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CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF SPORT

Player Perceptions Of The Talent Development Environment In Elite English Youth Soccer Academies

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Introduction

Talent Development Environments (TDEs) are resource intensive requiring substantial financial investment.

Martindale, R. J. J., Collins, D., & Daubney, J. (2005). Talent development: A guide for practice and research within sport. *QUEST*, 57, 353–375.
doi:10.1080/00336297.2005.10491862

TDEs in English soccer have been a focus of increasing research attention.

Gledhill, A., Harwood, C., & Forsdyke, D. (2017). Psychosocial factors associated with talent development in football: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 31, 93–112. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.04.002

Concerns around balancing positive and negative subjective (e.g., psychological, social) and functional (e.g., educational) outcomes.

Rongen F., Mckenna J, Cobley, S & Till, K (2018), Are youth sport talent identification and development systems necessary and healthy *Sport Medicine*, 4, doi.org/10.1186/s40798-018-0135-2.



Challenges to coaches and other stakeholders

Low productivity of academies Less than 1% of players who are contracted to professional football clubs aged 16 will still be playing the game aged 23.

We know little about player perceptions of their TDEs
With this regard, their voice underrepresented.

Aim To explore England based academy soccer player perceptions of their talent development environments.



Anderson, G., & Miller, R. M. (2011). The academy system in English professional football: Business value or following the herd? University of Liverpool, Management School Research Paper Series. Retrieved from <http://www.liv.ac.uk/managementschool/research/working%20papers/wp201143.pdf>

Materials and procedure

Factor	Descriptions
1. Long-term development	The extent to which developmental programmes are specifically designed to facilitate athletes' long-term success (e.g., fundamental training and rounded development, ongoing opportunities, and de-emphasis of winning).
2. Holistic quality preparation	The extent to which intervention programmes are prepared both inside and outside of sports settings (e.g., caring coach, clear guidance, mental preparation, and balanced life).
3. Support network	The extent to which a coherent, approachable, and wide-ranging support network is available for the athlete in all areas (e.g., professionals, parents, coaches, and schools).
4. Communication	The extent to which the coach communicates effectively with the athlete in both formal and informal settings (e.g., development path, rationale for training, and feedback).
5. Alignment of expectations	The extent to which goals for sport development are coherently set and aligned (e.g., goal setting, goal review, and individualised goals).

Source: Adapted from Martindale (2010). Copyright 2010 by the Taylor & Francis Group.

Talent Development Environment Questionnaire-5 (TDEQ-5)

Chunxiao Li, Chee Keng John Wang, Do Young Pyun & Russell Martindale (2015) Further development of the talent development environment questionnaire for sport, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 33:17, 1831-1843, doi: 10.1080/02640414.2015.1014828

Designed to identify good practice in TDEs. Various iterations of the TDEQ (used in football but now could be seen as obsolete).

25 item, 5 Subscales. Deemed to be valid and reliable.

Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)

Factor	Descriptions
1. Long-term development	The extent to which developmental programmes are specifically designed to facilitate athletes' long-term success (e.g., fundamental training and rounded development, ongoing opportunities, and de-emphasis of winning).
2. Holistic quality preparation	The extent to which intervention programmes are prepared both inside and outside of sports settings (e.g., caring coach, clear guidance, mental preparation, and balanced life).
3. Support network	The extent to which a coherent, approachable, and wide-ranging support network is available for the athlete in all areas (e.g., professionals, parents, coaches, and schools).
4. Communication	The extent to which the coach communicates effectively with the athlete in both formal and informal settings (e.g., development path, rationale for training, and feedback).
5. Alignment of expectations	The extent to which goals for sport development are coherently set and aligned (e.g., goal setting, goal review, and individualised goals).

Martindale, R. J. J., Collins, D., Wang, C. K. J., McNeill, M., Lee, K. S., Sproule, J., & Westbury, T. (2010). Development of the talent development environment questionnaire for sport. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 28, 1209–1221.



Materials and Procedure

A total of 90 (N = 90) elite youth soccer players completed the TDEQ-5.

Mean age ($M_{age} = 17.8$, $s = 0.5$ years). The sample consisted of players from CAT2 (n = 15), CAT3 (n = 56) and CAT4 (n = 19) soccer academies aligned to professional soccer clubs.

