High Performance:
Player Development Plan

New Zealand Golf Inc.

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Introduction

Golf is a sport that is important to New Zealanders, holding a special place in the nation’s sporting landscape.

For New Zealand as a sporting nation, Major Golf Championship victories provide some of the most memorable occasions in our history. The names of Sir Bob Charles and Michael Campbell are synonymous with the very pinnacle of New Zealand sporting success. They are athletes whose success has inspired generations of New Zealanders from all walks of life.

When Michael Campbell won the US Open, the nation literally stopped. Parliament was suspended, the streets of Wellington were closed and Michael’s plane was shown live to the nation as it landed at Wellington airport.

Our National Development Programme is about developing more New Zealanders who win on the world stage and inspire a nation. While there are many goals and stages throughout the player pathway, our ultimate goal is to develop more New Zealanders who win Major Championships and Olympic Medals.

Major Championships are without question the pinnacle of world golf. They are the epitome of elite sporting success commanding public interest and global media attention that few other sporting events can rival.

Golf is also fortunate to now be included in the Olympic Programme. This event will add to the profile of the game and sit firmly as an aspirational goal for our players.

While the New Zealand Golf Academy Programme has been delivering success across a wide range of measures for over 20 years, it is now time to refresh and revitalize the player development programme and its pathway stages. These changes are based on well researched, best practice models and philosophies.

The following document will outline the talented player development pathway, New Zealand Golf’s National Development Programme, the programme stages and the philosophy that underpins it all. The National Development Programme has been put in place to support New Zealand’s next generation of emerging talent as they strive to reach their potential and excel on the world stage.
National Development Programme

Our Vision

“Winning on the World Stage”

Our Mission

“To have a world class player development pathway that identifies emerging talent, supports growth and builds a winning culture”
Outcomes and Success Measures

Desired Outcomes

We will have:

1. An integrated talent identification system implemented
2. A World Class player development programme in place
3. An increased number of international competition opportunities
4. More players exhibiting ‘Winning Behaviours’
5. And more Kiwis ‘Winning on the World Stage’

Success Measures

Success is defined as an increase in the number of top 10, 5 and top 3 placing, and ultimately international golf victories. An increasing number of golfers within the top 200 men’s and women’s amateur and professional rankings will also provide a further measure of success.

The pathway to excelling as a World Class Amateur Golfer:

The pathway to excelling as a World Class Professional Golfer:
Overview

The New Zealand Golf National Development Programme is the pathway that takes New Zealand golfers to success on the international stage. It encompasses specific age and stage appropriate programmes that are geared towards a common objective of developing more New Zealand golfers who achieve success at the highest level on the world stage.

The essence of the programme is to take players who have reached their respective district led development programmes and further progress and refine their skills based on the Long Term Player Development (LTPD) philosophy and strategies. This will assist them to firstly succeed as amateur golfers on the world stage before then successfully transitioning to professionalism.

The need for a systematic LTPD pathway arises from the challenge of competing in the rapidly advancing international sporting arena. It is both important to correctly identify emerging talent and then invest in their continuing progression to ensure the next generation of New Zealand’s excelling golfers have the skills and experience to compete, and win, internationally.
New Zealand Golf’s National Development Programme

The Philosophy
The national programme’s player development philosophy is based on Istvan Bayli’s ‘Long Term Athlete Development’ (LTAD) model. Golf Canada’s adaption of the LTAD model for golf has provided a framework for New Zealand Golf to learn from and adapt to meet the needs of New Zealand’s aspiring golfers.

Long Term Athlete, or in golf’s case ‘Player’, Development (LTPD) is based on sport research, coaching best practices, and scientific principles. LTPD expresses these principles, research, and practices by identifying 10 key factors that are essential to player development. These are:

1. 10-Year Rule (Excellence takes time...)
2. FUNdamentals
3. Specialisation
4. Developmental Age (or simply Age)
5. Trainability
6. Physical, Mental, Cognitive and Emotional Development
7. Periodization (or more simply planning / time management)
8. Competition Planning
9. System Alignment and Integration
10. Continuous Improvement (Kaizen)

Golf is a multi-skilled, long term development sport that requires an understanding of the many phases of player development within it to cater appropriately for those that enter the talent and performance pathways. While it could be detrimental to focus on one area of the LTPD factors above at the expense of another, for the benefit of greater awareness, two of the factors have been expanded on below.

