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Message from the
Director of Coaching
Chris Snyder



Hi all,

I am excited to have you all back reading our *OPC* Magazine!

I am especially excited to have you tune into this issue because we are focusing entirely on the American Development Model (ADM), a pipeline athlete development system that the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, our National Governing Bodies and our own coaching education department have been working on for the past six years. I wanted to start by explaining the progress the ADM has made since formally starting in 2014.

Growing excellence in sport: the vision for ADM

Adults organize, while children play sport in our country. I make that statement knowing every time I walk on the field as an adult the child in me comes out to “play”. It’s something I share with my two young daughters, and hopefully will for the rest of my time. Sport is play and is what truly connects every human being that participates. When we talk with other adults who organize sport as a profession in our country, it is amazing to watch them connect and get their “good old days” to come to life in our country’s sport programming. When we talk about the root of the ADM, they jump for joy because it connects with their own personal love of play.

For six years, the adults that organize sport for NGBs have been looking for ways to not only get kids back playing and loving the game, but also finding ways to allow serious competitors, graduated collegiate athletes, retired elite professionals and weekend warriors permission to play again in their journey. You see, over the past 30 years, adults in the system have ruined what “play” means in our country. We have allowed sport to become the business that we all hated as young children. We allowed sport to become serious, expensive, exclusive and at times, very boring. It’s ironic and exciting to know that the adults that may have contributed to hurting play in sport are now unifying to fix our wrongs. Over 24 NGBs in the sport realm here in the U.S. have unified around the idea that the ADM can be the calling card to put excellence back in sport. How we define excellence is providing quality experiences for every stage of development where you will 24

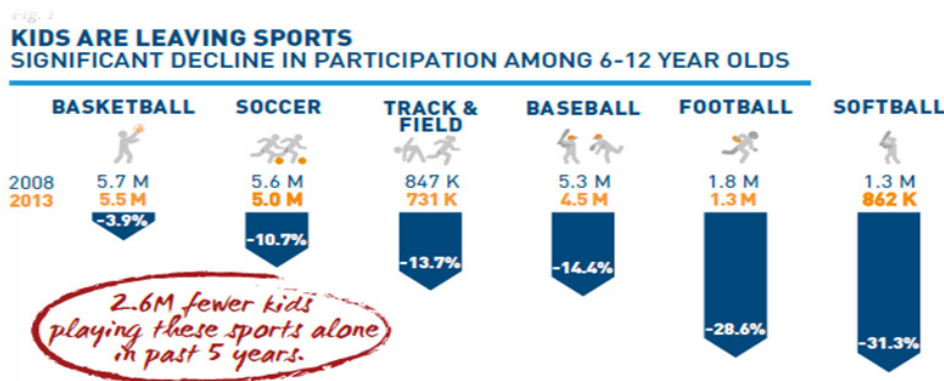


This whole movement was started by USA Hockey, along with a few other NGBs that were really looking for a chance to apply long-term athlete development concepts from other countries. The bold leadership of those representatives from other organizations, like the United States Tennis Association, U.S. Ski & Snowboard, USA Swimming, USA Diving and USA Bobsled & Skeleton, along with the USOPC all came together to create the ADM in 2014. The brain trust of this group worked to collaboratively get the buy-in from over 47 additional NGBs back when the idea of getting play and fun back into sports came to be. The main goal at the time was to stop the dropout rates from organized sport in the United States at the age of 12 and below.

NGBs were seeing first-hand these dropout rates impacting the number of opportunities for athletes, as well as threatening the cost, focus and availability of sport for everyone in our country. It was then a collaboration with the Aspen Institute and Project Play initiative that helped our group really focus on the voice of our inner child when it comes to sport. We utilized the eight plays from Project Play and the research from our friends in the U.K. and Canada at the Canada Sport for Life organization to help us get back to the roots of American sport. Through quality coaching, everyone gets to play different sports to help you develop foundational movement skills that help you learn and grow through your entire life. That is the theme of it all. A focus on allowing the child inside, or on the field, to develop first and compete second when their body and their mind is ready.

These two concepts are easy to rally around in any sporting community. The process of getting all adults in the sport world to realize there's no negative return on investment and no wrong time to do what is right has been a journey we have all found is winnable.

The USOPC now gets the honor and privilege to help our NGBs embrace and activate the ADM name, brand and philosophy for our country and others. We know the USOPC does not speak for every community, school or sport group in our country, but we know our name and our voice is expected to be one of leadership for all athletes in America. Therefore, we have embraced the opportunity to push out the ADM across all our NGBs and challenge them to develop an ADM program for their sport by 2024. It is not a mandate at this time, it is purely a challenge to drive our leadership down the path toward success for all involved in sport. With the help of the NGBs that currently embrace ADM, we are laying out new guidelines to allow our NGBs to align and qualify to be recognized as having ADM programming that is quality and putting excellence back in sport. The USOPC hopes to have these standards and expectations accomplished by the end of 2020 and will award the NGBs a stamp or seal that denotes they are an ADM organization. Our vision is to allow his recognition to bring national awareness to allow parents, athletes and coaches to know the programming of ADM is something they should look for and demand in their sport experience. There is never a wrong time to teach, develop and grow the right things in a child while they play sports – no matter if that child is on the field or in the heart of the adult who loves sport.



With less participation, there's less movement. Fewer kids are active through sports. In 2013, less than one in three children ages 6 to 12 engaged in high-calorie-burning sport or fitness activities three times a week, according to SFIA.⁶



Photo credit: Aspen Institute Project Play

In the years to come, we hope the club community administrators and coaches across our great country will embrace the programming our NGBs work to develop. We hope the NGBs will include their coaches, clubs and communities in the process of creating ADM programs because ADM is meant to unify everyone around growing sport excellence. We encourage you to learn more about our vision for ADM and to read on in this edition of *Olympic and Paralympic Coach Magazine*, where we will highlight what ADM has become. Together we can bring play back to the fields and to our hearts through sport.

