

Rules Alignment in Competition Review and Restructuring



Sport for Life

This resource is intended to advance the Canadian sport system by providing guidance to sport leaders who make important decisions that impact the quality of the sport experience for athletes at all levels from local to provincial to national. By modifying rules, competition can become more meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This resource provides a wealth of good information, content and considerations on how to create “meaningful competition” experiences throughout the sport system by modifying the rules. It is strongly recommended that the change process:

- a. Is led by an external facilitator with expertise in Long-Term Athlete Development, and
- b. Includes someone with an excellent understanding of the national sport organization’s competition system review, and
- c. Includes involvement, connection and coordination with the NSO ensuring alignment and coordination with their ongoing Long-Term Athlete Development work, and
- d. Consults with all the groups that may be impacted by it.

These measures will ensure that the sport’s system of competition will be well aligned throughout the athlete development pathway and is consistent with quality sport and Long-Term Athlete Development principles.

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RULES ALIGNMENT

IN COMPETITION REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURING

A GUIDE FOR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERS

As part of developing a fully Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) based system, many sport organizations are engaging in Competition Review and Restructuring. **Competition review** is the process of *analyzing* the competition structure, rules, and calendar to determine whether it supports the athlete development pathway outlined in the Long-Term Athlete Development Framework. **Competition restructuring** is the process of *selectively changing* competition structure, rules and calendar to address the issues and optimize the role of competition in serving athlete development. An important element of review and restructuring is to align **the competition rules** so they are supporting athlete development.

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DEFINITION OF MEANINGFUL COMPETITION

Meaningful competition provides experiences that support learning for competitors. It supports a “we can get better” attitude that encourages athletes to improve during and after the event (see Figure 1).

Meaningful competitions are structured to reinforce the development of Long-Term Athlete Development stage-specific skills and abilities. The expected level of performance matches the skill level of the competitor. Competitors are able to perform and test the skills they have learned and practiced in the training environment.

Remember this document focuses only on rules application for the FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages of development. Meaningful competition and rules alignment will also impact athletes’ development at the other stages of development but is not covered in this document.

Children in the FUNdamentals stage are motivated primarily by the desire to have FUN. While they may participate in competitive sport where points are scored, they are far less concerned with competitive results than they are with having fun, being with friends and developing a strong self-esteem.

The Learn to Train stage of Long-Term Athlete Development is the most important stage for the development of basic sport-specific skills. This stage represents a sensitive period of accelerated adaptation to skills training and fine motor control. It is also a time when children enjoy practicing their skills and seeing their own improvement.

Meaningful competitions lead to results that are relatively close and not predictable. Competitors are matched with others of a similar level of ability and are challenged to be the best they can be at that moment in time. **They believe they have a chance for success and remain fully engaged throughout the competition.**

This document will provide you with ideas on how to bring your system closer to the challenge zone so that the experience is more meaningful.

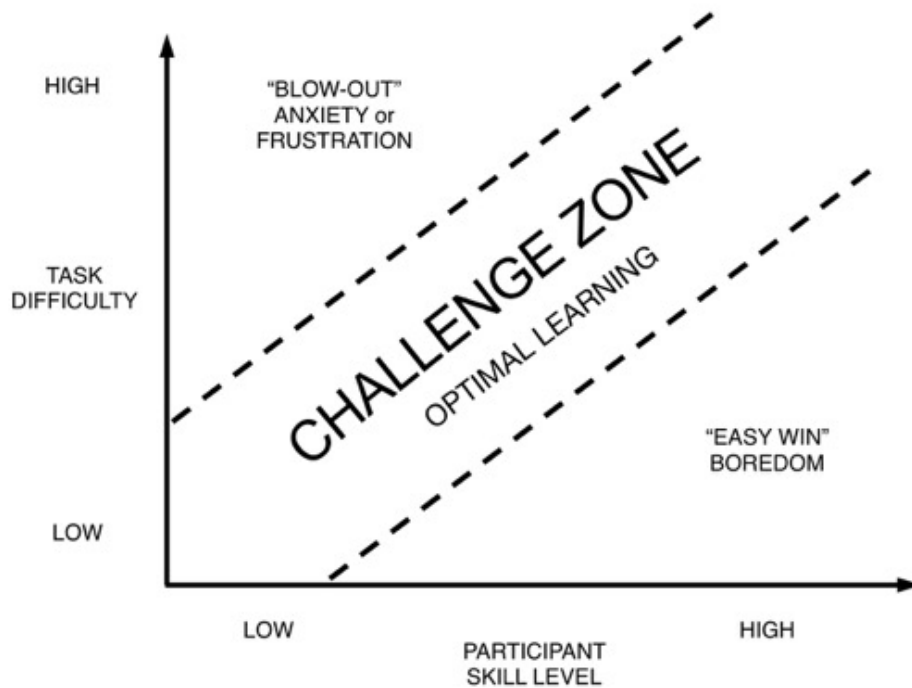


Figure 1. The Flow. Adapted by: Paul Jurbala, from Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.*”

Meaningful competition is athlete-centered, coach-led and system-supported. Coaches are responsible for maximizing the value of the competition by intentional selection of competitions and setting of appropriate competition goals matched to the stage and ability of the athlete. The sport system, including sport organizations, event organizers, coaches, officials and others is responsible for defining competition formats, rules, schedules, and eligibility to support the objectives of meaningful competition. Competition should contribute to the positive development of all athletes.

ALIGNING RULES FOR MEANINGFUL COMPETITION PURPOSES

THE PROCESS: WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

1. Establishing the work group
2. Getting proper education and resources (Preparation)
3. Adjusting and aligning the rules (Rule Alignment)
4. Identifying the role of the officials (Role Clarification)

When considering rules alignment for your association, get the information of the process currently in place for implementing rules changes in the organization. For example, a winter sport might adopt a change in the summer for implementation the following winter. Other sports adopt a new rule and wait a full year to provide proper transition time.

ESTABLISHING THE WORK GROUP: WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

This process should be collaborative and stakeholder education and buy-in are important outcomes with the intent of implementing the recommendations. Individuals* who play key roles in providing meaningful experiences, such as officials, coaches and administrators should be involved in evaluating the current state of competition and making recommendations for change. Athletes at all stages should experience meaningful competition so involving representatives from various areas of sport is crucial.