They have been expanded to address why the LTPD philosophy provides such a solid platform from which to build our own programme phases.

The 10 Year Rule (Excellence Takes Time):

Scientific research has suggested that it takes approximately 10 years or 10,000 hours of ‘Deep’ and ‘Deliberate’ training for an athlete to reach an international elite level of competitiveness within his/her sport. This factor is supported by The Path To Excellence, which provides a comprehensive view of the development of U.S. Olympians who competed between 1984 and 1998. Most reported a 12 to 13 year period of talent development from their sport introduction to making an Olympic team. The most recent PGA Tour statistics suggest that for golf this number is closer to 20 years. While this time frame will vary slightly from one player to another, one thing remains constant, excellence takes time. On this basis we also need to consider that talent is not simply ‘born’ but ‘grown’.

Physical, Mental, Cognitive and Emotional Development:

A major objective of LTPD is a holistic (complete) approach to athlete development. In addition to traditional physical, technical and tactical training the mental, cognitive, and emotional development must be considered. This includes emphasis on ethics, fair play and character building.
New Zealand Golf’s National Development Player Pathway

It is the role of New Zealand Golf’s National Development Programme to deliver and support athlete focused, coach led player development that provides a level of service beyond that of other leading golf nations in the world.

As players progress from one stage of the LTPD pathway to the next, it is crucial that the level of coaching service, specialist support service, competition structure and programme funding is increased to meet the needs of the players within the programme.

Below are the four key phases of a player’s progression that are supported by New Zealand Golf.

The National Development Programme Pathway Phases:

1. District led, New Zealand Golf supported, talent identification and development
2. National junior talent identification and development
3. National Academy Programme
4. Rookie Professional Assistance

The player’s chronological and developmental stage are taken into consideration during selection and within each programme phase.

Each phase is underpinned by the philosophy of Long Term Player Development and the need for a player to develop skills across all five performance pillars: technical, tactical (includes cognitive / decision making), physical, psychological and behavioral.

It is possible for players to arrive into the National Development Programme at any phase; it is not a rigid ‘stepping stone’ based pathway. Supporting the improvement of a players Performance Mastery, the ability to ‘play the game’, remains the primary focus throughout the programme phases.
The Player Pathway

Below is a diagram of the wider golf ‘player pathway’. This includes the entry points into the sport of golf and the various stages a player can be in throughout their time in the sport. The most populated stage of the pathway is participation. The Performance Pathway is shown on the right, those crossing over into this stage have made a commitment to performance at some level.

The role of the National Development Programme sits within the Performance Pathway and is represented diagrammatically below. For a more detailed look at the phases of the New Zealand Golf National Development Programme, and how they map against the LTPD stages, and the national and international competitive environments turn to the next page (page 9).
**Phase One**

**District led, New Zealand Golf supported, Talent Identification and Development**

**Overview**

Throughout New Zealand Golf’s regional sports organisations (the District Associations), exist various academy and squad based development programmes. The best emerging young talent within these programmes will be assessed through a number of talent identification (TiD) protocols.

Such assessments will measure golf performance mastery as well as other dimensions for success across five key performance skill areas. Information gathered during the TiD sessions will assist the players coaching support team in tailoring individual programmes specific to the players’ needs.

This stage of the National Development Programme will enable a greater understanding of the emerging players within the district programmes, it will also assist the districts and their coaching support teams with individualised player information that will assist their players’ long term development.

**Long Term Player Development Stage: Learn to Compete**

The high performing district players at this phase of the National Player Development Programme are likely to be in the ‘Learn to Compete’ phase of development.

The fundamental movement skills and golf specific skills the player has learnt in the earlier stages of development now need to be put to the test in appropriate competition. This can include senior club, junior district representation and events, and for the higher performers regional and national age group events (like the North/South Island and NZ Under 19 events).