To learn more check out the American Development Model section of the Team USA Mobile Coach in the app store or on the web at <https://mobilecoach.teamusa.org/>

Chris Snyder
Director, USOPC Coaching Education



ADM & Me: Insights in Learning from my USOPC Fellowship

Tyler Munoz, USA Football

Think back to a time when you were walking or driving by a local park and it was jam-packed with kids playing sports or games. How long ago was that? Were the games and sports organized by adults? Unfortunately, that image of a local park with kid-led free play taking place is becoming more and more scarce. Obesity rates, lack of fundamental movement skills (i.e., jumping, skipping, running, etc.), mandated focus on skills and drills rather than having fun, and athletes and parents falling into the specialization trap are all on the rise in the United States (The Aspen Institute, 2019). Sport has steadily shifted to meet the needs of adults, rather than whom they should be about: the children. Parents are pressured by society, other parents and even themselves to provide as many opportunities to help their child achieve and clinch their golden ticket to college. This heightened emphasis on earning a scholarship can easily turn a child's experience in sport into one that mimics a job, thus having a negative impact on their athletic development. In 2014, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (then the United States Olympic Committee) created the American Development Model to help guide National Governing Bodies of sport, clubs, coaches, parents and athletes in the holistic development of American athletes at all levels and contexts. Conceptually understanding ADM is one thing; trying to create a system that challenges the way things have always been done is another. Throughout my writing, I will blend the foundational principles of ADM and the reality of my experience working in ADM every day, in order to provide a new perspective to those who are in a similar place, and those who are looking to take on this work.

While all are non-profit organizations, NGBs are not created equal and the hurdles they face to support and promote their sports vary tremendously. The obvious factors like size of organization, number of members and overall structure range across all NGBs, but most struggle with financial constraints and lack of personnel to execute tasks and projects that benefit their sport. Aware of the roadblocks that NGBs face, the USOPC started a grant program in 2019 to provide financial and personnel assistance, in the form of a fellowship to NGBs that had already been identified and/or started developing their own versions of the ADM. In partnership, the USOPC and participating NGBs worked to create and execute development models focused on increasing the pool of athletes in that given sport, promoting holistic development of athletes in training and competition, and supporting coaches to provide positive experiences so athletes can reach their full potential on and off of the field of play.

This is where I came in! In the spring of 2019, I joined the USOPC's coaching education team in effort to expand ADM across all NGBs. As the ADM Fellow, I supported NGBs in the ADM space by helping them develop plans and outline next steps to implement their models. As a young professional, I had a lot to learn in a short amount of time. Under the guidance of Chris Snyder, director of coaching education at the USOPC,

I was able to assist six NGBs with adoption and development of ADM. The tasks ranged anywhere from scheduling and organizing conference calls and in-person meetings to creating resources and materials for NGB stakeholders; the entirety of my work was focused on support, development and promotion of ADM. My time with the USOPC's coaching education department was invaluable to learning and understanding how to effectively implement ADM within different sport contexts. The concept of the model gives NGBs a structure to develop athletes through these key principles (as listed on the Team USA website):

1. Universal access to create opportunity for all athletes.
2. Developmentally appropriate activities that emphasize motor and foundational skills.
3. Multi-sport participation.
4. Fun, engaging and progressively challenging atmosphere.
5. Quality coaching at all age levels.

I was extremely fortunate to be a part of six NGBs' adoption of the ADM. I had the opportunity to see firsthand how the ADM can energize and enable NGBs to reimagine how they grow the number of people involved in their sport, as well as how they can retain those who are already involved.

Although this endeavor generated more excitement and allowed NGBs to be more creative, it came with challenges as well. Adoption of the ADM is not the same for every NGBs because it is still relatively new in the sports world. At this point, few NGBs are far enough in their adoption of the model to see what the outcomes are and what the best way to communicate their models to the stakeholders in their sport is. The few who were a part of the early adoption have had a myriad of successes and struggles. With that in mind, there is not a proven method to successfully adopting the ADM. One of the biggest struggles during my fellowship was managing expectations of the NGBs and key stakeholders – ensuring them that this is a process that will take time and results will not come as quickly as they may have hoped. I also spent a lot of time communicating that this is a dynamic and constantly adapting process – just adopting the model and communicating its principles to athletes, coaches, parents and clubs does not guarantee that any meaningful changes will occur. This has to be a commitment by all those involved to truly be successful.



Photo courtesy of USA Football

Ultimately, I was able to see these principles come to life and create a positive impact in sport. Most notably, those involved at the USOPC and with NGBs want the best for the athletes, coaches and anyone else involved in sport. They believe in the impact that sport can have on the lives of every individual, regard-

less of their affiliation. Secondly, this model works! The early adopters of this model have been successful at increasing participation and retaining athletes in their sport. Lastly, I truly believe that the key principles listed above are what sport needs in the U.S. As leaders in this space, it is our responsibility to make sport accessible, to ensure that we are providing athletes with activities that meet them where they are developmentally, to encourage them to participate in as many sports/activities as possible, and to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to developing, learning and most importantly, having fun, while also making sure we are offering quality coaching at all levels, through coach support and training.

If we are able to activate the principles of the American Development Model, we will have better sport in the United States for generations to come. Together, we can let kids play! Let's fill parks, fields and courts with kids running around playing a variety of sports with huge smiles on their faces. As one team, movement and cause, let's work to put the fun back into sport.

Reference:

The Aspen Institute Project Play. (2019). State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sport 2019. Retrieved from: https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/10/2019_SOP_National_Final.pdf

Tyler Munoz is currently working with USA Football as the Manager of Football Education. Born and raised in California, he holds degrees in Political Science, Coaching Education and Sport Psychology from California State University, Fresno. Tyler has experience coaching both youth and high school level athletes. He has also worked with coaches at the youth, high school and Olympic levels as a coach developer and educator. Tyler can be reached at: tmunoz@usafootball.com.



