



REBUILDING ATHLETES IN AMERICA





AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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STATE OF THE GAMES: WHY CREATE ADM?

The American Development Model is a concerted effort between the United States Olympic Committee and its National Governing Bodies of sport to apply long-term athlete development principles in a way that resonates with the culture of sport in the United States.

The ADM is influenced by the work of Istvan Balyi, who is known worldwide as an industry leader in long-term athlete development principles. Balyi's approach to organized sport focuses on key principles of development and periodization of training plans, which help support athletes' individual needs.

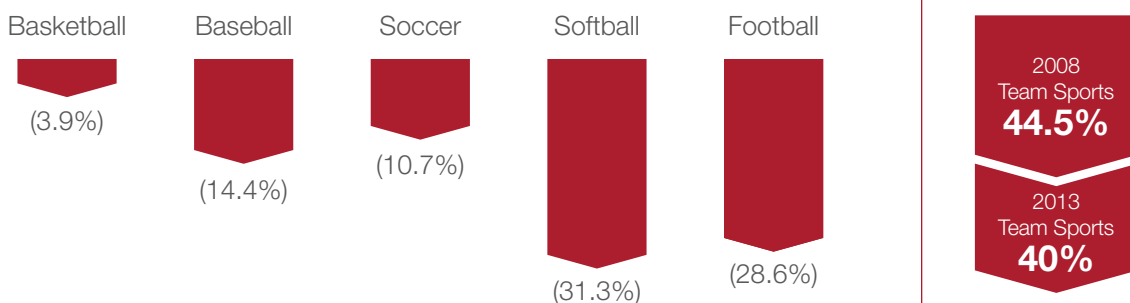
The need to rethink how we organize, operate and execute sport activity in the United States has been a point of emphasis over the last 15 years. The call to action became more urgent in 2013, when the Aspen Institute's Project Play initiative hosted a gathering of sports organizations and administrators to discuss key issues facing sport in the U.S. The following conclusions from that meeting were the inspiration behind the ADM:

FROM PROJECT PLAY REPORT: 2015 (www.projectplay.us)

Falling Sport Participation Rates

Some of the most widely practiced sports in the U.S. were seeing major declines in participation due to organized sport programs centered around the most talented, well-resourced athletes.

Decline in Participation Rates Among Children ages 6-12 between 2008-2013



According to Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), children ages 6 to 12 who played team sports regularly fell from 44.5 percent in 2008 to 40 percent in 2013.

Obesity Crisis

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Childhood obesity rates nearly tripled. The percentage of obese children ages 6-11 increased from 7 percent in 1980 to 18 percent in 2010. Among children ages 12 to 19, that figure grew from 5 percent to 18 percent (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015*). One study found that among 17 developed nations, **the U.S. had the highest rates of childhood obesity among those ages 5-19** (*National Academy of Sciences, 2013*).

Low Physical Activity Rates

Starting at age 9 — when children often develop a self-concept of whether or not they are an athlete — physical activity rates begin to drop sharply. By age 15, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity declines 75 percent, a higher rate than in Europe (*Designed to Move*, 2012). At that point, they average only 49 minutes per weekday and 35 minutes per weekend (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2008). Among kids ages 6-17, one in five youth are considered inactive, meaning they report no physical activity (*Physical Activity Council*, 2015). **Further, only one in three children is physically active every day** (*Fitness.gov*). Among high school students, that figure drops to nearly 29 percent. Meanwhile, more children each year are completely inactive, with one in five youth ages 6-17 not engaging in any activity, according to SFIA. In 2014, the number of inactives ages 6+ grew to 28.3 percent (82.7 million) of the U.S. population — the highest rate in the last six years (*Physical Activity Council*, 2015).



Shorter Lives

Today's children could be the **first generation to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents** due to obesity and other related diseases. (*Designed to Move*, 2012)



HOW THIS IMPACTS SPORT IN AMERICA

The United States Olympic Committee and our National Governing Bodies understand the role sport plays in the lives of Americans. Sport is an outlet for exercise, a way to build lifelong relationships and a platform for achieving our goals and realizing our potential. Without positive sport experiences, we risk:

- // Fewer athletes in the system to drive Olympic and Paralympic success
- // Fewer opportunities and demand for sport programming
- // Fewer opportunities to teach American youth valuable life lessons through sport.



