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2

2.2 TALENT IDENTIFICATION



WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS CHAPTER?

Talent identification should start earlier than you might think

After having talked about the importance of Mini-Basketball as a means to promote not only Basketball but also physical education among children, this chapter looks at the aspect of talent identification.

While these two aspects are closely linked, it has been observed that very often talent identification is not being introduced at the early stages of a child's interest in our sport.

It is important that talent be identified early at the very first stages of a child's involvement in the sport. Even at a very early age, there are many signs that a child has the potential (or not) to become a good basketball player.

This is why this chapter also tells you about what you should be looking for in children playing our sport, even if they are holding a basketball for the first time.



2.1 MINI BASKETBALL	1
2.2 TALENT IDENTIFICATION	11
Why you should read this chapter	11
1. Introduction	13
2. National Federation Selection Camps	14
3. The Daily Camp Schedule	15
4. Working Schedule of the Camp	16
5. Working Program for 9 and 10 Year Old Campers	18
6. Working Program for 11 and 12 Year Old Campers	19
7. Working Program for 13 and 14 Year Old Campers	20
8. Working Program for 15 and 16 Year Old Campers	21
9. Various Competitions During the Camp	23
10. Keep in Mind	24
2.3 NATIONAL TEAMS PROGRAM	25
2.4 MEDICAL	53



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BUILDING

2

1. Introduction

Most training systems, particularly those that are in the early stages of development, do not include complex talent identification systems because:

- There is a desire to train all those who show an interest and commitment, whether talented or not.
- There are other more important priorities, including providing adequate facilities and equipment, proper coaching, adequate financing for programs and adequate competitions.

However, there are reasons why initiating some form of talent identification makes sense:

- If the goal is to develop top class athletes, it is efficient to concentrate development on those athletes who possess qualities that are necessary for success.
- It increases athletes' confidence if they have been identified as possessing superior capabilities.
- It helps create a larger group of talented athletes and increases the competitiveness amongst them in training.
- It increases the opportunity for a developing liaison with sport scientists who could also help with the training and regular evaluation of athletes.
- Many youngsters miss opportunities to excel or develop into good athletes because they don't know what special attributes they possess, and are not directed towards sports in which they can excel.

There are some specific principles to consider when looking for groups of children with talent:

- Physical activity stimulates growth; children need a variety of general movement experiences.
- Children with a wide variety of movement patterns in early life, will most likely be able to efficiently master complex movement patterns in sport in their later years.
- Structural and functional growth are factors which affect athletic performance.
- The intensity, length and frequency of exposure to an activity are essential components of growth in that activity.

Considering the above principles, often the best sources of potential athletic talent are:

- Public and private schools with active recreation/sport programs.
- Community recreation programs.
- Existing sport clubs for children.
- Areas within society where the population is physically active.
- Areas within communities where there is an existing keen interest in sports competition and activity.

Usually, experienced coaches have developed their own subjective criteria to "eyeball" talent or potential skills, i.e. one athlete seems more coordinated than others, appears faster or stronger than others, seems to have the "right" attitude. Performance in competition usually provides the opportunity to evaluate talent.

A coach may even have developed a set of basic tests, to help quantify the skills or attributes that are important: eg the athlete can run a test distance faster than the standard, or the athlete has body measurements that suit basketball, or the athlete has certain physiological attributes such as a high maximal oxygen consumption, that distinguish them from others.



Although a coach's intuition is an important and often crucial element in assessing talent, the methods mentioned above, may be too crude and not as accurate or discriminating as they could be, in helping the coach confirm his initial impression. There is a need to have performance criteria related to the level of basketball and to have all the necessary attributes of a player examined.

- Body measurements i.e. lengths of limbs, trunk, widths, girths, % fat, somatotype.
- Physiological measures i.e. maximal aerobic capacity, maximal anaerobic capacity, muscle fiber typing, strength, power, speed, flexibility.
- Psychological measures i.e. ability to handle stress, courage, commitment, goal orientation, willingness to work.
- Motor learning/perceptual measures i.e. coordination, balance, kinesthetic sense, visual acuity.

