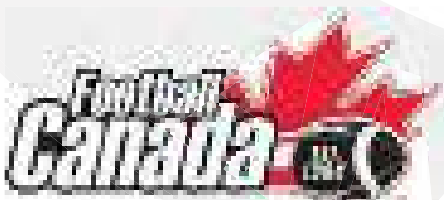


# FOR Football LIFE

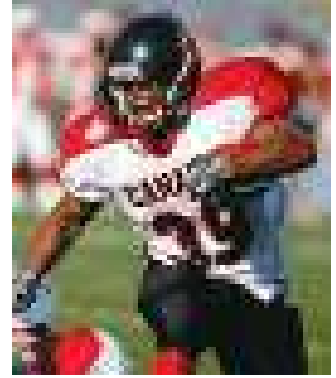
THROUGH LONG-TERM  
ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME ONE - THE OVERVIEW  
2009

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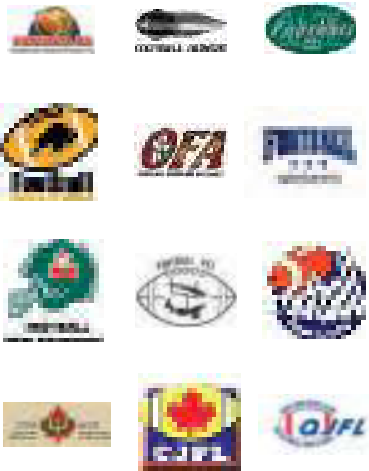
From Playground to Stadium





Football Canada acknowledges with gratitude the participation and involvement of its membership and key partners in delivering Football for Life.

Member Associations:



Key Partners:



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## The President & CEO Message to Football Canada

Canadian Sport Policy reflects a new approach to shared leadership and collaboration amongst all stakeholders to achieve the goals of enhanced participation, excellence, capacity and interaction in sport. As a result of this policy a “new” Canadian sport system has emerged... a sport system in which Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a key element.

LTAD is the result of the many gaps that have been identified in talent identification and systematic long term athlete development, and the idea that Canada has, in the past, focused on the short-term needs of athletes, rather than on the long-term health of sport and programming.

The current “Made in Canada” LTAD model is the product of many years of research and study of athlete development models world-wide. It incorporates the best development practices based on current scientific research. LTAD is built upon “a training, competition and recovery program based upon developmental age – the maturation of an individual – rather than chronological age” and it takes into consideration the unique nature of Canada’s sport system and culture.

In its quest to lead athletes to world-class results, Football Canada has begun to create its own LTAD Model. We know that LTAD gives us a framework to build a truly competitive program and its development and implementation is imperative in fostering the culture of excellence needed to drive Football Canada and its athletes to the highest level possible!

This document is an introduction to Football Canada’s LTAD. It provides the policy framework and key principles of the “LTAD”, and a preamble to the challenges and tasks that Football Canada and its member associations will face in developing a culture of excellence at the highest levels of competition, while at the same time providing the opportunity for all Canadians to enjoyable participation in one of Canada’s unique heritage sports. Meeting these two goals is not mutually exclusive as you will learn in the coming months and years.

### **Declaration of Adoption**

The member Associations of Football Canada have formally agreed that the Football Canada LTAD will provide the basis for developing football in Canada.



Barry Gunther,  
President Football Canada



Richard Munro,  
Chief Executive Officer, Football Canada



## Canadian Football: Proud Tradition, Exciting Future

Football Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) is the blueprint for athlete and football development throughout the nation. It provides direction, for all football organizations, administrators, volunteers, coaches, officials, team support personnel, athletes, and parents at all levels of development, in the three football disciplines (tackle, flag and touch) on the critical decisions that need to be made to provide each athlete with the opportunity to reach their goals and full potential in their chosen discipline.

The philosophy and principles of LTAD leads us to a new way of thinking about our programs, a way that requires us to make appropriate changes to playing rules and regulations, competition structures and schedules, training and recovery programs.

This model was created by bringing Football leaders and experts together with Football Canada staff, stakeholders, and members of the LTAD Expert Group to produce a plan based on the realities of our sport. It is the policy framework for the future development of Canadian Football by Football Canada, our provincial/territorial partners, clubs and stakeholders. The work is not finished. In the coming months we will create detailed plans to cooperatively implement the LTAD across the country. Successful implementation will result in a flourishing sport, with growth in the number of quality coaches, officials and most of all, athletes, from coast to coast to coast.

## The Global Football Family

The first games of “North American” style football were a series of international competitions in 1874 between Montreal’s McGill University and Cambridge’s Harvard University. The first two contests took place in May at Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA) and a third game was played in the fall at Montreal, Quebec (Canada).



Photo Credit: Notman Composite Photo, courtesy of McGill University Archives

The McGill-Harvard series is recounted by three sources posted below. One is a reprint of two actual game accounts from “The Gazette” in Montreal and one from “The Harvard Crimson” in Cambridge. The other source is from recollections of former McGill student Henry Joseph, who played in that first game, in a piece entitled “How the 1874 McGill-Harvard Football Games Forever Changed Football”.

North American style football has evolved greatly since those first contests. The rules of the game being played globally are the American rules and specifically the rules of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Canada, of course, has its own unique characteristics and playing rules. “American” football has grown in popularity in more than 50 countries on six continents. The sport has generated fans in countries as diverse as Australia, South Korea and Finland.

The first “American” Football Federation outside of the United States was formed in Canada in 1884. In 1936, American Football expanded further with the emergence of the game in Japan, and in 1976 Europe founded its American Football federations.

The sport has experienced a significant expansion especially in Europe. In 1996, European Federation of American Football (EFAF) was founded.



## International Federation of American Football (IFAF)

International Federation of American Football (IFAF) was founded in 1998. Currently, there are more than 50 member country federations in IFAF, located in such diverse locations as Australia, South Korea, Finland and Argentina. IFAF cooperates closely with major US American Football organizations, such as USA Football, the National Football League (NFL), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

The goal of the organization is to be part of the international sporting community. In 2005 IFAF became a full member of the General Association of International Sports Federation (GAISF), now called "Sportaccord". IFAF is actively pursuing membership in the IOC with the objective to participate in the World Games as well as the Olympic Games and membership development. In 2007, IFAF launched a new membership development program with the mission to strengthen the quality of American Football in those federations who are in need of support and in spreading the sport in those countries where domestic structures do not exist yet.

Competitions are at the core of IFAF and the basis for friendly relationships between countries and people. Currently, IFAF conducts three major world championship events (Senior Men's Tackle Football, Junior Men's Tackle Football & Senior Men's & Women's Flag Football). IFAF will introduce other World Championships in years to come, the most notable will be the Senior Women's World Tackle Championship in 2010.

## Football Canada and the IFAF

Canada joined IFAF in 2004 and is providing leadership and expertise on several of the IFAF Committees including; Governance, Marketing, Technical, and Competition.

In 2008, Football Canada hosted its first IFAF World Championships. The Men's and Women's Senior World Flag Championships were held in St. Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Quebec where Canada won Gold in the Men's and Silver in the Women's competitions. The event returns to Canada when Ottawa hosts the 5th Senior World Flag Championships in 2010.

In Tackle Football, Canada won Silver at the 1st IFAF World Junior Men's Championship held in Canton Ohio in 2009. The Women's program is preparing for the 1st IFAF World Women's Championship to be held in Sweden. The Men's National Team is preparing to be the first Canadian representative at an IFAF Senior Men's Worlds when it competes in the 4th Championships to be held in Austria in 2011.





Figure 1 - Global Football Community

# GLOBAL FOOTBALL COMMUNITY



# CANADIAN FOOTBALL COMMUNITY



**Associate:** CFL (Professional), NFL Canada (International) Sponsor of leagues & development activities, Canadian Junior FL (National League), CFOA (National Association) & Quebec Junior FL (Regional League)

**Independent:** Canadian School Sports Federation, Associations (Tackle, Flag & Touch), Leagues, Teams

**Program Stakeholders:** Boys & Girls Club of Ontario, Canadian Aboriginal Sport Circle, Special Olympics Association (PEI)



## How Did We Get Here: Canadian Sport Policy

An updated Canadian Sport Policy was published by the Canadian Federal government in 2002. It presented a powerful vision for sport in Canada. The policy was two years in the making and reflects the interest and commitment of 14 government jurisdictions, the Canadian sport community and countless organizations and agencies that influence and benefit from sport in Canada.

The Vision of the "Policy" is to have a dynamic and leading-edge sport environment that enables all Canadians to experience and enjoy involvement in sport to the extent of their abilities and interests and, for increasing numbers, to perform consistently and successfully at the highest competitive levels.

Further, the "Policy" challenges all stakeholders in sport to create and support an integrated athlete/participant-centered model that ensures the seamless progress of athletes/participants to the full extent of their abilities and interests.

## The four goals of the Canadian Sport Policy:

- Enhanced Participation - sport for all Canadians
- Enhanced Excellence - bringing home the gold
- Enhanced Capacity - to support enhanced participation and excellence
- Enhanced Interaction - amongst all Stakeholders

"The future of sport in Canada depends on strong leadership, extensive governmental collaboration, and co-operation with the sport communities built on partnerships, planning, and transparency".

The leadership must come from all who want sport to improve - athletes/participants, coaches, officials, volunteers, sport organizations, private enterprises, communities, the provincial/ territorial governments and their municipal and educational administrations, and the federal government.

Federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers of Sport endorsed the "Canadian Sport for Life through LTAD" concept in 2004 and are working towards implementing the principles of LTAD within their respective jurisdictions.

## Reference Publications

The following three publications have been published to support the development of the LTAD:

- Canadian Sport for Life (Through Long Term Athlete Development)
- No Accidental Champions (LTAD for Athletes with a Disability)
- Developing Physical Literacy (A Guide for Parents of Children Ages 0 to 12)

**You are encouraged to read these documents as they lay the foundation for Football's LTAD.**

# Football Canada's Role As The National Sport Organization

## MISSION

As the National Sport Organization, Football Canada's mission is "to initiate, sustain, and encourage programs, services and activities targeted at all levels, from the novice to the elite, which foster safe and ethical participation in the three disciplines (tackle, flag and touch) of amateur football."

## VALUES

Football Canada believes in and promotes the following values:

- Safety first
- Athlete centered
- Pursuing excellence
- Achieving equity and fairness
- Growth and development oriented
- Fostering a fun and safe environment
- Advancing accessibility to all Canadians
- Practicing responsibility and accountability
- Encouraging sportsmanship and ethical participation

## COMMITMENTS

Football Canada is committed (but not limited) to:

- Athlete centered sports programs
- Harassment and abuse free environment
- Fair play code
- Gender equity and accountability
- Access for persons with a disability
- Doping-free environment
- Appeals process
- Protection of personal information
- Code of ethics and code of conduct
- Official language policy
- Implementation of Long Term Athlete Development





## Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD)

Football Canada's LTAD model is a nine stage training, competition and recovery program that is based on developmental rather than chronological age. LTAD provides a general framework for athlete development that pays specific attention to growth, maturation and development, trainability, and sports system alignment and integration. More information on LTAD can be found in "Canadian Sport for Life".

