

***PLANNING FOR FUTURE SUCCESS: AN ANALYSIS
OF NEW BRUNSWICK'S SPORT PERFORMANCE***

by

Evan MacInnis

Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic

August, 2010

©Evan MacInnis, 2010

Executive Summary

The performance of New Brunswick athletes at the Canada Games and the lack of New Brunswick athletes competing at the Olympic and Paralympic level is becoming more publicly questioned. The lack of performance in these areas has been identified through the development of the New Brunswick Sport Plan as an important gap in our current sport system that must be addressed. There has been some work done by Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) to create and complete an athlete development plan from the younger ages (10-12) through to Canada Games; however; there has been little support financially from the Province of New Brunswick to help organizations develop their athletes on the entire athlete development spectrum. Without more focus and financial support for the current needs of the sport system in New Brunswick it is unlikely that the current performance trends will improve.

This report contains information collected in a study of the 2009 Canada Games coaches which identified the shortcomings and successes of Team NB at the 2009 Canada Summer Games; it is based on a questionnaire and interview survey with the head coaches and associate coaches of each team representing New Brunswick at the Games.

Some of the results from the coaches' survey included: establish performance standards, find meaningful competition, host off-season development camps, centralization, include sport science, plan accordingly and instil a culture of success.

The results showed that there are obvious gaps in the NB sport system especially in the areas of athlete development, coach support, and setting measurable goals while competing at the Canada Games.

Other data was also analyzed to determine trends and comparisons which highlight New Brunswick's relative performance based on population and investment.

Based on these findings and observations, recommendations were developed to make those teams competing at the Canada Games more competitive, including:

- Create a funding program for an athlete development pathway **\$750,000**
- Design a coach support program **\$450,000**
- Form an athlete development technical committee. **\$50,000**

These recommendations were created with the long term goal of increasing the likelihood of New Brunswick athletes competing for Canada at future Olympic Games.

Setting goals and having the adequate resources to reach them will result in improved performance and participation by sports in New Brunswick not only at the Canada Games but throughout the entire provincial sport system.

Discussion

The framework for implementing a strategy to address the performance level of New Brunswick athletes and coaches is firmly entrenched within events that have occurred over the past ten years at the national level. The Canadian Sport Policy (the Policy) was developed by Canadian Heritage in 2005 and was endorsed by the Province of New Brunswick. It represents the interests and concerns of 14 governmental jurisdictions, the Canadian sport community, and countless other organizations and agencies that influence and benefit from sport in Canada. The Policy has four main pillars:

- Enhanced participation
- Enhanced excellence
- Enhanced capacity
- Enhanced interaction

The Policy's main goal is to improve the Canadian sport system and athlete experience by creating a new system wherein the transitions from grassroots to high performance sport would be more efficient and effective. It identifies a number of positive benefits for individuals involved in sport, including: social and personal development, health and well being, cultural awareness, education, economic development and prosperity. The Policy encourages provincial governments to undertake the steps necessary to ensure more physical activity and sport programming within their respective jurisdictions. Each province has been an active part of developing and implementing this policy during its first eight years. A revised Policy is currently being developed by the Federal and Provincial governments.

From a high performance perspective, Canada committed to set targets for international events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games through the excellence pillar. At the same time, considerable effort has been placed on the development of resources for Canadian Sport for Life (LTAD). LTAD is an athlete centered, coach driven and administration, sport science and

sponsor supported model that supports the four pillars of the Canadian Sport Policy. LTAD has an impact on the entire sport continuum. LTAD has seven specific stages from active start to active for life: stages one-three encourage physical literacy and sport for all (Active Start, Fundamentals, Learning to Train); stages four-six focus on excellence (Training to Train, Training to Compete, Training to Win); and the final stage encourages life-long physical activity (Active for life). The LTAD model acknowledges 'the ten year rule' which states "scientific research has concluded that it takes a minimum of 10 years and 10,000 hours of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels." This long-term view mirrors the belief in high performance sport that athlete development occurs over the long-term.

An important benchmark for many Canadian athletes is the Canada Games (the Games), the nation's largest ongoing multi-sport event and a premier event in terms of identifying the next generation of Olympic and World championship athletes. The Games occur bi-annually, with teams and individuals representing each province and territory at summer and winter games. These two pathways in the performance continuum can provide an insight on the health of New Brunswick's sport system.

The Canada Games targets athletes that are typically in the Train to Compete LTAD stage of their development so the Games serve as an essential connection between the national and provincial sport communities. Since its inception in 1967, the number of participants has continually increased and the movement has flourished; the Games are regarded as an important stepping stone for athletes as they move on to junior national teams, senior national teams and ultimately, competing at the Olympic Games. The Canada Games Council has noted that 43% (79 in total) of Canadian athletes who competed at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics had participated at the Canada Games.