In line with examinations, the National Federation should establish the following criteria:

- What accurate, objective tests, measure these attributes? For example, strength can be measured objectively via various systems; body measurements can be easily obtained.
- What are the normal scores of these tests, at a particular age, that discriminate between those with potential and those without?
- Of the determined attributes, which are the best predictors of future performance?
- How do you implement a system of tests on a population?
- How do you evaluate the success of the predictive system you have established?

Two words of caution. Before one plans a complex system of talent identification, there must be a training system in place that will nurture those individuals who are selected as the best prospects. There is no sense in identifying talented youngsters, only to find there are inadequate facilities, equipment, coaching, financial support, and so on, to develop and support that talent.

There is also little value in thinking about a sophisticated talent identification system unless there are adequate trained personnel, equipment and knowledge for athlete assessment. There must be a commitment to a systematic and long term approach.

2. National Federation Selection Camps

In order to have systematic, gradual and scientific development of players and talent, each National Federation must have constant scrutiny of all its players and monitor their follow-up. The most practical way of doing this, is to start identifying players at early age and then follow them through their teams (clubs). In addition it should arrange to gather them from time to time at common preparation via basketball camps of 3 to 5 days duration. Here, the National Federation could examine its talented players, improve their technical and tactical level and advise them on their future work.

Before organizing a basketball camp, the National Federation has to establish all organizational criteria and know what would be the purpose of the camp. The camp must be a high level, quality camp for the best prospects in the country. Before choosing the location, the National Federation has to evaluate the accommodation prices, capacities, equipment in the rooms (TV, number of beds, toilet), courts (outdoor, indoor), locker rooms, restaurant (diversity and quality of food), swimming pool, fit-

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ness centre, internet access, playground, other sports courts, meeting rooms, video equipment etc. There are many factors affecting the decision about where to hold the training camp. Don't forget to examine how easy it is for the targeted athletes to get there. You will need at least two courts, close to each other or under same roof. Each court must have at least four baskets. Bear in mind that camp will have a lunch break and therefore the distance from the courts to the hotel or restaurant has to be short. Bedrooms for the campers should have two, to a maximum three beds. The same age group should be located at one floor (with one or two coaches who can control the players).

The National Federation must have sponsors and supporters for the camp and there is a need to have a general (Main) sponsor, media sponsors, sponsor for the equipment, apparel sponsor, and sponsors for drinks, food, prizes, and entertainment. The camp must be marketed and have its own program, poster, CD or promo video, key chains, hats, tee-shirts, stickers and other promotional material. The National Federation should use all effort to promote the camp using TV, radio and newspapers. Beside the promotional material, there is a need for a "Working Program", "Camp Guidelines" and a "Plan of the Work".

The National Federation should choose coaches for the camp (head coach, assistant coaches, observer coaches and specialized coaches), coordinators, demonstrators (ideally members of the senior national team), guest speakers, doctors and physiotherapist, referees, and staff which is going to work for the camp (camp director, marketing director, and administrative staff responsible for transport, hotel, equipment, courts). The main rule is that the camp must be composed of players of same age. At most, there could be a year's difference between the players (in one training group). The maximum number of players in one age group should be 20. During drills, the maximum number of players per basket should be 8.

3. The Daily Camp Schedule

The daily schedule (working part) should be divided into three sessions: morning, afternoon and evening. The morning session starts with wake-up call, 90 minutes before the beginning of the practice. After roll call, warm-ups and stretching (30 minutes on total), the program should run for one or two hours, during which skill stations are the main priority. Depending on the number of baskets, players will be divided in groups, with each station going for 15 to 20 minutes, with players rotating from one station to the next. After the skill stations, the morning program has two options (depending on the length of the camp). If the camp is of 3 days duration, players will be split in teams of five and have team practice. If the camp is of 5 or more days duration, players will be split in teams of three, and play games (round robin, 12 minutes games each day).

