

Introduction

Modern professional and elite sport receives a lot of interest and monetary support. Participants in the popular competitions are highly valued and respected for their skills, and these skills are explored and developed with increased funding and resources devoted to this effort (Baker, Cobley, & Schorer, 2012). Talent development has become a science, an art, and a business across sports and cultures.

The boundaries of physical and technical performance are still being pushed and challenged. Both athletes in the bloom of their career and developing athletes on their way to the top are offered excellent training regimes and methods with the purpose of developing skill and physical capacity as fast as possible, and they are pushed every day to become bigger, better, faster (Baker, Cobley, & Schorer, 2012). In contrast, the mental side of peak performance as well as talent development seems to be an area in which there is great possibility for improving performance (Krane & Williams, 2006). Like with most things in life, practice makes perfect, and sport psychological training is a viable way to develop talent and improve performance.

But what do we know about sport psychological training for talent development?

In order to provide sport psychological training to young elite athletes, it must be determined what psychological skills and characteristics are important for successful talent development, and how these skills are best taught to the young elite athletes.

This thesis will review the existing literature on psychological skills and characteristics for talent development and sport psychological interventions for young athletes, and build on this knowledge to design research that will produce guidelines on what psychological skills and characteristics are important for successful talent development.