

#### Moving Racquetball into the 21st Century

Sport is changing. Internationally, and at the national level, sports are becoming more scientific - and to give every player the opportunity to reach their full potential sports are learning what needs to be done at every stage of the player's development to give them the best chance to reach the podium, and play racquetball for life. This process is called LTAD.

#### We need a shift in thinking

Children and youth tend to stay in sports they enjoy and which they are good at. That is why the focus of LTAD is to improve skills, develop all-round athletic ability, and racquetball playing ability. To do this we need to:

- ✓ Coach the coaches to enhance their coaching knowledge of LTAD
- ✓ Increase the number of qualified coaches
- ✓ Get the right ratio of practice to games
- ✓ Incorporate new skills into practice and competitions
- ✓ Foster a positive competitive environment
- ✓ Make it enjoyable. Let's engage young players in creative, fun and inspiring practices and games.

#### How will this change Racquetball?

The focus on Racquetball LTAD is to make sure that players do the right things at the right time in their development to give them the best chance of both reaching their full racquetball potential, and staying in the game throughout their lives - for health and social benefits.

This means:

- ✓ More focus on developing all-round athletic ability as well as racquetball specific skills.
- ✓ Taking full advantage of windows of optimum trainability. Doing the right kind of training at the right time will ensure that players reach their full potential, since different abilities such as speed, skill, flexibility and endurance are best developed at different stages of the athlete's development.
- ✓ Using competition differently. Too often players go into EVERY competition as though winning is the most important thing. This encourages them to fall back on their most successful shots and tactics and prevents them from using their weaker, or newly learned skills. This develops "single-shot" players with weaknesses that opponents can exploit.
- ✓ Taking into account developmental age. Not all young players reach adolescence at the same age, and small, late developers are often at a disadvantage compared to those who have already grown into their adult sized body. Racquetball needs to find ways to keep these late developers engaged in the sport until they catch up.



#### Frequently Asked Questions about Long-Term Athlete Development

##### How can I learn more about LTAD?

You can go to the Canadian Sport for Life website ([www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)) where you can read general LTAD information for parents, and for coaches and athletes. To keep up to date with racquetball - specific LTAD information, visit [www.racquetball.ca](http://www.racquetball.ca).

##### I'm a coach - how will I learn more about LTAD?

Racquetball Canada is incorporating all of the latest Long-Term Athlete Development information into its coaching programs - starting with the Competition Development program currently being written. So take a coaching course to learn how you can use LTAD principles in your day-to-day coaching.

##### I'm a parent - how can I support the coach?

You can support the coach by understanding what he/she is trying to do. If your child loses a match against someone they usually beat - ask the coach about the purpose of the match: winning might not have been the goal - it might have been to have your child try out a newly learned skill under competition conditions. If the players are doing non-racquetball activities - the coach might be working on all-round athletic skills, or might be trying to take advantage of a particular window of optimum trainability.

##### I'm a parent - how can I support my child?

Understand that the child will pass through several stages of growth and development, and that there are things the child needs to do and learn at each stage - so if they are doing something different from other children of the same chronological age, it might be because they are physically more or less advanced, and have different training needs. Be supportive when the child passes through their adolescent growth spurt - this is a time when skills may deteriorate as the developing child learns to control the rapidly changing length of their limbs.

#### BCRA British Columbia Racquetball Association

For more information on Racquetball in British Columbia contact:

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Racquetball Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development at a glance