OVERVIEW

The United States Olympic Committee, in partnership with the National Governing Bodies, created the American Development Model in 2014 to help Americans realize their full athletic potential and utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle.

The model utilizes long-term athlete development concepts to promote sustained physical activity, participation in sport, and Olympic and Paralympic success. These concepts have been tailored to create a framework for developing American youth through sport.

The American Development Model is comprised of four key elements:



The ultimate goal is to create positive experiences for American athletes at every level. By using the American Development Model, clubs, coaches and parents can help maximize potential for future elite athletes, and improve the health and well-being for future generations in the United States.

The purpose of this document is to provide key influencers – including administrators, coaches and parents – a roadmap for building and delivering programs that focus on the individual athlete at each stage of development. The physical, emotional and mental landscape of each stage should enhance the athlete's overall development, while creating positive experiences in sport.

ADM STATEMENT

The United States Olympic Committee and its National Governing Bodies embrace the athlete development principles that allow American youth to utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle, and create opportunities for athletes to maximize their full potential. These five key principles include:

- // Universal access to create opportunity for all athletes
- // Developmentally appropriate activities that emphasize motor and foundational skills
- // Multi-sport or multi-activity participation (i.e. cross-training)
- // Fun, engaging and progressively challenging atmosphere
- // Quality coaching at all age levels

By creating early positive experiences for all athletes, the American Development Model will keep more children engaged in sport longer with four outcomes:

- // Grow both the general athlete population and the pool of elite athletes from which future U.S. Olympians and Paralympians are selected
- // Develop fundamental skills that transfer between sports
- // Provide an appropriate avenue to fulfill an individual's athletic potential
- // Create a generation that loves sport and physical activity, and transfers that passion to the next generation



KEY PRINCIPLES

I. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL ATHLETES

Universal access is defined as creating opportunities for everyone to participate in sport. By providing universal access to all youth regardless of gender, race, physical disability, and economic status, more children could become involved in sport and be more physically active. Sport must be inclusive so that all children have the opportunity to discover the benefit of physical activity and realize their full athletic potential. Sport and physical activity are tools for children to express themselves, develop social relationships and learn valuable life lessons.

II. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES THAT EMPHASIZE MOTOR AND FOUNDATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

A clear understanding of an individual's developmental level (as opposed to his or her age) will help coaches, parents and administrators appropriately tailor the training, skills and tactics taught to maximize an individual's full potential, while helping avoid burnout.

In order to succeed, athletes must first learn foundational motor skills and technique. Coaches, parents and administrators who jump directly into competition tactics and strategy without emphasizing basic fundamentals may put their child or athlete at a disadvantage. To ensure long-term success, athletes must be given adequate time and knowledge to develop these essential building blocks for success.

III. ENCOURAGE MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

Multi-sport participation is critical to developing a well-rounded foundation for physical activity that can transfer between sports. Encouraging children to participate in multiple sport activities at a young age offers them the opportunity to explore, play and discover sport according to their personal interests and skill level.

Multi-sport play also provides several cross-training benefits for athletes – such as strength, endurance, agility, coordination and speed training — that enhances athleticism and promotes a healthy lifestyle. Athletes also benefit from the social and psychological impact of multi-sport participation.

IV. FUN, ENGAGING AND CHALLENGING ATMOSPHERE

A fun, engaging and challenging environment is essential for any youth sport activity. The definition of “fun” may change as children advance to more elite levels of competition, but a standard emphasis on making the process positive and enjoyable is key.

Free and spontaneous play is encouraged to help foster growth and development. By offering the opportunity for unstructured play, athletes are more likely to customize physical activity to meet their needs and keep the “fun” in sport intact. Creating a team mentality through positive reinforcement is also critical.