It is important that by this stage of development the player has developed good technical proficiency of all golf skills and has good general physical conditioning. ‘Learn to Compete’ is now about taking these skills and conditioning, and developing their mental and tactical skills through learning to compete at age appropriate events while establishing their pre, competition and post competition routines.

The player should still be spending 60 per cent of their time in developing their skills and conditioning base in a tailored programme addressing their strengths and weaknesses; and 40 per cent of their time specifically training, preparing and playing in appropriate competitive events.

Therefore it is important that players are now introduced to periodised planning. This is to ensure the player has enough skill development training time and has a focus on only a few key events within a more limited and age appropriate tournament schedule.
Phase Two

National Junior Talent Identification and Development

Overview

Using evidence based data, such as that gathered during phase one and from district and national age group events and order of merit results, groups of players will be brought together in a camp format to continue to support the development of this group of emerging players. These players will also show they possess the necessary behavioural traits to continue to improve.

This phase enhances the player’s district led development programmes, by providing the player with further information, resources and knowledge across tactical, physical, mental and behavioural performance skills as appropriate to their stage of development.

Players may learn about short game performance considerations; pre and post competition routines including performance evaluation and how this information could be used for goal setting and planning; physical development, especially the impact of posture on the golf swing; mind skills and the importance of having a growth mind set; and what/how the players need to continue to develop in order to be selected for national team representation.

Performance testing and monitoring is also an important part of this phase to track how the players are progressing and to provide current data and information to the players coaching support team for their individualised training programmes.

This stage focuses on decentralised player development and refinement prior to advancing to the National Academy. While this level may be a stepping stone along the pathway to the National Academy such progression is not guaranteed.

This phase of the development programme will target those players who may represent New Zealand at age group squad or international team events (as a junior aged phase it is likely a number players will move through this level of support with only the hardest working, and most committed to their progression being offered membership to the next phase).

Long Term Player Development Stage: Train to Compete

It is likely that the high performing players identified in these phases will be in the ‘Train to Compete’ stage of development. All stages of development are important in the pathway of a players long term development.

But this stage sees the player take their chosen number one sport of golf to the next level of performance by training based on a key philosophy that ‘excellence takes time’ - while the 10,000 hours concept of deep deliberate training to reach an expert level of performance is well known, golf may well take double that figure to reach a professional level of mastery.
This phase sees the player fully commit to the sport year round and highly focused on training to reach their performance goals. The player and their coaching support team need to understand the players strengths and weaknesses across all performance skill areas. They should have a tailored and periodised plan to address these and prepare for key competitive events (likely to be national age group events and international age group events for the higher performers).

It is when the player reaches this stage of development that there is a shift in the time spent training versus time in competition and competition specific training ratio and at this stage is 50:50.

Therefore training needs to be of high intensity and specific to the player’s performance and personal goals. The window of opportunity to continue skill development is smaller as they now direct more time to competition and preparing for competition by developing their tactical (cognitive development) and mental skills.

For players to achieve high intensity/high quality training they need to understand and utilise the difference in styles of golf specific training which include blocked (distributed and varied) and random practice. There is also the need to focus greater time on short game over long game (approximately a ratio of 70:30) practice.
Phase Three

The National Academy Programme

Overview

The players selected to join this level of the National Development Programme will be deemed those most likely to go on to successfully represent New Zealand and become successful on the world stage. Selection at this level is based on both the performance of the player and their ability to develop, or continue to develop, within a structured programme.

A player who is selected into the National Academy will receive support in the form of clothing and equipment as well as funding for their key service providers such as their:

- Primary coach
- Sports psychologist
- Strength and conditioning coach
- Golf specific physiotherapist

Importantly they will also have funding assistance to ensure their attendance at national events throughout their term in the Academy. For the Academy players, who are heading towards or are now in the Train to Excel LTPD stage, there will be a contestable ‘International Tournament Campaign Fund’ (ITCF) to help assist them to create and manage their own international tournament campaigns.

The levels of investment into each player, and their development programmes, continue to become more personalised and specific. A player’s progress along their own developmental pathway, as well as their ability to best utilise such support, is considered when allocating support in this phase.

