TALENT IDENTIFICATION   **5.11**

Rationale

1   This policy has been developed to provide clear directions and corporate effort in regard to talent identification. This policy is applicable to all Orienteering Australia committees and to State Associations and affiliated clubs. Talent development works across systems so connectivity is crucial. At all levels, co-operative initiatives to promote athlete development and engagement via a smooth athlete pathway are guided by the ASC FTEM athlete development model as applied in the Orienteering High Performance and Athlete Development Plan. Ongoing improvement is a key feature of this process involving the recognition of gaps in our orienteering athlete pathway, at all levels (club, state and national), and monitoring, evaluating, promoting and streamlining initiatives aiming to minimise these gaps.

2   The responsibility for talent identification falls to all sectors of OA. While Schools and the pathway to the Australian Schools Orienteering Carnival (ASOC), plays a major role in helping promote the sport and uncovering new talent, clubs and state associations must supply assistance in the form of both human and material resources at other stages of the Talent Development Structure. To create connectivity, these resources are needed at the ASOC level and at key transition stages in our pathway (ie training squads leading to ASOC, and State JNOL squads leading to National HP Squads). "While there is a need to have the right strategies, resources and programs in place, there is a need to focus on the people that make up our systems, and this focus should prevail at every level of our systems." (April 2015, *Improving the identification and development of Australian Sporting Talent*)

3   Clear goals for Talent Identification (TID) at all levels are essential and should be underpinned by a balance between an emphasis on winning and the overall development of individuals through TID programs. There needs to be recognition of the complexity of objective criteria by which to measure an athlete's 'potential' for talent, compared with an athlete's actual achievement. The goals of programs should facilitate social support and recognise the motivational framework of cohorts related to age and gender (for example at younger levels - fun and enjoyment, and at senior levels - achievement and competition).
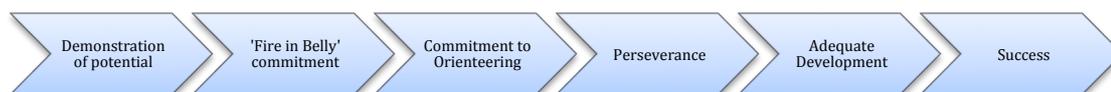
Talent development factors and sequence considerations in TID programs:

Athletes Identified as Juniors

Athletes Identified as Seniors

While the focus of talent identification is on competitive, athlete performance, the program goals should recognise that TID contributes to the development of the whole sport, including the potential recruitment of coaches, mappers and event controllers. Orienteering excellence is developed by athlete engagement in all of these roles.

4   The talent identification process recognises the importance of structured pathways in providing enabling experiences for talented athletes to progress through the system, and includes specific reference to:
   a) having clear talent pathways;
   b) having mentors within the pathway;
   c) critical ages to commence a pathway;
   d) the geographic reach of the pathways;
   e) costs to participate; and
   f) the role of school sport in association with clubs
Across most of these aspects, the level of sophistication in managing these aspects will determine the success of talent ID initiatives.

5   The philosophical and theoretical basis of this policy draws on findings from the ASC document "*Improving the Identification and Development of Australia's Sporting Talent*", whose findings confirm that athlete development across the continuum is influenced by an interplay of athlete, environmental and system factors, and that program planning and resource allocation should address these interplays. Evidence informed, athlete-centric, practical developmental frameworks are needed to encourage connectivity and coordination of stakeholders and recognise high performance drivers (i.e., coaching, leadership, daily training environments, competition, research and innovation) at all levels of the athlete pathway (e.g., foundational, pre-elite and elite). The project demonstrated that FTEM (i.e., Foundation, Talent, Elite and Mastery) (Gulbin, Croser, Morley, & Weissensteiner, 2013) and 3DAD (i.e., a three-dimensional representation of athlete development) (Gulbin & Weissensteiner, 2013) may be utilised to achieve optimal athlete development, progression and support at a sport and system level.

Aspects of the Policy

6   It is necessary for OA to develop and oversee the implementation of a multidimensional, identification and confirmation of talented athletes process. The process should use a combination of physiological and physical indicators of talent potential with skill based tests, prior developmental and training histories, and confirmation of psychological aptitude, commitment and character. Deliberate athlete development utilises 7 key athlete drivers - including sports science and sports medicine, coaching, competition, leadership and management, research and innovation, and an effective training environment.

7   Sports science provides input through consistent messages across the pathway about ethical and evidence-based, training, recovery, nutrition and injury management practices that promote performance. The Australian Sports Commission's 'Best Principles of Sports Science' underpins practices within all national and state TID programs.

