Talent Identification: Scouting Young Athletes in Search of the Next Big Thing in Sports

Leonard Gordon Jr., PT, DPT, SCS
**talent** noun

tal·ent | \ˈta-lənt\  

**Definition of talent**

1. a : a special often athletic, creative, or artistic aptitude
   
   b : general intelligence or mental power : **ABILITY**

2 : the natural endowments of a person

3 : a person of talent or a group of persons of talent in a field or activity

4. a : any of several ancient units of weight
   
   b : a unit of value equal to the value of a talent of gold or silver

5. **archaic** : a characteristic feature, aptitude, or disposition of a person or animal
5 properties of talent

1. Innate talent is, at least partly, genetically transmitted
2. Talent will have some **advanced indications** & those with training can identify the presence of talent **before exceptional levels** of mature performance have been demonstrated
3. Early indications of talent provide a **basis for predicting likelihood of success**
4. Only a minority are talented
5. Talent is relatively domain-specific
Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent

**GIFTEDNESS** = top 10%

**DOMAINS**

- **NATURAL ABILITIES (NAT)**
  - Intellectual (IG)
  - Creative (CG)
  - Socioaffective (SQ)
  - Sensorimotor (MG)

- **DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS**
  - Informal/formal learning & practising (LP)

- **ENVIRONMENTAL (EC)**
  - Milieu: physical, cultural, social, familial, etc.
  - Persons: parents, teachers, peers, mentors, etc.
  - Provisions: programs, activities, services, etc.
  - Events: encounters, awards, accidents, etc.

**CATALYSTS**

- **INTRAPERSONAL (IC)**
  - Physical/Mental characteristics
    - Appearance, handicaps, health
    - Temperament, personality traits, well being
  - Self-management (→ Maturity)
    - Awareness of self/others
      - Strengths & weaknesses, emotions
    - Motivation/Volition:
      - Needs, interests, intrinsic motivates, values
      - Resource selection, adaptive strategies, effort

**TALENT** = top 10%

**FIELDS**

- Academics: language, science, humanities, etc.
- Arts: visual, drama, music, etc.
- Business sales, entrepreneurship, management, etc.
- Leisure: chess, video games, puzzles, etc.
- Social action: media, public office, etc.

**SYSTEMATICALLY DEVELOPED SKILLS (SYSDEV)**

Sports: individual & team

Technology: trades & crafts, electronics, computers, etc.
#DiscoverYourGOLD
Sign up at ukssport.gov.uk/talent
Medal achievements of most successful countries in Summer Olympics from 2000 to 2016
(Total medals)

- United States (USA)
- China (CHN)
- Great Britain (GBR)
- Russia (RUS)
- Germany (GER)

Number of total medals

Do you have what it takes to represent the United States on the world’s largest stage? The United States Olympic Committee is giving you a chance to become the Next Olympic Hopeful and work your way toward the dream of becoming an Olympian.

Sign up now to register for the third season of "Milk Life presents, Scouting Camp: The Next Olympic Hopeful."

Athletes age 14 and older with a background in any sport are encouraged to apply.

"Milk Life presents, Scouting Camp: The Next Olympic Hopeful" is the USOC’s talent identification program that brings the nation’s top athletes to the U.S. Olympic Training Center to face the same physical and mental challenges Team USA athletes face every day as they train for the Olympic Games. The best of the best will be invited to national team camps to compete for a spot on the U.S. Olympic Team.

If you have the skill, drive and discipline to represent Team USA, sign up now to begin your path to the podium today.

Need help? Contact the U.S. Olympic Committee by emailing ScoutingCamp@usoc.org.
milk life® presents
SCOUTING CAMP
THE NEXT OLYMPIC HOPEFUL

24 AVERAGE AGE
TALLEST ATHLETE 6'5"
SHORTEST ATHLETE 5'0"

8 SPORTS 5 DAYS
BY THE NUMBERS

265,708 TOTAL MILES TRAVELED

15 ATHLETES FROM CALIFORNIA
THE MOST BY ANY STATE

23 MEDALS IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

90 ATHLETES INVITED TO PARTICIPATE
8 WINNERS
Naturalizing China’s talent search

“We have to break from the traditional system in order to seek all available talent and maximize resources.”
FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LEBRON JAMES AND MAVERICK CARTER

FOOTBALL ISN'T JUST A WAY OF LIFE.
IT'S A WAY OUT.

WARRIORS OF LIBERTY CITY

SUN 9/16 STARZ
Aspects of Measurement and Assessment in Young Athletes

1. Biological
   - Motivation
   - Coping with failure
   - Mental toughness

2. Psychological
   - Motivation
   - Coping with failure
   - Mental toughness

3. Sociological
   - Leadership
   - Team cohesion
Biological Components

- <14 years old
- >14 = Specialization*
- Athletes v non-athlete
- Athletes of different skill levels
- Level of maturation
- Swimmers show promise
- Potential over scoring
- Tests in isolation
Figure 1. Overview of concepts, sub-categories, and categories pertaining to psychosocial competencies associated with soccer success during adolescence.
Figure 2. A grounded theory of the psychosocial competencies and environmental conditions associated with soccer success during adolescence.
GENE DRIVE

The direct-to-consumer genetic-testing industry is predicted to grow to US$340 million in the next five years. This is still a small fraction of the overall market for DNA testing, which is expected to reach $10 billion in that time.

Ancestry Service
$99 $79

RECOMMENDED
Health + Ancestry Service
$499 $159

Global direct-to-consumer genetic testing market (US$, millions)

Human Genome Project
A tall tale

IF IT'S A DAUGHTER

YAO'S WIFE (YE LI)
Age: 29
Weight: 83kg

* DAUGHTER'S ESTIMATED HEIGHT = (father's height × 0.923 + mother’s height) ÷ 2

IF IT'S A SON

YAO MING
Age: 29
Weight: 140kg

** SON'S ESTIMATED HEIGHT = (father's height + mother’s height) × 1.08 ÷ 2

AVERAGE HEIGHT OF A MAN

1.74m

Graphic by Tian Chi
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<th>No.</th>
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Implications & Future Work

- Concept
- Utility
- Physical measurements
- Performance ≠ Talent
- Poor replication
- Extension of talent
- Multidimensional construct
- Probabilistic not deterministic
- Talent on a continuum
- Dangers of simplicity
- Poor long-term prediction accuracy in talent selection
References


References

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References


References


References


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