

Planning and periodisation for training programmes



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This article will investigate the planning processes for a training and competition programme, for a club standard aged seventeen female Netball player, whose playing position is Goal Attack. When planning an individual programme, three main factors must be taken into account: the development of the player, the player's goals and the biomechanics that can be used in the programme to help improve their performance.

As Netball is a late specialisation sport, six stages of development are used when planning and programming training and competition for a player: FUNdamentals, Learning to Train, Training to Train, Training to Compete, Training to Win, and Retaining. Since females and males mature physically and psychologically at different ages and rates, the Long-Term Athlete Development Model includes this theory into their work.

From six to eight years old for females and six to nine years for males, the FUNdamentals stage states that the Coach should be aiming to include a wide range of movement activities in fun, creative and playful environments, incorporating ABCs: agility, balance, co-ordination and speed; RJT: running, jumping and throwing; KGBs: kinaesthetic, gliding, buoyancy and striking with a body part; and CKs: catching, kicking and striking with an implement.

The Coach should be adding in games and challenges to develop speed, power and endurance, including the ethics of the sports and simple rules, hence mini-games being played such as High 5 and Tag Rugby (Ball, 2008; BrianMac, Date Unknown; Stafford (a), (b), (c), 2007). During the Learning to Train stage, females of eight to eleven years old and males of nine to twelve years, the players' programmes will include a single periodisation to allow

more time to develop the needs of the sport and allocating more time in the Preparatory Phase, concentrating on having an eighty-to-twenty percent training to competition ratio.

The development of strength, endurance and speed are all very important in this stage, as without the development of these fitness components, the athletes will not be able to fully develop onto the next stage of the model. The importance of warm ups, cool downs, stretching, hydration and basic flexibility exercises are starting to be progressed at this stage, as within the Stage Three: Training to Train, the athlete will begin to understand when to stretch, mentally prepare and how and when to taper and peak.

As the Training to Train stage is when the majority of children will enter puberty: females at eleven to fifteen years and males at twelve to sixteen, special emphasis must be highlighted on flexibility training, to aid with the growth and prevent injury on the bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles. At this third stage of the development model, the Coach must follow the guidelines for the player to include sixty percent training and forty percent competition into their programme; the competition percent includes competition specific training and competitions (Ball, 2008; BrianMac, Date Unknown; Stafford (a), (b), (c), 2007).

Between ages fifteen and seventeen for females and sixteen to eighteen for males, the training-to-competition ratio changes to forty percent training to sixty percent competition, however BrianMac (Date Unknown) claims that the ratio should be fifty-to-fifty percent. At this Training to Compete stage, fitness programmes, recovery programmes, psychological preparation and

technical development will be tailored to the individual and so therefore one athlete's programme may be a forty-to-sixty percent ratio, whereas another athlete's programme may be a fifty-to-fifty percent ratio, depending on their specific needs, sport and positions.

As the further development of fitness components and sport-specific skills were practiced in Stage Three, in Stage Four the athlete should be learning to perform specific skills under a variety of competitive situations, for example the Goal Attack can practise their shooting while being obstructed, contacted, in very noisy conditions, off balance etc. (Ball, 2008; BrianMac, Date Unknown; Stafford (a), (b), (c), 2007).

Twenty-five percent training to seventy-five percent competition is recommended at the Training to Win stage, where females aged from seventeen years and males aged from eighteen years, use training sessions to focus on maximising their performance, and training to peak for major competitions. Stage Six is described as the Retaining stage which ages will vary depending on the individual and the sport, concentrating on coaching, officiating, sports administration etc. however as the athlete is used to competing at a high level i. e. Superleague, National or International in Netball, then they should consider training down and being involved leisurely (Ball, 2008; BrianMac, Date Unknown; Stafford (a), (b), (c), 2007). For specific Netball Long-Term Athlete Development Model, see Appendix 1.

When planning a programme, goals should firstly be identified by the athlete, athlete and Coach, or athlete, Coach and parents; these goals must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time scaled) to

ensure that all factors have been taken into account, such as the athlete's lifestyle, and that it is related to the overall aim (Harris and Harris, 1984 cited in Thorpe, 2002). Once the goals have been established, periodisation can be used to plan the programme for the athlete; during periodisation three cycles occur: macro cycle, meso cycles and micro cycles.

In Netball single periodisation would be required as the competitive period is quite long with no considerable break during this period. The figure below shows the periodisation for a typical Netball player (NetballSmart, 2007). Macro cycles are made up by a preparation period, competition period and recovery period; the preparation period is beneficial in helping the athlete prepare fully for the demands of the competition, mentally, physically and technically, over a considerable length of time, usually from three months upwards.

This period can be sub-divided into general preparatory period and specific preparatory period. The athlete will train in the general preparatory period for a longer amount of time than the specific preparatory period, as they will concentrate on training their aerobic and muscular endurance, strength and mental skills; whereas in the specific period, the athlete will concentrate on the technical, tactical, physical and mental skills all needed for their specific sport and position.

Macro cycles typically last between two to three months and a year; however they can be planned for longer periods if the sport requires e. g. Olympics every four years (Galvin and Ledger (b), 1999; Whyte, 1970). Meso cycles are subdivisions of macro cycles which usually last between two and six

weeks and each meso cycle will have a specific objective and each cycle may differ in tasks, content structure, training forms and loads. In the Netball player's preparation period, successive meso cycles may increase the intensity of the athlete's speed (Galvin and Ledger (b), (c), (d), 1999). See figure below for example.