stage is important:

- To develop technical riding foundations safely with confidence in order to maximise the motor skill window of trainability.
- To develop the child’s physical literacy that is his or her dynamic balance, coordination, spatial awareness, agility, flexibility and basic stamina.
- To provide basic principles to riding to those returning to the sport (often as adult).

The participant’s introduction to equestrian sport should be multidisciplinary in nature, promoting involvement in many events, helping the participant to develop versatility in their riding. Development work should focus on making the rider’s involvement fun and interesting. This phase should promote a fun approach to training presented through games and tasks that facilitate the development of curiosity, exploration, and interest in sport, the equine and equestrianism. Development of body management and versatility are at this point, of far greater significance than discipline specialisation, which if occurring too early may limit the participant’s potential or activity choice at a later stage.

Children should be introduced to simple rules and ethics of the sport and should be exposed to excellent role models both in terms of their conduct and their riding skill.

Frequency of participation in suitable competition should increase towards the end of this phase. The aim is to introduce the participant to the competitive side of the sport, to provide them with an insight to equestrianism and to give them the opportunity to enjoy local events and competition. Such activity should be focused on fun and learning through positive experiences, and should allow the young participant to experience both success and failure. Experience of success will enable the Participant to build self-confidence and encourage them to explore and expand their behaviour, whilst experience of failure will enable them to learn persistence and how to “bounce back”. Important to notice how those responsible for the young participant react to success and failure – ensuring that both present as positive development opportunities.

Those individual who enter this stage after a long absence from the sport (often as an adult) will progress through similar stages of physical and technical development. However, the Mental, Personal and Social may differ as the reasoning behind participation may differ. It is important that individuals working with returners to the sport consider the Mental, Personal and Social points listed below as well as the generic bullet point listed under Active for Life. It is likely that initial reason for returning to the sport will change during the first few months in taking back the reins. It is therefore imperative that a coach whom is working with returners take an individualised participant centred approach to the Mental, Personal and Social reasoning for participating.

### Physical

- Functional stability & mobility
- Specific flexibility
- Regular body alignment monitoring
- Postural muscle balance
- Visual acuity testing and fitness of the eyes
- Testing for sidedness – hand, foot, eye & tilt preference
- Training aimed at the development of symmetry and balance.

### Technical

- Core riding technique and safety
- Symmetrical movement patterns & technical elements
- Symmetrical steering left & right
- Transitions between trot to canter, canter to gallop, jump
- Versatility – Independent seat of control of equine: riding independently, riding stirrups/reins, riding without stirrups, riding while being lunged. Focus on rhythm.

### Mental

- Individual’s spontaneous imagery
- Positive self-perception & confidence as a person/Participant
- Motivation to succeed
- Positive perception of pressure
- Self – awareness, self – regulation, & self-discipline
Personal and Social

Promotes:
- Parents facilitating disciplined involvement while avoiding excessive expectations and pressure
- Promotes exploration & discovery
- Promote personal best approach
- Promotes a language that replaces right & wrong with “good wanting to get better”
- Promotes risk-taking and motivation to succeed rather than motivation to avoid failure

Provides:
- Integrated, multidisciplinary exposure to equine sport (all events practised)
- Long term rather than short term aims and agendas
- A learning & development culture which promotes talent development rather than talent identification.

Guided & General introductions to:
- Warm up & cool down
- Nutrition
- Hydration
- Importance of clothing & safety equipment
- Importance of checking the equine & equipment
- Basic safety rules

3.8 Training to Improve

This stage is important:
- To develop an individual who is a competent participant. This requires continued development and refinement of the participant’s core motor and riding skill, with individualised programmes.
- To ensure progressive development of technical, tactical and mental capacities.
- To understand that this is a major development stage in relation to fitness and physical development.
- To understand mental/cognitive and social/emotional development.
- To conduct frequent musculoskeletal evaluations.

A multidisciplinary approach should still be emphasised at this stage, but there should be an increasing awareness of a leaning towards a specific discipline.