8   Coaching should also be focussed at key levels - from targeted school programs, to development clinics, to state junior talent squads, to the national Targeted Talented Athlete group, to National Junior Squad programs. Ideal skills of coaches vary at different levels of the Talent ID pipeline. Research indicates that soft skills (inter- and intrapersonal skills) are more important than technical skills at junior levels, and essential at all levels. Where possible, it is ideal to engage multiple coaches in TID to provide different perspectives and styles and additional attention. Support and recognition of coaches is vital at all levels.

9   Progressive, competitive opportunities also help by providing ongoing performance incentives for talent, assisting the aspiring, young orienteer to set goals or performance targets. Competition will also help uncover talent. Most recruiting outside Schools Orienteering will come through this avenue.

10   Leadership and management refers to the allocation of resources, human resource structures, pathway management and ensuring the people, processes and policies are in place and resourced at a school, club, state and national level with connectivity and coordination across the system. This is a responsibility of clubs, state associations and Orienteering Australia. Resourced transition programs and agreed protocols for connectivity between levels, and having people in place, are crucial for success.

11   Research and innovation refers to the ongoing appraisal of the athlete pathway and the early adoption of innovations that assist the system factors, program planning and practices that support the athlete drivers and athlete development.

12   An individualised approach to managing pre-elite talent is essential, along with effective communication, feedback and selection strategies. Programs should ensure an individualised and proactive approach to managing athletic talent (beyond an athlete's physical training) and effective communication feedback and selection strategies, rather than expecting athletes to adapt to a one-size fits-all model of athlete management.

13   At all levels, programs need to acknowledge that parents are a highly influential driver. This is particularly relevant in the foundational years for an athlete and as such, programs need to consider the development and dissemination of parent-centric resources for optimising athlete development. At all levels, there is a need to learn from, guide, support and acknowledge the invaluable input by parents. Providing information to parents regarding the athlete development pathway, program requirements, level of commitment, (i.e., not just financial), realities of 'making it' in elite sport and options for athletes who are unsuccessful (coaching, mapping, event organising etc.), is necessary.

14   The importance of a positive and supportive culture in TID programs is essential. Where a strong and positive culture exists, squad members feel welcomed and this helps them to fit in quickly, feel comfortable and then perform to their best ability. Team-building activities make members feel welcome and are essential.

15   Athlete self-regulation is critical and is a required component of psychological skills and strategies for effective learning development, transitioning from pre-elite to elite level athletes. These self-regulatory skills can be learned/taught and as such should be integrated into pre-elite level talent as early as possible (T1,T2). "Self-regulation is defined as the degree to which learners are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally involved in their own learning process ." (Zimmerman, 1986). There are six complementary elements of self-regulation: effort, self-efficacy, planning, self-monitoring, evaluation and reflection.

Club and School Talent Target Group/s
16   The target group is those young athletes who:
    a)   Show spontaneous enjoyment of the sport on the first/second contact;
    b)   Have a keen interest in maps, and relate quickly to maps in the field;

c) Show outstanding potential in activities/subjects that require problem solving, concentration and perseverance;

d) Combine this with recognised aerobic ability/aptitude evident by performance in specific tests or in cross country, long or middle distance track running;

e) Are enthusiastic about outdoor pursuits and enjoy being in the bush or are clearly engaged with sprint orienteering; and

f) Have come through club/school orienteering programs as high achievers.

School and School Committees' Responsibilities

17   The School and School Committees' responsibilities are:

a) Conduct school based programs

b) Conduct inter-school events/championships to encourage the talented to compete and also help to identify talent.

c) Encourage the involvement of parents of potential talented orienteers.

d) Provide information, magazines, books and online information for access by potential talented orienteers.

e) Liaise with School Development Officers and junior training group conveners to encourage the potential talented orienteers to participate.

f) Build a network of orienteering teachers to share information and resources.

Club Responsibilities

18   The Club responsibilities are:

a) Appoint a club coach who is to look out for talent and who will encourage talent development.

b) Appoint a schools liaison officer whose charter includes talent identification and target school program development.

c) Conduct development clinics for promising juniors.

d) Encourage the development of a strong, social network for keen juniors at club level.

e) Discourage promising juniors from undertaking advanced courses before they have adequate experience or maturity (ie foster success and avoid failure).

f) Implement effective communication and engagement strategies to support parents. Foster a sense of enjoyment, and a positive and welcoming club culture for parents as well as athletes.

g) Articulating the club's vision for development, athlete pathways, and up-skill parents in areas where they can provide athlete support (e.g., nutrition, injury management, encouraging independence and self-regulatory skills)

h) Streamline alignment between schools and club/foundational level TID and transition programs from school to club.