The Rules Alignment working group should have representation from:

- **Officials:** Who are accredited for domestic competition and possibly international competition and who have a deep understanding of officiating and athlete development at the stage(s) being considered
- **Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations (PTSO):** Representatives with experience in the appropriate stages of competition (up to 2 representatives - including 1 bigger PTSO and 1 smaller PTSO)
- **Coaches or sport specific Long-term Athlete Development experts:** Who have experience and a thorough understanding of athlete development through the stages and especially at the stage being considered, and who also have a strong working knowledge of the rules

- **National Sport Organization (NSO):** Will be charged with providing expertise, guiding, compiling and summarizing input from the group. The NSO plays an important role in reporting to other provinces and therefore making sure rules are aligned across the country.

*The individuals who are leading and contributing to rules alignment should have knowledge of the athlete development pathway and stage skill requirements as identified in the sport's Long-Term Athlete Development Framework and the Athlete Development Matrix.

WORKSHEET 1 – WORKING GROUP

Use the table below to list potential work group members for your sport.

Potential Working Group Members	Expertise / Contribution
PTSO representation (1 larger & 1 smaller PTSO) with experience in early Long-Term Athlete Development stages (FUNdamentals & Learn to Train):	
Coaches with experience of Long-Term Athlete Development (FUNdamentals & Learn to Train):	
Judges / Officials with expertise in domestic competitions:	
NSO:	
Clubs, schools, CIS, Other:	

Before starting the work on rule alignment members should be familiar with the following:

- a. Sport-specific Long-Term Athlete Development Framework
- b. Sport-specific Athlete Development Matrix
- c. Sport-specific Competition Review
- d. Meaningful Competition Toolkit
- e. Current rules for different competitions, jurisdictions, etc.

ADJUSTING AND ALIGNING THE RULES

The meaningful competition document has made links between the rules and meaningful competition. The table below represents a summary of those findings. These elements represent a starting point and this document will explore the key elements to consider.

MORE MEANINGFUL	LESS MEANINGFUL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rules are stage appropriate and encourage athlete development for long term success• Skill requirements are stage appropriate based on the sport’s Long-Term Athlete Development Framework and the Athlete Development Matrix• All team members gain experience and contribute to team outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rules are based on the adult game and encourage advanced skills or performance objectives that are not stage appropriate• Not enough playing time for athletes because a few strong individuals monopolize team play• Rules require demonstration of skills not yet learned or encourage “skipping ahead”• Favours athletes who have experienced early maturation

DEFINING THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Key considerations have been identified below based on research on other sports. These considerations are supporting meaningful competition as well as creating a better learning environment for athletes at the FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages of development. Looking at the current situation in your sport, identify in Worksheet 2 if the key considerations are currently implemented in your sport.

For all considerations currently in place in your sport, identify in Worksheet 3 if their implementation is supporting the four elements of a meaningful competition. If the rule in place is not supporting one element, you may wish to modify it later on in the process.

WORKSHEET 2 – KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Identify if the key consideration supports meaningful competition in your sport.

Key Consideration	Supports athlete learning	Reinforces development of skills	Athlete remains engaged and trying to achieve specific goals	Competition is relatively “close”
The scoring system is adapted so other scoring elements are considered				
A rule is in place to end a game when points differential is significant				
A second chance is given to athlete when they make a mistake				
Safety is considered as part of the rules (see page 19)				
Early and late developers can both be challenged				
Teams/Athletes are matched based on skills (play up and down)				
Proper and adequate equipment is used at each stage				

Key Consideration	Supports athlete learning	Reinforces development of skills	Athlete remains engaged and trying to achieve specific goals	Competition is relatively “close”
Playing field dimensions are adapted to stages				
Rules are in place for all athletes to participate equally				
A handicap is given to an athlete or team to ensure better match up				
Rules are in place to avoid travesty of the game*				
Special rules are in place to avoid coaches using strategies not linked with the athlete development matrix				

** Travesty of the game is defined as an attempt to intentionally lengthen or shorten a game or manipulate the score of the game by any means that has players not “playing to win”. For example, a badminton player might lose a game on purpose knowing it will allow him/her to face a weaker opponent in the next round. In softball, this would include batters or runners obviously attempting to make outs, pitchers obviously trying to miss the strike zone when pitching and fielders obviously trying to make errors Rules modifications can be made to avoid those type of problems.*

WORKSHEET 3 – KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN YOUR SPORT

Identify if the key considerations are present in your sport.

Key Considerations	In place at FUNdamentals	In place at Learn to Train	Not Applicable
The scoring system is adapted so other scoring elements are considered			
A rule is in place to end a game when points differential is significant			
A second chance is given to athlete when they make a mistake			
Safety is considered as part of the rules (see page 19)			
Early and late developers can both be challenged			
Teams/Athletes are matched based on skills (play up and down)			
Proper and adequate equipment is used at each stage			
Playing field dimensions are adapted to stages			
Rules are in place for all athletes to participate equally			
A handicap is given to an athlete or team to ensure better match up			

Key Considerations	In place at FUNdamentals	In place at Learn to Train	Not Applicable
Rules are in place to avoid travesty of the game*			
Special rules are in place to avoid coaches using strategies not linked with matrix			

** Travesty of the game is defined as an attempt to intentionally lengthen or shorten a game or manipulate the score of the game by any means that has players not “playing to win”. For example, a badminton player might lose a game on purpose knowing it will allow him/her to face a weaker opponent in the next round. In softball, this would include batters or runners obviously attempting to make outs, pitchers obviously trying to miss the strike zone when pitching and fielders obviously trying to make errors Rules modifications can be made to avoid those type of problems.*

THE SCORING SYSTEM

In sport, score is a quantitative measure of the relative performance of opponents in a sporting discipline. Score is usually measured in the abstract unit of points, and events in the competition can raise or lower the score of the involved parties. Most games with score use it as a quantitative indicator of success in the game, and in competition, a goal is often made of attaining a better score than one's opponents in order to win.

In team sport, the most common point metric is the 'goal' or 'score'. Goals are accrued by the respective teams, and the match score represents the total score accrued by each team. For example, in soccer and hockey goals are achieved by putting the ball in the opposing team's net. Other team sports like rugby and cricket have more complicated scoring procedures. The winning team is determined by who has recorded the best score, usually the team with the higher total score. A draw or tie occurs when competing teams record an equal score.

Individual-based sports (e.g. golf and tennis) have points-based scoring as well. These may be abstract quantities defined for the sport, or more natural measures such as a distance or duration. Each competing athlete accrues points based on the sport's scoring system, and the athlete with the best score is deemed the winner. In some sports, the best score is that of the competitor with the highest score, such as in tennis or high jump. In other sports, the best score is that of the competitor with the lowest score, such as in golf or the 100 metres sprint.