In the afternoon, after stretching, players (in three day camp) will play games (20 minutes half with running clock and five minutes half time). In the five or more days camps, players will have, (after stretching) team practice and then play games.

In the evening, during three day camps players will have some basketball classes with video presentation and guests. In five or more days camps, players, after dining, will have some skill competitions and five on five games.



4. Working Schedule of the Camp

The main tasks and focus on the camp should be the following:

BASKETBALL TECHNIQUES

1. Basketball stance

- Defensive stance
- Offensive stance
- Ball handling
- Holding the ball
- Catching the ball
- Ball protection
- How to move

2. Passing

- Passing while standing
- Passing while running
- Pass after pivoting
- Off the dribble pass
- Two-handed pass
- One-hand pass
- Hand off pass: direct, bounce
- Shot pass, long range passes
- Receiving the pass: while stationary, while running, in jump
- Stopping while receiving the ball
- Other passes

3. Dribbling

- Change the rhythm of the dribble
- Change the height of the dribble
- Start the dribble: hesitation step, cross-over step, behind the back, between the legs
- Stopping after dribbling: jump stop (two-footed stop), stride stop
- Change of direction dribble

4. Shooting

- Shooting techniques
- Shot after dribble, lay-up shot
- Shot after receiving the ball
- Break away shot



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2

- Jump shot: set shot, off the dribble shot, shot on the run
- Special shots: turnaround jump shot, draw back shot, hook shot,
- Faking the shot: by looking, body fake, dribble fake, pass fake, jab step, shot fake

BASKETBALL TACTICS

1. Defense

- Individual and group tactics
- Against fast-break: primary and secondary
- Position defense
- Handicap situations
- Setting the screen, pick: double screen (pick), staggered screen and continuation screen
- Pick and roll
- Channeling

2. Offense

- Individual and group offense
- Fast-break; primary and secondary
- Position offense
- Handicap situations
- Fighting through the screen
- Avoiding traps
- 1:1, 2:2, 3:3

BUILDING TEAM PLAY

1. Defense

- Importance of team defensive play
- Slide, defensive shuffle
- Combination of movements
- Defending the player when they catch the ball
- Foot work
- Aggressiveness
- Guarding the dribbler
- Using the hands
- Guarding the player who cuts to the basket
- Guarding the player who cuts to the ball
- General Principles: defender must see the ball and the player he guards
- Guarding players in different positions
- Defending the screen or pick



- Channeling
- Rebound
- Blocking out

2. Offense

- Importance of team offensive play
- Basic rules of movements
- Man-to-man play
- 1:1, 2:2, 3:3
- Handicap situations
- Importance of the weak side
- Principles of ball movement
- Rebounding

COMPETITIONS

- Elements of individual and group competitions
- 1:1, 2:2, 3:3
- Five on five games
- Shooting: free throws, three point shots

5. Working Program for 9 and 10 Year Old Campers

Basic principles and working tasks: Dribbling, passing, shooting, defending, basic coordination, development of motor ability (walking, running, jumping, throwing and catching the ball)

Working notes: Do not require perfect execution, use your voice properly, do not neglect anybody, groups may consist of boys and girls - max 20 campers - teaching basic basketball principles - duration of the practice is 75 min.

Stretching: Plays and drills to teach space, time, perception and rhythm;

Skipping: Development of motor skills: fitness, coordination, mobility;

Catching and holding the ball: Body balance according to space, time and ball;

Stepping: Left and right lay-up, from a stationary position and on the move;

Passing the ball: Passing while stationary and while moving; with two hands, one handed (left, right), over the head pass – paying attention to stance, hands, arms and footwork while passing and catching the ball, especially head and body position;

Dribbling: Dribble on the spot and while moving (with either hand, then free dribble). Emphasise the start of the dribble and the end, protection of the ball while dribbling, height of the ball, especially pay attention on the stance, the body position, legs and head to provide maximum field of vision;

Pivoting: Basic pivoting for protection of the ball from a defensive player, work on a forward pivot around left and right leg. Concentrate on the body position and the arms which are protecting the ball.



