
Abstract

A comprehensive approach to sport expertise should consider the entire situation that is comprised of the person, the task, the environment, and the complex interplay of these components (Hackfort, 1986). Accordingly, the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007) provides a comprehensive framework for sport expertise that outlines different pathways of involvement in sport. In pathways one and two, early sampling serves as the foundation for both elite and recreational sport participation. Early sampling is based on two main elements of childhood sport participation: 1) involvement in various sports and 2) participation in deliberate play. In contrast, pathway three shows the course to elite performance through early specialization in one sport. Early specialization implies a focused involvement on one sport and a large number of deliberate practice activities with the goal of improving sport skills and performance during childhood. This paper proposes seven postulates regarding the role that sampling and deliberate play, as opposed to specialization and deliberate practice, can have during childhood in promoting continued participation and elite performance in sport.