Consult your sport's National Governing Body for suggestions on age-appropriate dose and duration of practice and competition to help avoid burnout.

V. QUALITY COACHING AT ALL AGE LEVELS

Quality coaches are critical to athlete development; therefore quality coaching education is critical for athlete success at all competitive levels. Quality coaching not only requires a youth coach to be qualified and highly knowledgeable of their sport, but also basic training on effective communication, practice planning and athlete development. The very best coaches view themselves as continual learners and are always working toward improving themselves. Consult your sport's National Governing Body for information on the different types of coaching education that are offered and/or required for your sport.



5 STAGES TO A BETTER SPORT EXPERIENCE

The American Development Model is meant to explain an athlete's advancement through a pathway supporting a healthy sport experience based on their physical, mental and emotional level and potential for growth.

STAGE 5
Thrive & Mentor
Age: For Life

5

STAGE 4
Excel for High
Performance
Age: 15 +

STAGE 4
Participate
& Succeed
Age: 15 +

4

STAGE 3
Train & Compete
AGE: 13 - 19

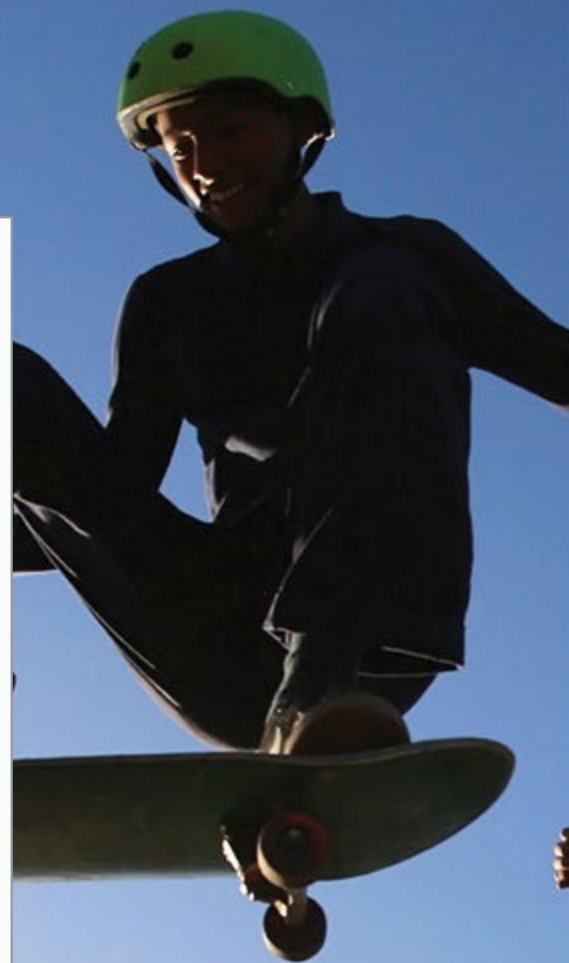
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STAGE 2
Develop & Challenge
Age: 10 - 16

2

STAGE 1
Discover, Learn & Play
Age: 0 - 12

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STAGES

The ADM is comprised of five stages designed to create a healthy sport experience and support an athlete's advancement based on their physical, mental and emotional level, and potential for growth.

