



INTRODUCTION

The National Darts Federation of Canada (NDFC) is introducing the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) as it is an approach developed to maximize the potential and active involvement in every athlete's career for optimal training, competition, and recovery within the sport of his or her choice. The NDFC promotes this development in all of the dart players and athletes as a whole to encourage the full potential within. By creating a child's sport program to fit with basic principles of growth, beginning in the early years, enables the athlete to reach their full potential and ensure a long-term commitment to not only darts, but to other physical activities.

The LTAD is broken into various phases in which players will move from simple to skills that are more complex. These skills will range from general motor skills to skills that are more specific to the sport of darts. For example, once an athlete learns the basics of a proper dart-throwing stance they will progress onto more challenging skills like throwing techniques.

The LTAD model recommends training sequences and skill development for the athlete from the "Active Start" stage (0-6 years old) to the "Active for Life" stage (any age). It targets the physical, mental, emotional and technical requirements of the athlete as they progress through each of the stages.

The seven stages of LTAD are:

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| 1. Active Start- | Males and females 0-6 years old |
| 2. FUNdamentals- | Males 6-9 years old / females 6-8 years old |
| 3. Learning to Train- | Males 9-12 years old / females 8-11 years old |
| 4. Training to Train- | Males 12-16 years old / females 11-15 years old |
| 5. Training to Compete- | Males 16-23 years old / females 15-21 years old |
| 6. Training to Win- | Males 19+/- years old / females 18+/- years old |
| 7. Active for Life- | Enter at ANY age |

The goal of the NDFC is to develop our athletes to their maximum potential by enhancing their athletic skills and training that will contribute to their success not only in darts, but also with any sport.

How does this all fit in with your child? Simply put, during your child's first few years, the emphasis will be on Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed (ABC'S of athleticism) to teach them how to control their own bodies. For this very reason, some exercises you may feel are irrelevant to the sport of darts; however, they will remain conducive to their personal development. Many games and other sports teach your child to throw a ball (basic swing action) and catch the ball (hand-eye coordination). Others will teach your child to run properly and even change position quickly. Through every stage of the LTAD, your child will train to maximize their potential in darts and as a long-term participant in all sports.

As the LTAD develops, the NDFC will log and update the progress to ensure whatever improvements are required, the changes will take place simultaneously.



ACTIVE START:

0-6 years of age

The concept of “Active Start” quite simply put is the development of the basic movement skills that work towards more challenging techniques in darts and other sports. Without these basic movements, the child will have challenges participating in any sport. A prime example is for a child to enjoy sports like baseball, basketball and football, the simplest skill of catching must be accomplished before advancing to any other more difficult technique can be taught. It is very important to remember that whatever activity that is being done is not gender specific.

The **main objective** for “Active Start” is to develop physical activities through experiment, practice and play by promoting fun activities that are family oriented and can be in every day life. Being physically active is critical for healthy child development and has many benefits, each equally important, such as:

- ✎ Enhancing the development of the brain function, social skills, coordination, motor skills, emotions and imagination,
- ✎ Helps to build confidence and self-esteem,
- ✎ Aids in building strong bones and muscles and improves flexibility,
- ✎ Improves sleep, reduces stress, develops good posture and balance,
- ✎ Helps children learn to enjoy being active.

Being physically active should be something that children view as being fun and a part of their every day life, and not something that is required. Keeping the activities fun will definitely go along way with keeping the child’s attention. Keep the activity family oriented so it can be mastered at home or anywhere.

The key concept would be to have your child participate in a supervised, yet unstructured capacity to let them begin their development whilst having fun. Such activities may involve catching, throwing or kicking a ball.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Fair Play- everyone gets to participate equally with emphasis on PLAY ✎ Cultivate sharing habits ✎ Develop listening skills through activities ✎ Introduction to team work (cooperation) and sportsmanship (shaking hands) ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Promote fair play ✎ Ensure active participation at home ✎ Actively involved with child’s activities ✎ Encourage team work and sportsmanship at home ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress at home



FUNDamentals:

Ages 6-9 years- males; 6-8 years- females

It is in the “FUNdamentals” phase where the skill development programs need to become more structured; yet remain a positive atmosphere and *FUN*. The athlete will learn all FUNdamental movement skills and enhance their overall motor skills. Not only will this assist with the development of dart specific skills, this will also enhance the overall quality of their health and life.

The **main objective** of FUNdamentals is to develop movement skills and build overall motor skills, whilst remaining in a fun atmosphere. Introduce the athletes to the ABC’s (agility, balance, coordination and speed) of sport and link them together into play. Other FUNdamentals like running, throwing, jumping and emotional development are also developed at this phase. Enhancing the FUNdamental skills before introducing dart specific skills is critical at this phase, such as:

- ✎ Introducing basic flexibility exercises,
- ✎ Using games, you develop speed, strength and endurance,
- ✎ Encourage development and participation in a wide range of sports (at least four),
- ✎ Ensure that whatever sporting equipment is required it is properly designed in size, weight etc and appropriate for the athlete,
- ✎ Basic object control and balance movements.

