

The Athlete Development Model

Overview

Canada Basketball presented their strategic plan to the country in the fall of 2003. The mission was described as: *2020 "A World Leader in Basketball"*

Leading a unified basketball community to engage all in quality experiences and drive international success.

The priorities were to:

- Unify the basketball community
- Develop an enduring economic model
- Build a dynamic developmental infrastructure by improving coaching at all levels by developing a system based on principles, which encompass participation and excellence.

The Athlete Development Model (ADM) is a key step in achieving the mission. It provides a consistent framework from which coaches can work. This document has been designed with the input of sport scientists and coaches from across the country. It is a long-term player/athlete development model that illustrates to coaches, parents, volunteers and administrators at the local, provincial and national levels, the importance of a systematic and consistent approach to the development of athletes. It also recognizes the importance of participation in securing the health of the nation.

The model is to be used as a guide for coaches and administrators. This will assist them in understanding the importance of teaching particular aspects of the game to athletes at specific stages of development. It is hoped that with this systematic approach, skills and abilities needed to achieve excellence in basketball will be reachable. It will also ensure that all participants will receive the appropriate training that will produce well-rounded people and maintain a lifelong passion for the sport.

The delivery of an aligned, consistent, and systematic development system ensures that everyone's needs are being met at every level of programming. Every participant in the game will be able to see the pathways which will lead him or her to their own level of self-fulfillment. Proper application of this document will ensure that coaches are educated with respect to the needs of their players. The ability of the coach to teach these skills then becomes of paramount importance. Therefore, the development of the coach as a teacher must be the primary focus. Coaches must be supported with frequent clinics and other educational resources

that are made available through Canada Basketball and the Provincial/Territorial Associations in order to stay current.

This is a growing, living document that will constantly be fed with new ideas and concepts.

"It takes 10 years of extensive practice to excel in anything."