LTAD is athlete centered, coach driven, and administration, sport science and sponsor supported. More specifically, LTAD:

1. Is based on the physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive development of children and adolescents. Each stage reflects a different point in athlete development.
2. Ensures physical literacy<sup>1</sup> upon which excellence can be built.
  - o Builds physical literacy in all children, from early childhood to late adolescence by promoting quality daily physical activity in the schools and a common approach to developing physical abilities through community recreation and elite sport programs.
  - o Recognizes the need to involve all Canadians in LTAD, including athletes with a disability.
3. Ensures that optimal training, competition, and recovery programs are provided throughout an athlete's career. Provides an optimal competition structure for the various stages of an athlete's development.
4. Has an impact on the entire sport continuum, including participants, parents, coaches, schools, clubs, community recreation programs, provincial sport organizations (PSOs), national sport organizations (NSOs), sport science specialists, municipalities, and several government ministries and departments (particularly but not exclusively in the portfolios of health and education) at the provincial/territorial and federal levels.
5. Integrates elite sport, community sport and recreation, scholastic sport, and physical education in schools.
6. Is 'Made in Canada', recognizing international best practices, research, and normative data.
7. Supports the four goals of the Canadian Sport Policy — Enhanced Participation, Enhanced Excellence, Enhanced Capacity, and Enhanced Interaction — and reflects a commitment to contribute to the achievement of these goals.
8. Promotes a healthy, physically literate nation whose citizens participate in lifelong physical activity.

<sup>1</sup>Physical literacy refers to competency in fundamental motor skills and fundamental sport skills.

## Benefits Of LTAD

### LTAD provides the following benefits:

- Establishes a foundation and philosophy for football development and a vehicle for change
- Establishes an athlete-centered focus from a child's first involvement in sport to the transition to lifelong physical activity or other sport related activities
- Integrates the needs of athletes with a disability into the design and delivery of sport programs
- Provides a framework for reviewing current practices, developing new initiatives, and standardizing programs
- Provides a clear development pathway from playground to stadium and on to being active for life
- Identifies the gaps in football's sport system and provides guidelines for problem solving
- Provides guidelines for planning for optimal performance for all stages of athlete development
- Provides parents with a clear understanding of football's programs and activities
- Provides key partners with a coordinated structure and plan for change
- Identifies and engages key stakeholders in delivering change
- Provides an aligned and integrated model for the three disciplines of football, tackle, flag and touch including:
  - LTAD — physical, technical, tactical, mental and life
  - Long-term coaching development
  - Long-term officiating development
  - Sport and physical activity programs and services in NSO's, PSO's, recreational organizations, clubs, and schools



## Understanding LTAD

LTAD is the new wave in athlete development based on the combination of sport science research with experience in working with athletes and coaches to develop and implement a comprehensive set of development principles. LTAD takes planning of athlete training, recovery, nutrition, and other elements of preparation to a new level, by integrating preparation over an entire career or lifetime, and considering the holistic development of the individual.

Figure 2 - Football for Life (Way and Swan 2009)



## Female Football

The popularity of Female Football continues to grow in Canada and on an international scale. There are a number of female tackle leagues as well as flag and touch.

The Maritime Women's Tackle Football League has operated since 2004 and consists of four teams. The Montreal Blitz is the only Canadian female tackle football team that competes in the US based Independent Women's Football League and has recently been crowned 2008 IWFL North American Champions, Tier Two.

The first Canadian high school all girls tackle football league is a seven team spring league in Northern Alberta. Additionally female tackle teams from Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg compete regularly against each other.



Canada won the World U-15 Flag Championship in 2007 with a co-ed team-one of the few nations to field a mixed team and in 2008 at the World Flag Championship, Canada took silver in the female division. The Women's program is now preparing for the 1st IFAF World Women's Championship to be held in Sweden in 2010.

Football Canada recognizes this LTAD as presented is only the first step in addressing the unique needs of female football players and there is a urgent need to develop a female specific LTAD. It will highlight growth and development of females so they can develop to their full potential as athletes, then become coaches, officials and leaders in football. Football Canada will continue to act on this to further build interest in and the capacity for Female Football.

## Football for Athletes with a Disability

Between 10% and 14% of Canadians have a disability, and for optimum health, it is essential that they also are fully engaged and supported in physical activity. Canadians with a disability also aspire to reach the highest levels of sport performance. They require a sport system to help them achieve their goals.

Development of athletes with a disability requires two new stages in addition to the 9 stages in the able-bodied Football LTAD. These stages are called **Awareness and First Contact / Recruitment**. Sports only have one opportunity to create a positive environment for perspective athletes with a disability. Research has shown that if that first experience is not positive, they may be lost to the sport and to a healthy lifestyle.

Athletes with an intellectual disability pass through the same of developmental stages as able-bodied athletes although the ages and rates of progress will differ. Football Canada has been working in partnership with Special Olympics to develop a program for “athletes with an intellectual disability”.

Consideration of mental, social, and emotional development is particularly important when working with athletes with an intellectual disability and the development characteristics and implications for coaches (Canadian Sport for Life) need to be interpreted in light of each athlete’s mental and developmental age.

Football Canada through their Flag Football Program continues to work to meet the specific needs and goals of Athletes With a Disability so that they can pursue the sport at both a recreational and competitive level. Traditional, modified, and unified rules for Flag Football and low organized games can be adapted to suit the particular and the degree of the disability. Pilot projects have been run with Special Olympics PEI and the Active Living Alliance in meeting these challenges.

Photo Credit: Richard Douillette, Special Olympics PEI





# The 10 Key Factors of LTAD

## Ten key factors influencing optimal athlete development have been identified:

- **The 10-Year Rule:** Research has concluded it takes a minimum of 10 years and 10,000 hours of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. There are no short-cuts.
- **The FUNdamentals:** Basic physical literacy is the foundation for later athletic success. All athletes, regardless of their sport, are more likely to succeed if early in life they developed a wide range of movement, balance and object control skills.
- **Specialization:** Broad-based skills and abilities must be developed first. Premature specialization (prior to age 14-16) may contribute to lack of essential skill development, overuse injuries, early burnout and early retirement from sport.
- **Developmental Age:** Young athletes may be early, average or late maturers in a range of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional qualities. It is essential to base athletic training on developmental age, not on chronological age. All too often, early maturers are identified for special attention and development, while it is the late maturers who may have the greater potential to become top athletes. It is also important to recognize that the early physical maturer may not be mentally or emotionally prepared for the challenges they appear ready to take on.
- **Trainability:** Trainability is the responsiveness of individuals to training at different stages of growth and maturation. Optimal windows of trainability for the "S's" of Stamina, Strength, Speed, Skill and Suppleness occur at different times- for example, stamina and strength trainability is linked to developmental age, while speed, skill and suppleness (flexibility) are linked to chronological age.
- **Physical, Cognitive, Mental and Emotional Development:** A holistic approach to athlete development, considering all of these factors, is required for the best results. In addition to the five "S's" of physical development, five additional "S's" including Structure/stature (body type and growth), Psychology, Sustenance (adequate nutrition and rest), Schooling (and stress), and Socio-cultural factors must be considered. At any stage, over-emphasis on physical training and winning may not equip the athlete for the all challenges of high performance or for life outside sport. Developing the whole athlete, including character, ethics, and so on, will be the objective of every program.
- **Periodization:** Periodization is the organization of a training program by manipulating type, volume, intensity and frequency of training over long-term (multi-year) and annual time frames. LTAD, with its focus on lifelong development, gives a context and direction for a sound, periodized training program.
- **Competition Calendar Planning:** Optimal sport-specific competition calendars are required for all stages of LTAD. Too much competition, especially at younger ages, can detract from development of skills and fitness. Modifying the competition calendar to meet athlete development needs, while it may create logistic challenges, is essential to LTAD.
- **System Alignment and Integration:** The best results can only be achieved when all organizations and individuals involved in sport are working together in an integrated, coordinated way to support athlete development and success. Coaches, other sport leaders, facilities, organizations and competitions must work together to create an environment that supports athlete development. The LTAD plan must become the focus of all Football leaders and organizations.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Sport is continuously evolving. Our plans and our organizations must adapt continuously to innovations, research and changes in the sport environment. New research and practical experience will constantly enrich our understanding and approach to LTAD.

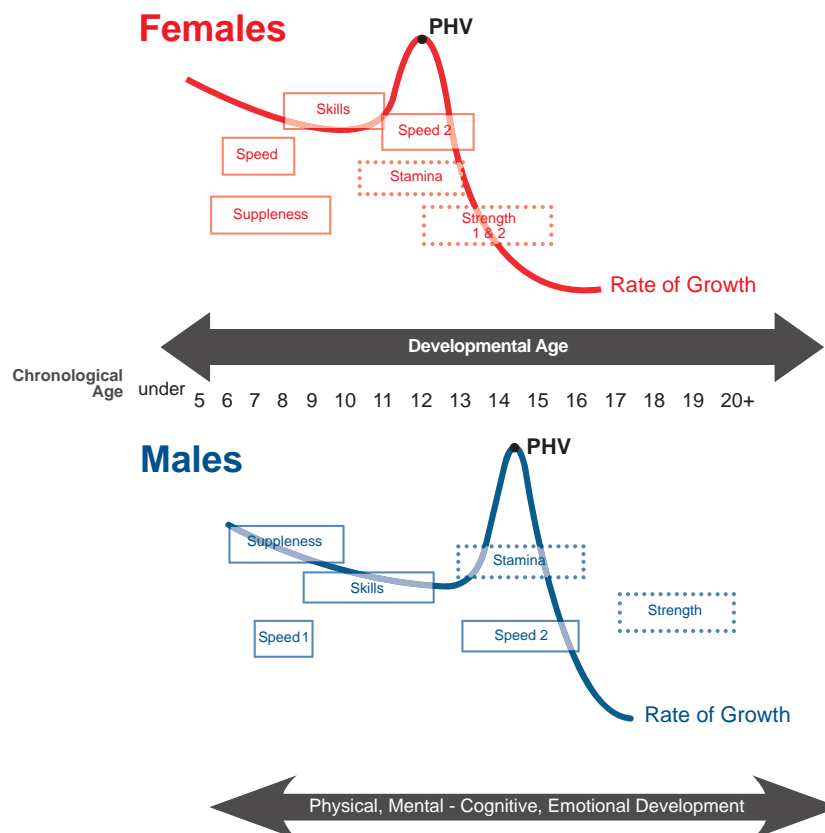


## Five S's of Training and Performance Sensitive Periods for Development

The developmental stages are critical for young athletes. The time of Peak Height Velocity (PHV), the maximum rate of growth during the adolescent growth spurt, represents an optimal "window" for training some of the physical "S's" of stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness. It is essential that the introduction of this training is based on developmental age, not chronological age. Development occurs at different times for different young athletes. If the window is missed, the athlete may not develop to full potential. This underlines the importance of youth recruitment, age-appropriate programs, and optimal coaching and competition calendars in Football. Coaches, especially, must have the expertise to identify the athlete's stage and the programs and systems that will allow the athlete to train and compete appropriately to his or her potential. However, even if windows are missed, all systems are always trainable. The Five Basic S's of Training and Performance are Stamina (Endurance), Strength, Speed, Skill, and Suppleness (Flexibility). (Dick, 1985)