State Association Responsibilities

19   The State Association responsibilities are:

a) Appoint and resource a state coaching coordinator and coaching team to coordinate state based programs. These will include working with the OA Head Coach to build connectivity of the system by collaborating with linking programs (Australian Schools Orienteering Championships, Identification of

Targeted Talented Athlete squad members, Junior Orienteering League Teams, National Orienteering League teams)
b) Appoint a Schools Development Officer with the help of government funding or private sponsorship.
c) Organise a State Junior Squad/s (M/W 15-20) with a well qualified coach/s.
d) Organise extended training groups or talent squads to pick up on keen orienteers not yet qualified or old enough for the official Junior Squad.
e) Arrange development clinics and training camps in conjunction with clubs.
f) Promote social activities to bind together squad and training group members.
g) Conduct fund raising and seek sponsorship to support talented juniors.
h) Recruit promising talent at target schools

i) Arrange clinics for teachers in the use of talent testing programs and in orienteering coaching (eg elements of Level 1 courses).
j) Articulate the State's vision for development, athlete pathways, and up skill parents in areas where they can provide athlete support (e.g., nutrition, injury management, encouraging independence and self-regulatory skills)
k) Ensure transparent TID selection processes - independent selectors and an emphasis on feedback for unsuccessful TID participants;
l) Streamline alignment between schools and club/foundational level TID;
m) Develop regional competition programs to transition from Sporting Schools to clubs.
n) Develop selection processes for Schools teams.

Orienteering Australia Responsibilities

20   Orienteering Australia's responsibilities are:
a) Publicise and support these policy directions.
b) Utilise evidence informed, athlete-centric, practical developmental frameworks, such as FTEM and 3DAD to ensure optimal athlete development, progression and support at a system level and across all recognised high performance drivers.
c) Maintain the Targeted Talented Athlete group, the Australian Junior Development Squad and the National Development Squad and training camp programs under highly qualified coaches.
d) Maintain the Head Coach role to act as an athlete pathway manager and assist with connectivity of the pathway with states and clubs
e) Develop advanced, specialised testing instruments for use in recruitment and for monitoring the progress of young orienteers.
f) Develop and help finance specialised physiological testing and performance monitoring for members of National Squads.
g) Select talented juniors for the Australian Junior Development Squad to represent Australia at AUS-NZ school tests, Trans-Tasman tests (MW17-20), AUS/NZL Challenges at Oceania, JWOC, WUOC.
h) Effectively communicate the evidence-informed athlete development pathway (i.e., from a foundational to an elite level), to all stakeholders including parents, coaches, administrators, managers etc., to ensure clarity and connectivity in the athlete environment.
i) Collect and aggregate the developmental histories of pre-elite and elite level athletes using viable database platforms. Talent track to 'map' the development of talent across and within regions of Australia. Identify and

distinguish between low, medium and high talent yield regions. This information is useful to identify what sets high performing talent yield regions apart from low and medium performing talent yield regions and puts in place strategies to encourage the attributes of high performing regions across Australia.

j) Compile talent identification and development manuals with input from experienced coaches and talent recruiters to aid benchmarking for development coaches and to ease transitions between stages.

k) Promote an 'athlete-coach fit' as much as possible by engaging multiple coaches that are receiving professional development specific to inter and intra-personal skills, as well as guidance and content specific to evidence-informed best practice.

l) Support the development of 'soft skills' such as self-regulation through training and education of coaches to not only develop their skills but also facilitate the development of these skills in their athletes. This includes the recommendation to screen and evaluate self-regulation early in athlete development (e.g. at a T1 and T2 level) to train and develop this skill.

m) Be proactive in preparing athletes for negotiating the demands of developmental transition (e.g., junior to senior elite transition, relocation and managing their 'dual career').

n) Screen, develop and monitor an athlete's self-regulatory skills as well as their motivation and coping ability.

Coach Guidance best practice at all levels

21 The Coach responsibilities at all levels are:

a) In talent development, it is crucial for coaches to listen, engage, know and connect with their athletes and embed them in appropriate or 'best fit' developmental environments (i.e., supportive clubs, coaches and daily training environments that cater for and optimally support the foundational and pre-elite athlete). Access to approachable role models within their sport, understanding an athlete's intrinsic motivators and facilitating the development of strong self-regulatory skills is critical.

b) Foster a sense of enjoyment, and a positive and welcoming culture for parents as well as athletes.

c) Provide feedback to athletes: At all stages of development provide feedback throughout development programs:
Quantitative: time trials, strength and conditioning/fitness testing, sport-specific skills; and Qualitative: psychological skills and attributes.

Appendix 1

Gulbin and Weissensteiner (2013) combine the identified influential factors in their 3D-AD model, a three-dimensional representation of athlete development. The 3D-AD model, included in Figure 1 below, highlights the leading factors (athlete, environmental, system and chance) that modulate (i.e., modify or control) athlete development outcomes. Importantly, the 3D-AD model recognises the dynamic interaction of these factors as an athlete progresses through their developmental sequence, from non-elite, to pre-elite and elite phases.