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2

Stopping: After the dribble or receiving a pass; the body always facing the basket and next action;

Shooting: Learning to shoot with left and right hand while standing and moving, body position, arms and identifying one target.

Defense: Basic stance in defense, body position, arms, legs, head. One-on-one defense in slow motion. Practice defense in the diagonal stance with and without the ball.

Offense: Teach your players to attack the basket (1:0, 1:1) with pivoting and correct technique. **Playing:** Emphasise the basic principles of running ahead of the ball, pass to the nearest player, based on the level of knowledge, allow the players at this level to play without too many rules.

Duration: With regard to two times a day practices, recommended duration is 75 minutes:

Warm-up	15 min.
Stretching	5 min.
Ball handling	5 min.
Skipping	5 min.
Fundamentals/Technique correction	25 min.
Playing	20 min.

6. Working Program for 11 and 12 Year Old Campers

Basic principles and working tasks: Continuing with work to improve motor ability, especially when campers work with the ball; learning the four basic principles of basketball and their combinations; require them to play 3:3 and 5:5;

Working notes: Insist on correct technique; use your voice on a proper way; give each player your attention; working group maximum 18 players; maximum duration of practice is 90 min.; work on all elements of basketball;

Stretching: Develop stretching abilities

Skipping: Progressively getting into basketball skills;

Catching and holding the ball: Controlling hand and arm movements, the body and the ball;

Stepping: Driving left and right, starting from standing position and on the move (improvement of technique) and also performing in complicated conditions;

Passing: Improving basic technique, "baseball" pass, ("push" pass), "shoulder" pass with right and left hand.

Dribbling: Stationary dribble with each hand and while moving; dribble with change of hand and dribble height; dribble while moving with defender (protection of the ball, change of dribble height, change of direction and pace);

Pivoting: Improving forward pivot, learning the half-pivot, "side-way" pivot. Emphasises position of the entire body and protection of the ball;

Stopping: Improving the 2-count (stride) stop. Emphasises stopping in the "ready" stance, in anticipation of the next action.



Shooting: Technique correction, shooting from the left and right side of the basket. Emphasise body position and the ball, also on hand and arm position. Introduce other other kinds of stationary (set) shots and on the move.

Defense: Improving the basic "front on" and channeling stance in defense with proper body position, hands, arms, legs and head. Emphasise proper arms and legs action when players "slide" in all directions;

Offense: Improving individual offensive ability offense; practice 1:0, 1:1, 2:1 offense, with various ways of moving, dribble and passing; emphasise timing of action towards the basket

Play: Teach basic principles of the game(running, passing, timing, shot, etc.); Insist on aggressive playing in "man to man" defense, learning the fast break and a penetration to the basket

Duration: Practice duration is	90 min.
Warm-up	20 min.
Fundamentals/Technique correction	35 min.
Play	35 min.

7. Working Program for 13 and 14 Year Old Campers

Basic principles and working tasks: Technique correction on previously introduced skills; improve motor functions with and without the ball, learn time and space drills; insist on good solutions when playing and introduce new game concepts;

Working note: Insist on regular practice of all technical elements; give every player the opportunity to improve themselves; correction at the right time, work with 16-18 players in one group, practice duration is 105 minutes; proceed with technique correction;

Stretching: Development of suppleness and getting ready to play;

Skipping: Keep on improving physical condition, coordination, balance, mobility, work individually and in pairs;

Catching and holding the ball: Try to improve control over the ball, increase performance speed of specific basketball moves;

Stepping: Work on improving previously learnt skills and learning to work under pressure; jab step after a bad pass with and without dribble; zigzag drive step; drive in - drop step;

Passing: Improving all elements previously learnt. Receiving the ball, ball protection, catching the ball. Passing in move for: three, four and five players; learn specific passes (by rolling the ball, "discus" pass, "baseball" pass, behind the back pass, through legs, over head, two handed pass);

