



U S SPEEDSKATING



Introduction

The American Development Model is a concerted effort between the United States Olympic Committee and its National Governing Bodies of sport to apply long-term athlete development principles in a way that resonates with the culture of sport in the United States.

The ADM is influenced by the work of Istvan Balyi, who is known worldwide as an industry leader in long term athlete development principles. Balyi's approach to organized sport focuses on key principles of development and periodization of training plans, which help support athletes' individual needs.

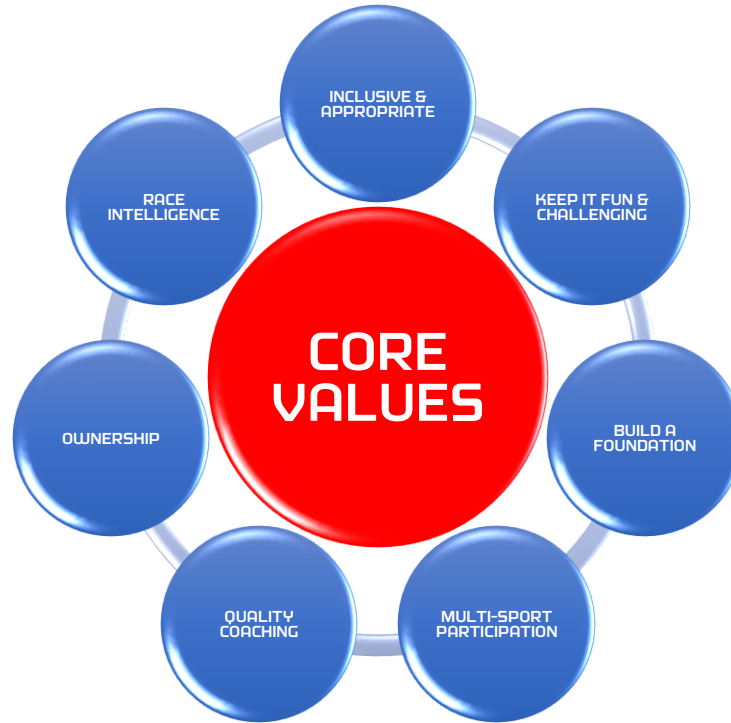
The ultimate goal is to create positive experiences for American athletes at every level. By using the American Development Model, clubs, coaches and parents can help maximize potential for future elite athletes, and improve the health and well-being for future generations in the United States.

The purpose of this document is to provide key influencers – including administrators, coaches and parents – a framework for building and delivering programs that focus on the individual athlete at each stage of development. The physical, emotional and mental landscape of each stage should enhance the athlete's overall development, while creating positive experiences in sport.



Acknowledgements

US Speedskating would like to acknowledge the work done by Isvan Balyi, Richard Way, and Colin Higgs and the work from their book "[Long Term Athlete Development](#)" along with their current work at [Sport for Life](#). Additionally we would like to acknowledge the work done by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee to spread the American Development Model to all National Governing Bodies. And finally to all of our members; club administrators, volunteers, coaches, parents, and most importantly athletes who helped and continue to help craft this document into a practical and effective framework for long term development in speed skating.



Inclusive & Appropriate

Create developmentally appropriate programming and foster a welcoming environment for all.

Keep it Fun and Challenging

Fun is the #1 reason why people participate in sports. Balance the difficulty of the task with the ability of the athletes to create fun and challenging environments.

Build a Foundation

Build a foundation on and off the ice of competence and confidence to set your athletes up for long term athletic achievement.

Multi-Sport Participation

The skills developed through participation multiple sports all combine to create more resilient and healthy athletes.

Quality Coaching

Well trained coaches are better able to create environments for learning to occur.

Ownership

Give athletes opportunities to take ownership of their athletic journey and they will prosper.

Race Intelligence

The training environments should resemble the competition environment.

The Stages

Stage 1 Discover, Learn & Play (0-12 Years Old)

This stage is all about Fun and Fundamentals. Athletes need to learn how their body works before more complex movements can be introduced. Focus on creating a fun environment that keeps kids active and teach them how to skate before they can be introduced to more complex sport specific movements.

Stage 2 Develop & Challenge (10-16 Years Old)

Now that you have athletes who understand the fundamentals of the sport you can start to introduce more sport specific skill development but don't forget to teach total body movements and activities through off ice training and multi-sport activity.