| STAGE                   | Athletes  | Parents  | Coaches  | Competition   | Training   |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>ACTIVE START</b>     | Children learn basic human movements and link together into play  | Parents help children by exposing them to a wide range of play opportunities.  | Coaches should not be involved with children at this age   | There should be little to no competition at this stage  | This is the window for creating billions of brain connections that control movement  |
| <b>FUNDAMENTALS</b>     | Children learn fundamental movement skills of running, jumping, catching, throwing, hitting etc.  | Parents expose children to a wide range of opportunities to learn fundamental movement skills. Fun introduction to racquetball   | Coaches teach fundamental movement skills with emphasis on hitting/ striking skills and hand-eye coordination  | Mini-competitions in fundamental movement skills, informal competition on the court. No formal results  | This is the window for strengthening brain connections that control movement, with focus on skill and flexibility development  |
| <b>LEARN TO TRAIN</b>   | Learn foundation skills of racquetball and other sports. Develop sound technique on forehand and backhand, and good footwork.   | Encourage and reward skill development rather than results, and encourage child to play 3 or 4 different sports to develop all round athletic ability.   | Coach solid foundations and skill development. Focus on progress not results, and capitalize on window of trainability for hand and foot speed. Encourage multi-sport participation.   | Competition should be used to practice new skills under competitive conditions. Play in local competitions, and learn the rules and etiquette of play. Players should compete against others of equal ability | Take advantage of windows of enhanced trainability in foot and hand speed, and skill development. Training should focus on single periodization  |
| <b>TRAIN TO TRAIN</b>   | Hone racquetball skills and develop an all-round game. Build the "engine" of the body - with emphasis on developing endurance, whole-body movement speed, and strength. | This is a time when late developers feel at a disadvantage compared to more adult-sized peers. Parents encourage players to remain in the sport until they also reach adult size and strength. | Coach to eliminate or reduce weaknesses in the player's game. Focus on building physical capacity and sound shot selection and execution under competitive conditions.   | Select which events to compete for training/learning purposes and which events for results. Select events for continued development rather than short term results. Compete at junior and senior nationals.   | Endurance should be developed throughout the stage with a greater emphasis on building strength towards the end of this stage. Gradual shift from continuous endurance training to interval training. Periodized training refined. |
| <b>TRAIN TO COMPETE</b> | Determine technical and tactical weaknesses and work to reduce them. Refine shot selection and execution. Racquetball becomes focus sport.                              | Continue to encourage late-developers to remain in the sport, and assist players financially and with transportation to take part in training camps and appropriate competition.               | Work with players to identify and work on game weaknesses. Develop game plans and implement plans during competition.  | Select competitions to both achieve success and play better players (3 wins for every loss has been suggested).   | Transition from continuous aerobic training to interval aerobic training and further develop anaerobic power and capacity. Build additional strength. Periodize training, peak for key events.                                     |
| <b>LEARN TO WIN</b>     | Racquetball becomes the player's primary focus. Training and lifestyle centres on racquetball   | Parents play supportive role, but are less involved in day-to-day racquetball activities.  | With technical skills at the highest level, and with high levels of fitness, focus shifts to tactical and strategic aspects of the game, to game preparation, and post-game analysis of own and opponents' strengths and weaknesses. Mental aspects of the game become most important. | Need to play top national and international players in meaningful competition.  | Periodization and peaking for optimum performance at major events.   |
| <b>TRAIN TO WIN</b>     | Full-time racquetball player, focussed on winning at the world level.   | Parents celebrate athlete success and support them in transition when they end their top-level involvement in the sport.   | Personal coaches work in collaboration with National Team Coaches to ensure Canadian Teams excel at world level.   | Focus is on World Championships, Pan American Games and the professional circuit.   | Periodization and peaking for optimum performance World Championships and Pan-American Games   |
| <b>ACTIVE FOR LIFE</b>  | Play for fun, fitness, health and socialization.  | Enjoy on-court play with your parents and children   | Take a coaching course, become a coach, and help develop the sport as a volunteer.   | Become a Racquetball volunteer, organize competitions, become a certified referee. Play in age-group competitions nationally and internationally  | Train to play - with focus on aerobic fitness and flexibility.   |

Some of the country's leading racquetball experts developed Racquetball Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development model over a two-year period. The LTAD model is designed to provide guidance to parents, athletes and coaches as they create and develop an athlete-centered racquetball environment containing optimal training, coaching, competition, and rest-and-recovery. Our LTAD supports the long-term retention of athletes and their development to their full potential as senior players. This one-page document is a brief summary and overview. For more details, please see the full Racquetball Canada LTAD document at:

<http://www.racquetball.ca/articles/LongTermAthleteDevelopmentPlan.pdf>

For additional information on all aspects of Long-Term Athlete Development, please visit the Canadian Sport for Life website, [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca). There, you will find additional information for parents, coaches, teachers and athletes. You can download information on LTAD, developing physical literacy, rest and regeneration, working with athletes with a disability, working with female athletes, measuring growth, and more.

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