Talent Identification and Outreach

Overview

- Talent selection vs. talent identification
- Why outreach is important
- Impediments to participation
- Outreach
- What would broader participation look like?
Talent selection vs. talent identification

- **Talent selection**
  - Choosing from available talent for select teams, training opportunities, etc.
  - Beginning of the developmental continuum: traveling squats, meet entries, relay team selection.
  - Highest levels: World Youth Championships, YOG, other national teams.

Talent selection vs. talent identification

- **Critical issues related to talent selection for leaders in youth athletics.**
  - Tryouts
    - Pressure on kids, families
    - Kids with most long term potential may not be selected
      - Late bloomers, access issues, schedule conflicts
    - Kids might get selected that shouldn’t be
Talent selection vs. talent identification

- Talent identification
  
  “I won't offer a definition, but I know it when I see it.”

Duck Test

Three Blind Men and The Elephant

Talent ID Variables

- Genetics
- Lifestyle
- Work ethic
- Intelligence
- Body shape & other anthropometric measures
- Connective tissue
- Muscle fiber type
- Cardio-pulmonary capacity
- Environment
- Developmental experiences & opportunities
  - Bone density
  - Upper body strength
- Nutrition
- Support networks
Talent ID Variables

Another way of looking at the many variables in Talent ID:

Performance Potential Factors
1. Physical abilities
2. Personality characteristics
3. Playing skills
4. Performance abilities
5. Pedigree (genetic makeup)
6. Preparation (environment, family, culture).

The point is, like the elephant test, it is difficult to assess the whole of an athlete or his or her potential from narrow perspectives.

Talent ID: Clinical Screening

- Vertical jump
- VO2 Max test
- Short dashes
- Horizontal jump variations
- Muscle fiber composition tests
Clinical screening: one example

• Muscle fiber type field test
  • not an actual composition test that would be invasive and costly, but, more accurate
  • simply a field test that might be interesting and fun

Muscle fiber type field test

• Equipment required:
  • bench press, weights, bar, spotter

• Procedure:
  • determine 1RM
  • rest 15 minutes
  • then attempt consecutive reps of 80% of 1RM
Muscle fiber type field test

**Scoring:**
- record number of correct and complete lifts at 80% of 1RM
- < 7 indicates > 50% FT
- 7 to 12 indicates equal distribution
- > 12 indicates > 50% ST

**Problems/concerns:**
- many muscle groups are used for any movement
- 1RM testing can be dangerous, only attempt with experienced lifters
- motor unit recruitment is the key to gains in explosive power
- etc., etc., etc.,

(Pipes, 1994)
Talent ID

- Other points of view
  - Talent ID is a waste of time
  - We coach the kids that come to practice
  - The Duck test
  - So what, it is really about athletes interests, parent pressures, etc.
  - What happens next?
  - Early classification poses many problems
  - Talent ID program hint at state controlled sport (Formal Soviet System, modern China)
  - The real issue is increasing participation numbers, especially among youth

Why outreach is important

- Medal count

- Our health and fitness
  - children
  - society

- NCACE Standards
Why outreach is important

- **Medal count**
  - other countries are doing outreach, talent ID, and working hard to be competitive on the world stage.

- maintaining competitive position will not happen automatically
Why outreach is important

• Health: numerous factors conspire against us to decrease our fitness
  • NCLB and the high-stakes testing trend
  • Early specialization and elitism
  • Food
    • fast food, processed food, high fructose corn syrup, portion sizes, etc., etc.
  • “Screen time”
  • Less outdoor play

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**Trends in Child and Adolescent Overweight**

Note: Overweight is defined as BMI >= gender- and weight-specific 95th percentile from the 2000 CDC Growth Charts.
Source: National Health Examination Surveys II (ages 6-11) and III (ages 12-17), National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys I, II and 1988-2004, NH-HS, CDC.
Why outreach is important

• Health

“No other sport has the potential of track & field to grow and provide opportunities to children to be physically active.”

- Bob Fraley during his USATCA Hall of Fame Induction speech

Why outreach is important

• USOC / NCACE Standards

Philosophy and Ethics.
Standard 1-D. Welcome all eligible athletes and implement strategies that encourage the participation of disadvantaged and disabled athletes
Impediments to participation

- access
- awareness
- apathy
- attrition

Impediments to participation

- access
  - pay-to-play
  - transportation
- facilities
- time
- coaching
- environment
Impediments to participation

- awareness
  - many kids are not exposed to track
    - poor TV coverage
    - media focus on males and spectacle
  - misconceptions that track means “running”
  - not knowing that opportunities that do exist, summer clubs for example

Impediments to participation

- apathy
  - the factors that lead to childhood obesity also lead to apathy
    - some children may need to be hyper-stimulated by games/media
    - some children/early adolescents may be in such poor shape that they think they can’t participate
  - humiliation/embarrassment
  - feel like they won’t get to compete
Impediments to participation

• attrition
  • while youth sport seems to proliferate, over half of all kids exposed to organized sport early will quit by the time they are 14
    • economic issues
    • early specialization
    • hyper-competitiveness
    • growth-spurt
      • pain
      • temporary loss of coordination
Outreach

- Physical education in schools as outreach
- Other sports as models
- Best practices in track & field
- Outreach as service-learning
- The spirit of outreach

Outreach

- Physical education in schools as outreach
  - IAAF Initiative
    - “Sport in Schools”
    - Kids Athletics
  - AAHPERD/NASPE
    - other NGB’s are using this as a promotional/outreach venue for their sports
Outreach

• Other sports as models
  • USA Fencing
    • two decades of aggressive outreach
    • medals as a result
  • NCAA Basketball
    • free promotional materials available
    • thousands of kids exposed annually
  • USA Tennis
  • USA Archery

Outreach

• Best practices in track & field
  • 100 Black Men of the Bay Area Youth Movement
  • USATF “Win With Integrity”
  • Hershey’s Track & Field Games
  • USATF Foundation efforts
    • Billy Mills
    • Travel Grants
  • Association level outreach
Outreach

- Outreach as service-learning
  - HS and College coaches lead their athletes in outreach efforts
    - volunteerism/service required by many schools
    - reach local youth
    - venues
      - elementary schools
      - parks and rec.
      - churches
      - after school programs

Outreach

- The spirit of outreach
  - opportunity
    - to participate
    - to improve
    - to be yourself
  - fun
  - nurturing
  - encouraging
  - safe
What would broader participation look like?

- more meets
- more tracks
- more records
- more media coverage
- more public awareness
- more healthy people

What would broader participation look like?

- more medals
Pyramid Power

The broader the base, the higher the peak.


References