Stage 3 Train & Compete (13-19 Years Old)

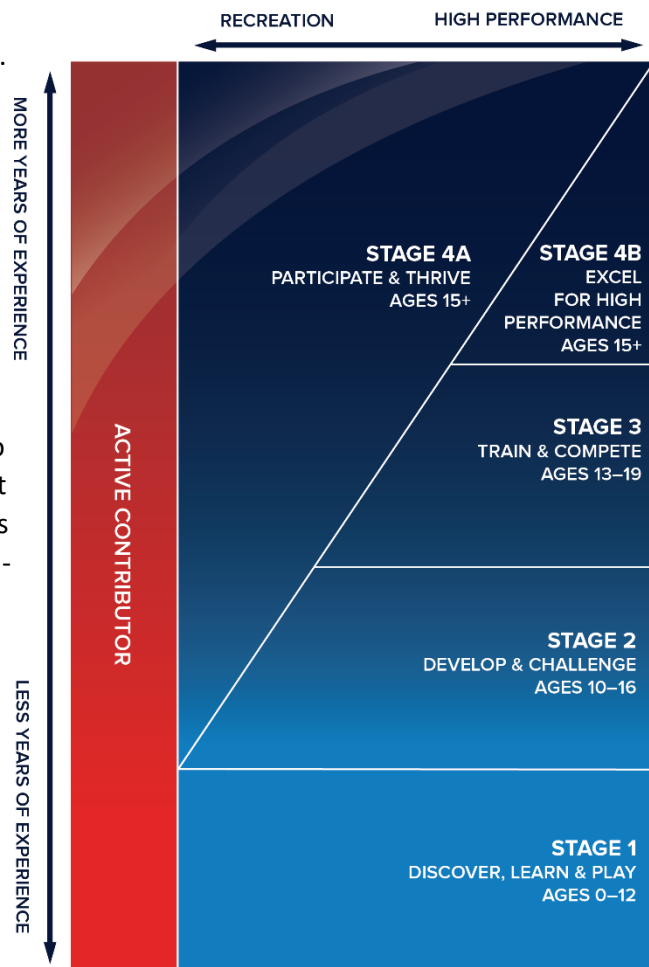
The focus starts to narrow, training sessions and programs become longer. Sport specific skill development and race simulation in practice are critical. Multi-sport activities should be geared toward cross training; running, cycling and structured strength training programs help set the stage for future development. Athletes should start to take ownership of their path.

Stage 4 Excel for High Performance or Participate and Succeed (15+ Years Old)

Stage 4 can find athletes making the choice between performance and participation. Both serve as important stages in athlete development. Performance minded athletes will start to fine tune physiology along with technical and tactical skills through year-long periodized programs. A heavy focus on taking ownership and accountability for their career is paramount at this stage. Participation minded athletes focus is on fitness, challenge and sport / life balance that will contribute to becoming a life-long athlete.

Active Contributor (All Ages)

A life-long passion for speed skating is greatly rewarding. Alumni events, recreational skating or volunteer activities, are just some of the ways to stay involved in the speedskating. Coaching and officiating also utilize a wealth of knowledge developed from experience to contribute to the development of our sport.



Stage 1 Discover, Learn & Play (0 – 12 Years Old)

This is the first step to being involved with speed skating at a young age (0-12) or when first introduced to the sport. Discovery of key concepts and the motor skills of skating is critical in order to learn how to compete in speed skating. Skills such as agility, balance, coordination, running, and jumping set a foundation for success in speed skating and can be gained through participation in local speed skating clubs and sharpened through many other individual and team sports. This early stage requires coaching that will allow fun and enjoyment through discovery and exploration.

The aim is for athletes to progress over time and for coaches to keep athletes in the challenge zone, where the difficulty of the tasks are balanced with the skill of the athlete, this will maximize fun and learning. Emphasize games that create a strong foundation of skating skills such as edge control, ability to skate forward and backwards, ability to cross over left and right while going both forward and backwards. Creating a fun environment where motor skill development is the focus will create a foundation for the next stage of development.

- [Keep it FUN!](#)
- [Incorporate other sports into sessions](#)
- [Follow NATA Sport Specialization Recommendations.](#)
- Skates of all kinds are welcome (Hockey, Figure, Speed)
- Keep athletes moving by utilizing the entire sheet of ice.
- Encourage supervised unstructured play where athletes can explore skating without instruction
- Learn basic rules and technique
- [Incorporate activities that develop physical literacy.](#)
- Small athletes, small track (85 meter track recommended for U10 and beginners)
- Competitions should be fun, focus on skills and working hard, not results.
- [Utilize local Learn to Skate USA programs to build basic speed skating skills](#)

Stage 2 Develop and Challenge (10-16 Years Old)

The second stage of the development process occurs after an athlete has a strong foundation in speed skating and wants to explore more organized training options. This stage focuses on refining the skills needed to be successful in speed skating, then furthering skill development through challenges, such as regional competitions or more organized sport programs.

Now is the time to start prioritizing speed skating technique. Short track should be the primary discipline for developing technique and time should be shared between the 85 and 111 meter tracks to enhance sport specific skill development. Where available long track can be introduced for variety, as a fun activity, and as a way to work on straight away technique. As athletes grow and establish basic speed skating skills more long track can be introduced.

