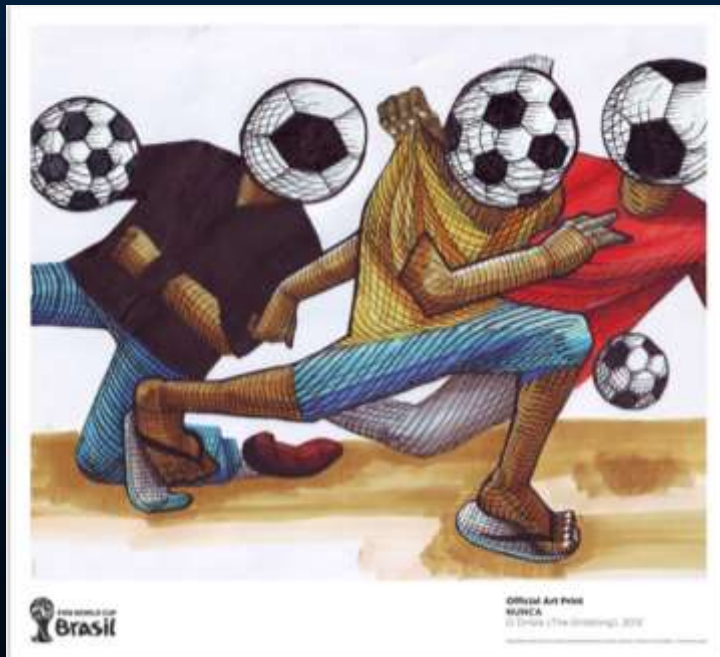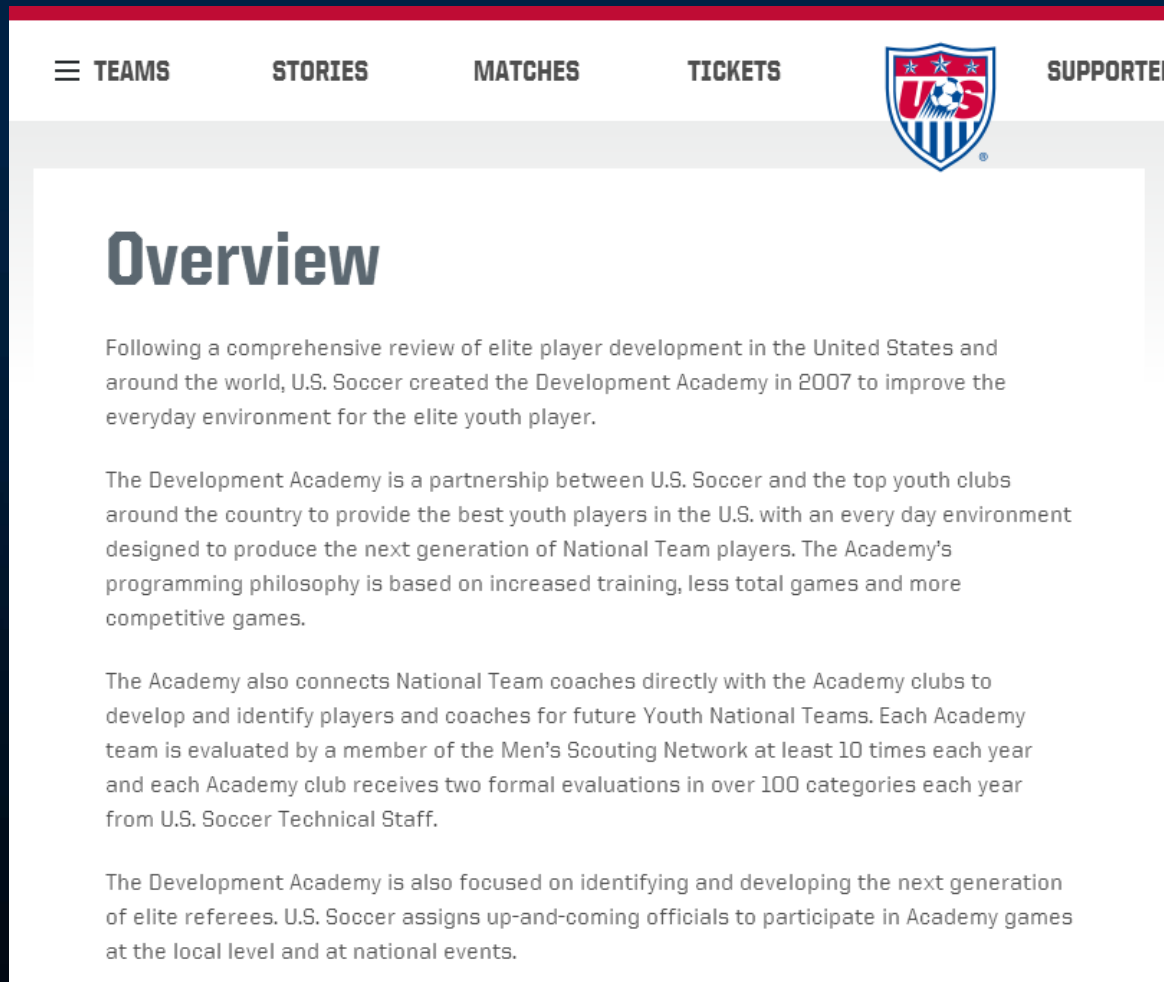# The Human Development in Player Development