-Dr. Herbert Simon, Nobel Laureate

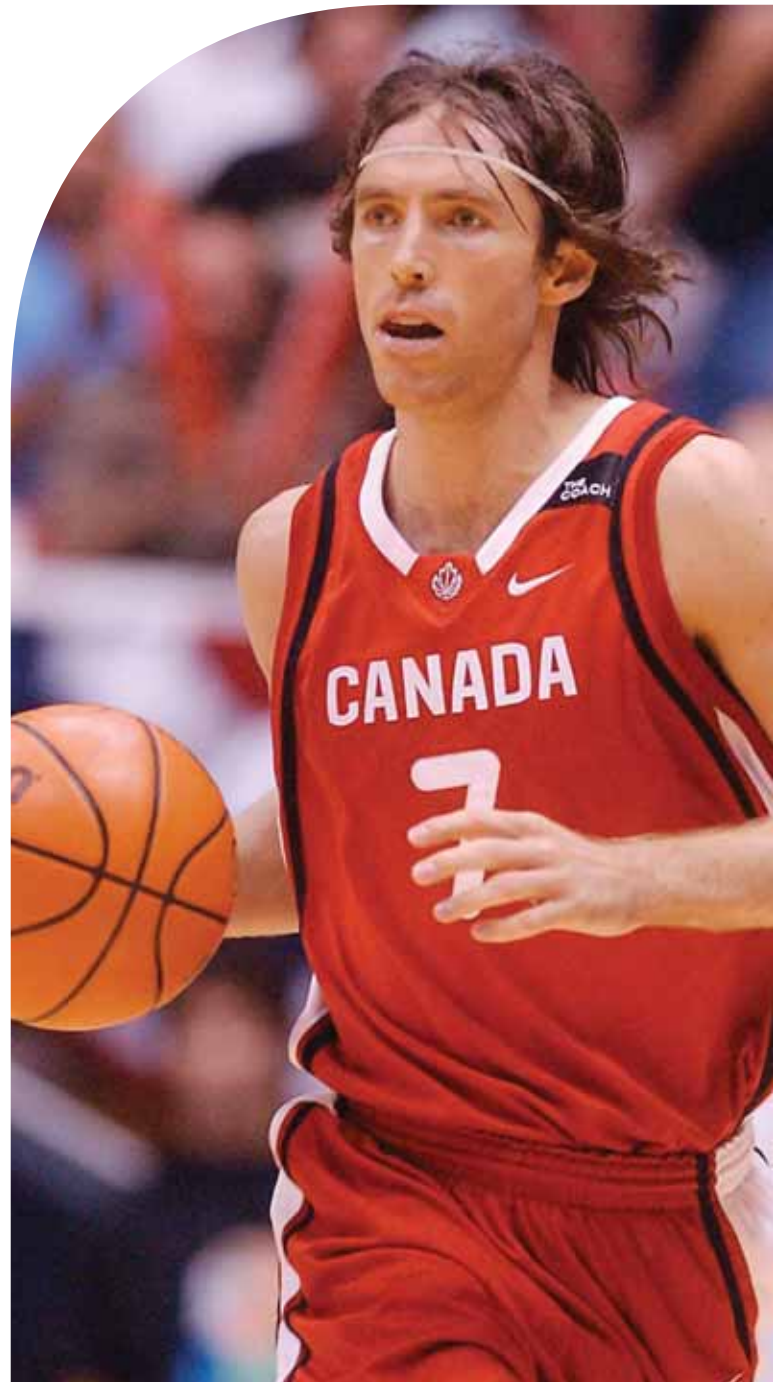




Figure 1

Athlete Development Model