- **Stamina (Endurance);** The optimal window of trainability occurs at the onset of PHV. Aerobic capacity training is recommended before athletes reach PHV. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate decelerates.
- **Strength;** The optimal window of trainability for girls is immediately after PHV or at the onset of the menarche, while for boys it is 12 to 18 months after PHV.
- **Speed;** For boys, the first speed training window occurs between the ages of 7 and 9 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 13 and 16. For girls, the first speed training window occurs between the ages of 6 and 8 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 11 and 13 years.
- **Skill;** The window for optimal skill training for boys is between the ages of 9 and 12 and between the ages of 8 and 11 for girls.
- **Suppleness (Flexibility);** The optimal window of trainability for suppleness for both genders occurs between the ages of 6 and 10. Special attention should be paid to flexibility during PHV.

Figure 3 - Optimal Windows of Trainability (Balyi and Way, 2005)



## Five More S's of Training and Performance

Holistic athlete development depends on a balanced approach to training which lays a solid foundation for each successive stage. Reference has already been made to the first five "S's" of physical development: Stamina (endurance), Strength, Speed, Skill and Suppleness (flexibility). The optimal development of these skills cannot occur without attention to five more "S's": Structure/stature (body type and growth), Psychology, Sustenance (adequate nutrition and rest), Schooling (or Stress), and Sociocultural factors.

- Structure/stature:** The tracking of stature as a guide to developmental age allows planning to address the critical or sensitive periods of physical (endurance, strength, speed and flexibility) and skill development. Diagnostics to identify strength and weaknesses is critical to factor 'structure' properly into training plans.
- Psychology:** Ultimately, the planning, implementing, and refining of mental strategies for high-level competition will have a large impact on podium performances. Consequently, the mental training program is critical at all stages of LTAD, as dealing with success and failure will determine whether the athlete continues in the sport and physical activity in general.
- Sustenance:** Sustenance recognizes a broad range of components with the central theme of replenishing the body, including nutrition, hydration, rest, sleep, and regeneration, all of which need to be applied differently to training (life) plans depending on the stage of LTAD. Underlying sustenance is the need for optimal recovery management: the athlete moves to a 24/7 model which places a high degree of importance on the individual's activities away from the field of play. To achieve proper sustenance and recovery, the coach and/or parent must monitor recovery through the identification of fatigue.
- Schooling (or Stress):** When designing training programs for young athletes, the demands of school must be considered. This is not only limited to the demands placed by school sports or physical education classes but includes integrating school academic loads, duties, timing of exams and other stresses. For mature athletes, a similar approach must be taken to work. When possible, training camps and competition tours should compliment, not conflict, with the timing of major academic or work events. Overstress (the stress of life events over and above sport training) should be monitored carefully. Interference from other school sports should be minimized, and communication between coaches responsible for delivering the training and competition programs, is essential. Parents need to work together with coaches and teachers.
- Socio-cultural:** Socialization through sport participation can involve broadening of perspective, including ethnicity awareness and national diversity. Within the travel schedule, recovery can include education related to the competition location, including history, geography, architecture, cuisine, literature, music, and visual arts. Proper annual planning can allow sport to offer much more than simply commuting between hotel room and field of play. Sport socialization also must address sport subculture to ensure general societal values and norms will be internalized via sport participation. As well, coaches and parents must guard against group dynamics which create a culture of abuse or bullying. Ethics training should be integrated into training and competition plans at all stages of LTAD. Overall, socio-cultural activity does not interfere with competition activities: It is a positive contribution to the development of the person and the athlete.



## A Word About Physical Literacy

**Physical Literacy refers to competency in fundamental movement and fundamental sport skills.**

Physical Literacy should be developed before the onset of the adolescent growth spurt. It is developed during the first three stages of Football's LTAD, meaning the time from birth to the start of adolescence; approximately age 11 for girls and 12 for boys. There is additional important information in the publication NO ACCIDENTAL CHAMPIONS regarding this very important developmental stage for athletes with a disability.

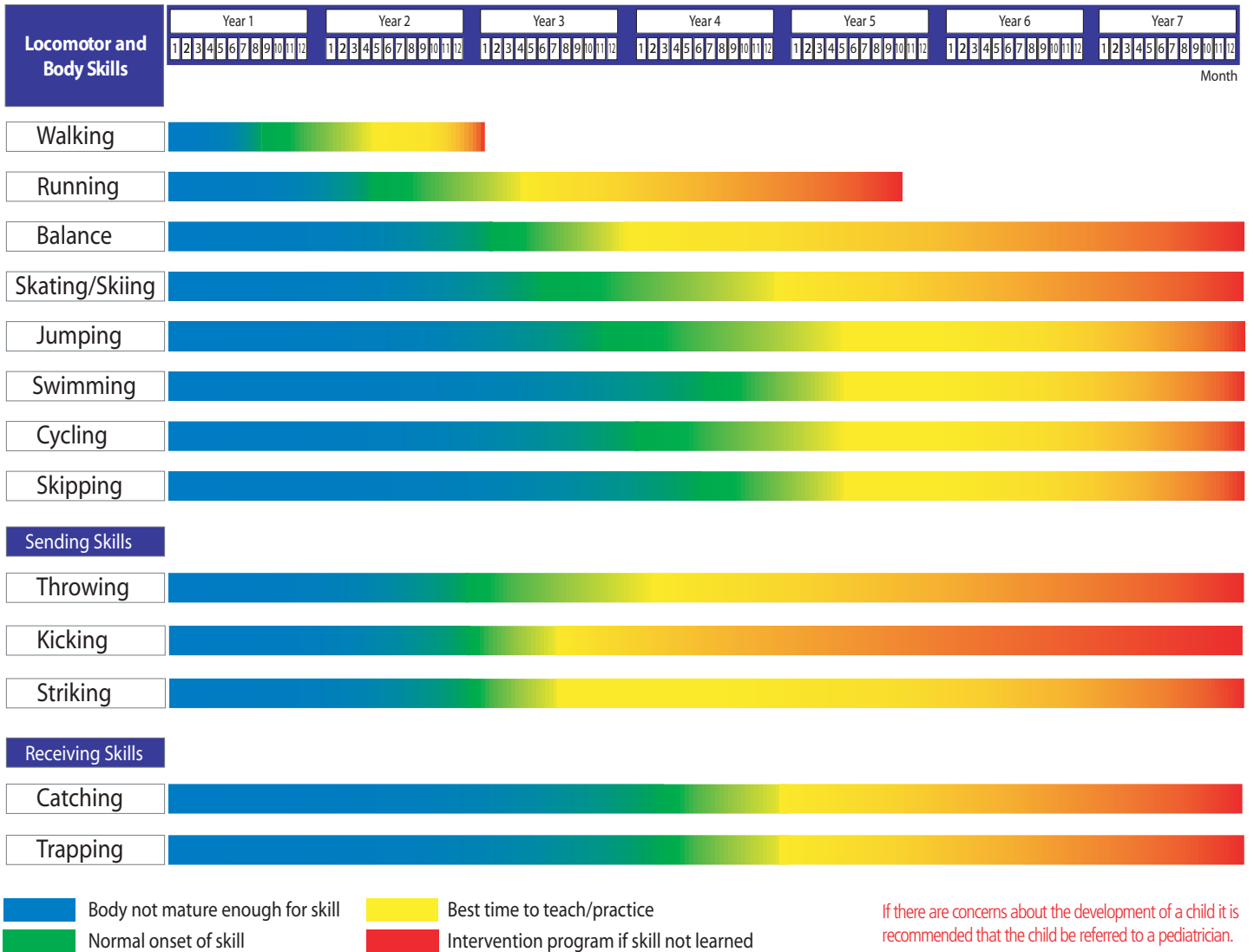
To become physically literate children need to master fundamental movement and fundamental sport skills. However, this mastery does not come all at once and we need to remember that children are not just "adults in miniature". For almost every skill the developing child needs to go through a series of developmental stages before achieving the well developed skill. The goal should be to help each child move to the next most mature version of the skill they are learning rather than pushing them to the skill the way an adult would.

### Getting the Sequence Right

For children to have success in sport either as in recreation or competitive environment, it is important that they master the fundamental movement skills before learning the fundamental sport skills. AND it is important that they master the fundamental sport skills before being introduced to specific techniques.



**Figure 4 - When and Where Children Learn and Practice Fundamental Movement Skills**  
 (excerpt adapted from 'Developing Physical Literacy' available for download at [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca))



\*Timelines based on Bressan E.S., and Rathbone, I. (2007). Fundamental Motor Skill Development. A paper prepared for Long-Term Athlete Development - Canadian Sport Centres - PacificSport

Note 1: There is tremendous variability in the normal time of onset of skills among children, and this chart should be considered ONLY as a rough guide to the sequence of development that might be expected.