Most sports have time limits, which means point-based victories are usually the result of obtaining more points than one's opponent. In others, the winner must achieve a fixed number of points sooner than the rival. In some sports, there is a perfect score that is the highest attainable, such as a 6.0 or 10.0.

These measures of winning and losing do not provide the opportunity to appraise all of the key skills that an athlete is working on in practice. For example, in baseball, the Athlete Development Matrix at the FUNdamentals stage of development places an emphasis on basic skills of the game. A better report from a competition would include more than the number of runs scored.

Those examples can be reproduced for most sports as the scoring system used at the professional level is also used at the other stage of development and regardless of the Athlete Development Matrix

developed by the sport. Using Worksheet 4, identify for the FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages, the key skills your scoring system should be focusing on.

Remember, even if a sport does not offer points on defence, be creative with this activity and determine if defensive plays should be rewarded. Consider execution and what is important for athletes in specific sport based on the Athlete Development Matrix. It is possible to observe and score a wide variety of things including time of possession, shots of goals and more.

To help you with this task, Figure 2 has an example from baseball where the plus and minus plays have been identified.

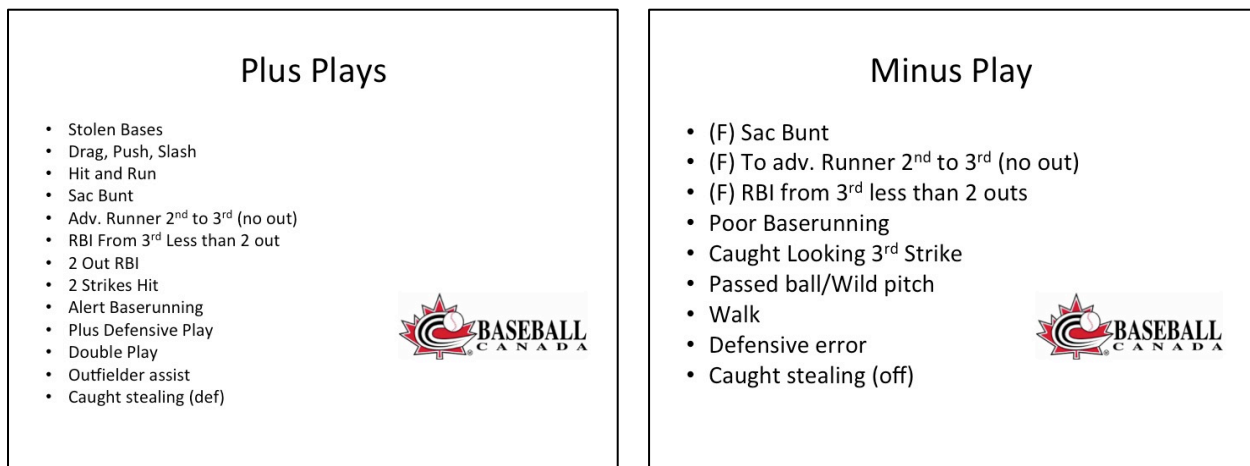


Figure 2. Plus and minus plays for baseball based on the Athlete Development Matrix.

WORKSHEET 4 – SCORING & MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS

	FUNdamentals	Learn to Train
Most important skills to emphasize (Plus points)		

THE MERCY RULE

When looking at meaningful competition, one of the key principles is to make sure the final score ends within a certain differential. Although blowouts during a competition cannot be totally avoided, rules can be created and enforced to reduce their impact on development. Some sports associations have a mercy rule(s) to minimize the impact of large points differential. For example, sports using time (e.g. hockey and basketball) have a rule where the time continues running when there is a certain point difference during the game (i.e. no time stoppage when there is greater than a 6 point difference in hockey). Another example is sport with rules that require coaches to use athletes at different positions when the score becomes non-meaningful.

Canada Basketball has taken it to the other level by defining meaningful competition based on differential (see Figure 3). A sport can use data from previous matches some to determine if a rule is needed to decrease the impact of a potential blowout.

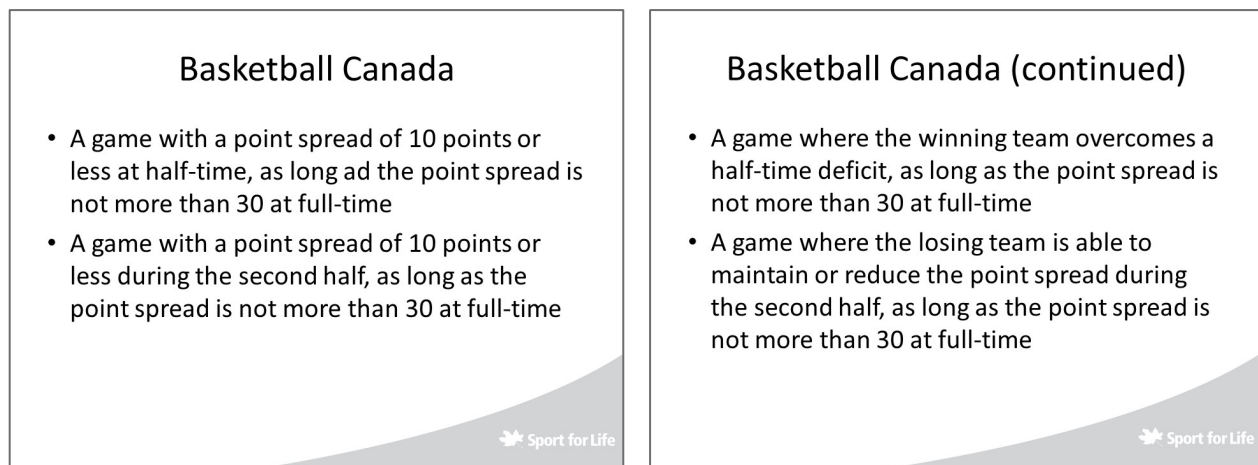


Figure 3. Canada Basketball's description of meaningful competition.

Using Worksheet 5:

- Identify what constitutes a 'blowout' in your sport. A blowout is a situation when an athlete or a team dominates the opponent so much that the meaningful competition principles are not met and when learning is not occurring.
- Identify what your sport is currently doing to prevent or manage blowouts. If your sport has not considered this aspect yet, indicate how you could manage this aspect it in the future.

WORKSHEET 5 – MERCY RULE

In the table below, identify what constitutes a blowout in your sport and what is currently being done to prevent or manage blowouts. If your sport has not considered this aspect yet, indicate how you could manage it in the future.