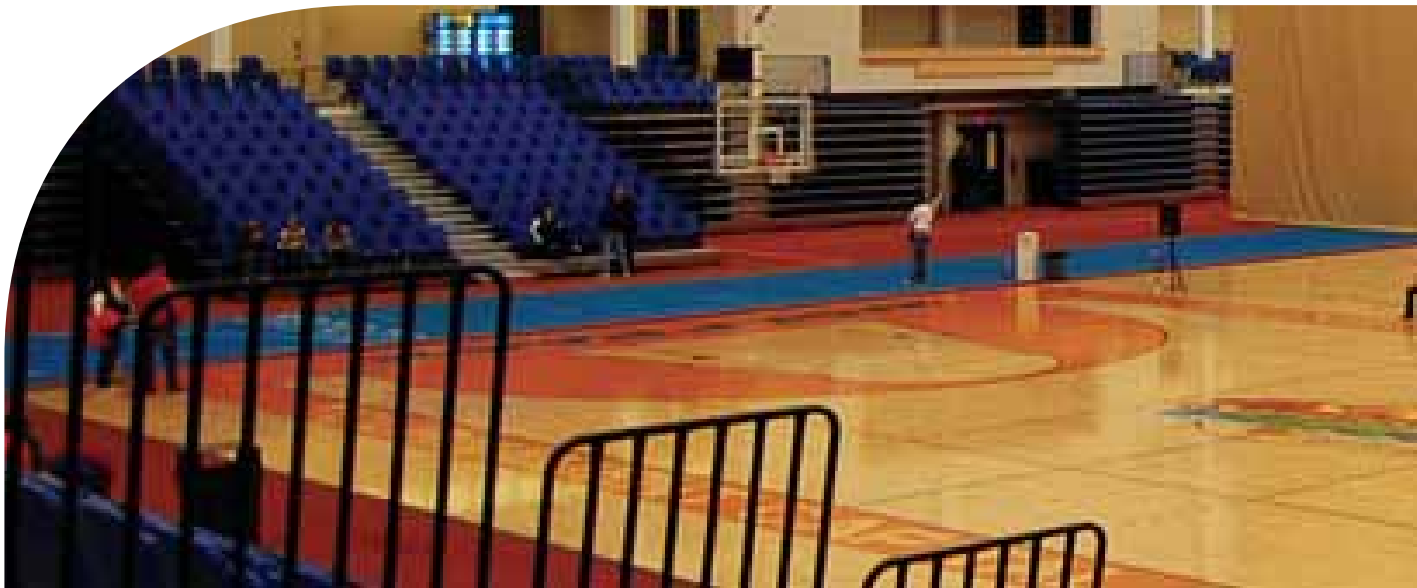
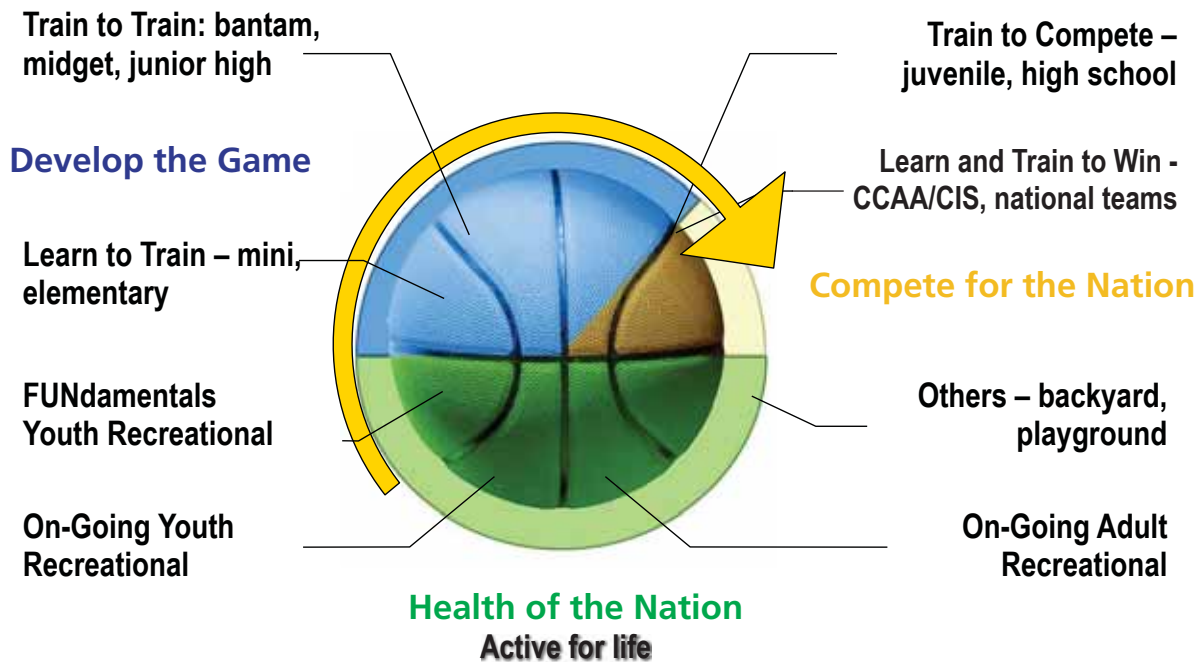
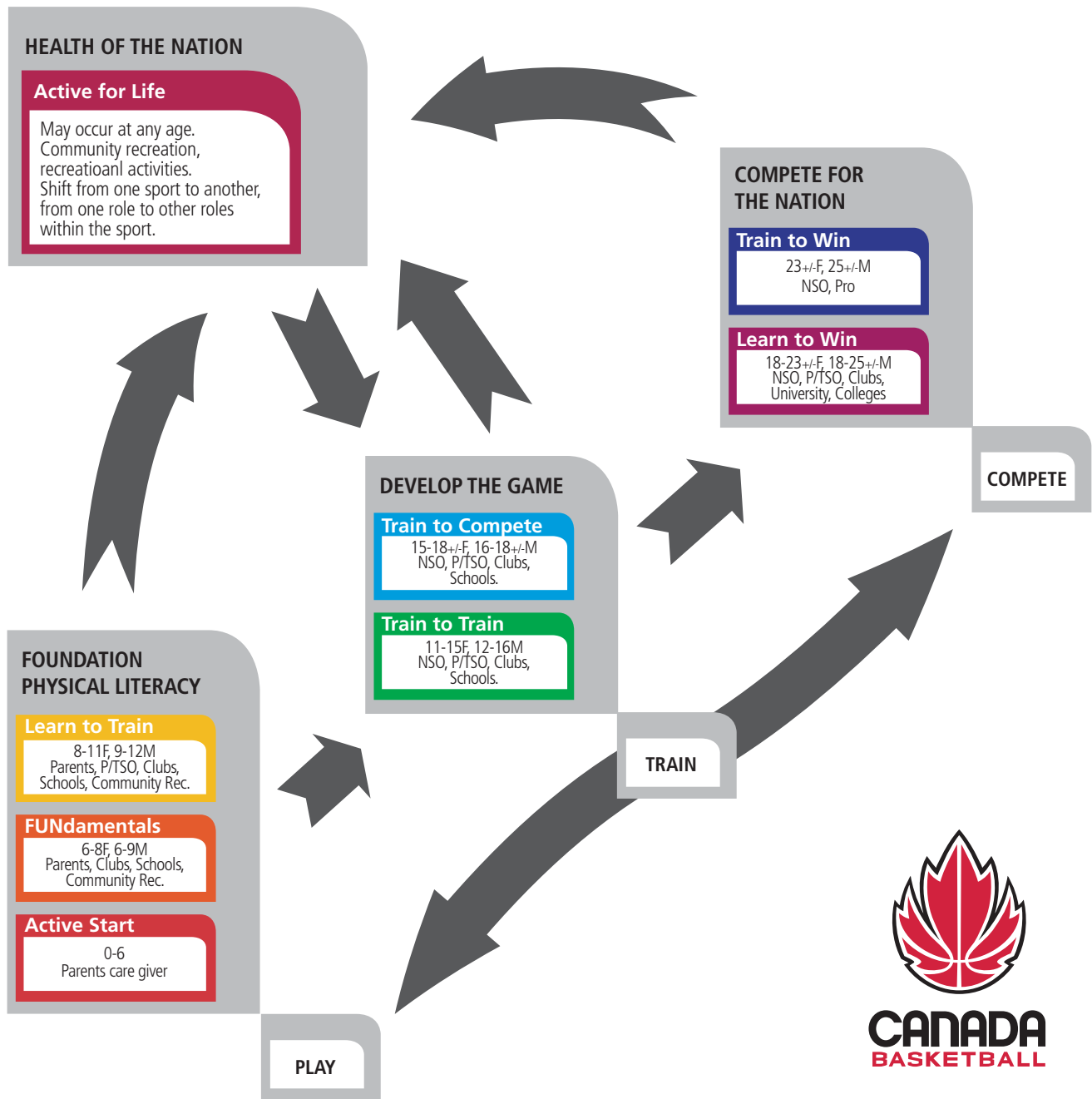