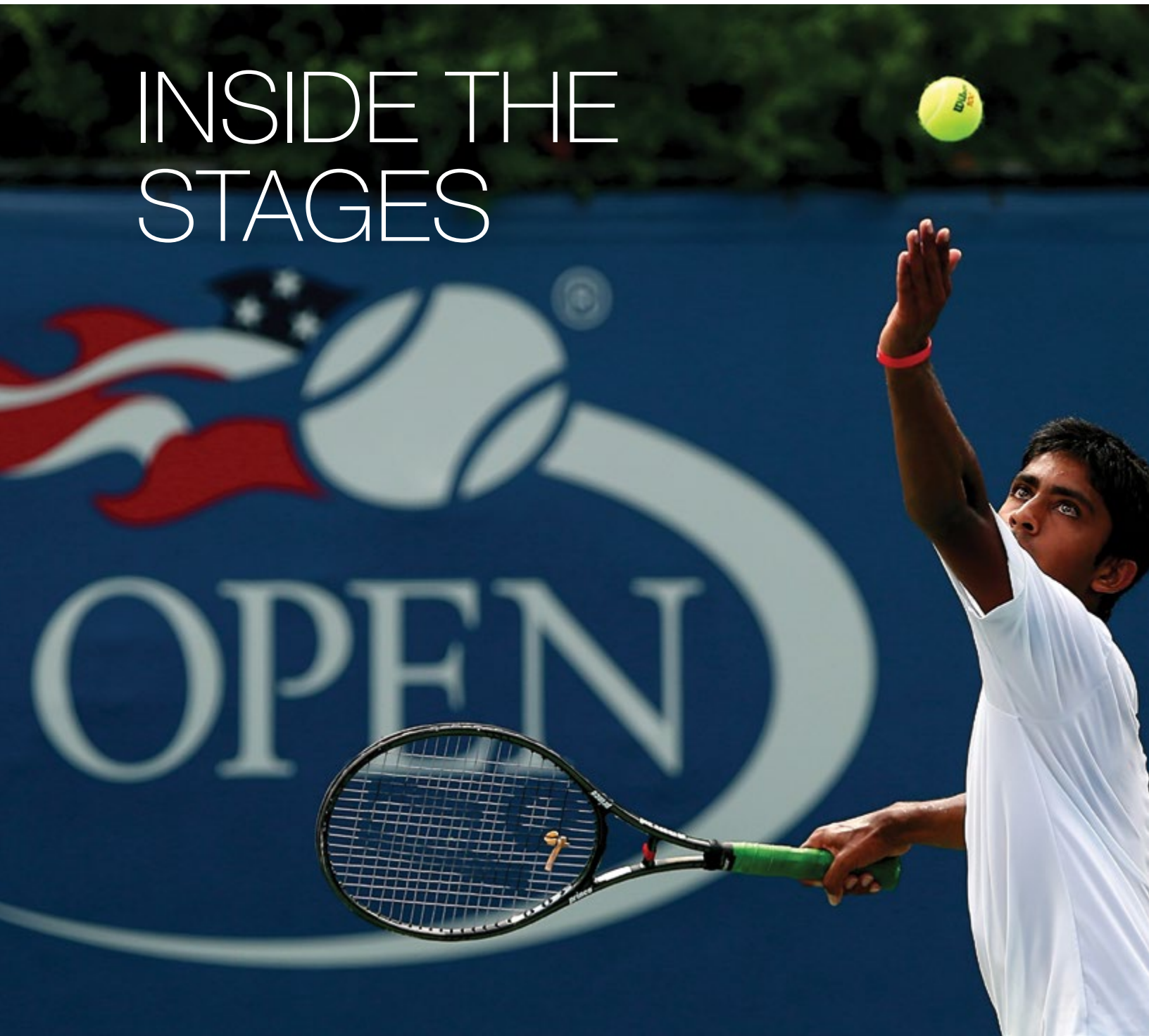
Pathway models like the ADM 5 Stages should be used to reference what key concepts athletes should be focused, encouraged or organized around as they develop and grow in their sports experiences. The pathway models are guides to explain how athletes navigate development and competitive expectations as they journey in the sport.

Consumers can use pathway models to understand at what developmental stages an athlete should consider focusing on skill development vs. competition, or at what ages one could expect to become more focused on elite performance.

Every sport will have a different pathway for development and navigation will be different for each sport experience, and this is ok. The ADM 5 stage model is a guideline for sports in America to use to encourage development and pathway guidance.



INSIDE THE STAGES



STAGE 1: DISCOVER, LEARN AND PLAY (AGES 0-12)



This is the first step to being involved with sports at a young age (0-12) or when first introduced to a new sport. Discovery of key concepts and motor skills of the sport/activity is critical in order to learn how the sport is played. Many skills are transferrable between sports. Programs should accommodate athletes that participate in multiple sports. This early stage requires coaching that will allow fun and enjoyment through discovery and exploration.