Global Growth through the ADM TJ Buchanan, Director of Sport Development, World Lacrosse

In May 2019 after leading US Lacrosse's Lacrosse Athlete Development Model (LADM) efforts for several years, I ventured into an unknown territory and accepted an offer to be the director of sport development for World Lacrosse. World Lacrosse is the international federation for the sport and is responsible for governing the sport globally. We hold the world championships, help new and developing lacrosse nations grow the sport and are seeking to gain inclusion in the Olympic program. Lacrosse is played in over 65 countries around the world and has approximately 1.2 million player participants. We're small in comparison to many sports. The LADM, as we know it in the United States, is already proving to be a catalyst for growth and retention at the youth level. It stands to reason that if it works here, it'll work anywhere.

Here's the thing though, outside of North America and a few European countries, most lacrosse play begins at the university age level and above. There are not many pathways for youth participation like we have in North America. What does this mean for athlete development globally? First, we have to think different about what is developmentally appropriate. In the U.S., we can look at building models based on physical and cognitive development of the athlete and making the content of our programming age appropriate. Outside the U.S., we have to think different. Many countries have athletes who may be in their early 20s coming to the game for the first time. So how in the world do we build a model for this? I think I have an answer...

In developing an Athlete Development Model for World Lacrosse I had to do a few things:

- Step 1: Forget about how we do sports in the U.S.*
- Step 2: Look at how people participate in lacrosse in other countries.
- Step 3: Forget about how we do sports in the U.S.*
- Step 4: Listen to the needs of our membership.
- Step 5: Build a model to meet those needs.
- Step 6: Forget about how we do sports in the U.S.*

*Yes, I know this step is listed three times. It's important to not be "so American" when working in the international lacrosse community.

The needs are simple for our friends around the world – get more people playing, keep everyone playing and close the competitive gap. After learning this, the answer was simple: build a model that is based on the sport age of the participant. It's the only way ADM is going to work internationally.

It just makes sense. Think about it, the first time you get into a new hobby, do you go "all in?" Probably not. You are more than likely what I would call a casual participant. Your initial experience is based off finding pleasure in the activity and not necessarily seeking elite performance in it. You maybe spend an hour or two a week doing it. Then after a year or two, you find yourself a little deeper involved. Maybe you upgrade your equipment and spend a little more time on it. Another year or two passes and now you're taking time off of work to do it, you're trying to bring friends into the activity and maybe you're entering some competitions. Be-

fore too long, you find yourself “all in.” You’re now coaching others, maybe officiating some competitions and organizing groups to participate. Depending on the physical demands of the activity, you might move entirely out of participation and into amore administrative role, just so you can stay involved. It’s that simple. Develop a pathway for participation that ranges from casual participation through elite performance and extends into life after competition.

As I set out to build the World Lacrosse model, this is exactly what I did. I asked myself and others: What would build confidence and desire in new participants? What might adults want and need from the sport as their skills and confidence grow? What might they want and need to help them successfully represent their country in world championships? What might they want and need once they were no longer playing the sport?

From those answers, it was simple to build the model. As it turns out, the wants are not terribly different that of a youth participant. Fun, friendship, participation, skill development and physical fitness are all at the top of the list. To round out the model, I then built in what youth participants need (accounting for their physical and cognitive development) and now we have a model for global development of lacrosse athletes of all ages and stages.

A good friend of mine often uses the phrase “simple, not easy” to describe the incorporation of the American Development Model into U.S. sports. For those of us who have worked feverishly over the past few years to implement ADM into our chosen sports, I’m sure you have found this to be true. The concept is simple: do what is best for athletes according to the developmental stage they are in.

It’s that simple.

What’s not easy is adoption of the model. In the U.S., we must overcome the “this is how we’ve always done it” mentality. Globally, we have that same issue, along with cultural differences with regards to participation in sport.

World Lacrosse is still in the very early stages of our Athlete Development Model. We have released it to our member countries and are encouraging them to use it as a framework to build participation pathways that will work for their unique culture. On a global scale, development initiatives cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. Encouraging and supporting adaptations, while maintaining the integrity of the model is the key to our member countries success. We are supporting them in the creation of their pathways with information and resources. As the countries are building their unique, but athlete-centered pathways they will see growth and retention. Given the overall infancy in the sport of lacrosse, as well as this resource coming from the international federation, we will quickly overcome the “this is how we’ve always done it” mindset.

TJ Buchanan is the Director of Sport Development for World Lacrosse, the international federation for men’s and women’s lacrosse, responsible for providing effective leadership and governance of the sport internationally while supporting the continued growth of lacrosse worldwide. World Lacrosse currently has 65 member-National Governing Bodies and holds five World Championships for the sport. In November 2018, World Lacrosse was honored to earn Provisional Recognition from the International Olympic Committee — a critical step in the continued growth of the sport around the globe. Prior to his position at World Lacrosse, TJ served as the Technical Director for Athlete Development at US Lacrosse, the national governing body of the sport. TJ’s work with U.S. Lacrosse has impacted more than 250,000 youth players and 40,000 coaches. In 2008, he was appointed as one of 25 National Coach Development Trainers for the National Governing Body. He has conducted over 100 Coach Development Clinics to provide coaches with the training and resources necessary to support athletes in reaching their full potential.



Triathletes are Athletes

Christy Lausch, USA Triathlon Youth & Junior Coach

As I greeted my high-performance triathlete athletes gathered at practice, I noticed a few absent faces.

While we were biking, running and, yes, meditating, they were swimming with their club team. They were running with their high school track team. They were downhill ski racing at the local mountain. They were racing at a cyclocross event. And I was excited for each of them, knowing that it was building their triathlon fitness and ultimately keeping them engaged with triathlon.

This is because triathletes are athletes. Athletes are athletes.

This concept of the holistic athlete, and seasonal sports, tended to be the norm years ago. Over the years this idea has been pushed to the side in favor of single-sport commitments as early as age 10 with promises of elite teams and Olympic berths.

However, according to a survey by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee in 2014, most Olympians did not specialize in their sport until very late in their development.