Athletes in this stage may begin to go through puberty, during this sensitive period of time it is important to make special considerations. As athletes begin their growth spurt they may struggle with coordination and become “clumsy”. While technical gains may become harder, physiological improvements can become a focus. While technique should always be a focus, over emphasizing technique with these athletes could lead to frustration and burnout.

This is also a great stage to increase racing opportunities. Ability based competitions will help challenge athletes and begin to develop much needed race intelligence that is critical for success in the speed skating. Spatial, visual, auditory, tactile and proprioceptive awareness must all be developed in a race specific setting. Short Track, Long Track and Inline racing should all be utilized to maximize the development of race intelligence.

- Keep it FUN
- Establish a foundation in sport specific skills and technique
- Explore local, regional and national competitions as athletes become ready
- Compete in both pack and time trial competitions
- Create challenging competitions by grouping male and female athletes together based on ability
- Training should be developmentally appropriate and balanced through periodization
- Balance training with both physical and psychological recovery to prevent burnout
- Incorporate other sports into training (inline speed skating, running, cycling, soccer, ultimate frisbee, hockey)
- Balance time spend in speed skating position with time spent doing total body movements
- Encourage unstructured play
- Work with athletes to understand goals and how to set goals

Stage 3 Train and Compete (13-19 Years Old)

At stage three, athletes begin to train and compete in a program that matches their personal interests, goals and developmental needs. Competitions become more clearly defined in this process with potential for new experiences in team selection. Maximizing potential becomes an option for athletes as they start to grasp the commitment necessary for speed skating, and the skill sets needed to excel at the next competitive level. Technical, tactical and physical development becomes increasingly more important for the athlete at this time. In addition psychological and social maturation need to be considered. This is also the stage to increase sport-specific training. Recreation and multi-sport activity should continue to be used in a cross-training capacity to allow athletes the opportunity to more fully develop.

This is a very sensitive period for athletes as they are going through puberty. Consideration should be given to create challenging training and competition opportunities that match their developmental age and not their chronological age. As athletes hit their growth spurt coordination will decrease however the ability to train speed and stamina increase. As athletes emerge from puberty their ability to improve all energetic systems will increase. It is important to monitor athletes and create periodized training programs to meet the needs of athletes post puberty.

Self reliance is also important to develop at this point. Allow athletes to begin taking ownership of their career through things like sharpening their own skates, setting goals and planning their season with their coach and parents, and registering for camps and competitions with their parents.

- Develop race intelligence
- Compete in local, regional and national competitions
- Be aware of athletes physical development and adjust accordingly
- Follow a periodized training program
- Spend time on both short track, long track and inline when available
- Compete in both pack and time trial races
- Increase time in sport specific training
- Utilize other sports for variability of training (inline speed skating, running, cycling, soccer, ultimate frisbee, hockey)
- Monitor and adjust training through physiological testing.
- Incorporate body weight and weighted strength training when appropriate
- Encourage self reliance

Stage 4 Excel for High Performance or Participate and Succeed (Ages 15+)

As an athlete reaches high school age they will likely face the option to either focus on speed skating for high performance and increased competition, or continue to compete for the fun, healthy and social aspects of speed skating. Athletes will be able to choose the pathway that best represents their interests and abilities. Growth spurts, experience, or dedication to training may all affect which path an athlete follows during their speed skating career. This stage allows for both full development and commitment to speed skating, and enjoyment of the benefits that it offers. Fun and socialization remain key elements of this stage, although the definition of fun changes from athlete to athlete and also will adjust based on the commitment level; high performance or participation.

Excel for High Performance

- Year-round periodized training program
- Incorporate appropriate strength training
- Monitor and adjust training through physiological testing.
- Increase time in sport specific training
- On ice sessions should be highly specific to racing situations
- Increase quality competition opportunities that match the ability of the athlete to develop racing intelligence
- Utilize other sports for variability of training (inline speed skating, running, cycling, soccer, ultimate frisbee, hockey)

Participate and Succeed

- Dedicated to participating for personal health and love of speed skating
- Participate in year round training opportunities on and off the ice
- Be active and involved in competitions or personal challenges

Active Contributor (All Ages)

The heartbeat of speed skating is the action that happens behind the scenes by many great volunteers, parents, and former athletes. Many Parents look for ways to become involved and support their children in sports and many speed skaters want to give back after they finish competing. There are many great opportunities for all through volunteering, coaching, officiating and mentoring to get and keep people involved in the sport. It all starts with a conversation at your local club about how to help. The sky is the limit with how involved you can be.

- USS Certified Coach
- USS Certified Official
- Club / Sport Governance
- Athlete Mentor
- General Volunteer