Figure 2
Canadian Sport for Life
Basketball Pathways





Stages of Development

Health of the Nation

Competition/Fun Continuum

The model recognizes that every individual chooses a different pathway in his or her quest to find self-fulfilment through the game. Basketball by its very nature is a competitive game. The level of competition falls on a continuum from having fun through participation to winning medals at the highest level of play. Closely tied to this continuum is the age of the participants and their skill levels. At a young age it is recognized that fun and participation should be the highest priority. As age increases the amount of healthy competition can increase appropriately. As skills improve competition can also increase. There does however come a point in time when participants will want to drop out of highly competitive situations to return to participatory situations which are less competitive, but provide enjoyment and needed exercise. These opportunities are crucial for the health of the individual and the nation. It allows people of all ages to maintain their personal fitness, develop important values such as co-operation and teamwork and can alleviate many of society's pressing social problems. It gives people something to do that is positive in their life.

By following the stages of the Athlete Development Model all participants will be given the proper grounding in the age-appropriate skills needed to play the game. The participants will then be able to make the right choice as to where on the competitive continuum he or she wishes to participate. There is a slight overlap in each stage of the model. The transition from one stage to the next is often flexible rather than a concrete separation because the stages are based on developmental age rather than chronological age.

It is very important that people are able to enter the model at any stage. Allowances must be made for people who are late entering the game. Because of the way our society works, a participant's biological age will most often determine which stage he or she is entering. Coaches must be aware that specific skills may be lacking in someone who is new to the sport, but with proper coaching this can easily be overcome. Programs also need to be able to safely and effectively adapt activities to include children and adults with disabilities. We want the game to be inclusive, not exclusive.

It is important to note that the Learn to Train (L2T) and Train to Train (T2T) stages in the model are biologically based. One cannot change these facts. You cannot rush human development. Young people will mature at various paces. Research has shown that chronological age is a poor basis for athlete development models, since the musculo-skeletal and emotional development of athletes between ages 8 and 16 can vary greatly within any given age category. The content of preparation should be adjusted to the developmental levels of the players.

Canadian Sport for Life, published by the Canadian Sport Centres, states that physical activity should be fun and a required part of the child's daily life, not something required. Active play is the way young children are physically active. Basketball is a late maturation sport and therefore does not recommend any formal, adult organized basketball at the Active Start stage of development. The overall development of an athlete begins around age 6. During these years when the athlete is aged 6 to 9, it is important that they acquire fundamental movement skills. This stage is called the FUNdamental stage of the process, and the underlying message is that children should have fun in all activities. During this stage the athlete will begin to develop the basic physical, affective, cognitive and psychosocial skills. This is the foundation upon which the child's personal and athletic potential should be based. Unfortunately this is the stage that is usually neglected, because it is far too common that coaches with little or no experience are in charge of teaching a group of children. Coaches must be aware that during each stage of a child's development there are specific time periods when certain movement skills should be taught. By introducing the movement skills at the appropriate time the coach ensures that the athletes can reach their full athletic potential at some future date. By following this model, coaches will be able to meet these time frames. This experience must be extremely positive for the child. The child must be able to realize the enjoyment of success at this age. Therefore successes must be made attainable. The Canada Basketball Athlete Development Model recognizes that there are two sub-phases of the