ATHLETE

- // Learning basic rules and sport techniques
- // Play multiple sports to accelerate motor skill development
- // Emphasize skill development, sport education and age-appropriate play
- // Emphasize practice over competition; if competing, not beyond local or regional levels
- // Encourage deliberate play

DISCOVER

- // Have fun
- // Sample multiple sports through unstructured play
- // Develop motor skills that transfer from sport to sport
- // Cultivate a passion for sport and an active lifestyle
- // Socialize with others
- // Utilize free or spontaneous play for discovery of the sport and new skills

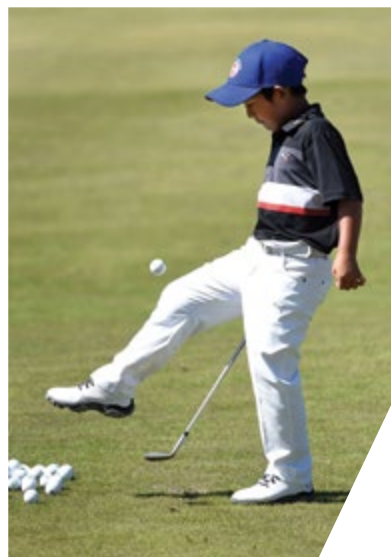
LEARN

- // Core fundamental movements
- // How to use size and age-appropriate equipment, and playing surfaces
- // Rules of the game

PLAY

- // Physical education class
- // Open gym
- // Free/spontaneous play
- // Basic organized play
- // Everyone has an equal chance to play in competition

STAGE 2: DEVELOP AND CHALLENGE (AGES 10-16)



The second stage of the development process occurs after an athlete has been engaged in a sport and wants to explore more organized training options. This stage focuses on refining the skills needed to be successful in the activity or sport, and then furthering skill development through challenges, such as recreational competition, organized sport programs or club participation.

Athlete readiness and motivation determine the choice to pursue the next level in sport. The second stage may begin earlier for some athletes who are quick to develop physically and mentally. Fun and socialization are still key areas of emphasis in order to encourage future participation and avoid burnout.

ATHLETE

- // Understand rules and techniques of the sport
- // Participate in multiple sports for continued motor and physical development
- // Participate in a fun, structured and ongoing training program (as opposed to participating in open gym)
- // Compete at local and regional levels
- // Emphasize practice and skill development over competing
- // Understand the impact on performance due to different maturation rates

DEVELOP

- // Physical: Core movement fundamentals, increasing requirements for speed, agility, balance, endurance, strength and coordination
- // Psychological and social: interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication skills and adapting to the growing challenges of sport development
- // Technical skills: Identify personal strengths and areas to improve with a continued emphasis on proper movement mechanics
- // Tactical: Institute age-appropriate times for practice and competition to enhance both team and individual skill development.

CHALLENGE

- // Recreational competition at local and regional levels
- // Organized league play

Note: Seek challenging competition that is commensurate with the athlete and/or team.

STAGE 3: TRAIN AND COMPETE (AGES 13-19)



At stage three, athletes begin to train and compete in a program that matches their personal interests, goals and developmental needs. Competitions become more clearly defined in this process with potential for new experiences in team selection. Maximizing potential becomes an option for athletes as they start to grasp the commitment necessary for certain sports, and the skill sets needed to excel at the next competitive level. Technical, tactical, physical and psycho-social development becomes increasingly more important for the athlete at this time. This is also the stage to increase sport-specific training. Recreation and multi-sport play can continue to be used in a cross-training capacity to allow athletes the opportunity to more fully develop.

ATHLETE

- // Begin to focus on particular sports
- // Use multiple-sport play for cross-sport development
- // Participate in a fun, structured and continuous training program
- // Compete in more challenging situations
- // Improve skills at the local, regional and/or national levels

TRAIN

- // Seek opportunities to further develop skills
- // Focused training through coaching
- // Follow a consistent training schedule
- // Increase sport-specific training
- // Emphasize competition skills
- // Utilize more sport-science related information such as nutrition and sport psychology
- // Participate in development camps

COMPETE

- // Club competition
- // Middle and high school competitions
- // Local, regional and national competitions

Note: Seek challenging competition that is commensurate with the athlete and or team's skills.



