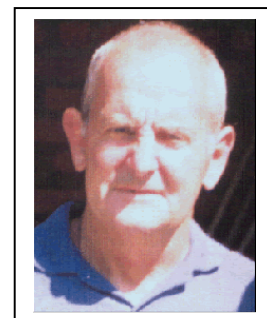


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Leading Teacher and Co-ordinator of Sport, Ouyen Secondary College, 1967-1998
Education Victoria: Inaugural Most Outstanding Teacher Contribution to Sport, March 1994
Athletics Australia: Olympic Athlete Program Elite Juniors Co-ordinator, 1995-96
Debbie Flintoff-King Olympic Gold Camps Program: 1992-1995
Speed is a Key Athletics & Swimming Camps & Clinics, 1998-
Australian Track & Field Coaches Association (Level 4) .. coach, Eaglehawk Athletics Club
Australian Swimming Coaches Association (Bronze) .. coach, Geelong Swimming Club
Athletics Victoria: Regional Track & Field Co-ordinator (North West), 1988-1995; 1998-1999
Pallikoodam Swimming/Athletics Program (Kottayam, Kerala, India): Feb. 2000 -



Follow Your Dream(s) .. www.nwaswimaths.com .. PROGRAMS > General Programs

Intent young faces watch the explosive perfection of Cathy Freeman, the magic skills of Michael Voss, the precision of Ricky Ponting, and the relentless pursuit of success of Leisel Jones, of Stephanie Rice, of Michael Phelps.

There is silence in the classroom. Amazement. Respect. Awe. The faces say it all: “I wish”, “I might”. **They dream.**

But, **how does the dream become a goal? How does the goal become an achievement?**

With perseverance .. with very great difficulty. Especially so if that initial dream is formulated in an isolated country environment.

Check out: www.nwaswimaths.com
PROGRAMS >
General Programs >
Setting Goals (Naber)

Geography aside, however, **the dream-goal-achievement transition is dependent on action**, gathering resources, planning and implementing appropriate strategies.

Ultimately, every athlete has to take their talent and apply it, grasp opportunities and exploit them.

So often we hear “there are a lot of potential stars in country areas”.

But, everyone has “potential” ..
it is a measure of what we have yet to achieve.

I agree isolation drains energy, finance, and initiative;
it takes an almost inevitable toll.

But, face facts!

If you are a country athlete, and you have a dream, **the initial steps to success may be in your hands.**



So often opportunities are non-renewable resources, and while it may be true that some country athletes may lack resources, they have to learn they are in control of their destiny, and make things happen.

Having coached in an isolated country town (Ouyen, 450 km, from Melbourne) for over 30 years, making frequent trips and extended stopovers in every state capital, travelling overseas with Australian Junior Teams and school groups, I understand the frustration of country athletes, and I support the view that more opportunities and resources should be accessible to young athletes in remote locations.

But, **crying for help, falls on deaf ears. It is (very) easy to “cop out” by declaring your talent neglected.**

Not all aspects of a country-based development are disadvantageous .. the grass may just appear greener. Country athletes often reveal a strength of character, a physical and mental toughness, and a more proactive approach towards success. They have a capacity to understand and appreciate the efforts of those who have helped them, in turn promoting more support, and, better appreciate opportunities than athletes and coaches with such things handed to them often, too easily.

But what are the responsibilities of development coaches? I prefer the term “**development**” to “junior”.

The early stages of an athlete's career are of critical importance. We learn errors as easily as correct techniques. It is therefore **vital** that development coaches provide athletes with a sound platform of skills from which to launch their progress ... speed, co-ordination, core strength, knowledge, self-esteem should be the focus; it is up to the athlete to apply the skills they acquire in the sport or lifestyle area they choose. Coaches of elite athletes are not necessarily the best or better teachers of fundamental skills; they are different coaches, not necessarily better coaches.

The quality of coach education has greatly expanded and improved in the past 20 years, and as younger coaches work with and benefit from the experiences of their peers, the learning environment is/can be enriched for the young athlete.

However, it is fundamental that having reached a “national standard” athletes, must move to proximity with programs that will enable their progression to continue.

How often do we hear of young athletes motivated, inspired by, and learning from elite role models.

Recently **Cathy Freeman** expressed her gratitude to **Debbie Flintoff-King** for helping her to believe in herself? ... *There wasn't enough I could do to be like her.* Herald-Sun: 14/12/08

“The helicopter is **not** going to land and whisk you away to play for the Bombers (a dream) .. you have to be pro-active, heed advice, persevere, and never, never, never give up.”

Elite sprinter Lauren Hewitt had to move to Melbourne for the final years of her education, as did Australian Netball World Champion Sharelle McMahon; I doubt whether either of these young ladies regret the decision they and their families had to make, and the financial and life-style sacrifices that have been critical in their success.

So, develop, refine, and extend basic skills .. it is never too early to implement a skills plan; and be on the lookout for opportunities that will help you achieve your goal(s).

Recognising an opportunity is fundamental to progression. And, opportunity often knocks softly.

I wonder how many young men heeded the advice of David Parkin. What did he recently suggest about speed and the ability to run of young country footballers? The Herald-Sun article presented the recommendations of a man with legendary experience .. who listened? I'm sure many read, but, more importantly, how many reacted positively?

As a country athlete you need guidance, encouragement, opportunity. But no more so than your metropolitan counterpart.

You are both a phone / fax / email away from your coach.

Distance no longer disadvantages;

it can cost, but it does not disadvantage; emails, texting, DVD's ... get yourself into the 21st century.

The more initiative you can show, the more likely your efforts will be noticed and appreciated.

This is not a boys / girls thing. My general philosophy is that **girls want to learn things, boys think they know everything.** But, in reality, every athlete is an experiment of one; the athlete who steps up to the plate gives themselves the opportunity to excel.

All the AFL camp draftees will impress ... a few will progress. Forget the few super-talents, they will (usually) progress.

So, **what can you (the country athlete) do?**

Very, **very** few athletes possess enough “natural ability” to progress beyond “local superstar” status.

1. **Seek educated, informed, experienced guidance.** Are there development coaches in your area? Can they help? What fundamental skills should be learnt, how, and in what sequence?

The days of “one coach” are over .. lets call it "yesterdays coaching". A leading coach, for sure, but one who is collaborative, a guide, and who respects the knowledge and experience of experts in the many fields that contribute to achievement. (Don't just seek out someone who will tell you what you want to hear.)

Seek out a coach(es) who will provide precise, varied, realistic challenges, as well as positive, corrective feedback.

And remember: So often **help not sought, is described as not existing.**

A Dream is a Dream. A Goal is a Dream with an achievement strategy and a time-line.

Don't hesitate. Do it. The dream is fading.

2. **Establish and maintain communication with your coach(es).** Direct is best, but telephone, fax, email, video .. even mail can work, and, don't just communicate when things go well.

Seek a program that will enhance your skills, and stick to it. There are many fine coaches and fine programs out there looking for young athletes or enthusiasts to support.

Great coaching is not about winning .. great coaching is about empathy with and skill acquisition by the athlete.

Don't be distracted by labels that supposed identify a “Head” Coach .. seek the help YOU need from someone who has your best interests as their goal.

But, remember, in terms of knowledge, **there are no automatic solutions, no super-coaches, only differences in the way programs are applied.**

The fundamental responsibility of development coaches is to develop basic skills, improve movement skills, strength and flexibility, and enhance confidence and self-esteem.

This is a vital responsibility that will empower youngsters in many aspects of their lives, and deliver them to sub-elite levels where these skills and their performance progression can be further refined.

Surely coaches of our “elite” would appreciate athletes progressing towards them with enhanced levels of basic skill, co-ordination, strength, confidence, self-esteem and flexibility.

3. **Keep an open mind.** Every person has an idea to contribute. They may have had or witnessed the experience or strategy that you need to develop your skills.
4. **Develop a support group.** Clearly identify the persons you can count on, train with, confide in .. and, use them. Show your appreciation if you wish to expand your support.

On five occasions in the past six years, I have spent several weeks working with swimmers aged 8-16 years at a school in Kottayam, Kerala, south-West India.

After each session, on every day, the youngsters would line up to express their appreciation.

Result: I’m going back. (I’ve been back .. 8 visits): www.nwaswimaths.com > PRESENTATIONS > General Presentations > Pallikoodam Nov.-Dec. 2007

5. **Keep records of your progress:** written records, diaries, video. **An eye full is better than a mouthful**, not just in learning a new skill, but in seeing the fruits of your endeavour. (Training Diary .. 5-10 mins./day; don’t become a slave to your diary)

Former National Youth and Olympic Swimming Coach Bill Sweetenham says: “If it can be measured, measure it.”

We all respond best to tangible results; often the fear of objective comparison lies in the mind of an adult who sees the performance of the athlete as a reflection on them. Yet every Saturday thousands of youngsters are happy to place their skills on view, willing to accept and learn from the assessment of their efforts.

The young swimmer may not know the quality of 48.0 for 50m F/S, but they understand and appreciate that 48.0 is better than 49.0. Sport is about personal progression, and good coaches can direct the evaluation process of athletes to have them understand that **they can’t all be winners, but they can all be champions.**

6. **Learn about your sport.** I am invariably astonished at coaching clinics how few young athletes have any real awareness of elite performers, or, indeed, what is an elite performance; let alone, an appreciation of the performances of past champions.

Mark out the men’s World record for Triple Jump (18.29m), check out just how far a 65m kick is, shoot 47 netball goals out of 50 shots from a variety of locations are various levels of pressure.

7. **Seek out competition opportunities.** Plan, with your coach, the progression that will help you to develop your skills. Be prepared to travel to coaching clinics, races, matches, and championships.

Athletes learn more from facing a superior opponent, than exploiting an advantage over a less prepared and less experienced performer.

Would you prefer 60 minutes travel on a country road, or in city traffic? Focus on the positives.

Every competitive experience is an investment; and at competitions, experience is what you get, when you didn’t get what you wanted. Enjoy your successes, discuss your concerns, and remember, **the only performance you have control over, is your performance.**

New friends, a broader perspective and enhanced self esteem and personal satisfaction will be your primary rewards ...

*you can’t all be winners, but, you can all be **champions.***

Winners Win .. **CHAMPIONS** always do their best
Doing your best is a skill that can be learnt.

“Sport builds character” I prefer: **“Commitment builds character”** ... it does **not** have to be a sport. **Choose your major interest area(s), but pursue personal excellence with passion and persistence.**

Do it before the dream fades.

North West Athletics: web site ... www.nwaswimaths.com

Today’s Preparation
determines
Tomorrow’s
Achievements

Here’s a little test? You can choose any sport(s)

Go to any ten (10) people .. any age, but different ages; male and female; and, not just your friends:

Question: Name 6 (six) elite performers in:

Netball	Basketball	Soccer
Athletics	AFL	Cricket
Swimming	Hockey	Golf

The results suggest which sports market themselves best; hey, if your first response starts with “but”, you are reflecting your sport’s problem .. are you part of the problem?