

Sport Specific Training for Youth: Beware!

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Sport Specific Training for Youth: Beware!

- 7 million youth currently involved in some level of athletic competition
 - Slightly less than 1% will get a full college scholarship to a D1 school
 - Slightly less than 1% of that population will get paid any amount to play their sport after college
 - About 1% of that population will make a living from playing their sport
- Are we training the future of athletics, or the future of our health care system?

The Current Problem With Specialization

- America's current youth sport culture is about sport specific skill acquisition and early specialization
 - Currently experiencing sport related injuries at an alarming rate
 - Burn-out
 - Cessation of physical activity

The Current Problem With Specialization

- Sport coaches are largely responsible for a youngster's physical development
 - No P.E.
 - 2004 study found 1 in 5 youth spend ANY time in their week doing unstructured, physical activity
- In the panic to raise a professional athlete, parents and coaches are streamlining their youngsters at too young an age
 - Developing skills specific to one game in one environment
 - Research has found no correlation between the best player on a team at age 12 and age 18



Athletic Development!

- Developing athleticism is like developing intelligence
 - Broad array of intellectual skills develops problem-solving abilities down the road
 - Too much time developing one ability leaves others in debt



Athletic Development

- Our goal as fitness professionals should be to aid in the development of a broad array of physical abilities for youngsters
 - Positive, engaging environment
 - Develop healthy physical habits for life
 - Create happy, healthy, pain-free adults

Athletic Development

- A youngster neuromuscular system is “plastic”
 - Molds and adapts to external stimuli
 - The more external stimuli, the more learned adaptability
- In the “old days” kids developed necessary skills interacting daily with their environment
 - Climbing, crawling, throwing, kicking, chasing, etc.
 - Proper neuromuscular development learned to depend on this process
- In order to facilitate proper development, we must now attempt to emulate this “play” environment in training

- 10 year rule
 - No specialization or competition until 14-16 years old
 - Poland, Former Soviet Union, Canada
 - Focus on the developmentally appropriate fundamentals of movement and fitness
 - Unstructured play within their sport

Gross Motor Skill

- Initial phases of training should focus on general athletic development in line with a child's developmental stage
 - Focus on gross motor skill
 - Primal movement patterns
 - These set the foundation for all neuromuscular coordination!
 - Necessary for every athlete in every sport

Youth Training Continuum

- Training youth is largely a continuum in regards to the development of physical ability
 - Each skill aids in the development of another
 - E.G. running can increase leg strength, power, and balance
- Certain physical skills can be optimized at certain stages in a youth's development
 - These stages are called “sensitive periods”
 - For information on these sensitive periods, read “Children and Sports Training” by Jozef Drabik
 - Youth training bible

The Big Ten

- What 10 things should youngsters be doing in “training” for sports
 - Crawling
 - Throwing
 - Catching
 - Climbing
 - Rolling
 - Skipping
 - Rhythm
 - Striking
 - Running
 - Shuffling

Also!

- Laughing
- Interacting with others
- Learning about other health habits (nutrition, etc)
- Learning life habits (goal setting, accountability, teamwork, etc.)
- Sweating!
- Going home excited to tell their parents what they learned!

- Program design for Youth

- General Warm-Up

- Basic coordination, strength, balance
- Hip Bridges
- Crab Raises
- Spidermans
- Cobras
- Swimmers
- Push-Up Planks
- Bird Dogs
- Bird Dog Rotates
- Reach Squats
- Jumping Jacks
- Seal Jacks
- Gat Swings
- 1-leg balance
- Frankensteins
- Shuffles
- Kareokas
- Skips
- Side Skips
- Simon Says
- Agility Ladder

The “Big 4” Activities for Young Athletes

- 1. Soccer** (Aerobic fitness, lower body coordination, running, agility, change of direction and pace)
- 2. Swimming** (Survival skill, upper body strength/mobility, upper/lower coordination)
- 3. Martial Arts** (Body awareness, flexibility, coordination, emotional discipline, hand and foot/eye coordination, reaction)
- 4. Gymnastics** (Whole-body strength, coordination, power, flexibility, awareness)

Circuit 1

1. Jump Rope (Rhythm)
2. Lizard Crawls (Whole body strength, coordination)
3. Med Ball Squat and Throw (upper/lower coordination, power)
4. Skip, shuffle, kareoka

Circuit 2

1. Cheetah Runs (Upper/lower strength, power, coordination)
2. Jump-Rope “S” Runs (Non-linear movement, agility)
3. “Through the legs” walk (Coordination, flexibility, ambidexterity)
4. Roll-Over to Push-Up (Core Strength, spatial orientation, coordination)

Circuit 3 (Partners)

1. Wheelbarrow walks (Upper body and core strength)
2. Partner Med-Ball Rolls (Kinesthetic differentiation, non-linear movement)
3. Partner Mirror Drill (Coordination, body awareness, reaction)
4. Partner Reaction Ball Game (Reaction, hand-eye coordination)

Circuit 4

1. Ball roll in-and-out of cones (Flexibility, upper/lower coordination, non-linear movement)
2. Agility ball turn-and-catch (Movement adequacy, hand-eye coordination, predictive movement)
3. Crab walks (Whole body strength, upper body flexibility)
4. Jump Rope Circle Runs (Facing forward, non-linear movement, agility, direction change)

Circuit 5 (Group Games)

- 1.** Red light/Green Light (speed, reaction, body control, deceleration, acceleration)
- 2.** Agility ball Rodeo (hand-eye coordination, grasping, throwing, peripheral vision)
- 3.** Over/Under/Roll (strength, power, coordination)
- 4.** Tag on the Sahara, cheetahs and lizards

Conclusion

- Considering the data, the most significant impact we can make on a young athlete is helping mold them into happy, healthy, pain-free adults.
- A young neuromuscular system needs general development, with very little specialization.
- Educate and Inspire!



Motivate, Educate, Inspire!

Thank You!

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