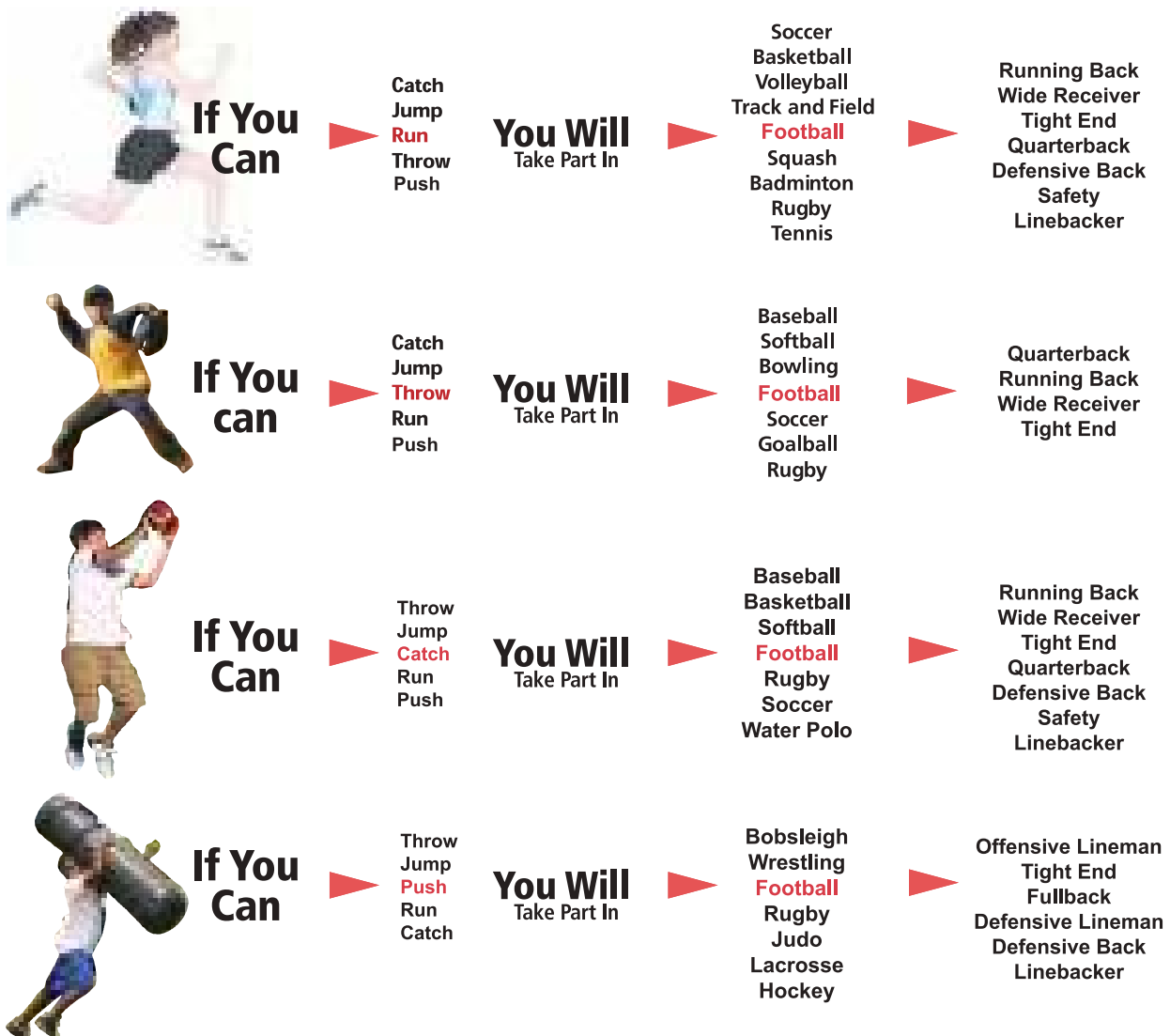
All children should be exposed to a wide range of fundamental movement skills in a wide range of settings including on-land, on ice/snow, in water, and in the air. Since agility, balance and coordination are critical, children should be given the opportunity to learn running, jumping and throwing; gymnastics; swimming; and ice/snow activities. Communities should consider establishing single programs that expose children to the whole range of skills.

## The Consequences of Missing-out on Physical Literacy

A child who misses out on developing physical literacy is at a great disadvantage. Missing out on Fundamental Movement Skills means that a child is more unlikely to choose to take part in a formal sport activity that requires proficiency in that skill, and this restricts their choice of life-long health-promoting activities and restricts their opportunities for sporting excellence.

From a very practical point of view, if the child does not develop these fundamental movement and sport skills at the appropriate time in their growth pattern, as a coach you will have to dedicate precious practice time or special training opportunities to the development of these skills.

Figure 5 - Benefits of Having Fundamental Skills



## The Football Canada LTAD Framework

Football's stages of development are grouped into a framework of Start, Skills, Specialize, Succeed and Football for Life, representing a pathway from the first exposure to Football through to the highest level of competition, and /or on to lifetime participation and enjoyment of the game.

Football in Canada typically has several entry periods. Some athletes begin early, in the FUNdamentals phase through community based programs, while a second group enters the sport at high school age. Most of those who enter football at the high school age come to the sport with some foundation of physical literacy and fitness developed in other activities. Whatever the entry point all athletes must progress developmentally from Learn to Train to Train to Win stages if they are to reach the highest level of the sport. For those who choose to participate but not pursue high performance, the Active for Life stage is open at any age.

The LTAD Model for able-bodied athletes groups the seven LTAD stages into a framework of Start, Skill, Specialize, and Succeed, plus Football for Life.



## Guiding Principles

Football is a sport for every Canadian, for life. In addition to the importance of keeping fun in football, the principles at the heart the game and this LTAD model are central to the future growth and development of the game:

Athletes and safety first;

- Fair play and respect for each individual and football
- Teamwork and shared effort
- Training and competition programs which are carefully matched to the development stage of athletes
- Quality programs delivered by knowledgeable coaches, team support personnel, officials and administrators
- Understood and supported by informed parents, sponsors and spectators

Football Canada's LTAD is based on providing the right kind of competition at the right time to promote optimal athletic development. Each of the disciplines and the modified games within each provide a unique and valuable opportunity to play the exciting game of football.

The right kind of competition matches the athletes' stage of development and the ability of the community to provide the opportunity to play football. In many communities because of a scarcity of participants, insufficient funds, facility limitations, lack of competition and/or a shortage of available expertise to administer, coach and officiate the 12 aside game, the modified tackle of 6 and 9 aside, flag 5 and 7 aside and touch 5 and 7 aside make perfect sense. Each community must assess its ability to deliver one or all of the variations of the game. Each community must assess its ability to provide the right kind of experience for its participant athletes. There is a place for all three disciplines and the modifications should be made based on the ability of the community to provide the proper learning and playing environment for the participants.

Due to the large variety of unique skills, physical attributes and abilities that are required on a 12 aside football team there is a position for every individual to contribute to the success of the team. At the highest level of tackle competition there is a premium placed on the big athlete. These athletes need the opportunity to develop a passion for the game and to develop the skills and attributes needed to play the game at the highest level. This will only happen if they get the same opportunity to play football early. Not only is the big athlete needed to compete at the highest level, the big kid needs a sport too. Football provides the opportunity

for big kids to play! Tackle Football is one of the few sports where the big youngster can play, contribute to the team effort and gain all the benefits of sport participation which otherwise may not happen.

While the modified tackle games and flag and touch have a rightful place to stand as independent activities throughout the Football for Life continuum, they are not intended to replace the traditional 12 aside tackle game. The modified tackle games provide on a smaller scale all the enjoyment, thrills and entertainment of the 12 aside game, yet it trains the player on the fundamentals and rudiments of the more complex 12 aside tackle game. The objective is to provide everyone who wishes to play football the opportunity to do so, especially where there are limitations to play 12 aside tackle.

**Pages 22-31 show the highlights of Football's LTAD model, stage by stage.**

Remember that while every athlete must progress through every stage to the level to which they aspire, every athlete is also an individual. All abilities are always trainable. **These objectives and benchmarks are guidelines for development, not a means to select or reject individual participants. Everyone in a leadership role must know, recognize and support the individual growth of each athlete.**







## THE IDEAL PRO



*\*for other disciplines replace tackling with flagging or touching*  
Swan, Way, Sacobie and Balyi, 2009

## The Nine stages of LTAD are:

### Stages of LTAD

The LTAD model divides athlete development into a series of stages. Within each stage, appropriate development is essential. Only by following age-appropriate activities and building a foundation in each stage for the next can athletes optimally prepare to progress toward their goals. Football is considered to be a late specialization sport.

The stages of development shown in this chart are general in nature and football has adjusted the stages slightly to accommodate the realities of the sport.

### Athletes with a Disability

For athletes with a disability two more stages are added at the beginning: Awareness and First Contact. These emphasize the need to make access to sport known to people with a disability, and then to ensure that the sport environment and first exposure are positive and welcoming. Information about LTAD for athletes with a disability can be found in the LTAD publication "No Accidental Champions".



# Football Canada's LTAD

## 1 - Active Start

**Chronological Age: 0-6 (M & F)**

**Training Age: 0 years in football**

**Objectives: Backyard Fun**

- Provide organized physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day for pre-schoolers
- Provide unstructured physical activity- active play- for at least 60 minutes every day for toddlers and preschoolers. Toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except while sleeping
- A wide range of basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, twisting, wheeling, kicking, throwing and catching should be enjoyed
- Help children in this stage feel competent and comfortable with activity. Games should be non-competitive and focus on activity

**Development Opportunities:**

**General Movement Skills:**

- Running
- Jumping, Twisting
- Throwing
- Catching
- Kicking

**Physical Attributes:**

- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination

**Football Development:**

- Build overall movement and physical literacy
- At end of stage, introduce non-competitive Football
- Focus on fun, basics of throwing, kicking, catching with appropriate size ball

**Game Options to Consider:**

- Unstructured
- No competition
- Use of soft "nerf" balls
- Touch or Flag game only
- Just fun!

**This stage** represents the entry into physical activity and sport, including the development of physical literacy. Athletes develop basic physical literacy and enjoy their first participation in organized games.

Safe, community-based programs; Equal participation for all; Skill development is placed ahead of competition; Broad-based stage-appropriate development including Football and other sports and activities; Social development and fun are never forgotten.