It is in this stage that PROPER instruction is maintained as it can be very difficult and time intensive to undo the incorrect coaching. With proper FUNdamentals, should a child decide at a later date to leave sport competition, they will still benefit from the skills they acquired throughout the programming and will only serve to their advantage in any recreational activity.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Everyone participates equally- play & compete ✎ Enhance listening skills through activities ✎ Introduction to basic rules & communication with coaches & team mates ✎ Enhance team work (cooperation, sharing) and sportsmanship (shaking hands) ✎ Teaching responsibility, commitment and respect (including winning with dignity and losing with grace) ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Ensure activities revolve around the school year and enhance during the summer months by having child attend multi-sport camps ✎ Have child participate once or twice per week in a “preferred” sport, but participate at least 3-4 times per week ✎ Actively involved in child’s sports ✎ Teach responsibility, sportsmanship and sharing through activities at home ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress at home



Learning to Train:

Ages 9-12 years- males; 8-11 years- females

It is between the ages of 8 and 12 that it is considered the most critical periods of motor development and coordination. It is this stage where the child will learn all fundamental sport skills and develop specialized movement skills, including sport-specifics if a favourite sport has been identified with the child.

The **main objective** of “Learning to Train” is to ensure that this stage does not get bypassed as it will compromise the future achievement and development of the athlete. It is considered a “cornerstone” in the athlete’s development and in essence, bypassing this stage will prevent the child from reaching their full potential and set them up for failure! Though some novice competitions may be included during this stage, it is critical to remember that goals, not results, must be taught. The coaching may also emphasize on improvement of skills and fitness, but again, that is focusing on goals, not results! You may focus on the following:

- ✎ Develop strength using exercises that incorporate the child’s own body weight (like medicine balls),
- ✎ Further developing endurance through games,
- ✎ Further develop speed by using specific activities that focus on agility, quickness and direction change during warm up,
- ✎ Structure competitions to identify differences in age and abilities. Utilize a 70:30 ratio (70% training and 30% competition and/or competition-specific training),
- ✎ Teach athletes to cope with physical and mental challenges training and competition,
- ✎ Introduce proper nutrition.

Encourage “unstructured play” whilst maintaining a structured atmosphere. Supervise the athlete’s and identify strengths and weaknesses and celebrate the achievements of each athlete; recognize their efforts.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✎ Everyone participates, but the athlete starts to “earn” the right to compete✎ Enhance rules of play and encourage moral discussions✎ Enhance respect towards themselves, officials, coaches, fellow players, etc✎ Teamwork building; skills enhancement✎ Learn to embrace diversity and utilize it to their advantage✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✎ See the need for your child to move from the level of playfulness to a new level of training✎ Identify, encourage and support your child’s development to narrow their focus to a maximum of 3 sports✎ Be prepared to assist coaches in the development of your child’s skills✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress at home



Training to Train:

Ages 12-16 years- males; 11-15 years- females

During this stage, it is when major growth spurts occur (PHV- peak height velocity), which is also during the greatest gain in aerobic capacity, speed and strength training.

Therefore, the **main objective** must be on building an aerobic base. However, while building the aerobic base, it is important to remember to further develop and enhance sport-specific skills. One must remember the seven key physiological proficiencies: balance, posture, flexibility, core strength/stability, strength and power, cardiovascular endurance and performance skills (nutrition and lifestyle). Obviously the physical and emotional development with each child will vary, but a basic guideline is as follows: Females have two windows of opportunity; the first immediately after PHV and the second with the onset of menarche. Males have one window and it usually begins 12-18 months after PHV. With this in mind:

- ✎ Emphasize flexibility training given the rapid growth of bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles,
- ✎ Learn to cope with the physical and mental challenges of competition,
- ✎ Continue developing strength using own body weight and medicine balls,
- ✎ Use talent identification to help athletes focus on two sports and the training between the two sports equal a total of 6-9 times per week,
- ✎ Towards the end of this stage, increase resistance work, strength training techniques and further mental preparation are introduced,
- ✎ Optimize training and competition with a 60:40 ratio (60% training, 40% competing). Train athletes in daily competitive situations in the form of practice matches or competitive games and drills.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Playing by the rules- reflections on actions/ controlling emotions ✎ Encourage debate surrounding sport strategy ✎ Documentation of personal and team goals ✎ Encourage mental development of game ✎ Enhance ability to embrace diversity and utilize it to their advantage ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Ensure activities revolve around the school year and enhance during the summer months by having child attend sport camps ✎ Ensure child is training between the two sports equally between 6-9 times per week ✎ Actively involved in child's sports ✎ Enhance responsibility, sportsmanship and sharing through activities at home ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress at home



Training to Compete:

Ages 16-23 years- males; 15-21 years- females

The Training to Compete stage is where the peak strength velocity and peak weight velocity occur simultaneously with the opportunity for greatest strength gain. It is here that the athlete will optimize their fitness preparation and specific skills as well as overall performance.

