

## Modelling our Coaching *Working the Model*

In Ulster we are developing a Strategic view of how our coaching and games should develop. Long-term player development is the key and a focus on the individual essential in order to sustain player involvement. Preparing the young player for competition is key to this sustainability. A model presented by Dr. Istvan Balyi, a leading expert in the world on the 'Periodisation of Training' and 'Talent Development' is presented here to stimulate our thoughts and discussion.

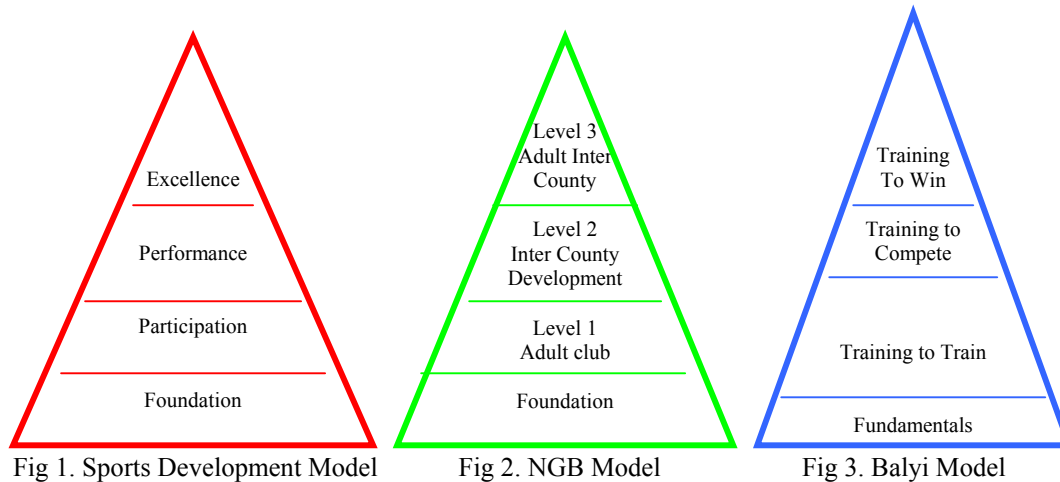


Fig 1. Sports Development Model

Fig 2. NGB Model

Fig 3. Balyi Model

Balyi presents key stages in the Long-term athletic development of elite performers. Stage 1: The FUNDamentals (6-10yrs) is about developing a fun environment where the focus is general athleticism reflected through the ABC's, Agility, Balance and Co-ordination. At this stage speed, endurance and power can be developed through FUN and games. Proper running, jumping and throwing technique and the ability to execute basic body movements that underpin the key skills within any sport is essential at this stage. In addition the young player can use their own body weight to build basic strength. Sports participation can be 5 to 6 times per week.

Stage 2: Training to Train (10 – 14 yrs) builds on the ABCs by placing an emphasis on shoulder, elbow, core, spine and ankle stability. The Fundamental technical skills are executed towards the end of this stage and the Fundamentals of tactical preparation are emphasised. Participation in complementary sports is encouraged with similar movement patterns and energy systems. Individualisation of fitness and technical training also evolves near the end of this stage with the introduction of mental conditioning and other aspects such as nutrition and hydration. Sports specific training can take place 4 times per week.

Stage 3: Training to Compete (14 – 18 yrs) evolves to provide sport and individual specific physical conditioning. The sports specific technical and playing skills are executed under competitive conditions. Advanced tactical preparation can take place and more in-depth mental preparation of players. More advice on nutrition and hydration, and lifestyle management can commence with this age group and the introduction of weight training lifts USING A BRUSH SHAFT and no weights can

begin early on in this stage to establish good technique. Sports- specific technical, tactical and fitness training can take place 6 – 8 times per week.

Stage 4: Training to Win (18yrs+) provides an opportunity to work with the physically matured players. At this stage maintenance or possible improvement of physical capacity can take place and further development of the technical, tactical and playing skills. All aspects of performance and training are modelled and training becomes very individualised with a clear focus on the needs of the individuals. The support services continue to evolve with the player. As training intensity and loads increase there is a need to address rest periods, nutritional intake and Periodisation of the training programme. Sports-specific technical, tactical and fitness training can take place 9-12 times per week. What significance is this model to Gaelic Games?

#### Applying Balyi to the GAA Model

This model encourages us to think about what we do at each level within our performance ladder. Getting the base of the pyramid right is essential and the Fundamentals encourage athleticism. As coaches this is essential with the young children with the emphasis on learning through FUN. This foundation provides the basis that allows efficient execution of the game related skills in later stages. What are we doing with this age group? What resources are we providing coaches with to help them deliver good Fundamentals? Training them to Train encourages the player to develop the technical aspect of the game. Being able to identify a problem and coach the player to correct this is the essence of coaching. Focusing more on the individual and developing their strengths and working on their weaknesses is key at this stage. Setting good habits and encouraging good practice will benefit the player in the long term. At 14+ the training to train phase begins to focus on the physical development of the player. Teaching good technique for strength training can begin without the use of weights. At 16+ lightweights with high repetitions, reinforcing good technique provides the basis upon which structured weight training can begin at 18.

Coaching our young players needs to be a priority. Planning and setting long-term programmes for development are essential. The coach needs to be patient and work the plan as appropriate for the age group. Good FUNdamentals are essential and within our Association I believe we need to revisit what we are doing at this level. More thoughts on this next month.



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