A blowout in my sport is...			
Rule currently in place?	Rule definition or possible rule	Level of implementation	Other elements
<i>e.g. Yes</i>	<i>i.e. Softball Canada has a rule that stops the game after 4 innings if there is a 6 runs differential</i>	<i>i.e. All levels (Canada Games to provincial championships)</i>	<i>i.e. For all games or for certain games during an event?</i>
Yes			
How could the existing rule be modified to make it better?			
No - Write some ideas that reduce blowout situations and their impact.			

THE MULLIGAN


By definition, a mulligan is described as a second chance to perform an action, usually after something went wrong through bad luck or a blunder on a first try or chance. The mulligan is best-known from golf where a player is informally allowed to replay a stroke. As a result, the hole is played and scored as if the first errant shot had never been made. A mulligan is against the formal rules of golf, however it is sometimes used in friendly games.

In formal play, players who attempt to or agree to a mulligan may be disqualified from sanctioned competitions. However, in casual play, mulligans can speed up play by reducing the time spent searching for a lost ball and increase enjoyment of the game, as a player can 'shake off' a bad shot more easily with their second chance.

In friendly play, groups of players may choose to allow mulligans. If a mulligan is allowed, each player is typically limited to 18 per round, sometimes 9 in the front nine holes, and 9 in the back nine holes. Generally, mulligans can only be played on tee shots (which are notoriously difficult to make accurately), and sometimes they can only be played on the first tee shot of the round.

Certain sports require a series of artistic elements or situations that need near perfection to achieve success (see Figure 3). Trampoline has adopted the mulligan to let an athlete ask for a re-start if the routine goes wrong. This rule allows young athletes to compete knowing they can fail and that they will have a second chance.

In team sports, some leagues have adopted a rule where a sequence can be replayed once during a game if the execution was not performed adequately. Even if this rule does not impact the final outcome of the game, it does reinforce the link between rules and the skills matrix.



Creative Approaches

“Mulligan”

- Calgary Gymnastics Centre hosted a fun competition where athletes were able to try again if they made a mistake during their routine (they put their hand up and said “mulligan” and judges would throw away their scores and start again)
- Why? Athletes were able to try a slightly harder routine in a competition setting and with the addition of an extra attempt some athletes were able to score higher and place among athletes who were ahead of them in competition.

Figure 3. Description of how Gymnastics Canada has incorporated the mulligan.

Could your sport benefit from a mulligan to encourage demonstration of athlete skills at FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages of development?

In your sport, is there a moment when if you miss it, your match or competition is over?

Using the space below and with the help of a colleague, write down some ideas you currently have.

Initial thoughts and ideas

SAFETY

Safety plays an important part in sports programming. Safety includes the field conditions and the long-term implications of participation for athletes in certain sports involving repetitive movement, body contact and more.

With concussions and brain damage being prominent in the media, sports associations have to address this aspect of the game.

Below are some examples of sports dealing with (A) repetitive movement rules adaptation (B) contact who may create concussions and long term brain damages and (C) using a progression to prevent potential injuries.

A. Repetitive Movement Rules Adaptation

Baseball Arm Smart / Pitch Count - Rules Governing the Pitcher

Pitchers shall be permitted to have 2 appearances in the same calendar day. If a pitcher requires a rest following 1st appearance, they cannot return in the same calendar day.

Pitcher cannot pitch 3 consecutive days unless a pitcher's first 2 days combined does not exceed:

- 11U (Mosquito): 25 pitches
- 13U (Pee Wee): 30 pitches
- 15U Boys / 16U Girls (Bantam): 35 pitches
- 18U (Midget): 40 pitches

If pitcher's day 1 and day 2 exceeds figure above for their division, they require at least 1 days rest.

Pitcher cannot pitch 4 consecutive days. One day of rest is needed.

Pitchers and managers shall follow the following guidelines in Table 1.

Table 1. Guidelines for Pitchers and Managers for Rest Days based on number of Pitches thrown.

11U (Mosquito)	13U (Pee Wee)	15U Boys/16U Girls (Bantam)	18U (Midget)/ Canada Cup/ Canada Games	Rest Required
1-25	1-30	1-35	1-40	None
26-40	31-45	36-50	41-55	1 day
41-55	46-60	51-65	56-70	2 days
56-65	61-75	66-80	71-85	3 days
66-75	76-85	81-95	86-105	4 days
75	85	95	105	Maximum

Once a player assumes the position of pitcher, they cannot catch for the remainder of the day.

Rest Required shall be defined in “Days” starting at 12:01am and ending at 11:59 pm of the next calendar day.

A pitcher who is removed from the mound during a game shall not be permitted to return to pitch in the same game, even if the pitcher is retained in the game at another position.

A player playing in a division other than their own age group shall pitch based on the pitch count of the lower aged division.

For example: a 13U playing at 15U is subject to the 13U rules; a 18U playing at 15U is subject to the 15U rules.

B. Body Contact Rules Adaptation

Hockey Canada Checking Rule Adaptation

Body-checking was removed from Pee wee levels (Learn to Train stage of development) and below within leagues governed by Hockey Canada, starting in 2013-14 with the approval of a modification to playing rule 6.2b. In addition to this rule change, a work group has been directed to build a mandatory national checking and instructional resource program to support the progressive implementation of checking skills at the Novice to Pee wee levels (FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stage of development) to better prepare players for body-checking at the Bantam and Midget level.

USA Soccer Heading Rule

Following 15 months of litigation, U.S. Soccer announced recently a brand new series of initiatives designed to reduce the number of concussions suffered by youth soccer players, including the limitation and/or outright banning of heading the ball for players under the age of 13.

Per the new protocol, children 10 and under will be barred from heading the ball during any official session – practice or game – while players ages 11 to 13 will have heading limited during training sessions.

C. Using Progression and Standards

Some sports, like equestrian, have rules in place that use standards to determine if an athlete is ready or not to move to another level of performance. These rules are in place to protect the athlete for potential injuries and to ensure the athlete can perform skills at the adequate level of performance before moving up.

WORKSHEET 6 – SAFETY

In the table, identify if your sport has safety issues with repetitive movement rules, body contact rules, or using progression and standards. Then indicate some ideas about how rules could reduce risks in your sport.

