

Specialised Sports Performance Software

Supporting your teenager in training for their chosen sport can be a bit of a balancing act for parents. On the one hand we all want our children to achieve their best, however, on the other hand, we are aware of the dangers of over-training, the need for sufficient sleep, and the pressure of an already-crowded school life. So, how does one know when to push them that bit harder and when to hold them back from over-training?

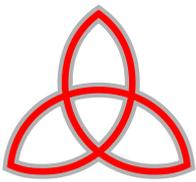
To achieve this balance requires specialised knowledge. One must understand the requirements of the specific sport to train athletes who perform at a high enough level to be competitive. At the same time one needs to understand exactly how much training can be undertaken without causing fatigue and injury, depending on their age. Ideally one should monitor each individual closely enough to detect fatigue before it leads to injury, while also demanding the very best athletic performance based on their age, position and personal history.

This may sound idealistic, but it is exactly how professional rugby, soccer and hockey organizations train their athletes, and it is made possible through the specialised services of highly skilled biokineticists, sports scientists and physiotherapists. Until now, this kind of specialization has simply been beyond the reach of schools due to cost. However, as the bar in sport keeps being raised ever higher, the need for science in the confusing balancing act of training has become all the more apparent.

Mark Steele, the Head Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Sharks, recently took his many years' experience with provincial and national teams and distilled it into a sophisticated software package called SSP, which is currently used for conditioning planning and monitoring at a number of schools and clubs in South Africa, and as far abroad as Japan. The software that he has developed allows four levels of monitoring. It allows the monitoring for players, their parents, coaches and Directors of Sport, currently across three different sports: rugby, hockey and soccer.

The Player

At its core, the program is a personal conditioning consultant to each player in a team. Players feed in their training information, fitness statistics and match schedule and the software tells them when to train and for how long, and tracks improvements and serves as an early warning system for fatigue which can lead to injury. It also allows players to build custom gym programs from a list of exercises suitable for their age, sport and position.



The Coach

At the next tier the software becomes a management tool for coaches, allowing them to better plan their training sessions by suggesting optimal training days based on match schedules, and training volumes based on the age, position and chosen sport. Coaches can also easily identify their star players and can see who needs more encouragement on the field. Trends such as declining performance can be an indicator of hidden injuries or a reduced interest in the sport, and the science makes it all much easier to see, sooner.

Directors of Sport

Higher up, a sports director can see at a glance how all the various teams are training across all sports, and can use this as a way to improve coaching habits to ensure the correct intensity of training is achieved during practice. Only with this high intensity will the pace of match day be mimicked and thus correctly prepared for. This becomes a key way to isolate good coaching habits and share these amongst all the coaching staff.

The Parents

For parents, being able to participate via the SSP website in a child's training and preparation is a new and interesting addition that allows more direct involvement during the whole week of training and not only on match day. The ability to assess the quality of training and be forewarned of any possible injuries also adds peace of mind.

For those players who are aiming at representative selection, SSP software has been highlighted as a perfect tool for selectors to browse through select players remotely and objectively. Even more importantly, SSP will allow state and national coaches to opportunity to track all of their selected players in their various schools/clubs, ensuring that they are training correctly, and therefore will arrive at their tournaments ready to give of their best.

SSP brings science to the art of conditioning training and gives your child the chance to achieve their best on the field, safely and without injury.

Please go to www.steeleathletic.co.za to view the site.