Talent Identification in the Grassroots Game

Nick Levett
FA Talent Identification Manager
Learning criteria

• Learn more about current research on talent
• Consider the role you play in this process
What is talent?
First task

• Come up with a definition for:
  - Talent
  - Potential

• Talent is systematically developed skills that enable you to do a task in the top 10%

• Potential is latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness
Talent identification

“Recognising and selecting players who show potential to excel at a more advanced level”

(Coble, Schorer & Baker, 2012)
Talent development

“Provision of the most appropriate environments for athletes to accelerate their learning and performance"

(Abbott & Collins, 2004)
Word of caution

- Lots of talent research is done in labs, not on the grass...
- Lots of generalisations made...
- Beware of contextual specificity...
- Beware of people simplifying the process...
Opinion finders

1. We are born with a certain ability and there is nothing much we can do to change that.
2. Ability is the result of hard work and practice.
3. Some people are naturally good at certain activities.
4. Support from parents and coaches is necessary to achieve one’s potential.
5. Success is mainly the result of natural ability.
6. With enough hard work almost anyone can become a champion.
The 10,000 "rule"

"It takes 10,000 hours to become an expert"

Most of the studies done through music. Finger manipulative tasks, not complex team games. No variables were presented in the data

(Ericsson, 1993; 1996)
28% of elite athletes in one study had participated for less than 4 years in their sport – ‘quick learners’ who had played 3 or more sports before settling on the main one.
Evidence from a study in Germany (Hornig et al., 2014) of 52 elite players, including 18 Senior Internationals, found they had participated in 4,264hrs before Bundesliga debut and 4,532hrs before international debut.
Word of caution

“Given that 10,000 hours is clearly NOT a pre-requisite for sporting success, a pre-occupation on early specialisation & youth training may be unnecessary, and possibly even 'harmful' for long term success.”

(Tucker, 2013)
Playing Philosophy

- Clear playing philosophy
- Defined player characteristics
- Structure to Talent ID & recruitment
Player journey’s – key themes

• Home life
• Personal development
• Football and sport
• Education
• Chance

As a coach, what does this mean to you?
Technical / Tactical
Psychological
Physical
Social
Dribbling skills
Range of passing
Receiving in tight areas
1v1 defending
Different types of finishing
Types of distribution
Movement to create space
Manipulate their body
Balance in different ways
Controlled use of limbs
Functional strength
Fast without the ball
Change direction at speed
Range of flexibility
Confidence
Communication
Emotional control
Commitment
Concentration
Psychological characteristics of developing excellence

Commitment
Focus and distraction control
Imagery
Realistic performance evaluations
Quality practice

Goal setting
Coping with pressure
Planning and organisational skills
Self awareness
But without PCDE’s

- Early promise collapses under pressure
- Delicate participants
- High rise – quick fall
- Good potential BUT...
- They don’t stay involved

(MacNamara et al., 2010, 2011, 2012)
How much do you know about your players?
Well behaved
Positive team player
Individual responsibility
Supportive to others
Manage relationships
Demonstrate independence
The Tiger Woods effect
Myth busting

• Myth that only playing football is essential for long term success
• Myth that starting younger and younger is essential for long term success
• Myth that playing other sports detracts from long term success
Multi-sport

- Does not hinder elite sport participation
- Linked to longer career
- Allows learning in a wider context
- Allows self-learning through play and experimentation
- Increase chance of developing motor and cognitive skills

(Cote, 2007)

9-11yrs
Football, rugby, cricket, athletics

12-14yrs
- 60% rugby
- 20% cricket
- 20% football

15yrs
80% football

18yrs
100% football
The underpinning skill set

- Ability to learn
- Coping capability
- Adapting skills
The playing ages

• Chronological age
• Biological age
• Relative age
• Sport playing age
The playing ages

• Knowing all these different ‘ages’ exist, what is the impact for you?
• How will you use this information?
Some considerations

• Allow children to experience a variety of positions
• Consider equal game time for all children
• Encourage children to join other sports clubs
• Expand your views of what ‘success’ looks like
• Share knowledge with ‘keen’ parents
• Support and encourage progression

• Above all, be patient and focus on the long term
Talent emergence?

“The task is not to just see what is, but to begin to envisage, and to work towards, what might be”
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME