

## Coaching Generation Y (Kelvin Giles)

selected extracts (Full article is available on the NWA website: [www.nwaswimaths.com](http://www.nwaswimaths.com) ... PROGRAMS > General Programs)

Kelvin Giles is a former UK National and Olympic Track & Field Coach, Inaugural Head Coach at the Australian Institute of Sport, Director of Performance for the Brisbane Broncos Rugby League Club, Director of Strength & Conditioning at the Queensland Academy of Sport and world renowned strategist on modern performance attainment models. Coach to 14 Olympians.

We live in an age where we all chase 'best-practice', whether in sport, the corporate sector or the community at large.

We can all train athletes hard, that's not difficult to do ... The key is to train smart and hard ...

I see young athletes, barely in their teens, on a crusade of winning their local, regional or national championship. Nothing else matters to the coach in charge, everything is geared to 'winning at all costs and often the coaches status in their particular micro-world of sport is enhanced by the number of age-group champions they produce. While they charge ahead chasing their own particular 'holy grail' of sport (the regional U/12 Championships or the World Youth Championships) they are given the responsibility of choosing the poor mite who is going to get the glory for them. Now we are in the world of Talent Identification, a scientific approach of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century that allows us to assemble our very best young things and prepare them for outcome based contests. The rules are usually the same as those in the adult world, the competition schedules also very similar, and coaching methodology is taken straight out of the adult world and simply watered down in some shape or form.

Who are we kidding? The world of competitive sport in the 12-16 age groups is dominated by the lucky soul who happened to be born a lot earlier than most of the others in the same chronological age group. In young males the 'best' athletes in this age group are usually those who shave three times a day. To quote a leading Australian High Performance Coach in an address to up-and-coming coaches, "Don't think that it is your coaching talent that creates the improvement from 12-16 years. It's a matter of growth and hormones – size is the dominant factor."

In all this argument my mind drifts to **the late developer**, the poor soul who was born at the very end of the school year they abide in. They are 6-9 months behind in all the growth and development factors that each has to negotiate and they have to operate under the same rules. Contest outcomes are the death-knell to this group of children even though in their own way they may display sound physical competence, agility, balance and coordination. They are young people crammed full of potential, just as eager to take part and probably with the same dreams as the 'gorilla' they have to compete against. Sad thing is that by their late teens everyone is pretty equal in development and maturation, life has a way of evening out the process and lo-and-behold we reach the start line for elite performance development (18+ years) and we have either burned-out the early maturer or crushed the late developer.

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Plenty more thoughts .. the above is a selection only: the full article is 4.5 typed A4 pages .. worth a read for those interested in (really interested in) working with young athletes.

Of course, most of those who need to read such thoughts, e.g. the parent or coach of a youthful superstar, *will not have the time*.

Thanks to Master Coach Bill Sweetenham for the referral. Related thoughts by Bill .. NWA Newsletter (8-11) p. 5  
[www.nwaswimaths.com](http://www.nwaswimaths.com) > RESOURCES > General Resources

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In my opinion:

FAR to much expectation (and with it, pressure) is attracted by very young athletes performing very well .. expectation and pressure from parents, from coaches, from their peer group, from themselves .. **here's a test**.

Everyone loves a winner ... but not if they persist in winning; examples are easy - Greg Norman, ultimately we all dislike having our noses rubbed in the continued success of someone else .. can you think of a "local" example?

**Select your sport** ... write down the youngster(s) who are its local superstars; e.g. at age 9, 10, 11, or 12, the athlete(s) who are "pushing aside" all the others of similar age (Kelvin rather unkindly calls them "gorillas" .. perhaps a truism) with their "amazing" achievements .. then, revisit the list in 4-5 years (if your commitment to the sport is retained).

Every year spawns a new batch of too easily impressed, often out-of-touch-with-standards parents of "superstars", all waiting to hear what they want to hear, the cycle repeats, and repeats, and repeats, .... if it is allowed to repeat.

**Experience can only be earned** (with time and endeavour) .. Experience cannot be legislated