STAGE 4: EXCEL FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE OR PARTICIPATE AND SUCCEED (AGES 15+)

When an athlete reaches high school they will likely face the option to either focus on sport for high performance and increased competition, or continue to compete for the fun, healthy and social aspects of sport. Athletes will be able to choose the pathway that best represents their interests and abilities. Growth spurts, experience or dedication to training may all affect which path an athlete follows during their sport career. This stage allows for both full development and commitment to their sport(s), and enjoyment of the benefits that sport offers. Fun and socialization remain key elements of this stage, although the definition of fun changes from athlete to athlete and also will adjust based on the commitment level to high performance or participation.

EXCEL FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

ATHLETE

- // Dedicated to maximizing athletic potential
- // Commit to an ongoing annual and/or long-term training program
- // Is single sport-focused while in season

EXCEL

- // Maximize talents
- // Year-round plan to excel and progress
- // Master and/or elite-level coaching
- // High performance focus

HIGH PERFORMANCE

- // Competitions commensurate with an athlete's skill level, and to appropriate levels outside their comfort zone
- // Elite national and international competitions

PARTICIPATE AND SUCCEED

ATHLETE

- // Dedicated to participating in sports to be successful and have fun
- // Multiple-sport for cross-sport development
- // Participate in a structured, ongoing training program
- // Focus on the enjoyment of sport and the healthy benefits of participation

PARTICIPATE

- // Be active and involved
- // Compete for both the challenge and for fun
- // Develop for personal achievement

SUCCEED

- // Local- and regional-based competitions that meet the athlete's needs and their competition goals
- // Sport club competition

STAGE 5: THRIVE AND MENTOR (ACTIVE FOR LIFE)

Everyone can use sport and physical activity to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Many athletes want to give back to their sport after they finish competing. Coaching, officiating and mentoring other athletes are natural next steps. With previous experience as an athlete, the coach, official and/or administrator can help prepare other athletes to be the best they can be in sport and enjoy the development process.

ATHLETE

- // Transition from participant to sport leader as a coach or advocate
- // Pursue opportunities to remain involved in sport
- // Maintain a physically active and healthy lifestyle

MENTOR

- // Certified coach
- // Sport club management
- // NGB involvement
- // Official
- // Professional development in chosen sport(s)

THRIVE

- // Masters programs/competitions
- // Consistent exercise
- // Recreational competitions
- // Personal health
- // Support local and national sports and organizations





ADM AND YOU: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The United States Olympic Committee is engaging with its National Governing Bodies of sport, and sport clubs, coaches, parents and athletes in the U.S. to utilize the American Development Model in a manner that helps keep American athletes strong and inspired to achieve their personal best on and off the field of play. Use the following recommendations as a way to further your ADM advocacy in the U.S.



ADM FOR NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES

National Governing Bodies look to maximize the potential of their sport at all levels. By using the ADM's key concepts, an NGB can look to grow the number of participants in their sport, and increase their reach in the United States. The following six steps will help maximize future growth for NGBs:

- 1) Build an NGB-specific pathway and visual representation to guide your members and future champions.
- 2) Encourage volumizing programs and limiting athlete cuts. Emphasize development over results.
- 3) Support multi-sport/activity and cross-training for athletes of all ages.
- 4) Outline and implement age appropriate training practices and duration recommendations for your sport, as well as periodization plans for each age level.
- 5) Drive physical literacy development at all age levels to match age and physical ability.
- 6) Provide quality coaching education based on national standards that encourage ADM concepts and age-appropriate teaching skills.