Participants who miss this stage of training will never reach their full potential, regardless of compensatory programmes they may participate in. Coaches must be aware that development could be impaired if the ratio of training to competition is inappropriate. Too much time spent training may result in vital competitive skills not being developed, equally too much time spent on competitive events may result in fundamental techniques and skills not being developed to a sufficient standard. This may have a detrimental effect on self-confidence. It is generally recommended that the ratio for this is 60% training and 40% competitive events. When competing in event the participants will be striving to win, but the overall annual programme should focus on developing the basic skills and understanding of the sport, and the most appropriate structure is a double special action plan, to keep the young participant engaged and motivated. The ideas of peaking and tapering should be introduced at a very basic level.

With regard to physical development, most young participants reach puberty during this stage, and that
optimal aerobic trainability begins at the onset of Peak Height Velocity (PHV), which refers to the maximum rate of growth in stature during the individual’s growth spurt. Aerobic training should be emphasised after the onset of PHV, whilst motor skill and core riding skill should be reinforced and monitored. Due to accelerated growth, muscular tightness can occur, with increases in bone length outpacing the changes of muscle length. For this reason, a special emphasis should be placed on flexibility at this stage. It is important to ensure that flexibility issues do not stop Participant development, and introduce imbalances that could lead to short term learning issues, but also issues with regard to body alignment, postural symmetry, which may cause long term injury issues. Also during this period of accelerated growth, difficulties with coordination, balance, and agility can lead to significant loss of self-confidence. This leads to a regression in both training and competitive skills as the participant not only comes to terms with an increase in stature, but also changes in hormonal balance and associated emotional states.

Coaches should constantly monitor, with careful observation, changes in the participant’s physique, attitudes and behaviours, in order to assess maturation levels. During this stage, young participants should be grouped according to maturation levels rather than chronological age.

The participant will increasingly develop their awareness and understanding of how the equine should work in correct balance and rhythm, throughout this stage.

**Physical**
- Functional stability & mobility.
- Stamina & strength – exercises in moderation, excessive weight bearing activities should be avoided.
- Visual sharpness testing & fitness of the eyes.
- Suppleness to ensure that lack of mobility is not a limiting factor to technical development.
- Regular sensitive checks & monitoring - on height, & musculo skeletal screening.

**Technical**
- Technical elements needed to control speed & direction
- Knowledge of movements & motion of the rider & equine

**Mental**
- Self-awareness – emotional state & physical fatigue.
- Visual sharpness and gaze control
- Concentration & focus
- Speed threshold
- Speed perception – special awareness
- Depth perception – distance, width, height.
- Terrain awareness – perception of surface grip, slip and support properties.
- Course reading & course recall
- Decision making.

**Personal and Social**
- Awareness of social demands at this stage of social maturity.
- Awareness of financial management.
- Individualised development based on individual development.
- Long term goals/aims – 12 month planning.
- Emphasis on talent development not identification.
- Effective communication skills.
- Preparation for media relations.
3.9 Training to Perform

This stage is important:
- To develop an individual who is a competent participant
- To provide all year round structured training
- To ensure that the participant’s key support structures are individualised and integrated
- To provide selected competitive events, learn from those experiences
- To maximise preparation by modelling training and competition activities
- Annual planning model (as a minimum)

This Training to Perform stage is most relevant for coaches working in academies, centres of excellence, with squads or individuals who have been identified as potential high level performers. The coach is to develop a Participant who is a competent competitor. This requires continued development and refinement of skills. To be able to focus on diagnosing individual strengths and weaknesses for selected events, devising a programme accordingly, it should help optimise development of performance.

The focus is placed on the process of learning and developing from competitive experiences, rather than on the outcome of a competitive event. This is accepted as a more effective and healthier approach in terms of motivation, continued participation and being Participant centred. Adopting such an approach is beneficial for keeping more young people participating in sport for longer, benefiting fully from the experiences drawn from competition, and supporting those participants who have the ability and motivation to progress to higher competitive levels.

