

Learn to Win Stage (L2W)

(Ages 18-23+/-females, 18-25+/-males)

At this point the athlete should have a very good understanding of all the basketball specific and position specific skills that are needed to be successful and the sport-specific fitness that is required to play. The athlete should understand that a great deal of time must be spent refining these skills in order to be competitive at the highest levels. The athletes must also understand that they must train at a high level of intensity under game/pressure situations in order to continue to improve.

Fundamental/Technical Skills

The following skills must be reviewed, emphasized, developed and refined:

- Dribbling
- Passing and catching
- Shooting form
- 1-on-1 skills - post and perimeter
- Cutting to get open in the post and on the perimeter
- Setting and reading screens
- Defensive stance and guarding the ball
- Defensive stance away from the ball
- Rebounding skills - offensive and defensive

PLAYING PRINCIPLES

Offensive Concepts

- Transition
- Half court offence (set plays) including playing without the ball
- Concept-based offence
- Penetration and kick passes
- Setting and reading screens
- Passing and relocating
- Effective use of dribble
- Attacking pressure defence
- Principles of zone offence
- Entering ball to the post
- Post movement

Defensive Concepts

- Organization of transition
- Half court concepts - man and zone
- Tactical considerations to defend opponents strengths
- Full court principles
- Forcing the ball

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Physical Characteristics

After 10-15 years of training, it is practically impossible to increase the volume of training for an athlete. Therefore the quality/intensity and sport/individual specificity of training should be increased. Research and practical experiences have shown that for the elite athlete, the key to improvement lies in the optimal manipulation of the intensity and frequency of training.

Basic Characteristics

- Physiologically the body reaches maturity during this phase;
- Final skeletal maturation occurs at age 17-19 for females and approximately 3 years later for males.

Performance Capabilities

- All physiological systems are fully trainable.

Implications for the Coach

- Coaches should use advanced physical training techniques and programs to ensure maximum adaptation and to minimize injuries;
- Coaches should ensure that all muscle groups and body alignments are well balanced, and complemented by optimum flexibility ranges;
- Coaches, when designing training programs, should use state of the art sport science and medicine information, including results of appropriate and timely testing and monitoring. Coaches need to stay current by accessing the most up to date information. Being involved with the provincial and national sport governing body will assist in this regards;
- Coaches should be careful to monitor training to ensure that over-training and over-stress are eliminated;
- Regular appropriate medical monitoring should be conducted with additional blood tests for female athletes to prevent iron deficiency.



PHYSICAL CAPACITIES

The **Learn to Win** stage of athletic development takes the Train to Compete stage one step further.

Now that the entire athlete's physical, technical, tactical, mental and ancillary capacities are fully established, the focus of training has shifted to the optimization of performance.

Stamina - The aerobic system is highly fragile and its maintenance is imperative. It is recommended that 3 aerobic sessions per week should be conducted in addition to other training and competition activities to ensure the maintenance of established aerobic power and capacity. There are several ways to accomplish this:

- Long, slow distance running can be used after training sessions in order to remove by-products of training. For more information visit www.ltad.ca;
- During sport-specific training sessions aerobic drills or interval drills can be conducted;
- Ultra-short interval training;
- Fartlek or interval sessions can be implemented as complementary training sessions;
- Non-weight bearing activities such as pool (running with a belt or swimming), stationary bike, cycling, stair climbers or rowing machines can also be utilized (especially for the very tall players).

Strength - Once an athlete has learned the proper techniques for weight training the use of heavier weights will increase neuromuscular development, rather than larger muscle mass. Male and female elite players should implement Olympic-style lifting in their training regimen to enhance strength and power development. The established strength levels can be maintained for up to 10 weeks by conducting only one training session for players every 7 to 10 days, although core and upper body strength training should be performed twice per week.

Implementing longer lower intensity periods is not beneficial for elite players. Intensity and frequency are the two key factors in the preparation of elite athletes.

Speed - Speed should be trained throughout the year and throughout a player's career. The preconditions of speed training include a rested or fully recovered nervous system so speed training must be carefully planned and sequenced within the weekly training program. Although speed is important in basketball, equally important is speed while in control of the ball.

During the competition period, the warm-up provides an excellent opportunity to fine tune the player's speed capacities. It makes sense to place speed training at the end of the warm up because there is no metabolic or nervous system fatigue present, thus the conditions are right to train speed.

Suppleness - Static (holding), dynamic (active or ballistic) and PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation or contact) are the more common methods of maintaining or improving flexibility. Dynamic stretching should be a part of the stretching protocol when preparing for high-intensity practical situations like pre-training warm up and pre-game warm-ups. **Static stretching should not be done as part of the warm up.** Only light static stretching is recommended after high intensity training. Stretching is recommended either 2 hours before exercise or 2 hours after exercise. To improve flexibility, stretching should be done 6 times per week. Stretching should begin when light sweating has commenced.