ADM FOR SPORT CLUBS



Sport clubs and organizations are a key part of both the youth and adult sport experience in the United States. By using key ADM concepts, a sport club can focus on growing their athletes and teams into success stories. Use these 10 key recommendations to help maximize your sport clubs' impact on the athlete's sport experience:

- 1) Limit cuts for ages 0-12 in sport programs and focus on developing skills over competition outcomes.
- 2) Use your NGB's sport pathway to design your own club development pathway for participation and competition offerings.
- 3) Provide physical literacy (i.e. agility, balance, coordination training) at every practice at every level.
- 4) Periodize training and rest time for your athletes to cut down on overuse injuries and burnout.
- 5) Encourage multi-sport/activity and cross-training to keep your athletes active and developing outside of your program.
- 6) Use developmentally appropriate drills and practice plans at all levels.
- 7) Provide qualified and certified coaches at all age levels.
- 8) Keep participation/competition costs reasonable. Find ways to increase numbers and retention rates from year to year, season to season.
- 9) Provide quality feedback and age-appropriate development benchmarks to parents and athletes.
- 10) Operate with an athlete-focused philosophy by creating fun, engaging and challenging sport experiences across all levels of development.





ADM FOR COACHES

Coaches hold a strong power of authority in sports. The coach's role is to maximize the potential of their athletes, while helping the athlete or team achieve the best results possible. This power of authority can make or break an athlete's sport experience. Quality coaches need to constantly develop their tools to help athletes grow and develop. The following recommendations can be used to achieve greater success in coaching:

- 1) Periodize training and rest time for athletes to cut down on overuse injuries and burnout.
- 2) Provide physical literacy (i.e. agility, balance, coordination training) at every practice at every level.
- 3) Use developmentally appropriate drills and practice plans at all levels.
- 4) Operate with an athlete-focused philosophy by creating fun, engaging and challenging sport experiences across all levels of development.
- 5) Provide quality feedback and age-appropriate development benchmarks to parents and athletes.
- 6) Focus on effort and development over outcomes to reinforce physical, technical and tactical advancements over winning.
- 7) Maximize athlete potential and retention at all stages of development.
- 8) Obtain certification as a coach and continue to develop your coaching skills, including age-appropriate teaching skills.



ADM FOR PARENTS

The parent's role in the sport experience can be one of support and guidance for the athlete's benefit. The following are recommendations for parents to help ensure positive sport experiences for their children:

- 1) Understand your child's sport pathway and recognize where they stand in terms of age and development.
- 2) Encourage sport sampling, in which your child plays several different sports up to age 12, at minimum, to help enhance physical literacy and to be sure they find sports they enjoy.
- 3) Encourage multi-sport/activity and cross-training to keep your child from burning out or developing overuse injuries.
- 4) Reward your child for sport development and proficiency over performance outcomes and winning.
- 5) Enroll your child in age-appropriate activities to ensure healthy progression and skill development before advancing to a heavy volume of competition.
- 6) Monitor the dose and duration your child is playing each week and encourage rest and recovery.
- 7) Ask for feedback from coaches and administrators on your child's development and maintain interest in your child's experience over performance outcomes.
- 8) Support and encourage your child to have fun. Don't forget it's about them.



ADM FOR ATHLETES

The athlete plays the most important part in their sport experience and athletic development. At the end of the day, it is the athlete that must learn, develop and achieve physical, mental and emotional success in their sport. The following six recommendations are designed to help athletes achieve their goals and maximize their full potential in sport.

- 1) Develop your physical literacy and sport skills every day. Use multi-sport/activity and cross-training to help develop and achieve all-around success.
- 2) Focus on your skill proficiency and game development over competition results and performance outcomes at the early stages of sport development.
- 3) Use free-play/pick-up game opportunities to stay active and build creativity outside of structured play.
- 4) Listen to your body and understand that rest and recovery are part of the sport development process.
- 5) Set goals and gather feedback from coaches and administrators to help achieve those goals.
- 6) Stay active year-round and use sport as an outlet for physical activity and exercise.







This publication is put forth by the United States Olympic Committee and the Department of Coaching Education in the Division of Sport Performance. For any inquires on the American Development Model, please email CoachingEducation@usoc.org.

All photos courtesy of Getty Images