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## **CANADIAN SPORT FOR LIFE Talent Identification**

Talent identification (TI) is the screening of children and youth using selected tests of physical, physiological and skill attributes to identify those with potential for success in a particular sport. Previous involvement in the sport is not a prerequisite for identification.

TI assumes that there is a genetic basis underlying performance and that some individuals are born with innately better/higher capacities and/or trainability. There is good evidence of a genetic basis to performance in a number of areas relevant to sporting success including body structure, and physiological and motor attributes.

Many nations have attempted to develop methods of identifying and measuring critical variables that will predict the potential for an individual to be successful at the elite level. These evaluation methods are dependent on the complexity of the sport and the attributes that contribute to high performance in that sport. However, separation of the 'talent' component from the 'training effect' is very difficult.

Cyclic sports such as swimming and rowing may have more quantifiable parameters associated with physiological aspects of performance than interactive and team sports. Research has shown that elite swimmers tend to be taller and have longer body segments than average. The ultimate potential of an athlete is also determined by other factors such as personal environment, training conditions, developed ability, and psychological predisposition to performance.

The question to answer is: How much of an athlete's performance potential can be measured?

The future success of an individual cannot be determined simply by

their current level of ability. At any point in time, many factors affect testing results and sport performance including training experience, maturity, fitness, etc. Early performance results should not be confused with 'talent'.

However, talented players should not have big 'gaps' in their profile. Very few individuals are exceptional in every domain, but they should be at least average in all.

There are two age groups, 10-11 and 15-16, that are particularly good times to test for talent. Decisions to exclude players from development opportunities before 16 years old are inappropriate as big changes can occur between 14 and 16.

Talent development is not talent identification or talent selection. A rudimentary sport development process cannot be expected to magically produce champion athletes. For example, many very successful tennis countries are much more concerned with talent development than talent identification. It does not do much good to identify talent if the training and competitive structures are not in place to develop that talent.

Athletes should not be eliminated from opportunities if at all possible. Instead systems should be set up where there are, for example, several tiers of teams. Movement of players between the tiers should be possible. Where there is a large base level of participation, it would be more effective to focus on athlete selection for enhanced training. In disciplines where the depth is not as great, identification of talent would be required, as many potential athletes may not already participate in the sport.

For additional information visit:  
[www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)