## 2 – FUNdamentals

**Chronological Age: 6-9 (M) and 6-8 (F)**

**Training Age: 0-4 years in sport**

**Objectives: Introduce the Game**

- Practice and master fundamental movement skills before sport-specific skills are introduced
- Emphasize overall development of the ABC's of athleticism: agility, balance, coordination and speed
- Participate in a wide range of sports. Develop speed, power and endurance using games
- The first window of opportunity for training speed occurs around age 6-8 for girls and 7-9 for boys. Developing this capacity is important for future athletic development
- Initial organized sport activity and introduction to competition and basics of rules occurs in this stage. Football can be introduced as one of several sport activities

**Development Opportunities:**

**Technical Skills;**

- Throwing, Catching, Kicking
- Athletes have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of offensive and defensive Football positions
- Training, competition and positional play is appropriate to the development and maturation of individual athletes

**Tactical Skills:**

- Introduce the game
- Basic skills are throwing, receiving, kicking
- Learn basic rules that govern the game

**Physical Skills:**

- Agility, Balance, Coordination
- Running + Backwards + w/change of directions
- Jumping, Twisting and Spinning
- Rhythmic Movement
- Speed #1 (Hand & Foot Speed)
- Aerobic Capacity and Flexibility
- Visual Awareness

**Mental Skills:**

- Enjoy Competition
- Respecting your opponent
- Code of Conduct
- Self-awareness

**Character - Life Skills:**

- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving

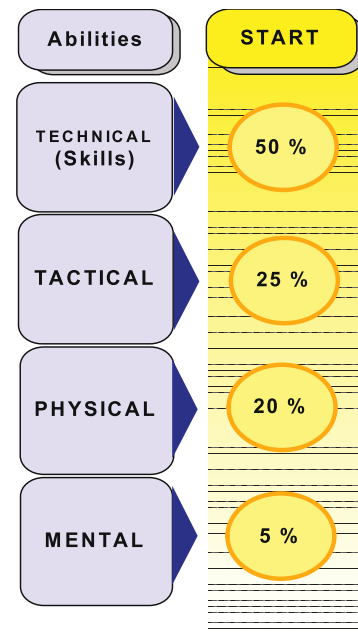
**Game Options to Consider:**

- Touch/Flag Football is the preferred development game
- Modified Tackle game may be introduced late in the stage
- Modified Tackle game has reduced rosters (6 v 6) and rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence. See Learn to Train stage
- Small field, small ball
- Skills emphasized; competition de-emphasized
- Skill development is more important than winning

**This stage** represents the entry into physical activity and sport, including the development of physical literacy. Athletes develop basic physical literacy and enjoy their first participation in organized Football. The guiding principles are:

- Safe community-based programs
- Equal participation for all
- Skill development is placed ahead of competition; Broad-based stage-appropriate development including Football and other sports and activities
- Social development and fun are never forgotten

**Figure 6 - Allocation of time in practice**



## 3 - Learn to Train

**Chronological Age:** 10-12 (M) and 9-11 (F)

**Training Age:** 1-4 years in football

**Objectives:** Basic Skills

- This is a critical period for development of motor skills and coordination
- Participate in a wide range of sports. Develop speed, power and endurance using games
- Focus on development of general sport skills
- Introduce Football competition at local/club levels. Participate in several positions & disciplines to build a foundation of Football skills

**Development Opportunities:**

**Technical Skills:**

- Throwing, Catching, Kicking
- Ball skills: carry, pass, punt, kick, catch
- Ball exchanges (hand off, pass)
- Tackling, flagging, touching
- Blocking and block protection

**Tactical Skills:**

- Learning the Game- basic rules
- Pass routes
- Defensive coverage (person to person)
- Formation recognition and adjustment

**Physical Skills:**

- Priority on agility and movement, and speed
- Running + Backwards + w/change of directions
- Jumping, Twisting, Turning. Spinning
- Agility, Balance, Coordination
- Rhythmic Movement
- Speed #1 (Hand & Foot Speed),
- Aerobic Capacity
- Flexibility
- Visual Awareness
- Limited, body-weight-only strength exercises

**Late Stage:**

- Aiming & hitting (eye-hand)
- Strength 1
- Speed 1
- Aerobic power

**Mental Skills:**

- Visualization (Learn to Image)
- Learn Thought Stop
- Learn to Set Goals
- Learn to Breathe to Control Nerves
- Progressive Muscular Relaxation

**This stage** represents development of a well-rounded set of Football skills, complimented by participation in other sports, and for many athletes, using Flag/Touch Football as an ideal introductory experience. Skill athletes develop basic and integrated Football skills and utilize these in competitive game situations. Guiding principles are:

- Athletes have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of offensive and defensive Football positions
- Training, competition and positional play is appropriate to the development and maturation of individual athletes
- Skill development is more important than winning

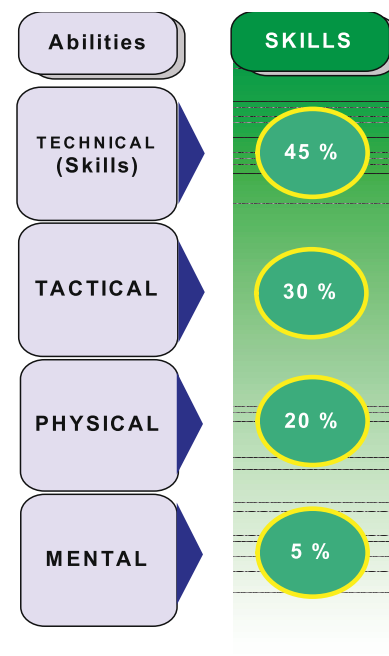
**Character - Life Skills:**

- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving

**Game Options to Consider:**

- Continue development through Tackle/Flag/Touch participation
- **Alternate:** enter a Modified Tackle program. Modified Tackle game has reduced rosters (6 a side or 9 a side) and rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence
- **Modified Tackle Defense:** person-to-person coverage, no motion or stunts, limited numbers of defensive rushers (from 3 to 6 in different divisions), and no defensive line player opposite center
- **Modified Tackle Offense:** no motion, blocking restrictions, a fixed requirement for number of backs, and requirement to make at least one pass attempt every three plays, to help develop a range of skills and game-learning situations

**Figure 7 - Allocation of time in practice**



## 4 - Train to Train

Chronological Ages 12-16 (M) and 11-15 (F)

Training Age: 2-8 years in football

**Objectives:** Integrating Skills

- **GENERAL:** Key period for using developing mental skills to integrate motor skills into game patterns: understanding and reading the game
- Possible transfer from Flag to Tackle or late entry into Tackle game
- **PHYSICAL:** Major post-growth spurt windows of opportunity for building speed, aerobic power and beginning of strength-building period (late stage)
- **SKILLS:** Consolidation of basic game skills. Acquisition of more advanced skills: play recognition, zone coverage, blocking (tackle) and special situation skills

**Development Opportunities:**

**Technical Skills:**

- Throwing, Catching, Kicking
- Ball skills: carry, pass, punt, kick, catch
- Ball exchanges (hand off, pass)
- Tackling, flagging, touching
- Blocking and block protection

**Tactical Skills:**

- Identifying / Reading Offensive & Defensive Formations & needed adjustments
- Understanding offensive & defensive strategies
- Increase variety of positional tactics

**Physical Skills:**

- Build on earlier stages' physical skills
- Aerobic Capacity then power
- Speed #2

**Mental Skills:**

- Psychological Profiling, Goal Setting, Self-talk
- Visualization for training & competition
- Thought Stopping (cognitive restructuring & countering)
- Concentration Skills
- Game Preparation Plan (Pre-game routine)

**Character - Life Skills:**

- Communication Verbal & Non-verbal
- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving, Discipline/work ethic, Fitness/Healthy Living
- Mental Strength/ Coping Skills, Confidence/Risk Taking, Respect/ Fair Play
- Pursuit of Personal Excellence
- Accepting Diversity

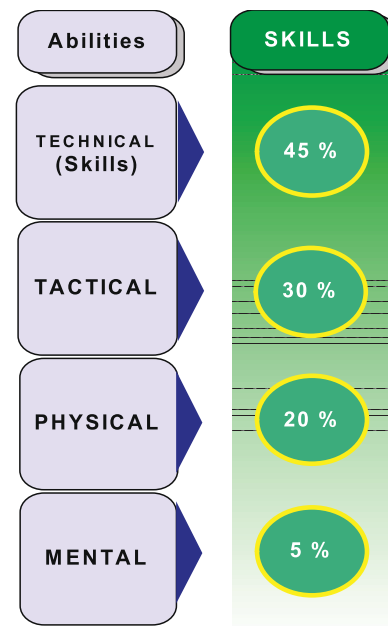
**This stage** represents development of a well-rounded set of Football skills, complimented by participation in other sports, and for many athletes, using Flag Football as an ideal introductory experience. Skill athletes develop basic and integrated Football skills and utilize these in competitive game situations. Guiding principles are:

- Athletes have the opportunity to develop skills in a variety of offensive and defensive football positions
- Training, competition and positional play is appropriate to the development and maturation of individual athlete
- Skill development is more important than winning

**Game Options to Consider:**

- Continue development through Tackle/Flag/Touch participation
- **Alternate:** Modified Tackle (6 A Side or 9 A Side) with rule modifications to promote skill development and confidence
- **Modified Tackle Defence:** person-to-person coverage, introduce "shifts", "blitzing" and "stunts", limiting numbers of defensive rushers (from 3 to 6 in different divisions), and no defensive line player opposite the center
- **Modified Tackle Offense:** introduce motion, a fixed requirement for number of backs, and a require for at least one pass attempt every three plays

**Figure 8 - Allocation of time in practice**



## 5 - Learn to Compete

**Chronological Age: 16-18 (M) and 15-17 (F)**

**Training Age: 6-10 years in football**

**Objectives: Making the Team**

- **GENERAL:** Use developing mental skills to integrate skills and understand and read the game
- Entry into high-performance path for Tackle Football. Early specialization into positions
- **PHYSICAL:** Major post-growth spurt windows of opportunity for building speed, aerobic power and muscular strength and power
- **SKILLS:** Consolidation of more advanced skills: play recognition, zone coverage, blocking (tackle) and special situation skills

**Development Opportunities:**

**Technical Skills:**

- Throwing, Catching, Kicking
- Ball skills: carry, pass, punt, kick, catch
- Ball exchanges (hand off, pass)
- Tackling, flagging, touching
- Pass protection
- Pass rush
- Defeating the block
- Blocking and block protection

**Tactical Skills:**

Note - late High school entry may require basic skill development

Others - Consolidate and Refine skills (begin position specialization)

- Defending the run and the pass
- Kickoff, Punt, Field Goal, Point after
- Identifying / Reading Offensive & Defensive Formations & needed adjustments
- Further understanding offensive & defensive strategies
- Increase variety of positional tactics
- Special situations

**Physical Skills:**

- Build on earlier stages' physical skills
- Strength #1 - Aerobic Power
- Speed #2
- Strength #2 - Muscle Strength, Hypertrophy, Endurance, and Power

**Mental Skills:**

- Performance Tracking
- Game Preparation
- Performance Evaluation
- Progression of PMR Skills
- Consistency

**This stage** represents a serious commitment to competition, coinciding with High School and CEGEP age, and often through the Tackle game. Athletes enter highly competitive programs, begin to specialize in their positions, and work toward excellence. Guiding principles are:

- Emphasis is on building solid competition skills
- All athletes are provided with optimal annual training competition and recovery programs
- Programs support athletes to learn from victory and defeat, to live balanced lives, and to always train and compete in a fair, honest and "clean" way
- Work toward international play
- Develop skills to be successful in CEGEP, College, Junior or CIS football