Long Term Player Development: Train to Excel

This stage is the final preparation stage in the player’s long term development. All of the golfer’s physical, technical, tactical, psychological and organisational skills should now be well established so the player can focus on the full optimisation of their performance. This is reflected in the training to competition ratio moving to 25:75. A player should be playing about 25 to 40 events a year. Therefore to be successful at this stage a player needs to not just understand but be highly efficient in their own planning and preparation. A players training and event preparation is based on peaking for major competitions to prevent over training and performance fatigue that can lead to injury.

The tournament pathway is a crucial element at this stage of a player’s development. International amateur events and professional events such as The Charles Tour are crucial for players at this stage to compete in to test their skills, compete and continue to develop and refine their skills for the professional world stage.

Development at this level is about refinement of all skills including organisational and behavioral skills that become more important as players expand their international experience. Performing on the world stage is not just about how the player plays the game, but also how they manage their life in regards to planning, financial management, media management, how to utilise a caddie and how well they adapt to different environmental conditions and cultures.
Phase Four

Rookie Professional Assistance

Overview

This programme is dedicated to provide assistance to selected rookie professionals as they continue to refine their skills and further their experience on the international stage during their first year(s) at the professional level. Under set terms and conditions a limited number of players could be supported on a yearly basis. Players who had successfully progressed through the New Zealand Golf Player Development Programme phases could be eligible for support while at this important stage of development.

Support in this programme may include sourcing and retaining key sponsors for the player; performance testing and monitoring using latest technology; and assistance with international event invites and programme funding. It is expected that players at this level have a support team and the self-management skills for organizing and planning their event schedule and training programme. It is also expected that the support provided at this phase is just to ensure that there is the continued support to bridge the gap between the National Academy Programme and having an established professional career.

Long Term Player Development: Excel

This phase of development is not too different from the previous 'Train to Excel' stage. The main difference being that the player reaches this stage of development when they have achieved playing success at the highest international amateur level and/or competes regularly holding a major tour card (PGA, LPGA, European, Ladies European, One Asia, Japan or JLPGA).

This stage of the LTPD model is not about development but about maintaining a fulfilling and healthy career in the game through continual management of a playing and training schedule.
Tournament Pathway

Overview

A critical aspect of player development is the need to introduce players to competitive environments that continually challenge their level and stage of development.

District and New Zealand based age group and open competitions are important steps that allow both talent identification and development to occur. The next step, for those players who excel, is an introduction to international competition. This provides the greater level of competition and experience required to further challenge and grow the higher performing players. It is this ongoing progression of competition that allows them to continue to test and hone their skills as they strive for success on the world stage.

District

Club golf is where an emerging player will first taste competitive golf and grow their love for the game. As the player develops technically and physically it will be appropriate for the player to compete in district age based events and then progress towards district open events. Playing competitive events on different courses will challenge the young developing golfers, who are likely to be in the ‘Learn to Compete’ stage of LTPD, to transfer skills learned training to the golf course and also develop on course tactical and mental skills.

Through success at domestic age and open events a player may be identified for district development programmes and representation which may start a player on their journey toward membership within the National Development Programme.

For the older and more developed golfers who are likely to be in the ‘Training to Compete’ and/or ‘Train to Excel’ stage of development, district open events become important not only for district selection and representation but also create opportunities for player preparation and fine tuning for their national and international events.

National

Over time the young developing golfers will be eligible to include national age group events on their golf calendar. This will give them experience of playing a national tournament course set-up and conditions against players of a similar age and stage of development.

As a player continues to progress onto district representation and national age group events they will be of a level that allows them to enter the national tournaments such as the North Island and South Island Strokeplay, New Zealand Strokeplay, New Zealand Amateur and The Charles Tour events. If not already, these players will be on the radar of the national selectors and may be involved in the National Junior Talent Identification and Development phase, to further refine their skill and grow New Zealand Golf’s understanding of their current and future ability.

National events will always play an important role in a player’s development programme whether they are age based for the younger ‘Learn to Compete’ stage golfers or the highest level of national events such as the New Zealand Amateur for the high performing golfers in the later stages of development. Playing competitive events is vital for players to develop and refine their skills as they look to succeed on the world stage.
International Age Group Tournaments

The first step is to enter international age group competition. The objective is to introduce players to this unfamiliar environment early, to allow their competitive play to develop within the appropriate player (age group) community, which is likely to be the higher performing 'Train to Compete' staged players.