Dribbling: Improving all elements previously learnt. Pay attention to ball control while they dribble with at full speed. Teach stopping the dribble at the right time; practice different kinds of a dribble with crossover, change direction stop-start (hesitation); emphasise wideness on the change of hand; appropriate use of behind the back dribble, through the legs, reverse pivot (spin move) etc; in stationary position combine the dribble with other elements of basketball; practice the dribble with defense changing hands, dribble height with the aim of creating space;

Pivoting: Improve all elements previously learnt; tech new techniques for left and right; pivoting " full pivot "; pivot with step out, combination of forward and reverse pivot;



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2

Stopping: Repeat the drills that we have previously introduced and vary practice with new drills. Insist on more accurate stopping, especial after a rebound and catching the ball. Practice the various stopping techniques.

Shooting: Practice the drills from previous programs to improve shooting; learning the jump shot and correction of jump shot, for those players who already use it; "hook shot" and "short hook shot"; lay-up shot; jump shot after a pivot; jump shot after a reverse pivot;

Defense: Work on technique correction by practicing previously learnt skills; be aggressive in situations with and without the ball in situations (1:1, 2:2, 3:3); teach players to help-and-recover, start with directing offensive player to use weak hand and into a confined space; using an opened and closed stance on player without the ball;

Offense: Fast break for two, three and four players; moving and setting up a player for a fast break with scoring; offense when numerical superior on court - 2:1, 3:2, 4:3; practise previously learnt skills;

Play: Improve the features that we learnt previously and introduce new ideas in playing basketball; seek best solutions when out numbering the defence; fast break; getting open, setting the screen; running in free space and scoring; play in the half court with defence; help side; actions in a offense position; bring the ball into the play from side and endline.

Duration: Practice duration is 105 minutes

Warm-up 20 min.

Skill Development 30 min.

Tactics 20 min.

Play 35 min.

8. Working Program for 15 and 16 Year Old Campers

Basic principles and working tasks: The most important emphasis should be on an improving of all previously learnt knowledge and teaching new skills. Work on motor functions with and without the ball, insist on a good tactics in the game; practice timing and spacing during drill executions;

Working notes: Full intensity has to be reached practice, with emphasis on a game situations; performing of all drills has to be closer to game speed; give full attention to each player while they practice; make corrections immediately; working groups with max.16 players; practice duration 120 minutes;

Stretching: Static and dynamic development of flexibility;

Skipping: Development of motor functions of young basketball players;

Catching and holding the ball: Workout at full speed, by controlling the ball; make a target to receive the ball;

Stepping: High intensity work on improvement of previously learnt skills; element of drills from previous program, especially under pressure with and without dribble; " zigzag " drive step, drive step-extended step, with step to a side, from penetration; jab-step technique, work with a defense;

Passing: Perfect execution of all kinds of passes. Pay particular attention to passing while moving, timing of the pass, quick and effective; concentrate on specific passes; use passing drills which improve



coordination, speed, flexibility; special attention must to be pay to passes with 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 players in moving drills with one or more balls;

Dribbling: Especially work on a dribbles learnt previously, make individual corrections and within group; pay attention to ball control while they dribble at full speed. Focus on stopping the dribble at right time; practice a different kinds of a dribble with crossover, change direction stop–start; practice wideness on a change of hand; correct use of behind the back dribble, through legs, spin move etc; From stationary position, combine the dribble with other elements of basketball; practice the dribble with defense changing hands, dribble height to create space;

Pivoting: Require perfect execution of of all kinds pivot, especially with defense and combined with other segments of basketball;

Shooting: For campers of this age, pay attention especially in this segment to technique; practice drills from previous programs in order to improve technique – speed and accuracy; adding new drills like: drive–stop–and–shoot, outside from the left and the right hand; jump shot (different situations) 3 - 4 metres; tap in shot using both hands; fade away after a rebound, with different shots combined with other aspects of basketball technique (faking, pivot...); dribbling, getting free and shooting drills; pay attention to the body position even when the ball leaves the finger tips; practice shooting without a dribble with jump; working with and without the ball;

