

The Canadian Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD)

The core concept of the Canadian LTAD system and our Basketball Athlete Development Model (ADM) is that it recognizes that better athletic performances and a greater percentage of the population engaged in health-promoting, physical activity, are both outcomes of a well-developed sport development system.

LTAD is:

- optimal training, competition and recovery programming with relation to biological development and maturation
- equal opportunity for participation and competition
- and athlete-centred, coach-driven and administration, sport science and sponsor supported.

The process to develop our sport's LTAD was extensive, inclusive and comprehensive. Knowledge was sought from experts across Canada and in-depth discussions have analyzed how our sport can adjust to integrate LTAD into all that we do.

This process initiated re-thinking ALL aspects of our sport including the three most difficult tasks of changing:

1. **System Alignment:** aligning the basketball community under one set of rules.
2. **System Alignment and Integration:** developing and integrating clear pathways that allow players, coaches, officials and administrators to progress through the system. These pathways must permit players to be involved in three distinct streams: health of the nation (recreational in nature), develop the game and compete for the nation. The pathways must also integrate a positive relationship between the educational and club-delivery system.
3. **Competition Schedules:** ensure the appropriate ratio of training to competition at all ages. Within our current development system we have produced a delivery stream of basketball called "competition." This was not a planned process. For numerous reasons the majority of our developing players are playing too many games without the opportunity to gain proper practice of the skills needed to play the game.

ADM Implementation

It is hoped and encouraged that those organizations and programs that are currently providing basketball services for athletes will use this model to review their existing methodology in the development of their athletes. At each level, especially the younger levels, there are a number of implementers in each local area. It is important to emphasize here that there must be very co-operative relationships at each stage and between stages for this model to be effective.

This would mean the following:

- The set criteria for each age level be known by each local authority;
- The recognition that each local authority may not be able to deliver the information effectively;
- That each local authority make a strong effort to educate coaches according to the stage of the athletes they are coaching;
- That the current system by which coaches are educated must be altered to cater to the developmental age specific needs of athletes;
- It must be recognized that not all participants wish to reach the highest levels. Therefore, being ultra structured and specific may turn some athletes off the sport. These athletes should be placed in less time consuming and intense environments than the athlete who wishes to compete at the highest level.

Another very important part of the implementation program is the need for facilities. It is obvious that our practice-to-game ratios are out of control - i.e. we have too many games and too few practices. If we are to change this, athletes will need more practice time, which means more gym time. To get more practice time for our athletes the basketball community must work together to find gym times at affordable prices and become involved in lobbying to build more facilities.

Financial Concerns

We must find a way to keep the cost of our programs low. Basketball is traditionally a sport played by all cross sections of society. With costs constantly on the rise, we are losing some of our best athletes - i.e. some of our best athletes are not involved in programs and do not receive the proper training because they cannot afford it. This is an issue for athletes as they decide what programs to play for and one that we must seriously consider when organizing training programs.

Also the chance for recreation opportunities is dwindling as the cost and need for facilities continue to rise. If we want to address the health of the nation we need to continue to provide these recreational opportunities.