



Physical Literacy

Total Performance Ages 12 – 15/16

This stage of an athlete's development is a balancing act and coaches have to know their athlete and the demands of their academic and extra-curricular activities to properly coach progression. Physically this age group requires increased sleep and physical rest but additional homework, early school starts and increased formal practice tend to make that impossible. Add in puberty and the adolescent growth spurt (ages 11-15 for females and 12-16 for males) and the athlete's body during this age span has tremendous energy demands. Their athletic training needs to be balanced with structured recovery.

This is the also time to consolidate sports specific skills and build an aerobic base. As they near the end of this stage the focus turns to strength and anaerobic alactic energy system development. Approximately 12 months after the young athlete hits their peak weight velocity there is a significant acceleration of adaptation to strength training and the curriculum is designed to take advantage of that with a well-structured, formal weight training program.

Athletes, parents and coaches need patience through this stage. Skills that an athlete had no issue with at 10 may disintegrate for a short period of time while the athlete reassembles their muscular/body control. This regression in one of the reasons that this stage is one of the peak periods when kids abandon sports. While it's frustrating, good coaching will get them through.

Sports should continue to emphasize practice; reinforcing and realigning skills.