Defense: Reinforcing previous knowledge, correction of technique. Concentrate on a play in defense in game mode; insist on defensive intesity and drill it; convince your players that they can play defense even if the shooting and offense are not going well; explain and show them time difference in favor of defense; doubling teaming and setting a trap (defense against screening); urge aggressive defense with drills 1:1, 2:2, 1:1 + 1, 2:2 + 1, 3:3, 3:3 + 1, 3:3 + 2; blocking out (of a shooter, on a ball side, on a help side, by positions); encourage "helping" and channeling of offensive player, and also watching observing, and react to other defense players;

Offense and play: Encourage players to combine the skills learnt with individual crativity. Reinforce previous concepts and stimulate new ideas; "pick and roll", "back door", value of a fast break with "playmaker" creating movement with screens. Responisibility of the "playmaker" to improvise when set playes break down; actions of offense - screening away from the ball and on the ball; attacking man-to-man and pressing defences; pass in from a sideline and a baseline in offense;

Duration: Time of practice is 120 min

Warm–ups	25 min
Technique Skill Practice	30 min
Tactics	30 min
Play	35 min



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9. Various Competitions During the Camp

1. Free throws

- player shots till they miss two in a row
- starts to count when they score the first one
- count total number of scored shots

2 Three point shot

- from different positions, shoot five balls, each counts 1 point
- bonus ball counts 2 points and it is shot from any spot
- special ball counts 4 points and it is shot from the center circle

3. Slalom dribbling

- 12 gates across the court, turn around each gate
- two races, best result counts

4. One on one

- starting from three point line;
- limited number of dribble (2, 3, 4, 5);
- basket rules, score from play counts 2 or 3;
- bonus after 3 fouls;
- penalty is a free throw – 1 point;
- offensive player keeps the ball if he scores from the free throw line
- winner is first with 7 points

5. Three on three

- basket rules, score from play counts 2 or 3 points;
- three passes are permitted (pass in does not counts);
- limited number of dribble (2, 3);
- bonus after 5 fouls;
- penalty is a free throw – 1 point;
- foul on a shot – 1 point + one free throw;
- game duration 12 minutes;

6. Five on five

- rotation of players is required, changes on 5 minutes
- zone defense is forbidden, FIBA rules
- 2 x 15 minutes, 5 minutes rest, 30 seconds time-out each half
- clock stoppage last 2 minutes
- technical foul - as personal foul + 5 minutes forced substitution



7. All star game

- 10 players per team
- 4 x 10 minutes with clock stoppage
- 1 time-out each quarter, duration 30 seconds
- 5 minutes half time
- first and third quarter are youngest player, and second and fourth quarter for the oldest players

8. Lay-up

- in 30 seconds, lay-up as many times as you can, alternating from the left and right side

9. Shooting

- entire team is standing in line with two or more balls shooting from a spot (e.g. free throw line)
- when you score, you get your own ball and pass the first player in line without a ball and go to the end of line
- if you miss, you rebound your shot and try to score before the player behind you scores. If they score before you sink your rebounded shoot, you are out of the game
- game is continued till only one player remains

10. Two balls

- two players from pair are shooting from the left and right
- you must score off a one dribbled move and then from a free throw
- duration 2 minutes

11. Fast shooting

- player is shooting 5 ball from each of 5 positions
- last ball on each position counts 2 points
- duration 1 minute

10. Keep in Mind

This chapter aims to provide an initial idea of how to run talent identification camps. All practices have to be managed according to the basketball level of campers. The program and work during the camp has to be adjusted to fit the situation on the ground. Bear in mind that players can not improve just in three or five days of camp and that there is a need for follow up and extremely good work in the teams/clubs. The final goal must be that each player comes to the next camp better skilled.

In countries which start organized youth national team program earlier (when players are 14 years old) the working program for campers will be different, but countries which start youth national teams program later on, could follow the pathway described. Of course, physical fitness programs have to be added as well as good psychological preparation for players in their early stages of development. We must add regular teams/clubs competitions as one of the most important part of the development of players. All this will lead towards successful development of players into future stars and potential national team players.