In fact, “the findings indicate that surveyed Olympians were involved in an average of three sports per year until the age of 14.” Even once they achieved success at an elite level, some continued to participate in other sports. Think of football and track athletes who crossover to bobsled. Multisport play appeared to be beneficial to these Olympians.

As coaches and educators, we can learn from Olympians and do better for our youth athletes by encouraging multisport participation and a slower, more thoughtful progression of their athletic development.

USA Triathlon American Development Model

One critical step towards this goal was the development of the [USA Triathlon's American Development Model](#) in summer 2019. Using USOPC guidance, with other National Governing Bodies' models already launched, the model is focused on long-term athlete development principles in a way that resonates with the culture of sport in the United States.

The USA Triathlon ADM is centered around eight stages of progression:

- Stage One: Active Start
- Stage Two: FUNdamentals
- Stage Three: Learn to Train
- Stage Four: Train to Train
- Stage Five: Learn to Compete
- Stage Six: Train to Compete
- Stage Seven: Train to Win
- Stage Eight: Triathlon for Life



Like other NGBs, each ADM stage includes key objectives for success, athlete development, training and competition guidelines. The eight stages progressively build skill development and mastery, emphasize speed over distance and encourage multisport participation. Regardless of stage, one key theme is the element of fun. No matter the athlete’s age or competitive level, fun should always be an experience coaches strive to create.

Because triathlon can be an equipment-heavy sport for young, growing athletes, it was important to include recommendations about cycling equipment at each of the stages. Many youth triathletes have parents who also participate in the sport. The ADM can help parents learn that “sizing down” their equipment may not be in the best interest of their child’s development and may be in violation of youth triathlon rules.

Another important highlight of the USA Triathlon ADM is that it was developed to be flexible with two distinct pathways at “Stage 4: Train to Train”. The standard pathway is for most recreational triathletes. The draft legal pathway is for athletes who desire to train and race in a specific format of triathlon racing within Olympic development pipeline. While both pathways can include high levels of competitive performance, the draft legal pathway focuses on specific skills and equipment that are necessary for success.

As mentioned, many triathlon parents are still participating and competitive in the sport as adults, and they are represented in the USA Triathlon ADM as well. Participation numbers from the 2019 USA Triathlon Age-Group National Championship bear out triathlon’s lifelong appeal with 33 athletes over 75 years old completing the sprint distance event and 26 athletes over 75 years old completing the Olympic distance.

ADM Implementation

One of the first steps USA Triathlon made to support the ADM principles was to announce changes to several components of the national championship for youth and junior athletes. Specifically, in 2020 the word “championships” will be removed from the event name (Youth & Junior Nationals) in an effort to emphasize participation and personal goal setting over competition for younger age groups.

Further, to align race distances with ADM recommendations, the age limit was raised from 15 years old to 18 years old. This change provides high school-aged athletes the opportunity to continue to race in youth- and junior-focused events before moving into adult-race environments.

To support these changes, national champion titles will only be awarded to athletes ages 13-18, while the younger age groups will receive placement awards.

The final change to the national championship structure, is the conclusion of the USA Triathlon High School National Championship. Beginning in 2021, high school athletes will benefit from expanded race opportunities within their home states through designated state championships.

The ADM model aims to gain commitment and support from the triathlon community. To achieve this goal, we have created the “Take the Pledge” initiative encouraging key triathlon partners to make a public commitment to the ADM principles and become an advocate for the long-term development of athletes.

The USA Triathlon ADM pledge asks coaches, race directors, athletes, parents and other involved members to commit to:

- Alignment of skill development, training and practice volumes with the ADM model.
- Encouragement and support of age appropriate race distances.
- Support of sports participation outside of swim, bike and run.

If you're reading this, we encourage you to take the [USAT ADM Pledge!](#)

ADM Partnership

USA Triathlon and USA Swimming have partnered to create and launch the Swim to Tri program. Swim to Tri is an opportunity for USA Swimming clubs to add multisport (bike and run) curriculum to their programs. In doing so, USA Swimming clubs can help create lifelong athletes, generate new revenue streams, offer alternative off-season programming and attract new athletes.

Many USA Swimming clubs are also a USA Triathlon club or have a collaborative relationship with a triathlon club. This collaboration is beneficial for the club and their swimmers. The first benefit is extending pool swimming to open water swimming and triathlon. The second benefit is a multisport curriculum has led to well-rounded diverse youth athletes who are engaged with the swim club throughout the year. All resources for Swim to Tri can be found at www.usatriathlon.org/swimtotri.

Ongoing Activation

While we are still in the early stages of the ADM launch, the adoption and success of the ADM will come from three ongoing areas of focus:

- Marketing support: exposure and promotion of the ADM utilizing USA Triathlon communication and social media platforms
- Ongoing content development: partnering with key coaches and educators to create articles, videos and other media which provide tactical demonstrations of the model
- Coaching education: deeper integration of the model into youth and junior coaching educational platforms

With the support of the entire USA Triathlon team, and the backing of the USOPC, the ADM is well positioned for success.

Nearing the Finish Line

If you have read this far into the article you may be thinking, “Isn’t triathlon swim, bike and run? And isn’t that already multisport?” Multisport should be considered both multi-lateral and multi-activity: movement across all three planes of movement and the development of core developmental capabilities like hopping, skipping and bounding. Cross-training with tennis, cyclocross and skiing are all complimentary sports that will develop the youth triathlete and prevent injury and burnout. This is especially important for female athletes who are dropping out of sports at approximately twice the rate of boys by the time they are 14 years old, according to the Women’s Sports Foundation.

Athletes are athletes. As sports leaders, I encourage us all to stay focused on the goal of supporting our developing youth and junior athletes through the ADM guidelines.

See you at the races (or on the slopes, or on the field)!



Photo by Noel Vasquez/Getty Images for Nautica

Christy Lausch is a USA Triathlon Youth & Junior and Level II certified coach and was named USAT's 2018 Development Coach of the Year. In partnership with USA Triathlon, Lausch led the development of the American Development Model leveraging guidelines and principles from the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee and other National Governing Bodies.