As such, the **main objective** is to emphasize the development of strength and aerobic power; which are vital to optimal sport performance. When competing, it is to remain positive and any weaknesses identified, must be corrected before expanding this stage. Training to Compete is basically about training to succeed in all competitive conditions. As such:

- ✎ Utilize a single, double or triple annual periodization program,
- ✎ Goals are to be performance based and competition are to offer a variety of outcomes,
- ✎ Design more individually tailored fitness/recovery programs, psychological preparation and technical development,
- ✎ Emphasize individual preparation that identifies individual athlete’s strengths and weaknesses,
- ✎ Training to competition ration should become 40:60 (40% training and development of technical/tactical skills, 60% competition/ competition specific training).

As athletes are further developing in this stage, it is important to enhance their individual knowledge of sport psychology, sport medicine, nutrition and “True Sport” programs available. Whilst the athlete is learning more in the competitive end of things, it is important for their training and competitions to still be positive, while increasing personal commitment to achieving their desired outcome.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>TRUE SPORT PRINCIPLES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Encourage rational and reasoned thinking ✎ Playing by the rules- rationalize behaviour/ channel emotional energy ✎ Mastery of psychological elements in the game ✎ Win with dignity & lose with grace- celebrate & recognize athletes who demonstrate these principles ✎ Respect towards officials/players/coaches/parents ✎ Monitor and record individual athlete progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Rise to the challenge and discover how good you can be ✎ Play honestly and obey rules as winning is only real when competition is fair ✎ Respect teammates, competitors & officials, both on and off the field ✎ Keep a positive attitude and contribute to a positive atmosphere & have a good time ✎ Respect your body, keep in shape and avoid unsafe activities



Training to Win:

Ages 19+/- years- males; 18+/- years- females

Training to Win is best described as “podium performance” and is the final stage of athletic preparation. It is during this stage that you will maximize fitness preparation and sport, individual skills as well as performance.

The **main objective** will continue to be zeroing in on the optimization of performance. By now, the athlete has fully established technical, physical, mental, and personal and lifestyle capabilities and you may now alter the focus of training to the maximization of performance. The tactical portions, including decision making skills, are also developed. It is important to remember that the optimal process of training, competition and recovery will never be compromised by focusing on the outcome or winning. Remember:

- ✦ Utilize a double, triple or multiple annual periodization program,
- ✦ You need to be careful with goal setting to ensure that common goals are established and achieved with your athlete,
- ✦ The training to competition ratio will vary in this stage. Initially, you may start with 50:50 (50% training, 50% competition); however before this stage is complete you may very well be at 25:75 (25% training, 75% competition).
- ✦ Ensure you allocate frequent preventative breaks to avoid physical and mental burnouts,
- ✦ Allow athlete the opportunity to participate in their training regimen,
- ✦ Ensure physical training programs utilize the most advanced techniques to avoid personal injury.

By having your athlete master the “skills” required, and through the proper competition streams, you have helped your athlete to achieve their podium performance!

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>TRUE SPORT PRINCIPLES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Establish realistic and achievable “stretch” goals with athlete ✦ Endeavour to push envelope of ability ✦ Enhance the knowledge and importance of nutrition and sport medicine ✦ Train athlete to peak for major competitions ✦ Respect towards officials/players/coaches/parents ✦ Monitor and record individual athlete progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Rise to the challenge and discover how good you can be ✦ Play honestly and obey rules as winning is only real when competition is fair ✦ Respect teammates, competitors & officials, both on and off the field ✦ Keep a positive attitude and contribute to a positive atmosphere & have a good time ✦ Respect your body, keep in shape and avoid unsafe activities



Active for Life:

ALL AGES

The whole concept of Active for Life may occur at any age and is basically a seamless transition from competitive sport to a long life of physical activity. There is no right or wrong age for this stage to progress. A positive experience in sport will be the key element to retaining athleticism after they have left the competitive stream.