The Canada Games are a good barometer for assessing the health of a province's sport system, relative to other provinces. There are two useful measures of performance at the Games that provide a realistic evaluation of team performance. The number of medals won is the most

visible, but the flag points won by a province is arguably the more accurate measure, as each province is ranked in each sport and awarded points based on their final placement.

Table 1.1 Provincial Flag Points from past four Canada Games

Winter Games	2003	2007	Summer Games	2005	2009
5. Saskatchewan	189.5	211.5	5. Nova Scotia	139	159.5
6. Manitoba	213.5	203.5	6. Saskatchewan	167	158.5
7. New Brunswick	155	131.5	7. Manitoba	138	149
8. Nova Scotia	117	111	8. New Brunswick	95.5	111
9. Newfoundland	93.5	79.5	9. Newfoundland	87.5	95

Note: Flag points vary from Games to Games based on team performance/participation and the sports/competitions being held.

Table 1.2 Provincial Team Medals from past four Canada Games

Winter Games	2003	2007	Summer Games	2005	2009
5. Saskatchewan	37	37	5. Nova Scotia	46	52
6. Manitoba	34	35	6. Saskatchewan	67	48
7. New Brunswick	19	12	7. Manitoba	17	24
8. Nova Scotia	8	7	8. New Brunswick	6	7
11. Newfoundland	2	3	9. Newfoundland	9	6

The demographics, geography and team performance needs differ significantly from province to province, and this must be considered relative to provincial performance. New Brunswick is the 8th largest province by population compared to the other Canadian provinces.

Table 1.3 Canadian Province Rank by 2009 medals/population

Provincial Rank	Population	2009 Medals	Medals/Population
1. Nova Scotia	941,000	52	1 : 18,096
2. Saskatchewan	1,030,000	48	1 : 21,458
3. British Columbia	4,455,000	144	1 : 30,937
4. Prince Edward Island	141,000	4	1 : 35,250
5. Alberta	3,688,000	76	1 : 48,256
6. Manitoba	1,222,000	24	1 : 50,917
7. Quebec	7,829,000	145	1 : 53,993
8. Ontario	13,069,000	202	1 : 64,698
9. Newfoundland	509,000	6	1 : 84,833
10. New Brunswick	750,000	7	1 : 107,143

New Brunswick lacks a natural centre of activity, and the population is dispersed across the province but it is geographically small enough for athletes to get together for weekend camps and has reasonable proximity to high level competition in Halifax, Quebec, Montreal and the north eastern United States.

In New Brunswick, approximately 36 Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) are involved in the summer or winter Games and most of the larger organizations participate in the Games program. For most PSOs, the Canada Games program represents the pinnacle of its involvement in athlete development. Following the Games, development is left largely to universities, provincial high performance training groups, out of province club programs or national training centres, and the individual athlete themselves. The level of competition, the visibility and exposure of the Canada Games program, and the associated benefits of team uniforms and travel, give the Games greater appeal than most other provincial team programs, making it a valuable tool for sport and athlete development.

The shrinking pool of athletes who can afford the costs associated with the equipment, training and travel required to be competitive is problematic across Canada. It is realistic to assume that it is not necessarily the best athletes competing, but those with the resources to pay for the team fees. However, many other provincial athletes, including those in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, are benefiting from ongoing investments in their athlete development programming. Therefore, improved programming at the Canada Games level should have a long term impact on the number of high performance athletes that New Brunswick produces, including future Olympians.

The document prepared in 2008 by Dr. Colin Higgs titled “A Sport Plan for New Brunswick”, set measures of success for each pillar of the sport system in the province. Under the enhanced excellence pillar, one measure of success is an increased in performance of Team New Brunswick at Canada Games based on flag points. Additionally, a goal within the enhanced excellence pillar is to improve New Brunswick’s standings at Canada Games. Based on the results from the 2009 Summer Games, New Brunswick is not improving on past results. In fact, New Brunswick is struggling to maintain its rightful place at the Games in terms of results, so it is no coincidence that New Brunswick is also seeing a reduced number of athletes competing for Canada at the Olympic Games, where in 2010, New Brunswick had no athletes named to Team Canada.

With a continuous decrease in performance comes the need to examine what needs to be done within the provincial sport system for New Brunswick athletes to once again become competitive at the Canada Games level and better guide athlete development in all sports.

A recent report was completed by the Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic in which coaches who represented Team New Brunswick at the 2009 Canada Summer Games were surveyed. The survey consisted of an online questionnaire and follow up interview. The questionnaire was created based on similar research being conducted by the Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic in Nova Scotia, with four questions for each of the following categories:

- Talent Identification
- Pre-Summer Training (before June 15th, 2009)
- Summer Training (after June 15th, 2009)
- Competition
- Canada Games Sport Science
- PSO Support

Fifteen of 24 head coaches (62.5%) and 20 of 31 (64.5%) associate coaches responded to the online questionnaire and nine head coaches were subsequently interviewed, representing 60% of those head coaches that responded to the online questionnaire.