FUNDamentals stage. The first is called the Movement phase. This is generally children ages 6 to 7 years old. Here basketball is learned through the fundamental movement skills. The second phase is the Modified Games phase which encompasses children 8 and 9 years old. Basketball is learned here through modified games such as 1-on-1, 2-on-2, etc.

The Learn to Train or Basketball Skills stage of development follows the FUNdamental stage. This is the major motor learning stage. It is often called the “skill hungry years” or the “golden age of learning” skills. One of the most important periods of motor development for children is between the ages of 9 to 12. During this time, children are developmentally ready to acquire the fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that are the cornerstones of all athletic development. In addition the basic basketball skills should be emphasized, but participation in other sports is still encouraged. Basic psychological skills such as goal setting and concentration can also be introduced.

Develop the Game

The Train to Train stage follows the Learn to Train stage and focuses upon athletes between the ages of 11 to 15 for females and 12 to 16 for males. The athletes will be introduced to many of the technical and tactical parts of basketball during these years. A more strategic, structured approach to training can be adopted during these years. An emphasis is still, however, on the fundamental movement skills. These movement skills can be further developed here, hopefully under optimal conditions. These skills are developed so that the athletes have the ability to reach their full athletic potential regardless of how intense training becomes in later years.

As athletes begin to mature, the competition to practice ratio often becomes skewed to the competition. The focus is shifted from development to winning, with practices becoming few and far between. There is often too much emphasis on competing and not enough on teaching fundamentals. Even during practices, focus is sometimes shifted to practicing sets, press break or scrimmaging, before a player can make a left handed lay-up. Our focus as leaders of the next generation of players must be to develop well-rounded basketball players. This can only happen if coaches emphasize development of the individual player more so than the team.

*Players need to learn the game,
not a position. Individual development is
the foundation.*

As in the FUNdamental stage there are two distinct phases of the Train to Train stage. It is during this time when the first major split in the competition/fun continuum occurs. Many athletes will not like the shift to the competition side and want to remain active in a more recreational setting. Others choose the more competitive side of the continuum. Both sides are important. The problem is when only one side of the continuum is available for delivery.

The Training to Compete (T2C) stage of training, involves athletes aged 15 to 18+/- for females and 16 to 18+/- for males. Very specific basketball, physical and mental training should now be applied. Athletes should be introduced to all aspects of the game and should begin to refine all technical aspects and most tactical components. Athletes may also begin high performance training (i.e. provincial teams, clubs teams) and need to compete against quality competition in order to improve. A high level of intensity should be associated with all training endeavours. Individualized training is paramount.





Compete for the Nation

The next two stages of athlete preparation are the Learn to Win (L2W) and Training to Win (T2W) stages and involve athletes 18 years and older. All of their technical, tactical, physical, mental and ancillary skills and capacities should be fully established and can be refined. Shorter periods of training at high level of intensity accompanied by frequent recovery breaks to avoid burnout are recommended.

Basketball activities should be fully integrated with sport science and sport medicine programs. Athletes between the ages of 18 to 25 +/- for males and 18 to 23 +/- for females will be in Learning to Win. These athletes will be competing in the CIS, CCAA or the NCAA. Training to Win stage is 25+/- for males and 23 +/- for females. These players will be playing professionally, aspiring to represent Canada.

Health of the Nation

The final stage of the model is Retirement and Retainment or Active for Life. During this time players will be moving from very competitive situations into more recreational programs. For many highly competitive athletes this is a time of great change. A program to aid these players in this process is crucial. For many it is retraining them into different roles, such as coaches, referees and administrators within the basketball system.

It is important to note that while this does provide a path for coaches to follow, all successful players will have one thing in common - a love or passion for the game. We, as administrators, coaches, parents and volunteers, must ensure that we provide an environment that allows players to get "hooked" on basketball. If this occurs the athletes will instinctively want to learn, to challenge their full potential.