Rule currently in place?	Repeated movement	Head injuries	Progressions
	<i>Yes or No</i>	<i>Yes or No</i>	<i>Yes or No</i>
<i>Here are some of my ideas for rules to support athletes' safety:</i>			

PLAYING UP/DOWN AND TIERING

Meaningful competition aims to provide two opponents of the same level with an equal chance of winning. As discussed earlier, a blowout during a competition does not provide for optimal athlete development for either the winner or the loser. This has been observed at events where a smaller province plays a bigger one. History has shown that the bigger province will win most of the time, in most team and individual sports. The same pattern is also seen at the provincial or regional level where a bigger center plays a smaller center.

Some sports have identified this problem and came up with a rule to allow older players to play down (e.g. an 18 years old players playing in a 17U division). Baseball Canada has seen a significant increase in the percent of meaningful games at Canada Games and some provinces have followed with similar ruling at the provincial level. The rule also takes into consideration tiering of teams participating in events.

Other sports (e.g. badminton and squash) have competitions where tiering happens throughout the competition based on match/game performances. For example, all players start in one bracket and cascade to other brackets where players with similar skills meet on the court.

Here is an example extracted from the Baseball Canada rule for 15U and 18U Boys Divisions:

The teams shall compete in two pools, with the pools determined by Baseball Canada using the following criteria:

- Teams will be placed in the Pool A and Pool B divisions based on a point system calculated from the last 3 years results.
- If tournament is hosted in Province of Pool A team, then Pool A is comprised of both teams from the Host Province and the top 3 teams. Pool B is comprised of the remaining teams.
- If tournament is hosted in Province of Pool B team, then Pool A is comprised of the top 5 teams. Pool B is comprised of both teams from the Host Province and all remaining teams.
- If the Host Province is ranked 5th based on the last 3 years results, the Provincial Team shall remain in Pool A while the Host Team shall go to Pool B.
- Bottom 3 seeded teams in Pool B have the opportunity to use 2 overage players. If the Host Province is in the bottom 3 teams, Host team also allowed 2 overage players. An overage player is maximum 1 year older.

WORKSHEET 7 – PLAYING UP/DOWN

Looking back at the meaningful competition document, complete the following table considering the reality of your sport.

<p>1. Meaningful – What range of performance describes a highly contested match or event? How close do competitors need to be for it to be exciting and meaningful?</p>
<p>2. Potentially Meaningful – This is grey zone between the two extremes. What is this range? What are the factors that could make results in this range more meaningful?</p>
<p>3. Non-Meaningful – What would commonly be considered a blowout? Consider rules or policies that are already in place (i.e. mercy rule in hockey).</p>
<p>4. Stage Considerations – Do these measurements or ranges differ by stage? Would it be beneficial to consider each stage individually?</p>

EQUAL PLAYING/COMPETITION TIME

“Equal playing time is a debate about the value of inclusion in sport. At the heart of the value of inclusion is the belief that anyone who wants to play sport should have the opportunity. Within the value of inclusion sits the issue of playing time. One way of being inclusive is to ensure that all team members play the same amount of time in a game or, alternatively, over the course of a season, all team members have roughly the same amount of playing time. That is, in both instances, if you make the team, you get to play.” – Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

The Benefits of Equal Playing Time for the Youth Athlete:

- **Avoid contention among players.** Youth are sensitive to and intuitive with favouritism regardless of the intention of the coach. Perceived favouritism demoralizes players, creates resentment, and they fail to try their best. In the worst case scenario, they give up the sport. Team wins at the expense of individual self-esteem are in fact, loses.
- **Minimize player fatigue.** If the top players get exhausted due to too much playing time, and the other players have limited game experience, it could cost the whole team in tough physical games.
- **Maximize player development.** People learn by doing and without access to playing time and game specific situations, players cannot learn. “Competitiveness” of sport should be about self-improvement and setting attainable goals. Winning is inherent in sport and is difficult to de-emphasize. However, winning at the cost to the individual impedes player, team, and club development as well as the advancement of sport.
- **Active for Life.** Players may choose to play soccer as a purely recreational activity regardless of their level of ability or disability. Soccer can be enjoyed as an integral part of any personal lifelong wellness plan. Adult players can also become active in the coaching and administration of the sport. The recruitment and retention of players, coaches, referees and administrators is key to the ongoing development of both grass roots and elite soccer in Canada.

The Benefits of Equal Playing Time for the Coach (in addition to those listed above):

- **Avoid contention/confrontation between coaches and parents.** Parents will not objectively judge their own child's ability and coaches should not expect objectivity from parents. If each team member is shown respect, fairness, and given the opportunity to play and develop, parents will not need to judge.
- **Simplify coaching decisions.** Exposing all players to all situations means that coaches do not need to guess about who can do what or handle what. Knowing what your athletes can do in a game situation makes coaching easier.
- **Improve team chemistry.** Focus comes when players perceive that everyone is being treated fairly and working as a team. Plus, athletes who are having fun have better game and practice attendance.

Soccer Strategies for Coaches to Deliver Equal Playing Time:

- **Communicate.** Conduct pre-season meetings with players/parents and share your goals, your techniques, and your expectations with the whole team. Commit publicly to Equal Playing Time and respect for the sport, the officials, the volunteers, the players and the organization. Know how to reach your team members and make sure they know how to reach you. Request updates regarding illness, vacation time, and family commitments so that you know when you will be missing players on practice and game day.
- **Plan.** For game day, plan your lines. For practice day, plan your drills. Having a plan and being organized will enable you to deliver the program fairly to all members of the team and create an inclusive environment.
- **Stick to your Commitments.** Honour your prepared game line-ups that ensure equal playing time for all your players. Stick to your game plan even if the team is losing - - kids play sports to have fun, not to win. Deliver on what you committed to publicly.
- **Have a Helper.** Recruiting a trusted helper who shares the Equal Playing Time philosophy will enable the coach to focus on game strategy and instruction during the game. Concentrate on watching the game and identifying each and every success your players' experience – big or small. Trying to keep track of how much each child plays during the game is next to impossible. Your helper can watch the elapsed game time to ensure line changes are made fairly.

- **Look for Opportunities.** Help players earn “starter” time with contests set up at practice. Earn penalty kicks as rewards for sportsmanship, skill development, or teamwork. Assign “homework” geared to improve competence and confidence. Find rewards for **ALL** athletes on the team and the team will reap the rewards.

Excerpt from Pickering Soccer Club:

- Regardless of the sport, the organization, or the country of origin: Equal Playing Time is in the best interest of not only the athlete, but also the coach, the organization, and the sport. In most youth sport, Equal Playing Time is the rule, not the exception. To really understand why the findings were so consistent, the core purpose of youth sport should be examined. Most experts and parents look to youth sport to support learning sport and life skills (e.g. self-esteem; participation and fitness; communication; teamwork, respect, and good sportsmanship). Sport also provides youth with the opportunity to experiment, take risks and explore challenges, and make mistakes – all in a non-threatening environment. An athlete does not learn these lessons solely by watching or sitting on the bench.