The ADM Assembly Line Chad Wigle, USA Boxing Coaching Education

Henry Ford is the embodiment of American ingenuity and innovation at its best. He did not invent the car, but his drive for excellence and efficiency to build an affordable vehicle that the entire family could enjoy, is his legacy with the assembly line. The American Development Model is the modern-day assembly line for sport, coaches and athletes in the United States. Like Ford, the coach education department at the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee did not invent Long Term Athletic Development, but they have adapted it, and created suggestions and guidelines translating a traditional LTAD model, making the ADM more relevant to American society. The United States is one of a small number of countries with an Olympic program not funded by the government. That means everyone from the suits at the top, to the community coaches on fields, courts and in clubs across this nation need to be responsible for recruiting and retaining athletes, providing opportunities for healthy competition.

USA Boxing understands the value of sport and necessity of keeping our children – many of whom come from under privileged and socially underfunded neighborhoods – involved with athletics and encouraged to stay physically active.

Boxing is an excellent activity to learn sport attributes, such as ABCs, hand-eye coordination, focus and full-body conditioning. Not to mention, boxing creates life skills like individual awareness in a team environment, taking direction in a short amount of time in a hostile situation, getting and giving feedback in a neutral, competitive environment. USA Boxing recognizes the value of age/stage appropriate training progressions and is following the USOPC's lead into this new era.

USA Boxing is fortunate that hundreds of thousands of people do some form of recreational boxing, whether that be in a group fitness class at the local gym or by themselves in a basement or garage pounding away on a punching bag to stay in shape. Up until now, we have not found a way to take that possible pool of talent, move them down the sport pipeline and recruit them into competitive boxing.

Of course, it does not take a rocket scientist to realize that thousands of average people don't want to get punched in the face and ribs on a regular basis. Even when the sport is done correctly a boxer is still going to take punishment on their hands, arms and shoulders. All kinds of people from all walks of life love the activity of boxing and the idea of boxing but, like Mike Tyson said, "Everyone has a plan 'til they get punched in the mouth." People like boxing, but people don't like getting punched in the mouth.

The old fashioned, outdated and traditional way to recruit pugilists was to take a potential boxing student, train them for a few days, then put them in the ring to see if they have "what it takes" to become a boxer. I have personally witnessed many times the failure of this business model at recreational centers, where the child gets in the ring, doesn't like getting punched in the mouth, walks out of the ring and through the door and onto a basketball court, most likely walking away from boxing forever.

It was a similar process for me as a boxer. I was around 19 years old when the head coach of the local boxing gym reluctantly let me in (he thought I was too old) and started to teach me boxing. On the third day, coach told another new guy and me to get some gloves and headgear on because we were going to spar. My buddy Sean pulled me aside and taught me a secret special move; the overhand right. I had no idea how respected this treasure was until I entered the ring and the bell rang. Every time my teammate threw his jab, I timed it with a countering overhand right, and it landed every time. I learned a few important lessons that day, some of which are: be open to coaching, hit and don't get hit, and the power of fate.

My spar-mate never returned to the gym, but I did. How would it have turned out if Sean told the other boxer about his secret weapon and I was on the other side of the overhand right? I would like to think that I would have stepped up to the challenge and come back, but I cannot say for sure if I would have.

That was 1991. Even in 2019, USA Boxing heard from puzzled parents about the process and progression of boxing. One mother contacted us about her son who loved boxing for the first three days, getting all sweaty and active hitting the bag, jumping rope, doing pushups and situps. Then the third day happened. He was put in the ring, came out with a bloody nose, and the coach told them that it's boxing, this happens and to get used to it.

As a coach educator I am not angry or even frustrated about this. Both my coach and this coach had the best of intentions to teach boxing, and they were using the best tools they had to accomplish this goal, most likely the same way they were taught. The problem is, it's a challenge now to get kids away from a screen long enough to do any kind of activity let alone one where they are going to get punched. How do I expect coaches to keep kids in boxing if approximately 70% of children are dropping out of sports in general by age 13?

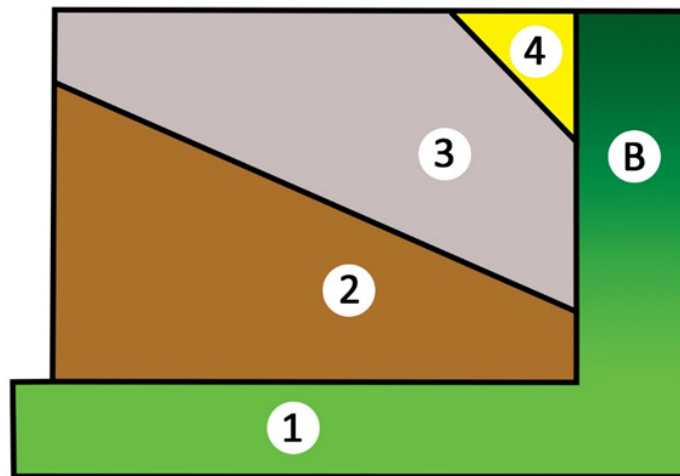
One solution is to teach boxing coaches more fun and safer ways to teach boxing. For example, we have realized that boxing is basically tag, and specifically tag to the face. Taking the simplicity of that idea, we can teach boxing and combat sport concepts to entry-level athletes using games, like tag, with literally no fist-to-face contact. A natural progression is to take those low-risk games and drills and use ADM small-sided play by roping off the training ring into four quarters. This will encourage experiences with a higher volume of contacts in a smaller playing area and decrease the emotional effect of getting into a boxing exchange.

In boxing, one of the most important emotional skills is to keep calm and focused when the opponent is directly right in front of you, inside punching range. These games can be the common denominator gym activity that everyone at every level does a couple of times per week. Training combatants of all levels how to deal with close quarter engagement, a coach can have intermediate boxers challenging the advanced boxers, and every member of the gym gets to contribute to team improvement, even if they're not on the high-performance squad.