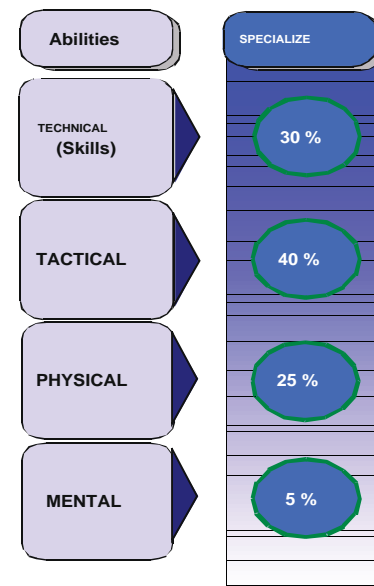
**Character - Life Skills:**

- Communication Verbal & Non-verbal
- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving, Discipline/work ethic, Fitness/Healthy Living
- Mental Strength/ Coping Skills, Confidence/Risk Taking, Respect/Fair Play
- Pursuit of Personal Excellence
- Accepting Diversity

**Game Options to Consider:**

- Tackle, Flag or Touch game
- Modifications: 6, 9, 12 A Side Tackle; 5 or 7 a Side Flag or Touch

**Figure 9 - Allocation of time in practice**



## 6 - Train to Compete

Chronological Age 17+

Training Age: 7-10 years in football

**Objectives:** Prepare to Win

- **GENERAL:** Position and game skill specialization
- Refinement of tactical and game skills and understanding
- Development of long-term plans for individual success
- **PHYSICAL:** Focus on building strength and power
- **SKILLS:** Refinement of all basic skills and consolidation of advanced skills
- Increasing complexity of plays

**Development Opportunities:**

Technical Skills:

- Refine all technical skills
- Concentrate on perfecting footwork

Tactical Skills:

- Consolidate and Refine all previous skills

Physical Skills:

- Build on earlier stages' physical skills
- Strength #2 - Muscle Strength, Hypertrophy, Power

Mental Skills:

Consolidate these skills

- Performance Tracking
- Game Preparation
- Performance Evaluation
- Progression of PMR Skills
- Consistency

Character - Life Skills:

- Communication Verbal & Non-verbal
- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving, Discipline/work ethic, Fitness/Healthy Living
- Mental Strength/ Coping Skills, Confidence/Risk Taking, Respect/ Fair Play
- Pursuit of Personal Excellence
- Accepting Diversity

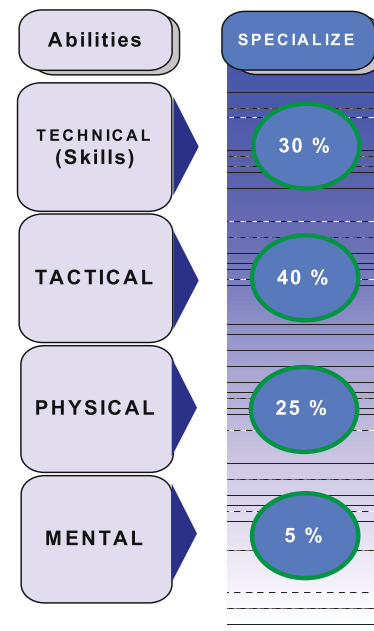
Game Options to Consider:

- Tackle, Flag or Touch

**This stage** represents a serious commitment to competition, coinciding with College or Junior Football. Athletes enter highly competitive programs, begin to specialize in their positions, and work toward excellence. Guiding principles are:

- Emphasis is on consolidating solid competition skills
- All athletes are provided with optimal annual training, competition and recovery programs
- Programs support athletes to learn from victory and defeat, to live balanced lives, and to always train and compete in a fair, honest and "clean" way

Figure 10 - Allocation of time in practice





## 7 - Learn to Win

Chronological Age 18+

### Training Age: 8-10 years in sport

**Objectives:** Earning a Starting Position in the Pros

- **GENERAL:** Fully specialized into position but with flexibility to adapt as needed
- Refining and perfecting physical and mental skills to master the game
- High-performance path for Tackle Football including CIS International play, professional recruitment
- **PHYSICAL:** Focus on building speed, strength and power. Ensure rest and recovery, healthy lifestyle and ethical participation
- **SKILLS:** Refinement and mastery of all position-specific skills

### Development Opportunities:

Technical Skills:

- Consolidate all technical skills

Tactical Skills:

- Consolidate all previous skills

Physical Skills:

- Build on earlier stages' physical skills

Mental Skills:

Continue to consolidate previous skills

- Identifying Performance restrictions
- Build and implement positive mental strategies
- Dealing with the pressures of success
- Lifestyle management

Character - Life Skills:

- Communication Verbal & Non-verbal
- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving, Discipline/work ethic, Fitness/Healthy Living
- Mental Strength/ Coping Skills, Confidence/Risk Taking, Respect/ Fair Play
- Pursuit of Personal Excellence
- Accepting Diversity

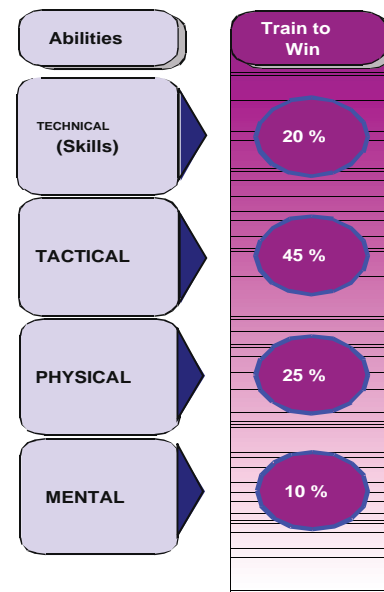
Game Options to Consider:

- Tackle, Flag or Touch

**This stage** takes the advanced athlete from a high level, CIS, Junior starters and non-starting professionals to starting professionals. In the Succeed stage athletes work to excel in highly competitive programs, aiming for the highest level of performance and success. Guiding principles are:

- Every program and every athlete is committed to excellence
- All athletes are provided with optimal annual training, competition and recovery programs of the highest level
- Each athlete strives for the highest level of performance in the context of fair, drug-free living, training and competition
- Athletes, coaches, officials and administrators are role models, mentors and ambassadors of the sport
- Experience in high-level games develops and refines tactical skills, anticipation and reading the game in a variety of situations

Figure 11 - Allocation of time in practice



## 8 - Train to Win

### Chronological Age 21+

### Training Age 10+ years

#### Objectives: Starting Professional and National Team

- **GENERAL:** Fully specialized into position but with flexibility to adapt as needed
- Master of the game but always looking for ways to improve and expand skills
- Role model for other athletes
- Professional Football career
- **PHYSICAL:** Focus on maintaining speed, strength and power  
Ensure rest and recovery, healthy lifestyle and ethical participation
- **SKILLS:** Refinement and mastery of all position-specific skills
- Continuous work to maintain highest level of skills

#### Development Opportunities:

##### Technical Skills:

- Perfecting all technical skills

##### Tactical Skills:

- Perfecting all previous skills

##### Physical Skills:

- Build and maintain physical skills

##### Mental Skills:

#### Continue to consolidate previous skills

- Refine positive mental strategies
- Game preparation and planning
- Dealing with the pressures of success
- Lifestyle management

#### Character - Life Skills:

- Communication Verbal & Non-verbal
- Partnership/Teamwork, Problem-solving, Discipline/work ethic, Fitness/Healthy Living,
- Mental Strength/ Coping Skills, Confidence/Risk Taking, Respect/Fair Play,
- Pursuit of Personal Excellence,
- Accepting Diversity

#### Game Options to Consider:

- Tackle, Flag or Touch

**The stage** is the highest levels, including Professional Football and International team starters. In this stage athletes work to excel in highly competitive programs, aiming for the highest level of performance and success. Guiding principles are:

- Every program and every athlete is committed to excellence
- All athletes are provided with optimal annual training, competition and recovery programs of the highest level
- Each athlete strives for the highest level of performance in the context of fair, drug-free living, training and competition
- Athletes, coaches, officials and administrators are role models, mentors and ambassadors of the sport



## 9 - Football for Life

### After developing physical literacy...

Football for Life includes participants of any age who enjoy Football in a non-competitive setting as well as athletes in competitive Senior Football leagues.

#### Objectives:

- Lifelong enjoyment of Football
- Active participation in Football and other sports
- Give back to the game as a coach, official, or sport leader (see page 31)

#### Maintenance Opportunities:

- Preserve physical abilities and skill while having fun

#### Game Options to Consider:

- Touch or flag leagues
- Senior Tackle leagues
- Pick-up in the park

**Football for Life:** “Stay” reminds us that an individual can remain active in the sport for a lifetime, through recreational competition and as a coach, official and sport builder. Fun is an essential part of the game throughout- the glue that bonds people to the game, and to each other. Guiding principles are:

- Fun
- Giving back to the game
- Respect for themselves, others and the game of Football





# Multi-sport, Multi-discipline Co-operation

LTAD is not simply about excellence. While one objective of the LTAD model is to define an optimum path to excellence and the system improvements which must be in place to support excellence, it is equally important to define a path to activity for life. Athletes can migrate from competitive Football to long-term recreational programs at any time, and must be encouraged to stay in sport-any sport-as well as to give back by becoming a coach, official or other sport leader.