Participants, who have progressed to an adequate level of competency in fundamental and specific skills, are now exposed to activities that will develop their capacity to produce these skills under a range of simulated competitive situations during training, known as modelling. Programmes are put in place to improve fitness, aid recovery, improve technical skills and psychological preparation is now individualised to focus on the specific needs of the participant. The ratio of training to competitive events and competition specific training during this stage should change to 40% training and 60% competitive experiences, including simulation. The specific technical, tactical and fitness training should increase to nine to 12 times a week, with the coach using their own experiences within the sport and their knowledge of the Participant, to integrate science and medicine into the programme. Double and triple special action is brought into more detail at this stage of the annual programmes, outlining the training cycles needed to peak and taper at certain times during a four year plan, allowing for peaking at major competitions. An awareness of the physical aspects continues throughout this stage, as outlined in the Training to Improve stage.

Careful attention should be given to the type and number of competitions for each individual based on their development of core riding skills and level of maturity. Increasingly attention should focus on the participant’s awareness and control of their own and the equine’s emotional state during training and competition and how it affects their performance. The Participant will develop a good understanding of how to compete the equine in the correct way in order to make the most productive use of competition.

By the end of this stage, participants are ready to make the transition to the Training for Excellence stage.

Physical
- Event specific strength and stamina
- Improvement of stability and mobility
- Strength and condition to increase career longevity
- Physical conditioning i.e. the ability to make high volume attempts in technical training without physical fatigue becoming the limiting factor.
- Body alignment monitoring and reduction of postural imbalances

Technical
- Features for promoting effective transfer from practice to competition performance:
  - Level of original learning
  - Perceived similarity
  - Task structure
  - Similarity of goals and processing
  - Number, variability and order of examples
  - Contextual interference

Men Aged 16-23
Up to 25 hours of all sport of which 20 hours ‘varied’ equestrian activity

Women Aged 15-21
Up to 25 hours of all sport of which 20 hours ‘varied’ equestrian activity

Long Term Athlete Development ★ 29
Feedback
Event specific technical preparation
Event specific technical development under competitive conditions to maximise transfer from training to competition

Decision training:
- Random practice
- Variable practice

Questioning to increase awareness and thus the agent for change

Hard first: introduction to the whole task early in the learning process

Ability to make decisions based on multiple means of feedback i.e. Video, coach

Mental
Training to promote transfer from practice to competition
Long term goal setting: Develop a four year programme
Development of:
- Depth perception – distance, width, height.
- Speed perception and special awareness
- Speed threshold
- High levels of self-analysis, self-confidence, self-regulation, self-organisation and management
- High levels of dedication and commitment
- High levels of self-awareness: of emotional state and physical fatigue
- The ability to reflect on performance immediately and after 48 hours, and learn from those experiences
- Mental toughness and resilience
- The ability to focus attention and block distractions

Integration into daily training of core mental training techniques:
- Positive imagery
- Mental rehearsal
- Positive self-talk
- Adaptive perfectionism
- Relaxation
- Persistence

Personal and Social
Creation of a motivational climate characterised by purpose, role, clarity, autonomy and feedback, allowing participants to feel connected, competent, autonomous and self-determining

Provide access to:
- High quality training
- High quality facilities
- High quality knowledge and expertise – coach and support team

Implication of recovery and rehab techniques and integration of those techniques into daily practice

Preparation for media relations
Awareness of relevant financial management
Awareness of social demands at this stage of maturity
3.10 Training for Excellence

This stage is important:

- Consolidate all objectives from the Training to Perform stage;
- Further develop and refine technical skills;
- Implement their participating style, integrating learned skills, in highly intensity competitive situations;
- Gain all advantages by continuing to improve flexibility, speed, strength and aerobic endurance;
- Refine the daily implementation of sport medicine and science knowledge e.g. nutrition, strength and conditioning, sports psychology, exercise psychology based on current results of monitoring and evaluation;
- Effectively manage with the challenges of different competitive situations (surfaces, altitude, wind, venues);
- Implement psychological routines to produce the ideal performance state.
- Maintain a positive lifestyle: no tobacco, no alcohol, and no drugs.
- Ensure use of pre-habilitation routines and recovery techniques to maximise overall performance.
- 4 year planning cycles.

Rider should look to develop consistent performance with the ability to peak both themselves and the equines for the big event.