Coach Timothy Nolan supervises four pairs of boxers during small-sided play, with two ropes dividing a regulation field of play into four smaller quadrants, at the United States Olympic & Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The USA Boxing version of the American Development Model has adopted the following phases for athlete development:



USA Boxing's ADM high-performance pathway travels through 1. Discovery, 2. Development, 3. Optimization, and 4. Performance, with a B. Retirement option exiting from any of the four stages.

1) Discovery Stage

- Learn FUNdamentals
 - Play and socialize with others
 - Motor skills like jumping, throwing running, ABCs
 - Boxing skills alongside other sports
- Inspire passion for sport and active lifestyle
- Zero to three athletic years' experience, recognizing that a child who has two years history of playing club soccer is going to be different than a sedentary child the same age
- Matches introduce athletes to competition environment (working with a referee in front of spectators), but has a neutral outcome without a winner or loser

2) Development Stage

- Learn to Train
 - ABCs and introducing speed and strength work
 - Beginning to identify personal strengths and areas to improve
 - More emphasis on proper techniques
- Self-awareness, teamwork and communication through sport challenges
- Three to six athletic years' experience
- Developing a passion for boxing
- Up to 15 club and regional matches

3) Optimize

- Train to Compete
 - Boxing is the primary sport
 - Increased one-on-one and small group coaching
 - Specialization of skills and strategies
 - Greater awareness of sport sciences (nutrition and psychology)
 - Challenge the boxer outside their normal comfort zone
- Six to 10 athletic years' experience
- Developing a passion for healthy competition
- Open class competition focusing on domestic tournaments

4) Perform

- Train to Perform
 - Maximize talents
 - Individualized coaching in team environment
 - Annual and periodized planning
- High performer with podium potential
- Passion for performance
- Open class matches and international tournaments

5) Retirement (from competition training)

- Recreational
 - Thriving in personal health and exercise
- Transition to coach, official or administrator
- Share experience, knowledge and passion for boxing
- Any age/experience
- Keep passion for health and fitness

To make all that work for the athlete, we need to educate our coaches on paralleled principles, through a similar supportive pathway.

Green Coaches are mostly parents and former boxers who want to learn how to coach the fundamentals, and provide a safe practice for new athletes, introduced to the sport of boxing for the first time. The green certification is online with a 50-question test, topics including FUNdamentals, ADM theory and healthily coaching the athlete in front of you.

Bronze Coaches support the club level and regional boxer as they participate in one day boxing matches. The bronze certification is a 16-hour in-person clinic with topics including teaching lessons using EDIP (explain, demonstrate, imitate and practice), the importance of a universal boxer, teaching basic skills, four phases of a complete sport-specific dynamic warmup, and how to work a competition corner.



Clinician Edward Ochoa assists Coach Robert with his defense mechanics during a bronze clinic.

Silver Coaches support boxers who frequent domestic tournaments. The silver certification is a combination of prerequisite online classes, a 16-hour in-person clinic, and post-clinic assignments. Topics include sport psychology, coaching principles, strength training essentials, technical and tactical analysis and teaching methods, and all inside of annual planning for multiple peaks.

Gold Coaches support boxers who represent Team USA at international events or boxers who are close to making the team. Gold certification requirements are TBD.



Clinician Gilberto Garza lectures a bronze class about ADM principles and how they can be applied to boxing.

Most people who stick with boxing can look back and see the benefits of their experience and how they have become better people because of it. With a surplus of assets, it's necessary for us to come up with a better way to recruit and retain curious individuals who walk through our gym doors.

It sounds obvious, but we need to change the culture so they don't get punched in the mouth the first week and have a supportive pathway from competition to retire into other auxiliary roles. I boxed on and off for a few years and got a few matches. Then, as young adult life happened, with more responsibilities and distractions, my coach recognized the opportunity to transition me into coaching. Coach Doug was a remarkable first mentor disciplined with strict fundamentals and having a step-by-step process that he put his boxers through. He noticed I was floating around stages one and two, discovery and development, and before I could exit the sport, he recruited me to be a coach.

The USA Boxing community annually consists of approximately 36,000 registered athletes with roughly 45% of the population turning over every year (also another annual 12,000 non-athletes with 23% turnover). With just over 2000 registered boxing gyms across America, what would it be like if we could retain just 10% of the 16,000 athletes who try competitive boxing, don't quite pan out, and keep them as coaches, officials, or gym administrators before they leave forever? That could look like hundreds of more referees and judges to relieve the overworked local volunteer staff, or gyms adding coaches, making the athlete to trainer ratio more manageable.

Of course, many of the exiting population are under 18 and are not able to fulfill any of those roles, but they could stay in the sport as recreational users, cross-training for their other sports and activities using boxing inside a truly multisport experience. When we keep kids involved recreationally, there's a good chance they could return to competition later in life as a teenager or young adult. Boxing is predominantly a late specialization sport (the average age of boxers at 2016 Summer Olympics was 25.2 years old). Having an open door

policy could prove to be a smart strategy for boxing's longevity.

USA Boxing's new coach education is still in its infancy but we're expecting a major impact for the Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028. The reason being is two-fold – the high-performance department is directly responsible for 2020 and 2024. Chances are most of the boxers for those teams are already in our system somewhere, but a coach who takes the bronze class this weekend will be more equipped to guide the podium pathway for the 13-year-old kid entering the gym for the first time on the following Monday. In just a few months, over 125 coaches have been certified through our in-person bronze classes. At our annual U19 Junior Olympics tournament in June, we are looking forward to offering our first bilingual bronze class, and our first silver class by the end of 2020.

“Be ready to revise any system, scrap any method, abandon any theory, if the success of the job requires it” - Henry Ford

USA Boxing scrapped the old and outdated system for one more conducive to the times and needs of youth athletes in America in the 2020's. The USOPC's ADM assembly line approach is a great new tool to support athletics in America, in excellence and efficiency, and through that approach, we can recruit and retain more with an effective pathway to gold medals this decade.

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70% of children drop out of sports by 13

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Iowa Innovation grows Football Through the Football Development Model

Steve Alic, Communications Director, USA Football

The Football Development Model (FDM) has established roots in Iowa, where a community league is piloting USA Football's recommended strategy for player progression of athleticism and fundamental skills through a range of football game types. The prototype has been nothing short of a huge success.

The Iowa Developmental Youth Football League (IDYFL) is changing how the game is played, taught and experienced for third-through-sixth graders. Based 20 miles outside the state capital of Des Moines, the four-community league is piloting USA Football's Football Development Model (FDM). The FDM delivers a progression of athleticism and fundamental football skills through a range of football game types.

In 2017, Dallas Center-Grimes (Iowa) High School head coach Scott Heitland learned of modified football game types at USA Football's annual National Conference in Orlando, Fla. The idea of matching fun, engaging game play and skill instruction with a child's physical and cognitive abilities inspired him to bring the concept home.

"What sparked it for me was watching my own son – he was 7-years-old and playing youth baseball – and he was playing modified games," Heitland said. "Smaller diamonds, shorter base paths, coach pitch and t-ball. Football wasn't doing the same. There was no pathway or progression."

The IDYFL unites the Iowa communities of Norwalk, Johnston, Dallas Center-Grimes and Adel-De Soto-Minburn, collectively known as "ADM." Driven by Heitland's inspired encouragement, the communities' four youth football clubs agreed to create the new league. Its eight-person board consists of four youth league presidents (one from each community) and the four varsity high school coaches of the four areas, including Heitland, who now serves USA Football's FDM Council.

"When we shared news of our new model and the direction we were moving to, we called a community meeting, led by our four communities' youth league presidents and head varsity high school coaches," said Tyler Tripp, the president of the board for the Norwalk Youth Football League. "We shared what we wanted to accomplish and every parent in that room could see that our motivation was sincere – we wanted what was best for their kids. Some had initial concerns, but all were very supportive. All of us took a leap of faith.

"It's a partnership across the board for everyone."

IDYFL 3rd graders play flag; 4th graders play padded flag (wearing full equipment, but not tackling); 5th graders play 8-on-8 Rookie Tackle; and 6th graders play 11-on-11 tackle.

With approximately 550 players today, the league's four community programs are experiencing a 65 percent increase in participation from when 11-player tackle was last played in all four divisions two years ago (340 players).

Mark Hargrafen of Dallas Center-Grimes is the dad of a 3rd grader and coaches his son's team. A member of the Wartburg (Iowa) College Athletic Hall of Fame, Hargrafen played guard for the Knights' football program in the 1990s. He sees the FDM as a smarter and safer path for his son.

"I thought that the model was progressive, just like the football I see practiced and played at the highest levels," he said. "Contact is minimized. It's not your father's football and it doesn't need to be. When I played college football, we were a glorified powerlifting team – it's not that way anymore. It's about agility, athleticism, physical literacy."



Photo courtesy of USA Football

League leadership already has received inquiries from neighboring towns interested to join and expand the IDYFL. Scott Mikkelsen, president of the Dallas Center-Grimes youth football program, credits a "can-do" attitude for the league's blossoming success.

"You need a group of youth board presidents that are flexible and high school coaches who will lend their time to it," Mikkelsen said of the new league. "We could not have done this without the involvement of the high school coaches – you cannot overstate how important that is. This would have taken years (to accomplish) without them."

As a high school coach involved with his city's youth program, Heitland has an overarching philosophy that inspires the IDYFL's vision.

"I don't dictate to our youth coaches, but I do tell them, 'Don't go through a practice without teaching blocking and tackling fundamentals that you learned at USA Football trainings,'" he said. "I don't care what offense they run – I want kids to have a good experience, learn the fundamentals and come back to play next year."

Steve Alic is the communications director for USA Football, the sport's national governing body and a proud member of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee. Steve can be reached at salic@usafootball.com.

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U.S. Soccer Grassroots Coach Education Play-Practice-Play (PPP) Model: An Evidence-Based Approach

U.S. Soccer Coaching Education Department

When children arrive at practice, they have little desire to stand in lines, run laps, perform drills, or be lectured – they simply want to have fun, connect with their teammates, and learn through engaging and enjoyable activities. If coaches want to create a practice environment where the children (players) have fun and are motivated to learn, coaches must first understand why they play soccer. They play soccer because they love the game! Therefore, it is important for coaches to keep these factors in mind when creating and designing their practice environments. As for practice design, the debate about the optimal quantity, quality, type, sequencing, and combination of learning activities during Zone 1 development (ages between of 6-12) is ongoing within the athlete development and performance literature.¹⁻⁷

While there is no single best approach to practice design⁵, athlete development research indicates that participation in different types of learning activities (e.g., child-led or adult-led, structured or unstructured) – such as ‘informal play’⁸, ‘deliberate play’^{1,2,9-11} or more structured activities such ‘deliberate practice’¹² – are important influences in the athlete development process.⁵ Recent studies, specific to soccer, indicate that high levels of engagement in low-structured informal play or soccer-specific deliberate play activities are an important component in the athlete development process and practice pathway of high-level performers.^{4,8,13-14}

PLAYERS LEARN:

- What they like – intrinsic motivation as the driver for learning
- What they need – transfer, no gap between the training and the game
- To read, analyze, and decide – how players perceive and explain a situation is the driver for their behavior
- To be creative – looking for solutions
- To reflect – thinking about experiences and how to use experiences
- To learn – developing and improving learning habits
- To be independent critical thinkers – independent/social and responsible/accountable adults

U.S. Soccer Grassroots Player Development Philosophy

At the grassroots level, children learn and develop to their full potential through game-like experiences in an enjoyable environment which supports individual growth.

Evidence-Based Practice Design

The U.S. Soccer Coach Education Department is committed to an evidenced-based approach to coaching education and player development. Evidence-based coaching focuses on integrating three key components: 1. the best available research on player development; 2. coaching expertise and; 3. an appreciation of the needs and values of the learner (i.e., player).

With that, in an attempt to create a developmentally appropriate practice environment, U.S. Soccer has adopted a three-stage practice plan model (i.e., 'Play-Practice-Play'). This approach aligns with the best available research on athlete development pathways and is designed with the intent of maximizing player enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and skill development.^{2,15-16}

Stage 1: Play - 'Deliberate Play'

When players arrive at practice it is important that coaches create an environment that is engaging and enjoyable. One way to engage players is through low-structured small-sided games (i.e., 2v2, 3v3, 4v4) also referred to as 'deliberate play' in the athlete development literature.^{2,16} Deliberate play refers to smaller informal game-like representations (i.e., small-sided games) of the official game format and are designed primarily for the purpose of enjoyment.¹ These deliberate play games are ideally governed by the players while being loosely monitored by the coach and focus on promoting enjoyment of competing¹⁹ rather than the outcome (i.e., winning).¹ The key point, for grassroots coaches, is that deliberate play promotes enjoyment, inclusion and development. When players are more engaged, feel included and are enjoying themselves, it will likely increase motivation to continue playing. This is particularly important during the adolescent years where dropout is higher.¹³

When coaches design practices that promote opportunities to engage in deliberate play, it should be viewed as intentionally creating a fun and player-centered environment that contextualizes the development of skill and tactical awareness. When engaged in deliberate play, the game/environment is the primary teacher and the coach serves as a facilitator who, when necessary, guides players to find solutions as opposed to providing the answers. In this stage of the practice, the coach's goal is to help create the environment that orientates the players to the practice objective via 'deliberate play.' While there are clear benefits to having a coach instruct and provide feedback on performance, coaches must also appreciate that in the teaching-learning process, they do not always have to instruct in order for learning and development to occur.

Benefits of 'Deliberate Play'

A growing body of athlete development literature suggests that engagement in deliberate play is important and has a number of positive implications for the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional

development of children.^{1 2 16-18, 20} More specifically, research investigating the practice pathway of elite soccer players indicates that high levels of engagement in less structured, soccer-specific deliberate play and practice activities are an important component for attaining high-level performance.^{3,4,8,13,14} As such, there are many benefits of deliberate play. It can:

- Increase enjoyment and intrinsic motivation.
- Promote motor and cognitive development.
- Promote game awareness.
- Promote inclusion.
- Provide players with frequent ball contact.
- Promote social interaction and problem-solving skills.
- Promote game-like decision making (i.e., tactical cues).
- Contextualize technical development (i.e., skill = tactical application of a technique).

Stage 2: Practice Activities

During the second stage, known as 'practice', the goal is to create an environment that develops the player in relation to the practice objective and any related player actions and key qualities of the player. While deliberate play is a positive introduction to the practice and has an important role in practice design, it can only facilitate the learning process to a point.⁵ In order to facilitate learning further players must be engaged in different forms of learning activities such as 'play-practice' activities²¹⁻²², 'Teaching Games for Understanding'²³ or elements of 'deliberate practice'.¹²

Research shows that the practice pathway to maximizing development is dynamic, that the acquisition of skill is non-linear⁷ and that there is flexibility in the types of training activities an athlete engages in to achieve optimal performance.⁵ The key is to create a practice environment that integrates a balance of developmentally appropriate activities that find the right challenge point for the learner.²⁴ 'Play-practice' activities refer to activities that are designed, and guided, by coaches to improve aspects of performance (i.e., player actions or key qualities) while emphasizing fun and enjoyment at the same time.²¹⁻²² The TFGU model, a games-centered teaching pedagogy, places emphasis on developing tactical awareness and decision-making within the framework of modified games,^{23,25} and facilitates the learners understanding of when, where and how to apply their technique in a game context.²⁵ Deliberate practice is more highly structured and primarily focused on the goal of improving performance, as opposed to just the inherent enjoyment of participating.¹²

One of the key qualities of a coach is the ability to design practices that incorporate developmentally appropriate learning activities that are enjoyable, educational, game-like and challenging. The characteristics of developmentally appropriate practice activities include:

- Frequent skill repetitions - improves ball mastery.
- Activities that are player-centered.
- Activities that are game-like in nature (i.e., problem-solving, decision making).
- Activities that provide opportunities for instructional feedback to facilitate learning and development.

It is important to reiterate that while some activities can be more structured and coach-led, they don't

have to be any less enjoyable. The goal of grassroots coaches is to find a way to create an engaging environment that incorporates activities that are educational, enjoyable and game-like.

Stage 3: The Game - Let them play!

During the final stage of every practice, the players should be provided with the opportunity and freedom to play, without interruption, in a format (i.e., 4v4, 6v6, 8v8, 9v9) that replicates the game. The format is based off of the maximum roster size per the U.S. Soccer Player Development Initiatives for the age group being coached (i.e. U6-U8 is 8 so 4v4, U9-U10 is 12 so 6v6, U11-U12 is 16 so 8v8, and U13+ is 18 so 9v9). This is the time for players to express themselves, without being micro-managed, and work through the process of applying their technical and tactical skills within a game context. At this stage of the practice, the coach is checking to see if the player is able to transfer the skills learned in practice into the game environment. The point at which the player is unable to find a solution, or make the necessary corrections, is an opportunity for the coach to engage at appropriate teachable moments in the learning process.

Summary

In closing, the key ingredients of an effective grassroots practice environment is one that has a careful balance between 'deliberate play', a variety of learning activities, and regular game opportunities. These three components, when combined, create an effective practice environment that maximizes player enjoyment and development.

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**On the cover: Two years to Tokyo Youth Sports Clinic
LOS ANGELES, CA - JULY 24: Team USA athlete Carlin Isles celebrates the two year countdown to the
2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo at a Youth Sports Clinic at the Japanese American Community Center
on July 24, 2018 in Los Angeles, California.**

Cover photo by: Joe Scarnici/Getty Images for USOC

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