5 Clubs in total (4 northern, 1 southern)

Completed in season, in person or via google forms.

	Number of items		
Subs	Factor	Descriptions	S
Long term develop	1. Long-term development	The extent to which developmental programmes are specifically designed to facilitate athletes' long-term success (e.g., fundamental training and rounded development, ongoing opportunities, and de-emphasis of winning).	0.68
Support network	2. Holistic quality preparation	The extent to which intervention programmes are prepared both inside and outside of sports settings (e.g., caring coach, clear guidance, mental preparation, and balanced life).	0.77
Alignment of Exp	3. Support network	The extent to which a coherent, approachable, and wide-ranging support network is available for the athlete in all areas (e.g., professionals, parents, coaches, and schools).	0.85
Communication	4. Communication	The extent to which the coach communicates effectively with the athlete in both formal and informal settings (e.g., development path, rationale for training, and feedback).	1.03
Holistic quality prep	5. Alignment of expectations	The extent to which goals for sport development are coherently set and aligned (e.g., goal setting, goal review, and individualised goals).	0.89
	<i>Source:</i> Adapted from Martindale (2010). Copyright 2010 by the Taylor & Francis Group.		3.57

Results (Item level analysis)

1. My training is specifically designed to help me develop effectively in the long term. (LTD1)	Long Term Development	5.14	0.79
23. I can pop in to see my coach or other support staff whenever I need to (e.g. physiotherapist, psychologist, strength trainer, nutritionist, lifestyle advisor). (SN2)	Support Network	4.98	1.07
4. My coach allows me to learn through making my own mistakes. (LTD4)		4.94	0.90
3. I spend most of my time developing skills and attributes that my coach tells me I will need if I am to compete successfully at the top/professional level. (LTD3)		4.91	0.87
22. Currently, I have access to a variety of different types of professionals to help my sports development (e.g. physiotherapist, sport psychologist, strength trainer, nutritionist, lifestyle advisor). (SN1)		4.76	1.30
17. My coach rarely takes the time to talk to other coaches who work with me. (RHQP3)	Holistic Quality Prep	3.77	1.49
15. My coach rarely talks to me about my well-being. (RHQP1)		3.59	1.31
21. I am not taught that much about how to balance training, competing, and recovery. (RHQP7)		3.57	1.53
16. My coach doesn't appear to be that interested in my life outside of sport. (RHQP2)		3.47	1.22
18. I don't get much help to develop my mental toughness in sport effectively. (HHQP4)		2.7	1.18

Discussion and Implications

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Successful Talent Development in Soccer: The Characteristics of the Environment

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The holistic ecological approach to research in talent development in sport highlights the central role of the overall environment, as it affects an athlete in his or her athletic development. Applying the holistic ecological approach, this article examines talent development among male under-17 soccer players in a Danish soccer club with a history of successfully developing several of its juniors to top-level soccer players. Principal methods of data collection include interviews, participant observations of daily life in the environment, and analysis of documents. The environment was centered around the relationship between players and a staff of coaches, assistants, and managers that helped the players to focus on: A holistic lifestyle, handling dual careers (sport and school), developing the ability to work hard, and being self-aware and responsible for their own training. Furthermore, the environment was characterized by a strong, open, and cohesive organizational culture based on integrated values concerned with the balance of the player's daily lives in school and sport. We argue that the holistic ecological approach opens new avenues and holds the potential to inspire coaches and practitioners to be sensitive to and analyze not only the individual player's athletic development but also the overall strategies and organizational settings, in the talent development environment.

Keywords: athletic talent development environment, career transition, group and interpersonal processes, talent development, football



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...in their progression to the professional level. With institutional approval, the Talent Development Environment Questionnaire (TDEQ) [1] was used to survey 50 elite players aged 16–18 (M 17.1, s = 0.6 years) recruited from the academies of Premier League and Championship clubs in England. Overall, the results suggest that elite player development environments are perceived to be of a good quality. However, while academies appeared strong in areas related to coaching, organization and sport-related support, they were somewhat deficient in areas related to athlete understanding; links to senior progression, and key stakeholder relationships. In addition to the importance of establishing well-integrated youth and senior teams and positive working relationships with findings underline the necessity for academies to pay close attention to psychosocial environments they create for developing well-integrated development are discussed.