Figure 12 - Football System Alignment and Integration (Way and Swan 2009)

## Performance Priorities

- Athlete
  - Performance and Support
- Coach
  - Education and Support
- Competition
- Equipment
- Facility Access
- Sport Medicine
- Sport Science
- Talent ID - Scouting
- Teams
  - National
  - Provincial
  - Club
- Training
- Research



## System Development

- Clubs
- Community Initiatives
- Communications
- Facility Plans
- Financial Sustainability
- Governance
- Games
  - International
  - National
  - Provincial
- Event Hosting
- Human Resource
- Marketing
- Organizational
- School Sports Academies and other Initiatives
- Risk Management
- Sport Sector
- Technology
- Volunteers



# Football for Life: Coach and Leader Development

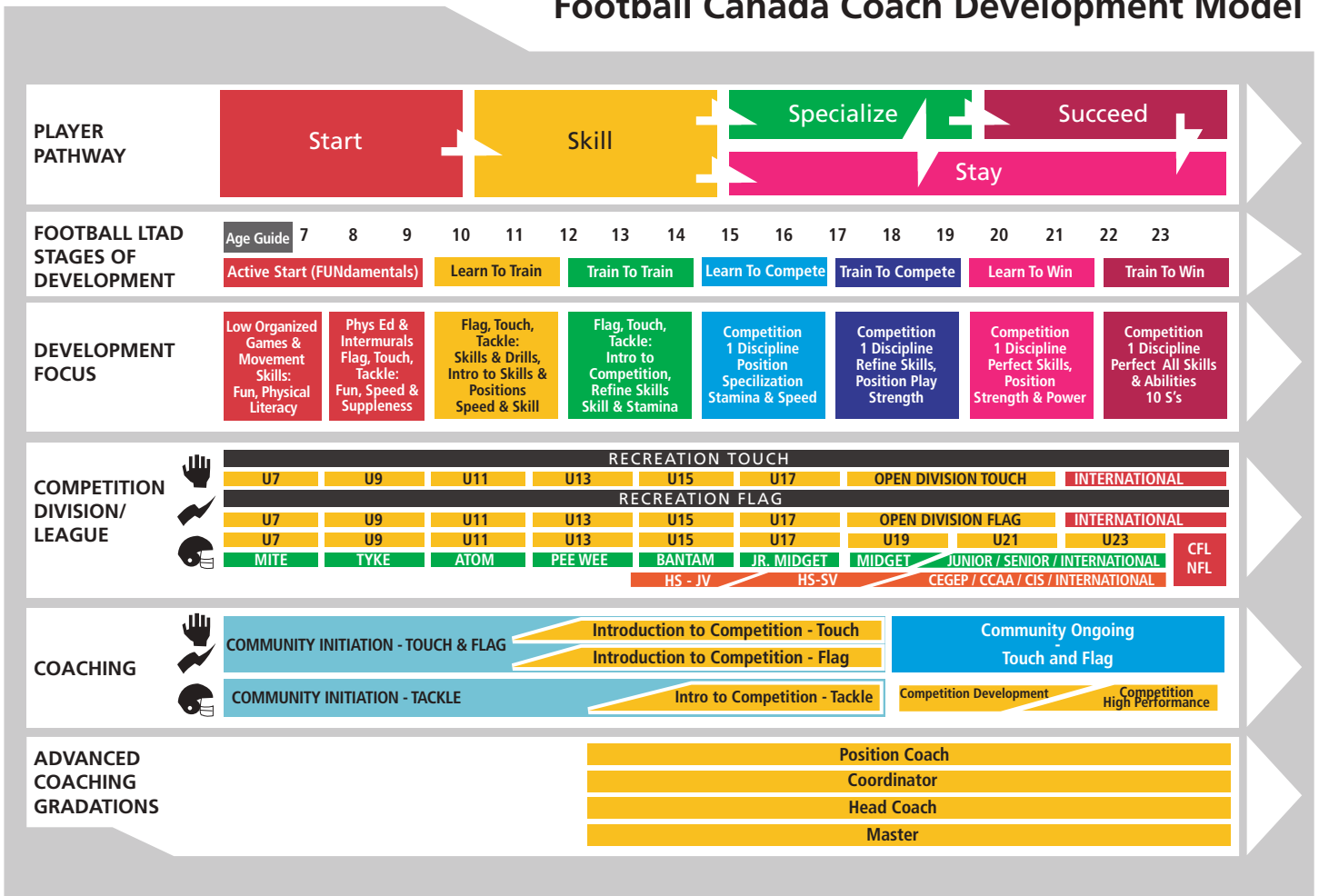
The Football for Life stage is not just the opportunity to participate in recreational Football. It is the time to “give back” by participating as a coach, official or sport leader. Volunteering is essential to the continued growth of the sport.

In particular, coaches are the backbone of the sport system. Vital to the development of athletes at all stages, they are leaders and organizers in community sport (Active Start to Train to Train) and technical experts at provincial and national levels (Learn to Compete to Train to Win). Coaches must have the expertise to identify the stage of maturation of the athlete and the programs and systems to allow that athlete to train and compete appropriately to his or her potential. We need more good coaches at all stages, and every coach must have a clear understanding of LTAD principles.

Just as all Canadian sport organizations are participating in LTAD planning, all are also developing new NCCP programs. The following diagram shows Football’s coach development model:

Figure -13

## Football Canada Coach Development Model



## An Integrated Football Development System

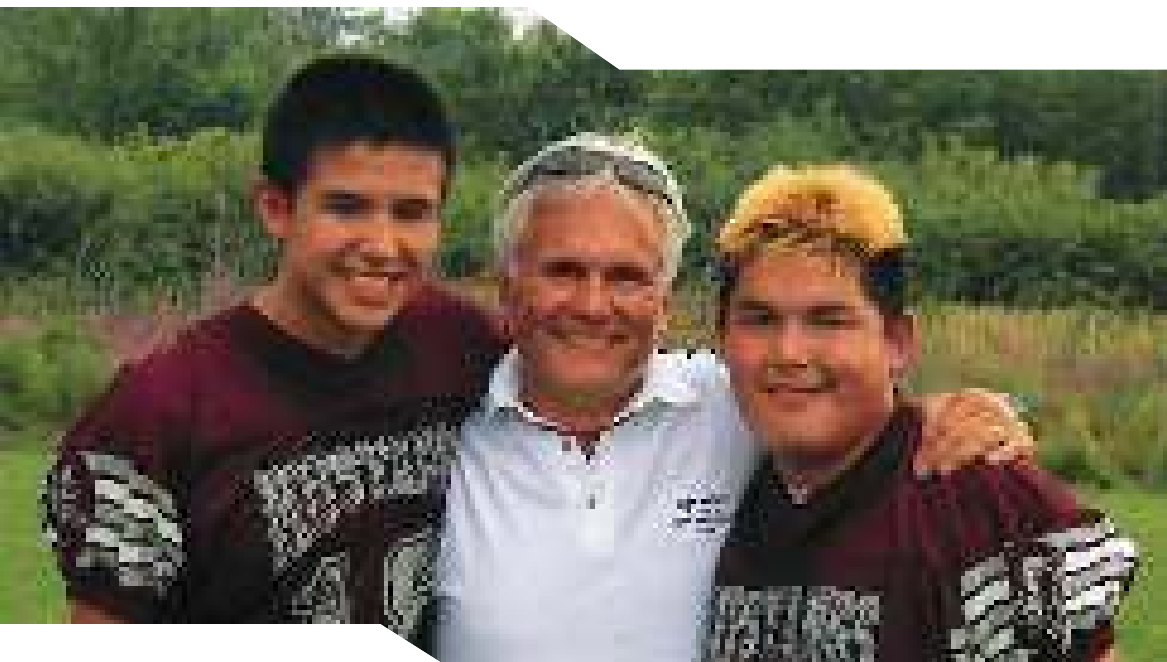
When the system provides adequate support, and the athlete attains the key competencies in each stage including previous, foundation stages, then the athlete is able, within his or her own limitations, to reach the highest level of performance. Everyone – athlete, parent, coach, club, association, etc – has to “get it right” for the athlete to reach his or her full potential.

To continue to build this great tradition and reach our objectives for growth of the sport, we need to work together. LTAD is athlete-centred, coach-driven and system-supported, so parents, athletes, coaches, clubs, officials and other sport leaders all have their role to play. The best results can only be achieved when all organizations and individuals involved in sport are working together in an integrated, coordinated way to support athlete development and success.

These points outline how each group can contribute to the sport:

### Parents:

- Encourage participation of their children in two to three other complementary sports
- Provide support and guidance and make involvement in sport fun
- Be educated about Football and how one can progress through the sport
- Have basic education on nutrition/recovery
- Make a long-term commitment to skill/performance progression
- Understand the ABC's of athleticism: agility, balance, coordination and speed
- Understand the concept that increased activity reverses the current trends in childhood and adult obesity and cardiovascular disease
- Understand the concept that inactive adults tend to produce inactive children and that the reverse is also true
- Understand that children will lose motivation if they feel that cannot match their parents' expectations
- Be flexible with their expectations; as children pass through different phases of development, parents (and coaches) should modify their expectations as necessary
- Strive to get an accurate assessment of their children's ability
- This is about the development of the child; make sure parental expectations of skills, abilities and aspirations are in line with the child's
- Explore the child's expectations, goals and aspirations



*CFL, NFL, Football Canada and its provincial associations work closely with aboriginal stakeholders to make Football accessible to all.*

### Athletes:

- Enjoy Tackle, Touch and Flag Football
- Become adept at the key physiological proficiencies: balance, flexibility, posture, core stability, strength and power, cardio endurance and performance skills
- Understand how pressure and stress affects performance
- Understand their mental performance strengths and weaknesses
- Know what mental management skills they need to integrate into their personal performance plan to be able to control their emotions, focus on the task, and cope with adversity under pressure
- Become self-reliant and demonstrate taking independent initiative in learning and developing their skills and strategies

### Coaches and Instructors:

- Have a passion for the sport and for excellence
- Be educated and have a thorough understanding of the LTAD
- Understand how and where they fit into the "system"
- Know what is required in order to deliver the athlete to the next level
- Continue to upgrade skills and knowledge
- Have a general understanding of what support is available for athletes of all levels
- Accept that effective mental skills are critical to consistent, quality performances at all levels
- Integrate the mental skills training process into athlete programs

### Clubs:

- Understand their role and what is required to deliver the athlete to the next level
- Provide proper coaching, training and competition opportunities
- Provide proper access to training and competition facilities
- Provide a support structure i.e. finances, mentoring, resources, instruction, coaching etc.
- Strive to create a well-organized, ethical, athlete-centered environment

### Provincial Associations:

- Be a source of information, expertise and support - the backbone to provide the necessary information, contacts, personnel and communications in Football development
- Understand what is required to deliver the athlete to the next level
- Facilitate discussion among the various stakeholders, clubs, athletes, appropriate administrators and associations
- Find means to reduce costs to stakeholders (athletes, coaches, facilities etc)
- Make sure significant programming is in place to support their role
- Strive to be the best association at their level
- Place increasing emphasis on junior development and adult recreational programs to ensure the long-term growth of the sport

## Building for Tomorrow

Keeping football strong means keeping up with the times. In an era when physical activity and sport participation are declining in Canada, we all need to do our part to help the next generation enjoy activity, develop physical literacy and go on to become active for life. Football can no longer be primarily a high school, college and professional sport, we need to make it more fun, more appealing and more beneficial for all Canadians. However, if we build on our traditions while looking to the future, the opportunities are there to achieve our vision: sustainable growth, increased participation, and excellence in competition.

Football's LTAD model is an essential tool in achieving that future vision. By building an integrated development system that emphasizes the progressive, seamless development of athletes, that is, by being athlete centered, coach driven and system supported- we can reach our goals. There is no doubt this will require hard work, dedication and a willingness to change and cooperate. With a clear pathway for athlete development in place, we can succeed as never before.