WORKSHEET 8 – EQUAL PLAYING/COMPETITION TIME

What does equal playing/competition time look like in your sport?

Based on the description above, list any considerations that could be used to examine playing equal time in your sport based on your knowledge and experience. Keep in mind that for some sports, (i.e. being eliminated after one run qualifies for lack of competition time in baseball).

THE HANDICAP SYSTEM

Handicapping, in sport and games, is the practice of assigning advantage through scoring compensation or other advantage given to different contestants to equalize the chances of winning. The word also applies to the various methods used to calculate advantage. In principle, a more experienced player is disadvantaged in order to make it possible for a less experienced player to participate in the game or sport whilst maintaining fairness. Handicapping also refers to the various methods by which spectators can predict and quantify the results of a sporting match.

Appendix 1 offers explanations for the handicap system from golf which has used the system for years.

Bowling is another example of a sport that makes use of the handicap. This is based on the bowlers accumulated average. A lower average for one player when compared to the average of other players who are competing will result in the issuing of a handicap that is understood to help equalize the competition in a given event. Some leagues choose to arrive at the handicap in a manner similar to golfing, where it is based on a short period of activity. In other cases, the bowling handicap is based on the average of the last two or three completed games.

The handicap system is also sometimes used in some form during. For example, in racquet sports, a player may start a game with a certain lead against an athlete with lesser skills. This approach creates a situation where both athletes are in that challenge zone, thus creating a meaningful competition for both. However, this system has rarely been used in real competitions. Table tennis has used some sort of handicap system using a rating system of athletes (see below).

TABLE TENNIS CANADA RATING SYSTEM

1. BASIC PRINCIPLES RATING – The “rating” of a player is a number value. To obtain this number value players compete in competitions from which the results are submitted to the Canadian Ranking System.

1.1. For each match, the winner gains a certain number of points whilst, at the same time, points are deducted from the rating of the loser. The number of points won or lost depends on the relative strength of the two players involved.

1.2. Points are added or deducted in accordance with the Points Exchange table: "Expected results" are those of matches where the winner had a higher rating going into a competition than the loser.

"Unexpected results" are those of matches where the winner had a lower rating than the loser.

2. WEIGHTINGS

2.1. Depending on the event, different exchange tables are used; a higher exchange value is used in higher star competitions.

2.2. TTCAN's Competition Department classifies all events considered for Ratings into tiers (star rating). There are four (4) tiers of events, each with a specific exchange table.

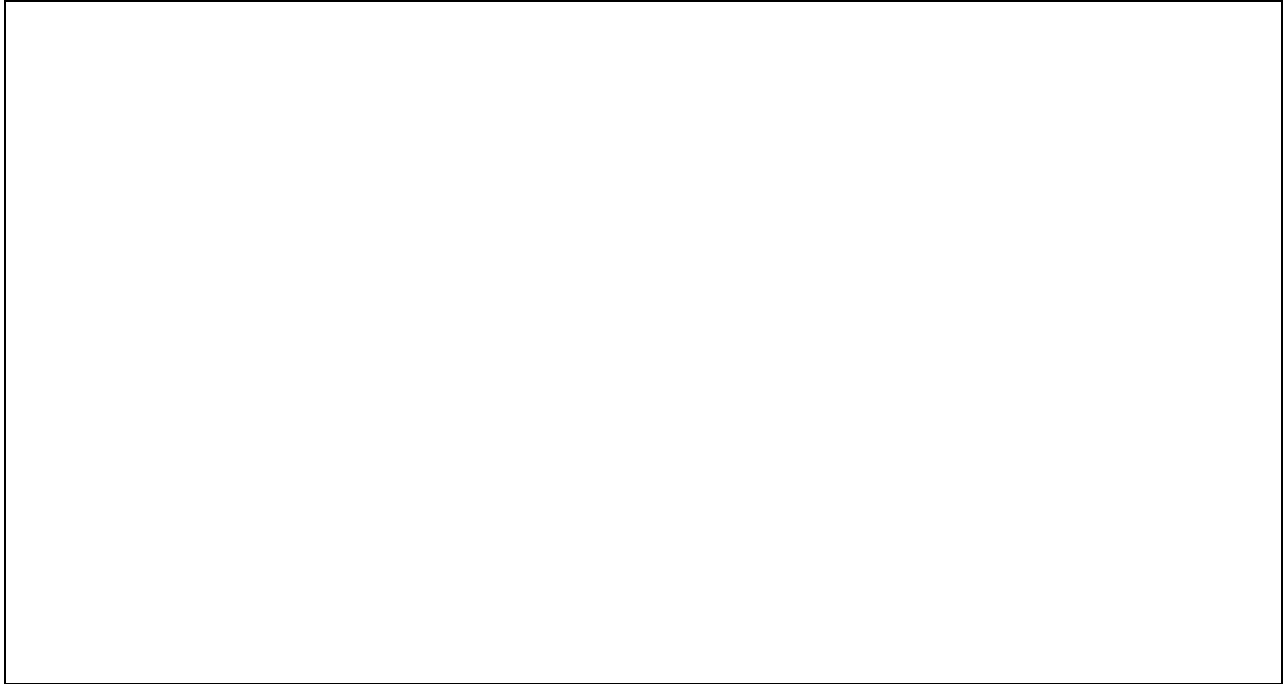
Tennis Canada uses something similar to determine the differences between athletes. Here is an extract of their rule.

Click here for full version:

http://www.tpacanada.com/sites/default/files/Self%20Rating%20Guide%20-%20English_0.pdf

WORKSHEET 9 – HANDICAP SYSTEM

With the handicap probably being a new concept for your sport, write down some ideas on how that could be used in your sport. Share your ideas with another participant.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for participants to write down their ideas on how a handicap system could be used in their sport.

ROLE OF THE OFFICIALS

EXAMINING THE CURRENT SITUATION

Judges, timekeepers, referees, clerks and other officials play a key role in allowing athletes to develop. Quality officiating is a meaningful part of quality sport, and there are tools to make officiating even better. Competitive structures can help athletes and coaches develop – and should be no different for officials.

In a competition environment, officials must deal with the situation in front of them. Unlike athletes and coaches who can, at times, work on certain skills, tactics or strategies within a competitive setting at targeted points during a season, officials are at the mercy of the competition before them. This means that officials are in a perpetual state of ‘peaking’, as they are never able to properly practice and develop a specific aspect of their sport in a periodized manner.