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The Multiple Meanings of "Youth Development"?

TEAMS STORIES MATCHES TICKETS SUPPORTER

Overview

Following a comprehensive review of elite player development in the United States and around the world, U.S. Soccer created the Development Academy in 2007 to improve the everyday environment for the elite youth player.

The Development Academy is a partnership between U.S. Soccer and the top youth clubs around the country to provide the best youth players in the U.S. with an every day environment designed to produce the next generation of National Team players. The Academy's programming philosophy is based on increased training, less total games and more competitive games.

The Academy also connects National Team coaches directly with the Academy clubs to develop and identify players and coaches for future Youth National Teams. Each Academy team is evaluated by a member of the Men's Scouting Network at least 10 times each year and each Academy club receives two formal evaluations in over 100 categories each year from U.S. Soccer Technical Staff.

The Development Academy is also focused on identifying and developing the next generation of elite referees. U.S. Soccer assigns up-and-coming officials to participate in Academy games at the local level and at national events.

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The Multiple Meanings of "Youth Development"?

Overview…

I. Why does it matter that talent development models and human development models are often separate when they don't have to be?

    I. Examples of the distance between

    II. Examples that could bridge the gap

II. Fun (and motivation) as a bridge

III. Life Skills as a bridge

IV. Making both human development and talent development part of team / club culture by coaching like a sociologist?

"You have a major problem in the ages of 17 to 21," Huw Jennings, now the director of the youth academy at Fulham, in the English Premier League, told me when I visited him in London. "The N.C.A.A. system is the fault line. *I understand that it is good for a person's development to go to university, but* it's not the way the world develops players.""

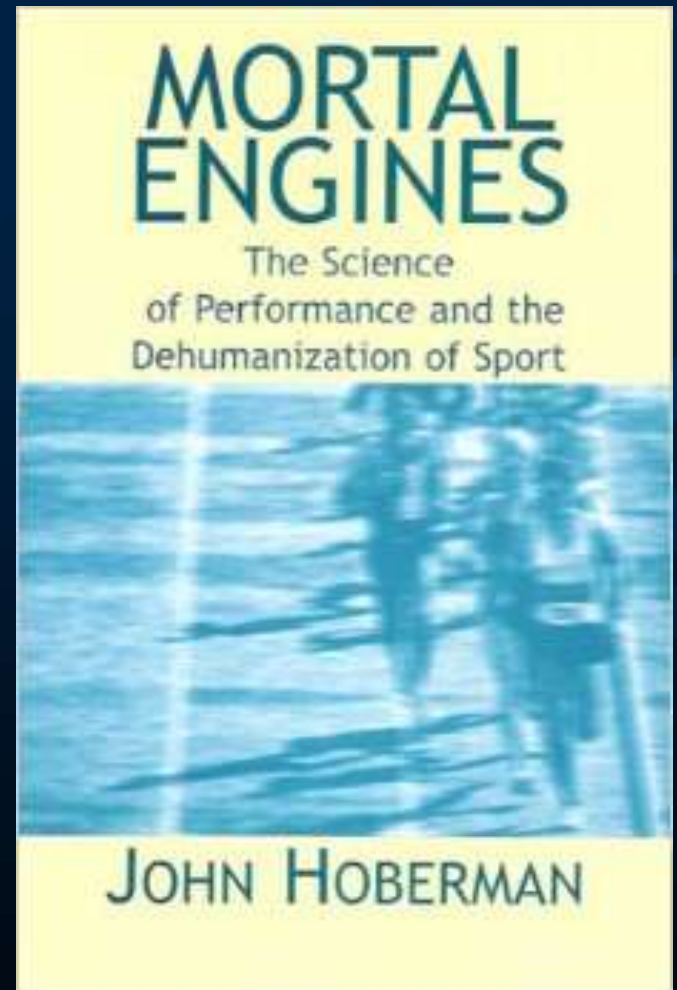- From Sokolove (2010):
'How a Soccer Star is Made'

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People vs Performance?