The **main objective** is to retain athletes as coaches, administrators, officials and mentors. It is therefore critical to have a strategy to ensure a smooth transition where the athlete will continue to participate or contribute to sport and still find self-directed enjoyment in the physical activity. You should encourage the athlete's to:

- Move from one sport to another (For example, the 12-year old basketball player may discover canoeing),
- Move from one aspect of sport to another (For example, a cyclist rides tandem at the Paralympic Games),
- Move from competitive sport to recreational activities (hiking, cycling),
- Upon retiring from competitive sport, move to a sport related career (coaching, sport administration, officiating, media)
- Move from competitive sport to volunteering as coaches, officials or administrators.

It is critical that sport change from cutting athletes and start re-directing them to other sports or the various other aspects of sport. In this different capacity, you may very well see the athlete train and perform very well.

<u>NDFC PRINCIPLES/ EXPECTATIONS</u>	
•	Encourage fun, participation and skill development- in that order
•	Encourage athletes to move from one sport to another
•	Help with the transition to go from a competitive stream to the recreational stream
•	Encourage and assist participants to become involved in volunteering as coaches, officials or administrators
•	Insist on respect for all & practice it on and off the field of play

It is only through a willingness of participation and cooperation between coaches and athletes that being Active for Life can be successfully achieved. Always strive for excellence and set goals, but don't forget to have fun while doing so. Through all of this, you are an athlete, a coach, an official and a mentor, you just have to believe it!



Conclusion:

The adaptation of LTAD and its concepts set out an opportunity for the athlete to experience an exciting and fulfilling experience in sport and development in life. The entire view of sport will continue to change as LTAD takes hold and alters the way we think about sport, recreation and physical activity programs. Through growth and development, LTAD will help the NDFC to create athletes with a clear and consistent player development path that is based on training and competition (developmentally appropriate for the level of readiness of each participant).

It is the focus of the NDFC to ensure player development paths shift at the introductory and intermediate levels of participation to more preparation and less outcome oriented competition. Initially, the athlete will emphasize on individual skill development with team success (i.e., performance outcome) gradually playing a larger role over time. For consistency and effectiveness, the player development will be according to clearly understood criteria, providing a framework for targeting resources successfully.

The idea of thinking a “podium performance” athlete is born overnight and can magically appear is incorrect to say the least. Scientific research has concluded that it will take a minimum of 10 years and ten thousand hours of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. To put this in perspective, the athlete and coach must slightly train and/or compete more than 3 hours daily for 10 years.

The principles and philosophies of LTAD promote both a commitment and passion to being active for life while at the same time allowing each individual an equal opportunity to excel and reach their full potential as an adult elite dart player. In part of the LTAD, the shortcomings and consequences must also be identified and addressed:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SHORTCOMINGS</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>What are the shortcomings?</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>CONSEQUENCES</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>What are the results of these shortcomings?</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Developmental athletes over-compete and under-train ✎ Adult training & competition programs are imposed on developing players ✎ Preparation is geared to the short term outcome of winning and not on optimal long term development ✎ Chronological rather than developmental stages are used in training and competition planning ✎ Coaches largely neglect the critical periods of accelerated adaptation to training ✎ The most knowledgeable coaches work at the elite level; volunteers coach at the developmental level where quality, trained coaches are essential ✎ Parents are not educated about the LTAD ✎ In most cases, the competition schedule interferes with athlete development ✎ There is no integration between physical education programs in the schools, recreational community programs, and elite competitive programs ✎ Limited access to affordable training at facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Poor habits developed from too much competition where focus is on winning ✎ Undeveloped and unrefined skills due to inappropriate training ✎ No systematic development of the next generation of successful international athletes ✎ Remedial programs, implemented by provincial and national team coaches, to counteract the shortcomings of athlete preparation ✎ Athletic potential is not reached ✎ Poor skill development, inappropriate level of programming & poor demonstration of skills ✎ Children not having fun as they play adult-based programs ✎ Poor talent identification, poor skill education and performance levels in major competitions ✎ Athletes failing to reach their potential and optimal performance level



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Richard Way, MBA, Pacific Sport Canadian Sport Centre Vancouver

The information contained herein and excerpts are from the compilation from the following LTAD examples from other sport including, but not limited to:

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| 1. Long-Term Athlete Development Plan for Rowing: An Overview | Rowing Canada |
| 2. Long-Term Athlete Development Plan: A Consultation Document | England Hockey |
| 3. Long-Term Athlete Development Plan: An Overview | England Hockey |
| 4. A Shorter Guide to Long-Term Athlete Development | British Swimming |
| 5. Long-Term Player Development Women's and Girls Football | English FA |
| 6. Football for the Future | Irish FA |
| 7. Long-Term Athlete Development Plan | Canoe Kayak Canada |
| 8. Long-Term Rugby Development Model | Rugby Canada |

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| 1. LTAD Website | www.ltad.ca |
| 2. True Sport Portal | www.truesportpur.ca |

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