

**RATIONALE**

**BEHIND**

**PERFORMANCE**

**TESTING IN**

**POWER AND**

**TEAM SPORTS**

*A major factor determining the athlete's potential in the given sport is his/her genetic inheritance, which includes the athlete's anthropometrical characteristics (structure and dimensions of the body), cardiovascular properties, muscle fiber type proportions and the capacity to improve with training. It is also known that the volume and suitability of the training which takes place before competition has a profound effect on performance. Finally, the nutritional and health status influence the performance significantly.*

Testing and evaluation should be viewed as an essential feedback mechanism in developing the power and team sport athletes. Testing should establish a baseline, to measure progress from each training period and cycle. Testing is an invaluable tool in athletic development and coaching. It is the tool for quality control of coaching and the training process!

#### **Benefits for the athlete**

**1** A testing program indicates the athlete's strengths and weaknesses in relation to his/her sport. Furthermore, the testing provides a baseline data for individualized training program. As the team sports involve several physiological components the well-designed testing program can isolate these components to be assessed objectively. As a result a performance profile of the athlete can be designed. This profile can be used to prescribe an optimal training program especially concentrating on identified areas of weaknesses.

**2** A well-designed testing program provides feedback to the coach and the athlete. Athlete's test results are compared to his/her previous tests, which provide a basis for the evaluation of the training program or training period. Valid tests confirm the effectiveness of the training program on each fitness component.

**3** A sound testing program is an important factor in providing information on the athlete's health status. Training at the high level and intensity is physically extremely demanding and stressful and may cause health problems. Team sport athletes do suffer considerable numbers of athletic injuries, which may have a detrimental effect on the performance for long periods of time. Additionally, overtraining syndrome and more common illnesses are not uncommon in team sport athletes. Certain performance tests may help in detecting these problems as well as periodic physical examinations by team physicians should be employed in the testing program.

**NEWTEST**

**4** A testing program is always an educational process. The Athlete learns to better understand the functions of the body in relationship to the training and the demands of the sport. With thorough interpretation of the test results the athlete can gain understanding on the physiological factors of the sport as well as the body awareness i.e. "listen to his/her body".

**5** When the athlete gains understanding on how the training affects his/her body and improves the physical performance ability, the athlete's motivation to train will increase. The increased knowledge and certainty that the training process will improve the performance, the athlete is more likely to stick with the prescribed training program and is more committed.

### **Benefits for the coach and the team**

For the coach, testing is an extremely valuable tool, which can be used in a variety of ways.

**1** Identify athletic talent in order to be able to recruit the best possible athletes for the team. By identifying the athlete's physical abilities the coach is able to select best athletes for the given position and role in the team.

**2** By identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the athlete's physical performance abilities will help the coach to develop more efficient *individualized* training program(s) to optimally develop the athlete's performance.

**3** In team sports the coach is able to create team profile(s) to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the team and thus, optimize the team's training.

**4** By consistently monitoring the athletes' performance the coach can monitor the training loads and status of the athletes. By monitoring the training effects in short term basis will reduce the chances of over-straining and over-training.

**5** Consistent testing with valid tests is a quality control tool in strength and conditioning program. The coach will be able to determine that the designed program will provide the desired and anticipated effects on the athletes' physical performance. Additionally, the team/organization management can utilize the test results in determining the level of coaching and training by comparing the test results from one year to another.

**6** Many of the performance tests used can be used as functional tests in athletic injury rehabilitation in monitoring the effective-

ness of the rehabilitation process. Furthermore, the functional tests may play an important role in determining the athlete's readiness to return to competition.

**7** For the coach testing is always an educational process in which he/she will learn more about the effects of training on the athlete's body, performance and health. This continuous learning process will make the coach better in designing training programs and help the athletes become more successful. This will eventually lead into a successful coaching career!

**8** When junior teams are in question, providing consistent testing results to the parents is a way of showing them the quality of the sports program and the value their children are receiving from it. This will commit the parents to support the program even more.