Introducing age group players to international competition will challenge them in many ways, none more so than being faced with higher levels of competition within both an unfamiliar environment and new peer group.

Other equally important aspects of this phase are the organisational and planning requirement of international travel and the issues they experience while undertaking such a challenge. Cultural differences, climate and altitude changes as well as uniquely different course conditions and grass types also play their part in the ongoing development process.

An opportunity exists for players within the National Junior Talent Identification and Development phase and National Academy Programme phase to experience international competition within Australia as well as Asia and the U.S (although not exclusively). An example of such tournaments would be; Victorian Junior Masters, Srixon International (formally known as the Jack Newton Junior Championship), Greg Norman Junior Championships, Handa Master Juniors and the Australian Junior Championship.

While not currently on the national junior squad travel plan the U.S based Callaway Junior Worlds is well attended, as are the many AJGA events, by top juniors from around the world.

International Development Tournaments

Continual experience competing in international tournaments is a necessity for a player’s ongoing development. Players who have advanced through the age grade levels, and who meet the criteria of selection, will now be introduced to international open grade competition.

The difference in location, playing environments and course conditions continues to challenge at this stage and further experience gained from these opportunities continues to prepare the player for success. While they may have begun to succeed or even dominate at the age group stage they may take a step back as they enter this new phase.

A number of Australian events provide an ideal testing ground for National Academy players. With only relatively short travel periods required, the players are able to enter Golf Australia Ranking Events that feature on the R&A World Golf Rankings allowing New Zealand based players to advance their World Ranking. A sample of these events includes the Lake Macquarie Amateur, Riversdale Cup, Master of the Amateurs and the Australian Stroke Play and Amateur Championship.

For players in their second and third years of the National Academy Programme there is the opportunity to experience a different range of tournaments and conditions that can expand their experience further. An opportunity that exists at this time is to match the tournament location and type with the intended Professional Tour they may wish to pursue a membership of in the future. Such events include the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships, Suntory Open, Korean Open, Juan Carlos Tailhade Cup, Argentina Amateur, British Amateur, US Amateur and the Canadian Amateur.
New Zealand Team Tournaments
There are numerous New Zealand team events which the selected players compete both domestically and internationally. International competition such as the Trans-Tasman Cup (Junior and Open), Nomura Cup, Queen Sirikit Cup, Astor Trophy, Ten Nations Cup and the World Amateur Championships all add to the ongoing development of the players selected and allow the very best to excel. For more on the process of selection into such teams please refer to the National Selection Policy document available in the high performance section of the www.golf.co.nz website.

International Tournament Campaigns
For the very best amateur players, the opportunity exists to test themselves against world class competition in a series of the most highly ranked international events available to them. Such a campaign will provide one of the final stepping stones for players emerging from the National Academy Programme through to the Rookie Assistance Phase.

Each international campaign is personalised to the individual and may have multiple objectives that meet set criteria as they target specific events. Currently the following tournaments may make up such a campaign;

Asia: Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships, Suntory Open, Korean Open, Singapore Amateur, Hong Kong Amateur, China Amateur, Panasonic Open.

UK/Europe: Lytham Trophy, Irish Open Amateur, Welsh Open Amateur, Brabazon Trophy, Scottish Open Amateur, St Andrews Links Trophy and The (British) Amateur.


For an exhaustive list of events that may make up part of an international tournament campaign see the links below.

The R&A and USGA World Amateur Golf Ranking event list for men and women:


Or the Scratch Players event list for men:

[http://www.scratchplayers.org/master.calendar.html](http://www.scratchplayers.org/master.calendar.html)
Excelling within the Programme:

Programme Delivery

As outlined in the programme phases it takes an integrated and complete approach, based in LTPD philosophies and covering the five key performance pillars, to support and develop world class behaviours and performance.