"It is my view that the comprehensive technologizing of high performance sport contains, and in some ways conceals, an agenda for human development for which high-performance athletes serve as ideal models. It is also my opinion that this anthropological agenda is a sinister one that transcends, even as it includes, the cultivation of certain body-types for sportive purposes. High-performance sport has become an exercise in human engineering that aims at producing not simply an athletic type, but a human type as well."

- Hoberman (1988, p. 203)

MORTAL ENGINES
The Science of Performance and the Dehumanization of Sport

JOHN HOBERMAN

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There is not just one pathway to elite player development!

"To date, researchers have revealed at least three main pathways or models detailing how these activities are engaged in by elite athletes from childhood to late adolescence. The pathways are characterised by the amount of time spent in practice, play and competition activity in one or more sports. These pathways are termed early specialisation, early diversification and early engagement."

The developmental activities of elite soccer players aged under-16 years from Brazil, England, France, Ghana, Mexico, Portugal and Sweden

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Abstract
The developmental activities of 328 elite soccer players aged under-16 years from Brazil, England, France, Ghana, Mexico, Portugal and Sweden were examined using retrospective recall in a cross-sectional research design. The activities were compared to the early diversification, early specialisation, and early engagement pathways. Players started their involvement in soccer at approximately 5 years of age. During childhood, they engaged in soccer practice for a mean value of 185.7, $s = 124.0$ h · year^{-1}, in soccer play for 186.0, $s = 125.3$ h · year^{-1}, and in soccer competition for 37.1, $s = 28.9$ h · year^{-1}. A mean value of 2.3, $s = 1.6$ sports additional to soccer were engaged in by 229 players during childhood. Players started their participation in an elite training academy at 11 to 12 years of age. During adolescence, they engaged in soccer practice for a mean value of 411.9, $s = 184.3$ h · year^{-1}, in soccer play for 159.7, $s = 195.0$ h · year^{-1}, and in soccer competition for 66.9, $s = 48.8$ h · year^{-1}. A mean value of 2.5, $s = 1.8$ sports other than soccer were engaged in by 132 players during this period. There were some relatively minor differences between countries, but generally the developmental activities of the players followed a mixture of the early engagement and specialisation pathways, rather than early diversification.

Table I. Milestones in years of age achieved by elite soccer players aged 16 years from Brazil, England, France, Ghana, Portugal, and Mexico.

	Start age in soccer	Start age in supervised training	Start age in leagues	Start age in academies	Hours in soccer by under-16 age group
Brazil	4.94 ± 1.38	7.78 ± 1.75	9.56 ± 1.62	13.16 ± 1.38	4118.68 ± 1533.67
England	4.47 ± 1.44	6.24 ± 1.25	7.45 ± 1.23	10.06 ± 2.26	4306.84 ± 1436.82
France	5.32 ± 1.11	6.48 ± 1.31	8.66 ± 1.14	12.90 ± 0.42	3890.08 ± 1301.01
Ghana	5.50 ± 1.43	9.43 ± 1.62	11.14 ± 1.24	12.79 ± 0.88	4588.11 ± 1608.78
Mexico	5.58 ± 1.47	7.12 ± 2.08	8.46 ± 2.67	12.94 ± 1.56	5449.14 ± 1909.25
Portugal	4.30 ± 1.37	6.62 ± 1.59	8.26 ± 1.19	8.30 ± 1.67	4438.65 ± 1895.46
Sweden	4.29 ± 1.04	5.95 ± 1.89	8.12 ± 2.08	13.82 ± 2.55	5095.39 ± 1949.34
Combined	4.88 ± 1.41	6.93 ± 1.82	8.65 ± 1.95	11.95 ± 2.56	4553.09 ± 1748.82

Table II. The number of other sports engaged in and the number of players who engaged in them during childhood and adolescence in each country.

	Childhood		Adolescence	
	No of other sports	No. of players	No. of other sports	No. of players
Brazil	1.40 ± 0.69	45	1.32 ± 0.67	19
England	4.40 ± 1.55	43	4.16 ± 1.70	43
France	1.72 ± 1.27	18	2 ± 0	2
Ghana	1.91 ± 1.13	23	1.72 ± 0.90	18
Mexico	1.73 ± 1.47	30	2.25 ± 1.77	12
Portugal	1.66 ± 0.72	29	1.33 ± 0.71	9
Sweden	2.54 ± 1. 61	41	1.86 ± 1.22	29
Combined	2.32 ± 1.63	229	2.52 ± 1.76	132

Table III. The type of other sports engaged in and the number of players who engaged in them.