# LTAD Initiatives (Implementation Plan)

Football Canada recognizes that implementing LTAD will require changes at all levels within the sport in across Canada. The impact will vary, depending upon the discipline and will affect factors such as organizational staffing, allocation of existing resources, competition structures, programming, and coach and officials education. Successful implementation will require strong partnerships, between Football Canada, and its provincial and associate members as well as national / provincial stakeholders. Founded on the common vision and values articulated within this document, strong leadership, and an effective communication plan will be required. In turn, provincial and associate members will need to develop similar partnerships with their stakeholders.

In developing this model, a number of key issues for Canadian Football have been identified. The following list of initiatives is required:

## Communication:

- Develop and implement a communication plan to ensure understanding and buy-in for the LTAD from all stakeholders
- Develop a lobbyist and activist program for football at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government
- Federal, provincial and municipal governments recognize football's contribution to sport and health in Canada

## Organizations:

- Strengthen Football Canada's role in building collaboration among organizations and leagues throughout all levels of the football community – system alignment!
- Develop models of best practices that are understood by organizations involved in grass roots development
- Football Canada to deliver programs and services of value to provincial and associate members
- Football Canada and PSOs work toward a greater level of staff support
- Partnerships are established with professional teams
- Football Canada and PSOs implement a sustainable governance and operations model that supports accountability and enables achievement of strategic goals
- Elevate the profile, stature and image of Football Canada
- Build the value associated with Football Canada's marketable properties

## Coaching:

- Review and implement necessary changes in Football Canada's NCCP to ensure the principles and values of LTAD are imbedded in all coach development programs
- Increase the number of trained and certified coaches at all levels
- Develop mentorship program
- Establish a viable coaches National Coaches Association.



### Player Development:

- Develop the Technical Manual (details for each stage of the participants/athlete model) to deliver the “Football for Life”
- Integrate Physical Literacy into the appropriate stages of development
- Review and implement as necessary appropriate playing rule modifications that are compatible with the LTAD Stages of Development
- Introduce football to new players of all ages
- Develop and implement an LTAD specifically to meet the needs of the Canadian female population
- Equal opportunity for participation and excellence is available for female athletes from Playground to Stadium
- Develop and implement an LTAD for Athletes with a Disability
- Develop and implement a national athlete identification system

### Leaders:

- Develop and implement a Long-Term Officials Development program (LTOD)
- Integrate officials into competition management
- Increase the number of officials at all levels of competition
- Develop a sport science support group to further advance LTAD principles and factors
- Create more leadership training opportunities in cooperation with the Provincial associations
- Develop and implement an Athletic Trainer’s Program for football
- Recruit “retired” players to remain active in football as coaches, officials, administrators, and in player support roles

### Competitions:

- Competition structures are fully aligned with Player Development Program
- Undertake a thorough review of the sports competition structure that favours athlete/participant development, including age appropriate rule modifications
- Develop and implement a sustainable program of national championships that will ensure an appropriate excellence pathway for developing athletes (in the three disciplines)
- Develop an appropriate “National Team” program and structure that will produce world class results in International competition and IFAF World Championships.
- Supports the IFAF’s advancement of quality international competitions
- Host international competitions
- Player choices are optimized so they can pursue the most appropriate playing opportunities for themselves in Provincial, National and International competitions

### Facilities:

- Improve quantity and access to appropriate practice and competition facilities



## Future Perfect Playing Field

Canadian football is led by a strong national body providing consistent governance and leadership through all levels and across all provinces, leagues and governing bodies. There is a strong partnership with the CFL and NFL founded on a compelling shared vision and characterized by collaborative effort and rigorous communication. A sense of unity and common purpose is present throughout the football community.

Leadership in football is rooted in a common set of values and goals and a commitment to providing ethical stewardship of the game. The football community is diligent in recruiting and developing skilled individuals — including retired players — who can provide creative strategic and program leadership at all levels in the sport. As a result, leadership is progressive, responsible and proactive. There is both continuity and renewal.

The economic model of the sport has evolved. It has a marketing orientation and capitalizes on increased popularity and exposure of the game as well as the public's acceptance of the positive value of sport and physical activity for all ages and genders. As a consequence, the football community is benefiting from membership growth, increased investment by corporate Canada, provincial and federal governments and the capacity to generate revenue internally through events and other avenues.

The alliances within the football community have many positive spin-offs. It is possible to leverage the professional leagues' capacity for promotion and create national marketing campaigns. In addition to promoting the game, it is frequently possible to piggy-back on the advertising and sponsorship opportunities. National and regional media coverage is growing and has expanded to include all CIS games. There are increasing numbers of viewers and new CFL markets are opening. Promotion of football has extended through the many and growing avenues of electronic communication — on-line, download, web-based etc.

Football in Canada is a growing, thriving sport at all levels, from grassroots through high school, junior, university, international to professional leagues. The capacity to innovate and develop grass-roots program alternatives adapted to the size of community, age,

gender and population and capitalize on ways to extend the season has resulted in year-over-year growth in participation. Consistent delivery of national, standardized programming has increased exposure of the sport and generates a wide variety of options for playing football. Football attracts a diverse range of participants of all ages, both genders and populations in various sized communities. A growing number of Canadians play in professional leagues. Football is no longer plagued by misconceptions about safety or expense and is valued for its drug-free status. Its image is one of game that is fun to play in many forms.

Increasing participation is also due to the high quality of the coaches, officials, trainers and leaders. The football community has moved toward a systematic, comprehensive approach to the development of coaches and officials, anchored in nationally accepted certification programs, significant use of various learning options made possible through technology, and complemented by clinics, mentoring opportunities and involvement of alumni. The professionalization of coaches continues to accelerate.

While the game is better marketed and enjoys strong presence in the media and growing public and international popularity, football in Canada retains its heritage and unique rules. The Grey Cup is not just a game — it is an institution and the largest national celebration of the game that is uniquely Canadian.

Football Canada — Board of Directors:  
January 17-19, 2008

*For Canadian Football the second  
half is just beginning.  
Ready, Set, Hut!*

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## Appendix: Definitions

**Abstract Thinking** – Thinking about processes, objects and events that may or may not have real world representation.

**Active for Life** is the life-long enjoyment of sport and physical activity.

**Active Start** stage is when young children develop movement skills through active play.

**Adaptation** means the changes in a person's body due to various external stimuli.

**Adolescence** is the child's rapid period of growth when a child's matures physically and sexually.

**Aerobic Endurance** - Ability to exercise for long durations using aerobic energy systems.

**Aiming/Hitting** - Hitting a target with an object.

### Age

- **Chronological age** refers to the number of years and days elapsed since birth.
- **Skeletal age** refers to the maturity of the skeleton determined by the degree of ossification of the bone structure.
- **Relative age** refers to differences in age among children born in the same calendar year (Barnsley and Thompson, 1985).
- **Developmental age** refers to the degree of physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional maturity.
- **General training age** refers to the number of years in training, sampling different sports.
- **Sport-specific training age** refers to the number of years since an athlete decided to specialize in one particular sport.

**Agility** - The ability to move quickly in three dimensions while remaining in control of the movement.

**Ancillary Capacities** are the training and performance factors an athlete has learnt about taking care of their mind and body while playing sport.

**Balance** - Ability to remain upright while moving. Includes static balance and balancing while moving or gliding.

**Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L)** is a movement which promotes healthy growth and development through good sport, so people can enjoy a lifetime of physical activity and excel in sport.

**Childhood** runs from the 1st birthday to adolescence.

**Coordination** - Moving several parts of the body serially or simultaneously to achieve movement.

**Core Strength and Stability** - Strength of the core muscles of the trunk, including chest, back and abdomen, which provide an "anchor" for the effective use of arm and leg muscles.

**Development** includes social, emotional, intellectual and motor growth and maturation over time.

**Early specialization sports** (e.g. gymnastics and diving) refer to sports that recommend specialization before the age of ten.

**Fine Motor Skills** - Movements controlled by small muscles, e.g. hand or finger movements.

**FUNDamental** stage is when children learn a wide variety of fundamental movements and build motor skills as they participate in a number of different sports and activities.

**Goal Setting** - The ability to set targets for future behaviours or outcomes.

**Gross Motor Skills** - Large movements of the limbs and body using multiple joints and muscle groups.

**Growth** refers to "observable, step-by-step, measurable changes in body size such as height, weight, and percentage of body fat."

**Late specialization sports** (e.g. athletics, tennis and all team sports) refer to sports that do not recommend specialization before the age of ten.

**Learn to Train** stage is when pre teens learn fundamental sport and decision making skills as they participate in a variety of sports.

**Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Model** is a framework that recognizes the distinct stages of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development in participants in sport.

**Maturation** refers to "qualitative system changes, whether structural or functional, in the child's progress toward maturity; for example, the change of cartilage to bone in the skeleton."

**Memory** - Ability to retain and recall instructions, information, and experiences.

**Mental Models** - Ability to understand and manipulate mental models of real-world processes.

**Peak height velocity (PHV)** is the maximum rate of growth in stature during growth spurt. The age of maximum velocity of growth is called the age at PHV.

**Peak strength velocity (PSV)** is the maximum rate of increase in strength during growth spurt. The age of maximum increase in strength is called the age at PSV.

**Peak weight velocity (PWV)** is the maximum rate of increase in weight during growth spurt. The age of maximum increase in weight is called the age at PWV.

**Periodization** is time management (scheduling) of the volume, intensity and frequency of training, competition and recovery.

**Physical literacy** is when fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that permit a child to move confidently and with control, in a wide range of physical activity, rhythmic (dance) and sport situations are developed.

**Post-natal growth** is often divided into three or four age periods, including infancy, childhood, adolescence, and puberty.

**Puberty** refers to the point at which an individual is sexually mature and able to reproduce.

**Readiness** is the correct time when a child is ready to learn and perform tasks to meet the demands of training and competition.

**Sensitive periods of trainability** refer to the period when a child can most easily learn physical skills.

**Speed 1** - Speed increases due to improvements in neuromuscular coordination.

**Speed 2** - Speed increases due to improvements in energy systems, anaerobic alactic and lactic.

**Strength 1** - Strength increases due primarily to increases in neuromuscular coordination, not growth.

**Strength 2** - Strength increases due primarily to increases in lean muscle mass-hypertrophy.

**Strength (endurance)** - Muscular strength and endurance, allowing repeated static or dynamic muscular contractions with reduced levels of fatigue.

**Trainability** is how individuals respond to training at different stages of growth and maturation.

**Train to Train** stage when youth, during their growth spurt, develop the physical, technical, tactical and mental capacities to compete at higher levels of sports.

**Train to Compete** stage ranges from athletes representing their province at nationals to representing their country in international competitions.

**Train to Win** stage is when athletes are competing and winning in senior international competition.

**Visual Acuity** - Ability to discriminate edges and see objects at various distances.







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**Football**  
**FOR LIFE**  
THROUGH LONG-TERM  
ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT