

What is a good talent development environment?

We all want our children to be develop their sporting skills while at the same time learning social skills, having friends, and not feeling too stressed. A successful talent development environment is not necessarily one in which the athletes win youth championships. Rather it is one in which the athletes develop into successful senior athletes.

Sporting environments are all different, but the ones that are successful at developing sport talent share certain characteristics. Below we list some features of good talent development environments and their opposites

Features	Successful talent development environments	Less successful talent development environments
Supportive training groups	Inclusion, support, and friendships.	Individualised training. Training alone, rivalry.
Role models	Opportunity to engage with role models and share ideas.	Boundaries between talented and elite athletes; secrecy.
Integrated efforts	Synergy. Communication and coordination between club, school, family etc.	No communication. Athletes experience contradicting demands.
Focus on long term development	Development before results. Age appropriate training, and room for diversification.	Aim for early success. Kids seen as miniature elite athletes. Early specialisation.
Strong and coherent culture	Walk the talk. Values and actions are aligned.	Confusion. Values and actions out of sync.

Based on:

Henriksen, K., & Stambulova, N. (2017) Creating optimal environments for talent development: A holistic ecological approach. In J. Baker, S, Cobley, J.Schorer & N.Wattie, *Routledge Handbook of Talent Identification and Development in Sport*.