This stage is focused on providing the most appropriate environment for participants to reach their maximum potential. Preparation aimed at developing the rider to be able to manage their commitment to the sport, their family, their commercial and training demands, issues with owners and sponsors, plus manage multidisciplinary support teams is essential for the participant. This demands the development of high levels of self-regulation, personal organisation, and access to interventions which aid and support the rider in maintaining performance over the course of a long career. Testing body alignment and functional stability and mobility is important to ensure that trunk and spine issues do not become a constraint to optimal performance and the maintenance of performance overtime. Emphasis should also be placed on medical and regeneration support, including regular testing of the immune system.

Towards the end of this stage the rider will be engaging in significant amounts of practice. Again due to the prospective length of their career, they may be facing motivation and effort constraints as they seek to maintain performance levels. Planning must take into account for the fact that peak effort cannot be sustained for long periods without rider (and equine) breaking down.

To maintain motivation, it is important to develop an environment in which the elite riders perceive that the benefits of continued involvement outweigh the cost of that involvement and the benefits of alternatives. The rider should have clarity of purpose, role clarity, autonomy, and access to high quality feedback through trusted and credible individuals.

At the end of this stage, an Active for Life mentality of continued involvement and physical preparation should be beneficial to the individual, as well as to the future of the sport, as the experience of the athlete is reinvested in the sport.

**Physical**

- To maintain or further enhance event specific strength and stamina
- Pre-habilitation principle to prevent injuries and to strength deepen muscles
- Balanced training
- Integration of several performance factors:
  - Fluctuation of training
  - Cyclical modulation of training load
  - High degree of individualisation
- Regular monitoring of physical fitness specific to equine sport and events
- Maintaining a four year training programme aimed at maintaining key physical conditioning factors during long work period and competition period.
- Planned regeneration years for equine to optimise big-event peaking
- High quality rest and regeneration
- Optimal diet
- Sensible and relaxing leisure activities

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<tr>
<th>Men 23+ (although could be from 19+)</th>
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<td>Depending on individual needs</td>
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Women 21+ (although could be from 19+)

Depending on individual needs

Men 23+ (although could be from 19+)

Depending on individual needs

Long Term Athlete Development ➔ 31
Technical

- Consolidation and refinement of riding technique
- Adaptability to meet the context and environment demands
- Features for promoting effective transfer from practice to competition performance:
  - Level of original learning
  - Perceived similarity
  - Task structure
  - Similarity of goals and processing
  - Number, variability and order of examples
  - Contextual interference
  - Feedback
  - Event specific technical preparation
  - Event specific technical development under competitive conditions to maximise transfer from training to competition

- Decision training:
  - Random practice
  - Variable practice
- Questioning to increase awareness and thus the agent for change
- Hard first: introduction to the whole task early in the learning process
- Ability to make decisions based on multiple means of feedback i.e. Video, coach
- Technical training to develop the ability to bring and train the equine

Mental

- Training to promote transfer from practice to competition
- Long term goal setting: Develop a four year programme
- Development of:
  - Depth perception – distance, width, height.
  - Speed perception and special awareness
  - Speed threshold
  - High levels of self-analysis, self-confidence, self-regulation, self-organisation and management
  - High levels of dedication and commitment
  - High levels of self-awareness: of emotional state and physical fatigue
  - The ability to reflect on performance immediately and after 48 hours, and learn from those experiences
  - Mental toughness and resilience
  - The ability to focus attention and block distractions
  - Integration into daily training of core mental training techniques:
    - Positive imagery
    - Mental rehearsal
    - Positive self-talk
    - Adaptive perfectionism
    - Relaxation
    - Persistence
- Awareness and detection of the rider to:
  - Equine fatigue
  - Equine emotional state
  - Equine balance
  - Equine health
  - Equine injury
  - Equine feel
  - Equine symmetry
  - Equine functional stability and mobility.

Personal and Social

- Creation of a motivational climate characterised by purpose, role, clarity, autonomy and feedback, allowing participants to feel connected, competent, autonomous and self-determining
- Provide access to:
  - High quality training
  - High quality facilities
  - High quality knowledge and expertise – coach and support team
- Implication of recovery and rehab techniques and integration of those techniques into daily practice
- Preparation for media relations
- Awareness of relevant financial management
- Awareness of social demands at this stage of maturity
3.11 Active for Life (Retention)

This stage is important for:
- Maintaining individual health and fitness
- Developing leadership skills
- Volunteering opportunities
- Socialising
- Career advancement

Approach will vary depending on the participant age, gender and circumstance;

Although profiles can be segmented into many groupings, for the purpose of LTPD an overview grouping profile has been outlined based on three age categories.