TYPES OF OFFICIATING

The structure of each sport dictates the way it is officiated. Therefore, since every sport is specific, officials in each sport have a diverse set of challenges and skills. For the purpose of a multi-sport examination of officiating, categories are needed to guide the work. The simplest categorization of officials would be into “active” and “not active” sport officials. Such a categorization would separate those officials who have high levels of physical demand (e.g. a soccer referee) from those with a lower level of demand (e.g. a gymnastics judge). Physical fitness is never enough to guarantee great officiating, but it is never irrelevant either, so a better acknowledgement of that continuum would be helpful.

Research indicates that categories for officials can be broken into the following groups:

1. **Interactors** are officials who physically are in the same space as the athletes. Commonly found in team sports (though combative sports are a clear example as well), these officials occupy the same space and often directly interact by talking to, avoiding and sometimes even physically touching (e.g. a boxing referee breaking up fighters) the athletes. As these officials are physically in the athletic space, their physical demands are often higher than those of other officials.
2. **Reactors** are usually called upon to make a call based on the action in the sport. Volleyball referees, for instance, will react if a player touches the net or if the ball hits the floor and an

in/out call is required. The level of physical exertion among these officials will usually be lower than that of interactors, but these officials usually move and are at or near the field of play.

3. **Monitors** do not make calls as such but are usually judges who provide a decision/mark only upon the completion of the performance. These officials, such as figure skating judges, may be near the field of play, but do not interact directly with the athletes, and often also do not interact with each other either. Commonly, these officials are seated when officiating.

The challenges for each official and each type of official are different. In some areas, such as in physical fitness and physical skill development, there will be bigger differences, but physical fitness is never enough to make a great “interactor” official and it is always helpful to a “monitor” official to have good physical fitness, for example.

Depending on the stage of development you are working with, officials play an important role. The two most important roles are **enforcing and educating**. As a sport organization, it is important to identify what role the officials will play at each stage of development.

WORKSHEET 10 – OFFICIATING

Identify the ideal percent of enforcement and education for your sport considering the nature, peak of performance and other relevant factors. Finally, among all the rules in place in your sport, what are the ones an official should enforce and the ones officials should educate. Consider the example provided.

	FUNdamentals	Learn to Train
Enforcing	<i>Example: 20%</i>	<i>Example: 30%</i>
Educating	<i>Example: 80%</i>	<i>Example: 70%</i>
Playing Rules to Enforce/ Educate	<i>Example: Enforcing the respect of the non-checking rule in hockey is important to enforce as it becomes a safety matter.</i>	<i>Example: In soccer, the purpose of a throw in is to put the ball in play. Not respecting proper rule should not be enforced. Some clubs even allow a throw-in to yourself using the feet.</i>

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Implementing change in any organization is a difficult task. The same is true for aligning the rules within a competitive sport environment. Having an action plan will help your organization implement changes. Considering all the elements discussed in this workbook, use the grid below to identify what changes that would have the greatest impact on your sport while considering how difficult it would be to implement the change. The equation for change provides you with a visual to help you stimulate thoughts.

Major impact and difficult to change	Major impact and easy to change
Minor impact and difficult to change	Minor impact and easy to change

WORKING FOR CHANGE

When working to implement change, think about these five factors (see Figure 4).

Your vision for change is quality sport, as described in the Sport for Life framework. Your skills include the knowledge, credibility and connections of your work group members. Your first tasks are (1) to develop powerful incentives attractive to your target group, (2) to secure the resources necessary to deliver the incentives and support the implementation process, and (3) to develop an action plan that involves all partners and lays out a practical pathway for change. Remember, you can draw on your sport specific Long-Term Athlete Development framework and many other resources in developing your action plan.

-	+	Skills	+	Incentive	+	Resource	+	Action plan	=	Confusion
Vision	+	-	+	Incentive	+	Resource	+	Action plan	=	Anxiety
Vision	+	Skills	+	-	+	Resource	+	Action plan	=	Gradual change
Vision	+	Skills	+	Incentive	+	-	+	Action plan	=	Frustration
Vision	+	Skills	+	Incentive	+	Resource	+	-	=	False Start
Vision	+	Skills	+	Incentive	+	Resource	+	Action plan	=	Change

Figure 4. Working for Change.

APPENDIX 1 – GOLF HANDICAP SYSTEM

The Handicap System is mainly known in golf with the purpose of making the game of golf more enjoyable for golfers by providing a means of measuring one's performance and progress and to enable golfers of differing abilities to compete on an equitable basis. Through this system, each golfer establishes a "Golf Handicap Factor" which is a numerical measurement of a player's potential (not actual) scoring ability on a course of standard difficulty.

The Handicap Factor is calculated using the best 10 of the player's last 20 rounds and updated with each new round played. The Handicap Factor travels with the golfer from course to course and is adjusted up or down depending on the length and difficulty of the course played, resulting in a "Course Handicap". The Course Handicap is the number of strokes a golfer receives from a specific set of tees at the course played and represents the number of strokes he would require to play equitably against a "scratch" golfer (a golfer with a Handicap Factor of "0.0"). The more difficult the golf course, the more strokes the golfer receives and vice versa.

The relative difficulty of a golf course is determined jointly by Golf Canada and the provincial golf association using the Golf Canada Course and Slope Rating System. Specially trained Course Rating Teams evaluate the difficulty of a golf course based on such variables as length and a number of obstacle factors (e.g. topography, bunkers, water hazards, severity of rough, and more).