Type of sport	No. of players
Athletics	80
Swimming	62
Basketball	44
Table tennis	37
Tennis	33
Handball	32
Volleyball	28
Judo/karate	29
Golf	28
Snooker/pool	23
Cycling	22

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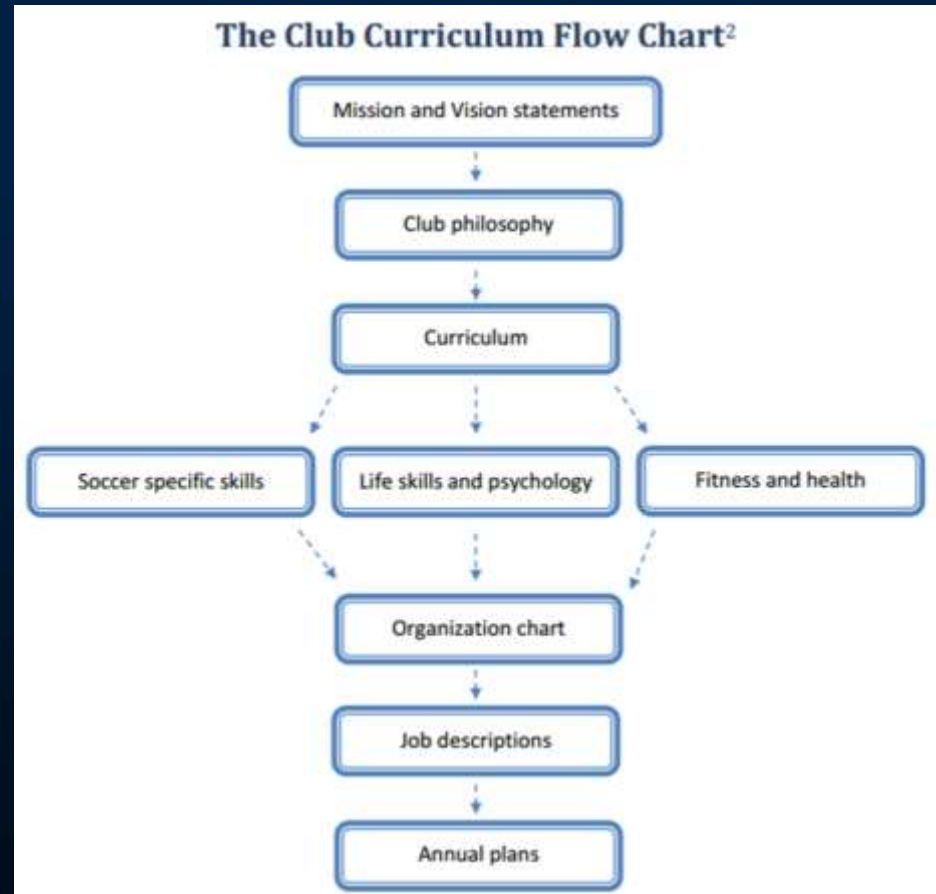
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The Multiple Meanings of "Youth Development"?

For your club or team, what percentage of the emphasis is on:

- 'soccer specific skills'?
- 'life skills and psychology'?
- 'fitness and health'?

What percentage of your time with players?

What does that time look like?

The Club Curriculum Flow Chart[2]

Mission and Vision statements → Club philosophy → Curriculum → Soccer specific skills / Life skills and psychology / Fitness and health → Organization chart → Job descriptions → Annual plans

Losing Ground
Youth aged 6 through 18 participating in organized sports

	2008	2012	Change
Tackle football	3.26 million	3.08	−5.4%
Soccer	7.11	6.61	−7.1%
Baseball	6.04	5.61	−7.2%
Basketball	7.59	6.95	−8.3%
Ice hockey	0.33	0.55	+64.0%
Lacrosse	0.30	0.77	+158.1%

Source: SFIA/Physical Activity Council survey of nearly 70,000 households and individual

The Wall Street Journal

Why does this matter? As the science of performance gets better, the number of youth participants is going down!
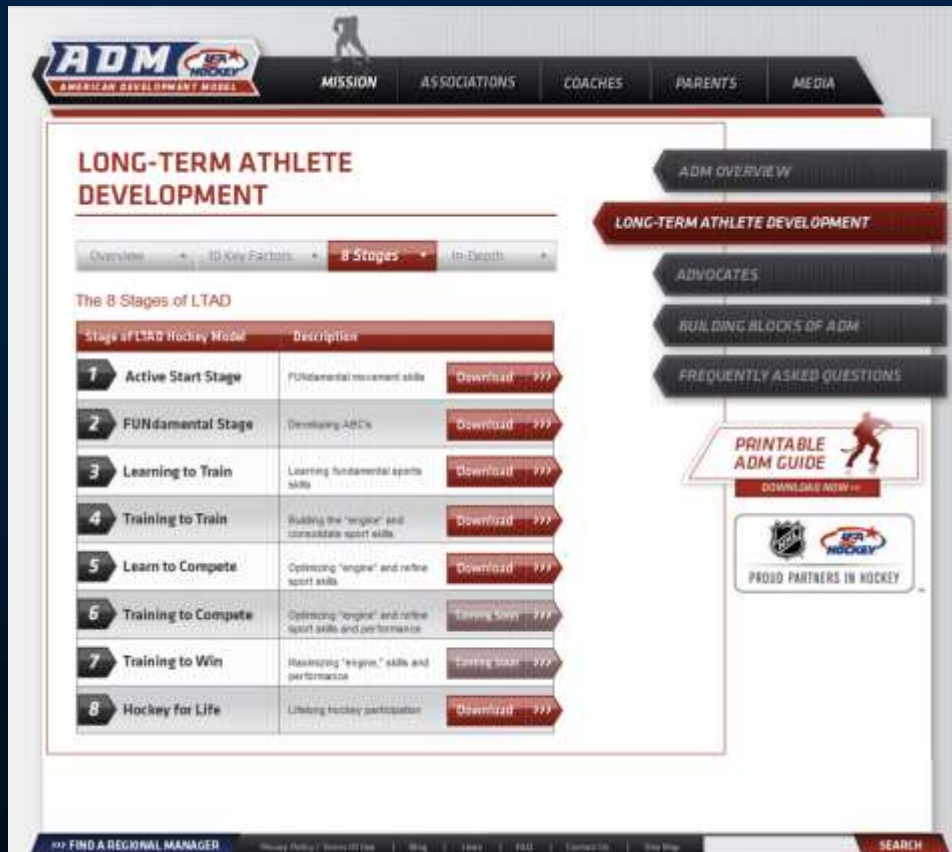
Slowing Down

Percentage of U.S. youths involved in no physical activity over a 12-month period.

→ Ages 6-12
→ Ages 13-17
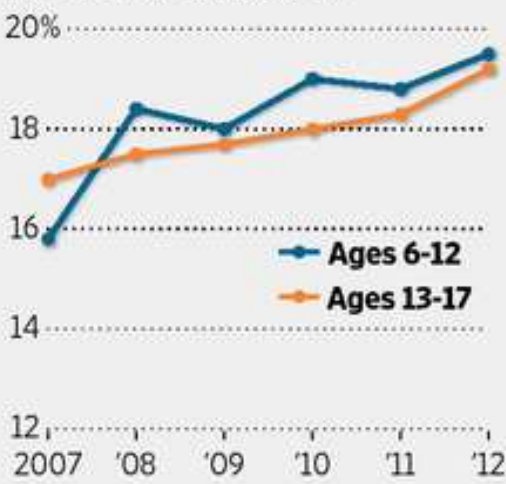
Source: SFIA/Physical Activity Council survey of nearly 70,000 households and individuals

The Wall Street Journal

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So, why is youth hockey growing?

"If we can change how we view kids and hockey – if we can let kids act like kids and develop at an appropriate pace – we can improve a lot more than just the quality of youth hockey. We'll have better kids."

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

LTAD STAGES

8 **Hockey for Life**

7 **Training to Win**
19+ Junior (NCAA, NHL)

6 **Training to Compete**
Junior (NCAA)

5 **Learning to Compete**
18 and under (Midgets)

4 **Training to Train**
15–16 and under (Midgets) / 13–14 and under (Bantams)

3 **Learning to Train**
12 and under (Peewees) / 10 and under (Squirts)

2 **FUNdamentals**
8 and under (Mites) / 6 and under (Mites)

1 **Active Start**
6 and under

"We should always strive to do the right things for kids and the American Development Model does just that. I think as hockey has evolved in our country, coaches and parents have certainly tried to do the right thing in regard to development. But we haven't had a national blueprint for associations to use – something that is based on solid research – until now. This is a major step forward and USA Hockey is to be commended for its leadership."

RON WILSON
2010 U.S. Olympic Men's Hockey Coach
7th All-Time Winningest Coach in NHL History

The ADM utilizes long-term athlete development (LTAD) principles as its framework. LTAD principles can be used as a basis on which to make our existing systems and structures more consistent. Developed by internationally renowned coach educator Istvan Balyi, and adapted to ice hockey by USA Hockey, the principles of LTAD are rooted in successful programs throughout the world.

This is a great opportunity to change the way we go about developing hockey potential.

One of the first things that USA Hockey did when beginning this project was to look closely at the statistics related to player development – specifically the skill development time each player has when in both a practice setting and a game setting. When viewed from the perspective of how kids learn the number of repetitions of specific skills and situations that occur in practice versus a game, we quickly learned where players have a chance to develop the most: practice. So a model was created that valued practice and proper training above all else. This isn't to say that the

ADM is about taking the fun out of hockey, quite the contrary. Practices can and should be fun, especially if the kids are all playing together and having a blast with a game that they love. The more they play it, the better chance that they'll love it. And when you combine a passion for the game with increased puck time, kids will start to excel at it. Play, love, excel. That's the ADM.

As research was conducted in developing the ADM, it became apparent that critical areas in our system were neglecting kids at a very early age. As ch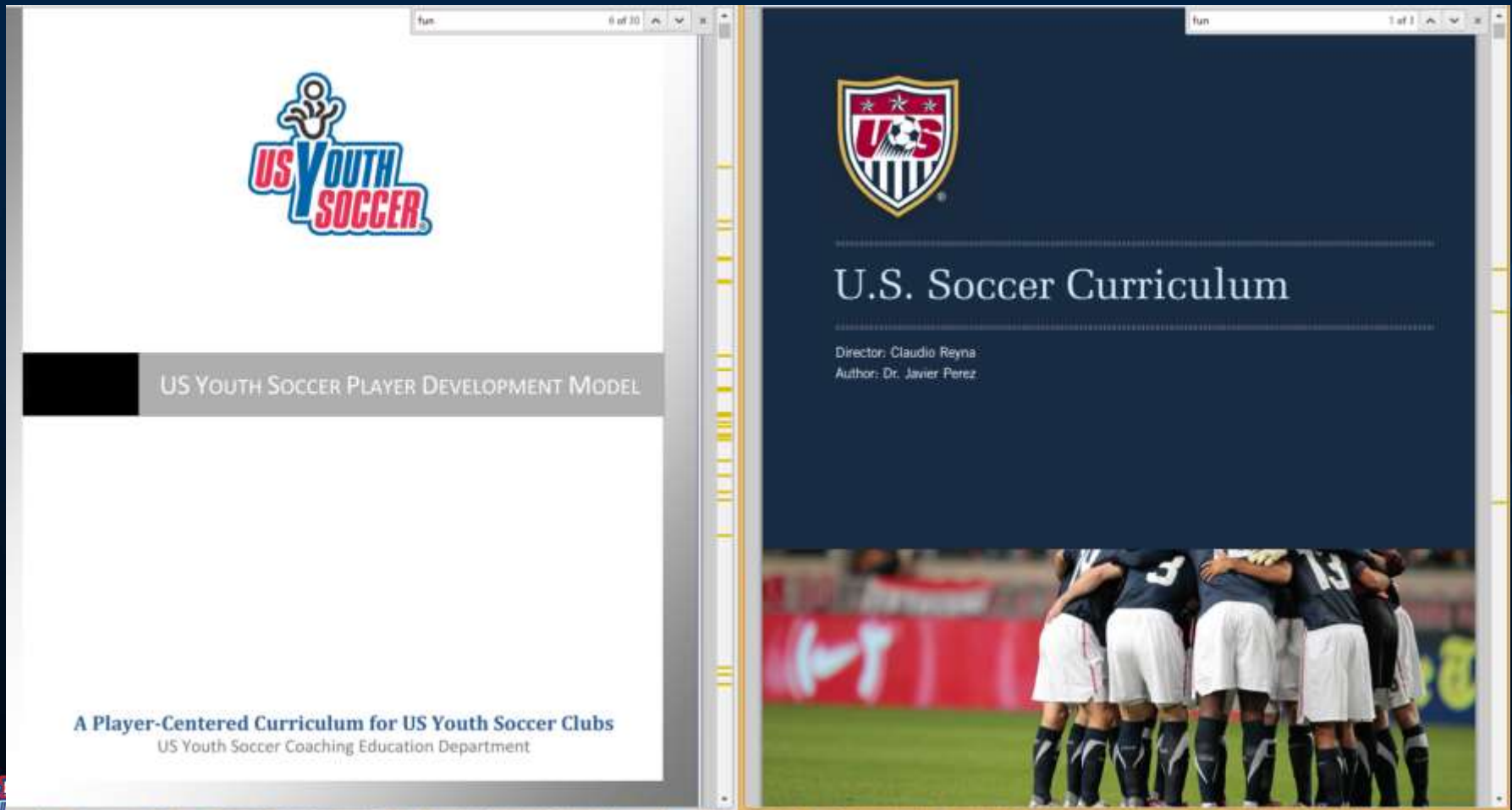ildren mature, they each progress through the same development stages. And certain aspects of these stages must be addressed at the appropriate points along the development curve in order for our children to reach their genetic potential. Maximum development occurs through age-appropriate structure and content. Without developing skills and certain physical and mental

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Potential points of symbiosis between talent development and human development models?

Examples:

- Encourage broad motor skill / athletic development at early ages (avoid early specialization)
- Accommodate maturational differences by making experiences 'age appropriate'
- Increase opportunities and 'social capital'
- Consider the whole person in a way that minimizes the potential for burnout
- Cultivate intrinsic motivation and a passion for the game (ie, make sure kids have fun!)
- Develop life skills and character

Cultivate intrinsic motivation and a passion for the game (ie, make sure kids have fun!)
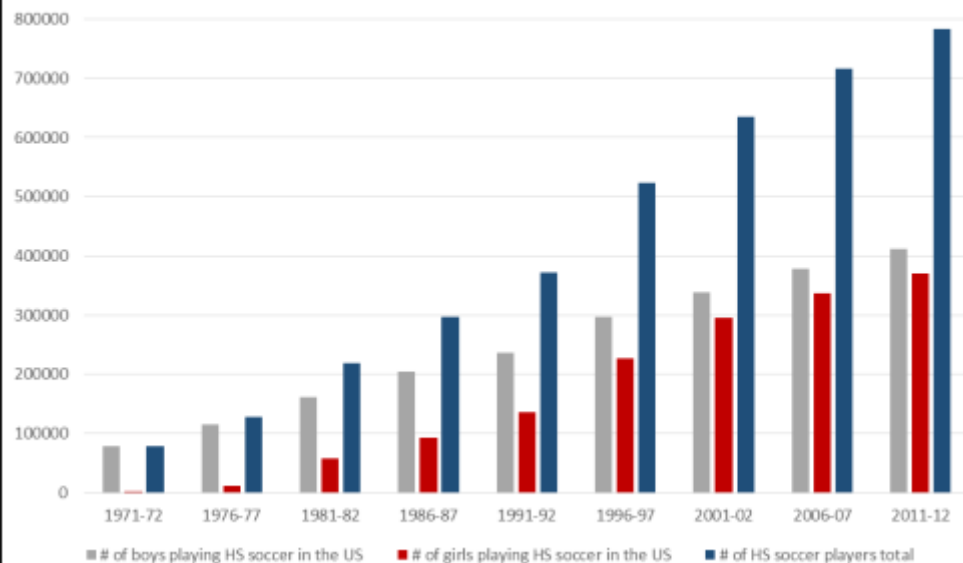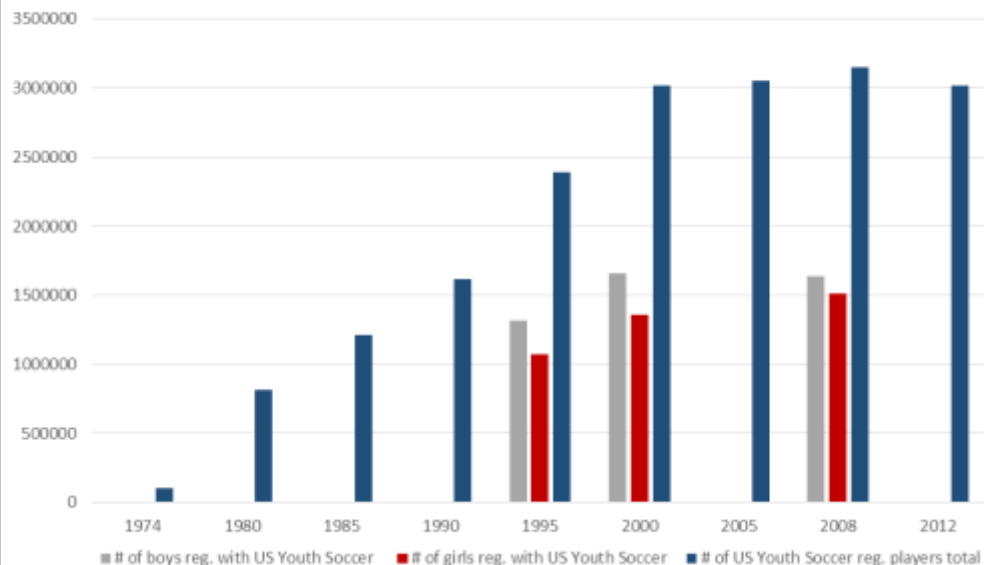
Why players quit?