These five key areas are:

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<td>Psychological</td>
<td>The mind; both mentally and emotionally</td>
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<td>Technical</td>
<td>The mechanics of the golf swing</td>
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<td>Physical</td>
<td>The body</td>
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<td>Organisational</td>
<td>The golfer and the person, planning and preparing for success</td>
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As a player strives to ‘be the best’ they need to build a coaching team around them to address each pillar and support their journey toward their long term goals.

New Zealand Golf recommends a player begins to identify their primary service providers or support network as they progress along their own, individual performance pathway. The end goal is to build a support network that is capable of delivering skill development strategies across the key performance pillars above.

The High Performance team at New Zealand Golf, and the specialist service providers it sources in each of the performance areas, are one such source of support. But due to the de-centralized nature of the programme, and the geographical locations of the players with it, an important recommendation is that players also source regionally located providers to form their core support team.

As players move through the National Programme, from junior camp attendees to programme members, New Zealand Golf’s role in their development evolves and deepens. As a player reaches the National Academy New Zealand Golf’s role, and the various specialist providers available to the programme, is best described as that of ‘secondary service providers’ with a focus on assisting players to create their playing schedules, their development plans and to monitor their progression over time.

Each player’s primary service providers, their regionally located coaching teams, will deliver the majority of their coaching programmes, with New Zealand Golf providing funding for, and working closely with, a players coaching team to oversee their on-going progress.

With some of the very latest golf specific technology available New Zealand Golf takes an ‘evidence based’ approach to player assessment, programme planning and on-going monitoring. This is to ensure players understand where they are now, where their goals will take them, what ‘GAP’ currently exists, and how they will bridge this ‘GAP’ over time.
Player Assessment, Development and Monitoring

There are many strategies applied across the various pathway phases to meet the long term development needs of each player in the programme. For an example of how such strategies may be applied to a player within the National Academy see below:

- Establishment of the players initial mid and long term goals.
- Completion of an assessment phase to set benchmarks, identify strengths and opportunities.
- Through consultation with the player and their support team a yearly plan is formed.
- This is followed by a GAP analysis that allows for the creation of an individualised performance plan (IPP) that has a mid-term focus (90-120 days).
- Plan schedules of activity to achieve the strategies within the IPP (to bridge the GAPs).
- Regular, scheduled, review allows for confirmation of the strategies applied or for adaptions to the programme to be made.

The player assessment and monitoring strategies form an important part of the talent identification and development programme and are carried out during district and national training days and camps as well as when working directly with a player and their coach. Employing such strategies assists the creation of a player’s development and training programmes and forms an important link between district development programmes and the national development programme.

To assess player competencies an array of objective and subjective assessments are carried out to build a player’s profile. For an example of the tools available to undertake player assessment see below:

- Club delivery and ball launch monitors; units such as Trackman and Flight scope use Doppler radar technology to ensure high levels of accuracy within the captured data.
- Three dimensional biomechanical analysis. This accurately identifies body function and motor pattern issues that need to be addressed for skill development to continue.
- Ultra sound putting stroke data capture; SAM Putlab measures the competency of a player’s consistency and technique and provides a tool for the testing phase within the yearly plan.
- ‘Shots to Hole’ performance data (tournament statistics); this web based programme quickly identifies opportunities for targeted skill development and practice scheduling.
- Other skill tests; such as the Trackman Combine test and the Red Zone short game test. To provide benchmarks for current skill and to track progression.

The gathering of performance data, that is evidence based, allows for performance improvement recommendations. These are based on best practice models, to be made without crossing over into coaching preferences (the differences between coaching models or methods).

Mind Skills: The ‘Glue’

Lastly, as a player builds their set of physical golfing skills it is crucial they also apply themselves to building their mind skills. Each player in the programme is challenged to apply a ‘Growth Mind-set’ with a ‘Pathway 1’ philosophy. Living ‘Pathway 1’ begins with acting courageously as they work toward building self-confidence, self-belief and self-acceptance.

This mind-set, when aligned with strong personal values, will become the glue that successfully bonds the development of their technical, tactical and physical skills together to produce ‘World Class’ levels of performance. A player who has self-confidence, self-belief, self-acceptance, and who lives ‘Pathway 1’, by consistently being courageous, will be well on their way to achieving success and to reaching ‘World Class’.