Based on information gleaned from the questionnaire and interviews, there are two areas in particular that require additional resources: athlete development and coach support. This is problematic, as athlete development programming in New Brunswick is generally weak and it is typically the coaches that design and implement athlete development programs. These areas are closely intertwined and would benefit greatly from significant programming and investment. However, it is unrealistic to expect any improvement in these areas given both the absence of professional coaching and the existing strain on volunteer coach resources in the system. For New Brunswick to see any real systemic improvements in athlete development programming, there must be a substantial increase in funding.

Any new investment brings with it a need for accountability. As such, the third recommendation is that an Athlete Development Advisory Committee be formed. This Committee would provide counsel and support on the creation of athlete development pathways, team plans, and it would monitor and evaluate each sport's progress as they implement their respective plans.

The survey identified 13 common themes found throughout the coaches' feedback. These common themes, along with the trends noted above lead to the recommendations outlined in this report: design and implement an athlete development pathway, create a coach support program, and create an athlete development technical committee. The projected cost for these initiatives is \$1.25 million.

Design and Implement an Athlete Development Pathway

There are 37 sports eligible to participate in the Canada Games every four years. Athletes who attend the Games must have experience at, and exposure to, competition at the provincial level if they are to become competitive. In fact, each sport must develop an athlete development pathway that identifies the programs, coaching, competition and support required at each stage of development. A sport's athlete development pathway must begin at the Learn to Train stage (as defined by the Canadian Sport for Life Long-term Athlete Development Model) which is approximately 10-15 years of age (varies by sport), and should include club, regional, and provincial programming and address the following areas:

- Coaching
- Appropriate training programs
- Meaningful competition
- Access to facilities and equipment
- Implementation of sport science and sport medicine programming

These areas must be included in the athlete development pathway prior to, during and following Canada Games programming. This comprehensive approach will address many of the issues that were raised in the findings of this report. The athlete development pathway should follow the sport specific Long Term Athlete Development model to ensure appropriate programming is implemented.

Estimated investment: **\$750,000/year** based on an average investment of approximately \$20,000 per sport.

Coach Support Program

Adequate coaching is the key component of athlete development. Without skilled, trained, and dedicated coaching, athletes will not reach their full potential; however, New Brunswick is one of the few provinces that does not have a coach support program. In the absence of this programming, it is little wonder that the majority of New Brunswick PSOs have not developed an athlete development pathway, as the capacity to do so simply does not exist.

Creating a successful athlete development pathway requires technical expertise and time, invaluable resources that PSOs do not have at this time. The coach support program should involve the coaches that work with athletes from the Learn to Train Stage up through to the Train to Compete stage (and possibly the Train to Win stage).

Estimated investment: **\$450,000/year** based on 15 coaching positions in a matching funds arrangement with eligible PSOs.

Athlete Development Technical Committee

Should the athlete development model and/or coach support program be adopted in New Brunswick, it is recommended that a committee be appointed to support PSOs as they develop their respective plans, monitor progress and evaluate success. The committee would also provide counsel to sports for creating performance benchmarks and goal setting, as well as technical support in the development of the athlete pathway.

The committee would also be responsible for evaluating and making recommendations for funding adjustments after both the summer and winter Games based on results and progress. This program would mirror the Own the Podium program on a provincial scale, with an emphasis on both programming and results. Goals and targets will be identified at the outset, and will act as a roadmap to ensure that successes are achieved. The committee will also act as the governing body overseeing program support and support services, including sport science and sport medicine.

Each sport would be required to submit their plan, including long- and short-term goals, to the committee for funding support. Based on expertise and resources, it is recommended that the Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic play the lead role on the Athlete Development Technical Committee.

Estimated investment: **\$50,000/year**

Increasing funding and ameliorating the areas noted above will in turn, increase the number of opportunities for New Brunswickers to perform on the National and International stage. This is to say nothing of the other positive impacts a stronger sport system will have in New Brunswick in terms of healthcare, social development and overall wellbeing.

The positive effects of participation in sport are well documented in North America, and the lack of representation by New Brunswick athletes on the national and international stage are indicative of the fact that the provincial sport system is not fulfilling its role. It was evident that increased funding for coach and athlete development yields success in New Brunswick as demonstrated leading up to the 2003 Canada Winter Games, with the Sport Focus Program. Setting goals and having the adequate resources to reach them will result in improved performance and participation by sports in New Brunswick not only at the Canada Games but throughout the entire provincial sport system.