Based on Sabo (2007) survey for the Women's Sport Foundation

WHY STUDENTS QUIT A TEAM SPORT

GIRLS

I WAS NOT HAVING FUN **38%**

I WANTED TO FOCUS MORE ON STUDYING AND **36% GRADES**

27% I HAD A HEALTH PROBLEM OR INJURY

I WANTED TO FOCUS MORE ON OTHER **22%** CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

18% I DID NOT LIKE OR GET ALONG WITH THE COACH

16% I DID NOT LIKE OR GET ALONG WITH TEAMMATES

15% I WAS NOT A GOOD ENOUGH PLAYER

14% MY FAMILY WORRIED ABOUT ME GETTING INJURED

BOYS

I WAS NOT HAVING FUN **39%**

29% I HAD A HEALTH PROBLEM OR INJURY

I WANTED TO FOCUS MORE ON STUDYING AND GRADES **26%**

22% I DID NOT LIKE OR GET ALONG WITH THE COACH

18% I DID NOT LIKE OR GET ALONG WITH TEAMMATES

15% I WAS NOT A GOOD ENOUGH PLAYER

12% MY FAMILY WORRIED ABOUT ME GETTING INJURED
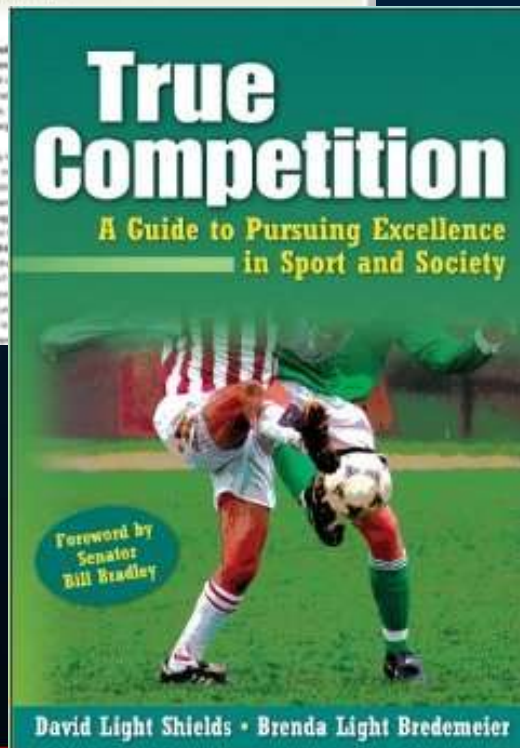
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Number of US High School Soccer players

Number of registered US Youth Soccer / Club players

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Developing life skills and character…

A Conversation with David Shields

True Competition

A Guide to Pursuing Excellence in Sport and Society

Foreword by Senator Bill Bradley

David Light Shields • Brenda Light Bredemeier

"At its core, sport is an odd blending of play and work, of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, of 'it's just a game', and 'life's a game'. Under these conflicting tensions and pulls, it is not surprising that a moral leniency that is legitimated, in part, by the playful, nonserious nature of sport is stretched beyond its appropriate bounds. One can hide seriousness under the cloak of play. The egocentrism of the game provides an easy rationalization of all manner of egocentric moral distortion."

-- David Shields

Making teams 'communities of character' by:

Building a sense of community through democratic leadership.

Developing a task / mastery-oriented environment.

Motivational – Goal Orientation

Task / mastery-oriented:

- **Improvement focus**

- **Athlete receives positive reinforcement for**
  - working hard,
  - demonstrating improvement,
  - helping others learn, and
  - believing that each player's contribution is important.

Ego-oriented:

- **Outcome focus**

- **Athlete receives positive reinforcement for performing well and competing aggressively with other players.**

- **Athletes are punished for mistakes.**

- **Most attention is given to high-ability (star) athletes.**

For sports to build 'life skills' and 'social character' that applies outside of sport settings:

Life skills should be have explicit points of *integration* within the sports context (not just an assumed side-benefit);

Life skills associated with sports settings should *transfer* in clear and intentional ways outside of sports settings (ie, in the workplace, home, school, etc.)

Example 1: Goal Setting

http://www.uptivity.com/blog/2014/04/02/the-key-to-performance-management-success-goal-setting/

Example 2: How to compete

Your Examples?

What works?

Have you seen or enacted successful ways of cultivating human development in contexts of player development?

Have you seen or enacted convincing ways of making that part of a team, club, or school culture?

Final thoughts...

Human development and talent development are not (necessarily) different ways of approaching 'youth development' – the best coaching combines both...

There is not just one 'best' model of player development – they always depend on cultures and opportunities (within teams, communities, and nations). Creating new cultures requires intentional reflection and effort...

Even though psychology is great, American soccer needs more people who can also coach like sociologists!

Questions? Comments?

Also – Some suggested resources that bridge human development and talent development (to which I have no direct connection):

http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/3/US_Youth_Soccer_Player_Development_Model.pdf

http://truecompetition.org/

http://www.aspenprojectplay.org/

http://www.positivecoach.org/