- 15-21;
- 22-34;
- 35+

The aim of this section is to encourage lifelong participation and retention in the sport. In this stage participants enjoy lifelong participation in a variety of competitive and recreational opportunities as well as pursuing alternative roles to remain involved in the sport.

Motivation in the section can be varied from still being involved in high performance competition to pursuing the sport for health and fitness or for personal satisfaction. This phase of development encompasses all age group competitors that participate in equestrian in addition to former elite athletes who remain active through daily activity and participation. While the participants can participate in competitions they are seen as more recreational than high performance.

Under ideal circumstances, participants enter the Active for Life stage of LTPD at one of two times:

- After they have developed physical literacy by the end of the Learning to Take Part stage and chosen to pursue sport and physical activity according to the goals of the Active for Life stage.
- After they have exited the LTPD performance training and competition stream (Train to Improve, Train to Perform, and Train for Excellence stages). Achieving the goals of these two stages will increase the possibility that the individual will choose to adhere to regular physical activity throughout their life span.

At this stage physical literacy and technical skills should have been developed to an adequate level and therefore training should focus around ensuring the enjoyment, personal satisfaction and social benefits of being involved in a sport.

The sport should ensure that at this stage there is an array of opportunities through which to remain engaged in the sport whilst not necessarily participating directly this is crucial to ensure the continuous development of the sport. These role could include volunteering in official capacitites, assisting in the organisation and delivery of the sport or transferring into coaching roles. For each of these roles focus should be on developing the required skills to complete the roles competently. A positive experience in the sport is the key to retaining participants after they leave the competition stream.
Age 15-21

**Technical** will vary depending on previous experience of rider. **Physical, Mental** and often most importantly with in Active for Life the **Personal and Social** can be summarised as:

- Initiating the development of social networks and personal relationships
- Sense of belonging through group activities – less individual work
- Development of essential mental skills (i.e. concentration, focus, emotional control and motivation)
- Development of essential life skills (i.e. goal setting, management, critical thinking, discipline, management of success/failure)
- Development of self-esteem and self confidence
- Build physical and cardiovascular endurance
- Enhance flexibility, coordination and balance
- Personal and team achievement is critical – this may not always be within a competition environment, it is therefore imperative to understand the ‘true’ (of not initial articulated) individual goals for participation. These goals may change on a regular basis within this age group.

Age 22-34

**Technical** will vary depending on previous experience of rider. **Physical, Mental** and often most importantly with in Active for Life the **Personal and Social** can be summarised as:

- Having established a personal identity as an equine participant, these individuals are often more performance orientated, training can often be reduced in order to compete more.
- Build social networks and relationship
- Enhancement of essential mental skills (i.e. concentration, focus and often more importantly emotional control)
- Exploration of career opportunities within the equine sector
- Ability to use healthy coping mechanisms when dealing with life issues
- Enhancing sense of personal competences thereby increasing self-esteem
- Help individual achieve final stages of physical maturation in early twenties
- To meet the Sport and government sport participation indicators and participate on regular basis (1 x30)

Age 35+

**Technical** will vary depending on previous experience of rider. **Physical, Mental** and often most importantly with in Active for Life the **Personal and Social** can be summarised as:

- Opportunity for social interaction and engagement is essential this can be pre and post, as well as during activity
- Maintenance of essential mental skills (i.e. concentration, focus, emotional control and motivation)
- Personal satisfaction of setting and meeting individual challenges and goals
- Ability to use healthy coping mechanism for dealing with life issues
- To meet the Sport and government sport participation indicators and participate on regular basis (1 x30)
- Maintain fitness to support a healthy lifestyle
- Maintain weight to ensure ability to continue to participate on appropriate equines to participants favoured activity/discipline
- Ability to segregate personal life and participation can often to be key to participant
- Although most participants will want to participant in individual activity against individual goals, most will want to feel belonging to a group or centre.


Long Term Athlete Development Resource Paper: Canadian Sport for Life. Published by the Canadian Sports centres.