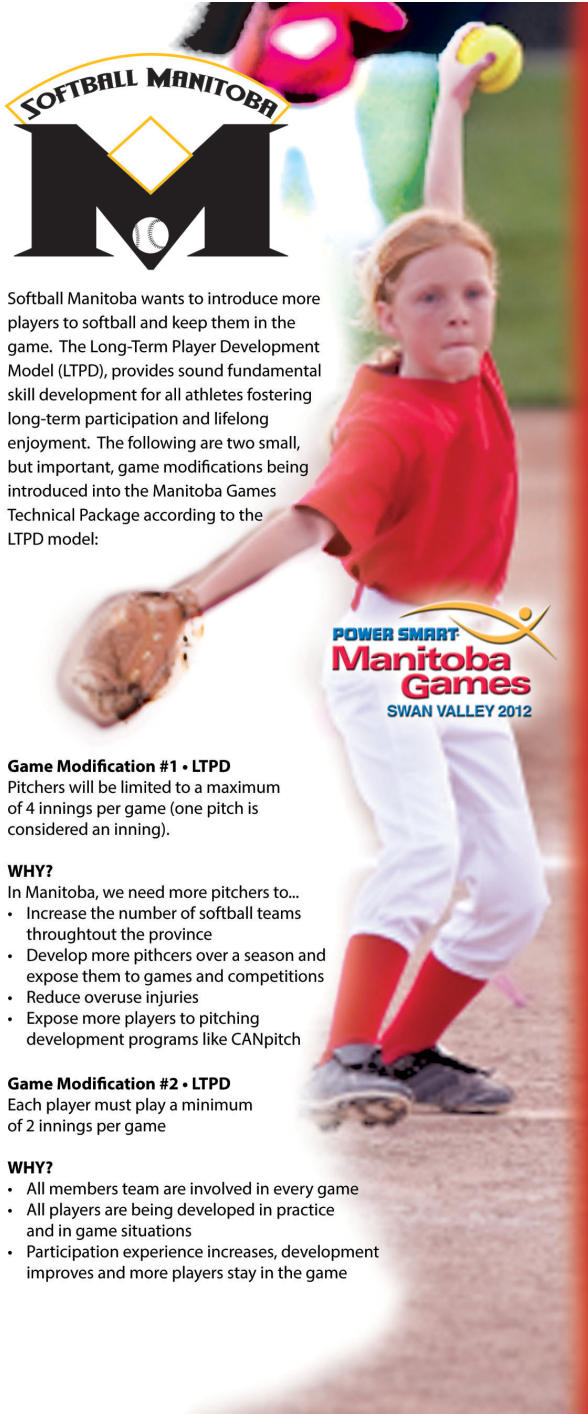
Only Golf Canada member golf clubs are permitted to use the Golf Canada Handicap System and Golf Canada Course Rating System and related trademarks and service marks and must do so in a manner that preserves the integrity and reliability of these systems.

APPENDIX 2 – TENNIS CANADA “PLAY TENNIS” RATING SYSTEM

A self-rating guide used in house leagues and teams.

Rating	Ground-Strokes (forehand and backhand)	Return Of Serve	Net Play (volleys and overheads)	Serve
1.0	This player is just starting to play tennis			
1.5	This player has been introduced to the game, however has difficulty playing the game due to lack of consistency rallying and serving.			
2.0	Can get the ball in play but lacks control, resulting in inconsistent rallies. Often chooses to hit forehands instead of backhands.	Tends to position in a manner to protect weaknesses. Inconsistent return.	In singles, reluctant to come to the net. In doubles, understands the basic positioning; comfortable only with the forehand volley; avoids backhand volley and overhead.	In complete service motion. Toss is inconsistent. Double faults are common.
2.5	Can rally consistently 10 balls in a row, especially on the forehand, with an arched trajectory over the net when the objective is to hit to a partner at moderate speed.	In singles, consistent when returning towards the middle of the court. In doubles, difficulty returning cross-court to start the point.	Becoming at least at the net in practice but uncomfortable in a game situation.	Attempting a full service motion on the first serve. First serve is inconsistent (less than 50%). Uses an incomplete motion to ensure a steady second serve.
3.0	Able to rally consistently 10 balls in a row on forehands and backhands. Able to maintain the rally when receiving high, short or wide balls, assuming the ball is received at a moderate pace, especially on the forehand stroke.	Can control the direction of the ball in both singles and doubles, when receiving a serve of moderate pace.	Very consistent on forehand volley with easy balls, inconsistent on backhand volley. Overall has difficulty with low and wide balls. Can smash easy lobs.	Full motion on both serves. Able to achieve more than 50% success on first serve. Second serve much slower than first serve.

APPENDIX 3 – SOFTBALL MANITOBA PITCH COUNT RULE



Softball Manitoba wants to introduce more players to softball and keep them in the game. The Long-Term Player Development Model (LTPD), provides sound fundamental skill development for all athletes fostering long-term participation and lifelong enjoyment. The following are two small, but important, game modifications being introduced into the Manitoba Games Technical Package according to the LTPD model:

Game Modification #1 • LTPD

Pitchers will be limited to a maximum of 4 innings per game (one pitch is considered an inning).

WHY?

In Manitoba, we need more pitchers to...

- Increase the number of softball teams throughout the province
- Develop more pitchers over a season and expose them to games and competitions
- Reduce overuse injuries
- Expose more players to pitching development programs like CANpitch

Game Modification #2 • LTPD

Each player must play a minimum of 2 innings per game

WHY?

- All members team are involved in every game
- All players are being developed in practice and in game situations
- Participation experience increases, development improves and more players stay in the game

Softball's Long-Term Player Development Model Training to Train Stage (Competitive Softball)

Here is what players in this stage should be doing:

SEASON STRUCTURE

Early in Stage

- Pre-Season: 14 to 18 practices
- Competitive Season: 12 to 15 weeks
- Practice to Competition Ratio: 60%:40%
- Number of Games: 24 to 30 games
- Number of Practices: 36 to 45 practices;
Softball - specific activities: 2 to 3 times per week for 90 minutes per session

Later in Stage

- Pre-Season: 15 to 20 practices
- Competitive Season: 12 to 16 weeks
- Practice to Competition Ratio: 60%:40%
- Number of Games: 30 to 36 games plus structured skill development prior to games
- Number of Practices: 45 to 54 practices
- Frequency: Softball - specific activities: 3 to 4 times per week for 90 minutes per session

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Understand that coaches are beginning to identify and develop "talent" at this stage. This may mean an increase in commitment.
- Ensure your child is not pushed, over-trained or is over-competing as injuries and burnout can result.
- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition.
- Discuss with your child that sudden growth changes may cause temporary performance decreases. This is normal and will improve as they adapt to their new body.
- Understand that this is a major fitness development stage for speed, strength and stamina.
- Provide support to your child and encourage increased independence as the player becomes more responsible for making decisions about their athletic career. Be available when the player needs guidance.

Complete information for coaches and parents regarding the Softball Long-Term Player Development Model can be viewed at www.softball.ca. More information on Softball Manitoba's Manitoba Games program can be found at www.softball.mb.ca or email donklym@mts.net.



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Rules Modification and Alignment

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There are many people and organizations that continue to contribute to advancing quality sport in Canada. In this case, the original work and thought leadership around Rule Modification and Alignment has been discussed in many forums. Thank you to all who continue to make the sport experience better in Canada.



Sport for Life