Key words: Talent development, career transition, group and interpersonal processes, talent development, football

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A holistic perspective on elite youth football players: A negative environment

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Journal of Sports Sciences, November 2012; 30(15): 1593–1604

Identifying factors perceived to influence the development of elite youth football academy players

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Abstract
Based on the developmental theory presented by Gagné (2009), we examined the factors perceived to influence the development of elite youth football players at a critical stage in their progression to the professional level. Transcribed interviews with ten expert development coaches were inductively and deductively content analysed. Conceptualisation of the data revealed six interrelated higher-order categories that represented the factors perceived to either positively or negatively influence player development. These were: awareness (e.g. self-awareness, awareness of others); resilience (e.g. coping with setbacks, optimistic attitude); goal-directed attributes (e.g. passion, professional attitude); intelligence (e.g. sport intelligence, emotional competence); sport-specific attributes (e.g. coachability, competitiveness); and environmental factors (e.g. significant others, culture of game). In this investigation, awareness emerged as a fundamental and mediating element for understanding how young players are able to transition to the professional level. Collectively, the findings underline the multidimensional nature of talent development and suggest that an intricate combination of stage-specific factors must manifest for gifted young players to translate their potential into excellence. Mechanisms by which academies could be helped to shape the characteristics and conditions associated with effective development are discussed.

Keywords: talent, investment years, awareness, environment

International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 2014
Vol. 12, No. 2, 150–165, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2014.880259](#)

Developmental experiences of elite female youth soccer players

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Received 20 September 2013; accepted 29 September 2013

Literature on talent development within elite female athletes, this study explored the developmental experiences of elite youth female soccer players. We adopted a holistic ecological approach to examine the development of elite youth female soccer players. We initially interviewed to gain an understanding of their development as soccer players. Subsequent interviews were used to gain a current and prospective understanding of the players' experiences within elite youth soccer. The data were subjected to an inductive and deductive analysis, composed of collaborative member checking process to co-construct a sequential list of the players' experiences within elite youth soccer. The findings suggest that soccer fathers and older brothers played a significant role in the development of their daughter-players and served as a source of support for their sister-players and soccer brothers acted as a significant role in helping players to lead their lives. Friends inside (termed as soccer friends) and outside the club played a significant role in helping players to lead their lives. The findings suggest that the behaviors appear to be key intra-individual factors that influence the development of elite youth female soccer player. Finally, findings suggest that the findings are considered in the light of future research directions for future research.

My coach tells me I will need if I am to compete	5.14	0.79
Currently, I have access to a variety of different types of professionals to help my sports development (e.g. physiotherapist, sport psychologist, strength trainer, nutritionist, lifestyle advisor). (SN1)	4.98	1.07
(TD4)	4.94	0.90
My coach rarely takes the time to talk to other coaches who work with me. (RHQP3)	4.91	0.87
My coach rarely talks to me about my well-being. (RHQP1)	4.76	1.30
I am not taught that much about how to balance training, competing, and recovery. (RHQP7)	3.77	1.49
My coach doesn't appear to be that interested in my life outside of sport. (RHQP2)	3.59	1.31
I don't get much help to develop my mental toughness in sport effectively. (HHQP4)	3.57	1.53
My coach rarely talks to me about my well-being. (RHQP1)	3.47	1.22
I don't get much help to develop my mental toughness in sport effectively. (HHQP4)	2.7	

Implications for Coaches and other stakeholders

Scope for education for coaches and wider stakeholders (parents, players, all support staff) in the form of workshops surrounding coach-athlete relationships and also holistic preparation. *Similar practice has been show to work within psychological skills*

Harwood C, Barker, J.B., Anderson, R. (2015). Psychosocial Development in Youth Soccer Players: Assessing the Effectiveness of the 5Cs Intervention Program. *The Sport Psychologist*, 2015, 29, 319 - 334 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2014-0161>

Individual club stakeholders such as Academy Managers or Director of Football could use the TDEQ-5 to self assess against TDEQ-5 subscales as part of existing evaluative processes.





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Thank you



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