The bottom of the figure provides an illustrative example of the relative influences the

key factors may play in athlete development at various points throughout the development. The figure illustrates how the importance of different factors may increase or decrease at different times during development, as represented by the changing relative size of and proximity between factors. These factors and their size at different times in development are highly dependent on the sport and the individual athlete.

FIGURE 1: THE 3D-AD MODEL (GULBIN & WEISSENSTEINER, IN FARROW, BAKER & MACMAHON, 2013)
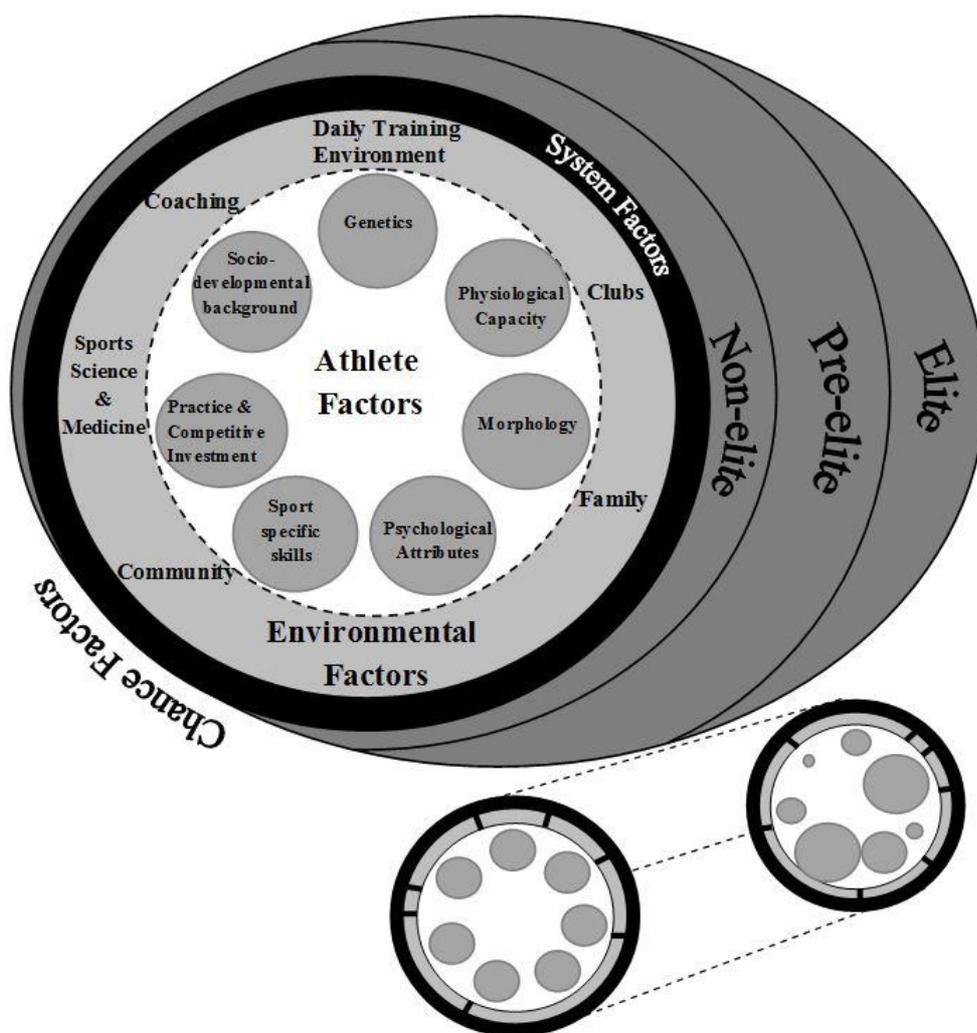
(Source: Gulbin & Weissensteiner, 2013)

The conceptual 3D-AD model is utilised to complement the operational framework of FTEM developed by the Australian Institute of Sport (Gulbin & Weissensteiner, 2013). FTEM is an acronym for the four macro stages of the skill and performance development of sporting participants (i.e., Foundation, Talent, Elite and Mastery) (Gulbin, Croser, Morley, & Weissensteiner, 2013). Predicated on 'best practice' principles, FTEM is guiding the current review and refinement of the athlete development pathway and alignment of recognised performance 'drivers' (Leadership, Coaching, Daily Training Environment, Research & Innovation) of the majority of ASC supported National Sporting Organisations (NSOs). The FTEM Framework comprises 10 progressive and aligned micro phases in athlete development, as illustrated in Figure 2, including:

December 2015