Performance Indicators

- The player demonstrates continuous progression in establishing a high level of conditioning and strength practical to the game of basketball and continues to maintain, if not optimize, this fitness, throughout a competitive career
- Testing
- Several tests can be performed to monitor team and individual fitness
- Vertical jump and standing long jump
- Chin ups/push ups/bench press
- Crunches
- Leger Boucher test
- Sit and reach
- Speed and agility tests
- Medical examinations

Mental Characteristics

Basic Characteristics

- Neurologically the brain matures when athletes are between 19 and 20 years of age;
- There is significant understanding and acceptance of the need for rules, regulations and structure.

Performance Capabilities

- Athletes are capable of self-analysis and can correct and refine skills themselves;
- Athletes can analyze and conceptualize virtually all facets of their sport;
- Well developed information processing skills help to improve the athlete's ability to visualize verbal instructions;
- For the young adult, the rules and structure of training and competition must be perceived as clearly defined and fair.

Implications for the Coach

- Optimal performance becomes the major objective, but still not at the cost of player development;
- Principles of adult learning should be implemented;
- Athletes should be involved in decision-making and in the planning of team or group activities.

Psychological Skills

- Long term, short term and daily goals must be established;
- Players have the appropriate levels of maturity and knowledge in order to effectively use and apply the mental skills of imagery, focus control and activation/arousal control;
- Players need to focus on competing to win by focusing on effort and execution (process not outcome);
- Players must be able to compete under stressful and pressure situations that will occur during a game, therefore these situations must be duplicated in practice;
- Players begin to establish a balanced and stable self concept;
- Self-assessment strategies provide athlete with information on training and competition patterns;
- Players must be able to demonstrate self-control in demanding, pressure situations, therefore the use and practice of relaxation and visualization techniques are highly recommended;
- Players are ready to assume leadership roles, therefore the coach must understand this and provide leadership opportunities;
- The coaches should promote effective communication skills between players and coaches;
- It may still be difficult for some athletes to accept specific roles and these should be continuously communicated;
- Opportunities should be provided for athletes and coaches to strategize and exercise problem solving skills.

Performance Indicators

- Players demonstrate the ability to effectively apply mental training skills to enhance performance by:
 - Goal setting
 - Focus and distraction control
 - Activation/arousal control
 - Emotional stability
 - Positive self talk
 - Imagery
 - Self assessment
- Players demonstrate the progressive understanding of the importance of establishing strong and positive personal values to enhance their personal development;
- Players demonstrate the understanding and importance of role acceptance;
- Players demonstrate an understanding of the importance of team building to enhance individual and team performance.





Emotional Characteristics

Basic Characteristics

- There is a need to be self-directed and independent;
- Self-actualization and self-expression are important;
- Major decisions about career, education and lifestyles become a priority during this phase;
- Interaction with the opposite sex continues to be a priority and lasting relationships develop.

Performance Capabilities

- The athletes are ready to assume responsibility and to accept the consequences of their actions;
- Major changes in interest, hobbies and physical activities may occur during this phase.

Implications for the Coach

- Goal setting should be strongly emphasized to give definite direction and purpose to the athletes' overall development;
- The athletes need to be treated with respect, given direction and, provided with structure;
- Professional guidance should be made available to help athletes to make decisions about off-season and educational pursuits;
- Athletes must have ample opportunities for independent social interaction.

Ancillary Capacities

- All ancillary capacities learned in the T2C stage must be refined;
 - Warm up
 - Cool down
 - Stretching (when, what and how)
 - Hydration
 - Nutrition
 - Recovery and regeneration
 - Taper and peak
 - Integrated pre-game and post-game routines
 - Health awareness
 - Environmental awareness
 - Socio-cultural
- Advanced ancillary capacities of time management need to be continually refined to meet the changing demands of balancing sport, education, family and professional development.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR THE LEARN TO WIN STAGE

- High intensity, basketball-specific training sessions of shorter duration are recommended during this phase. Careful planning these sessions with recovery and regeneration methods will provide the training necessary for major tournaments;
- Players must have 9-15 years of training before embarking upon this stage;
- Players at this stage must be fully prepared (physically, technically, tactically, and mentally) based upon the foundation that has been built during the earlier stages;
- The concept of "more is better" is a recipe for disaster. Quality over quantity must be the goal;
- The emphasis is on attaining the player's optimal capacity and on optimal performance.

