New Zealand Golf

Talent Development Plan

Background

For nearly 30 years New Zealand Golf has led, in one form or another, a talent development and refinement programme for the emerging golfing talent throughout the country. Over this time these programmes have been well regarded internationally and this continues to be the case today.

Initially, New Zealand programmes were considered to be at the cutting edge of player development as very few such programmes existed. In recent years, international focus and respect continues to be shown to New Zealand programmes given the success of various players on the world stage, including the sensational Lydia Ko who reached the number one position in the Rolex World Rankings soon after turning professional.

The key factors in the New Zealand programme successes to date are:

- A strong base of young players from around the country who have good support from their golf clubs, their districts and their coaching teams.
- A long standing club, district and national competition schedule that forms the competition pathway for these players.
- Well-established district and national development programmes that provide extra support to the very best of our emerging talent.

While we have been successful in the past, the performance golf landscape continues to evolve. As time has gone on, most of the countries New Zealand competes against now have sophisticated, professional, competitive and well-funded development programmes.

The tailoring of individual programmes for players, the maintenance of them by their coaching teams and the level of investment into their overall programmes by national bodies has seen the evolution of the 'golfing athlete'. The golfing athlete and their team now leave no stone unturned in their quest, and are continually asking the question; will 'doing this' improve my performance?

The challenge for those of us in New Zealand who support our emerging talent, including district programmes and New Zealand Golf, is to sustain the excellence of our programmes in this increasingly competitive and professionalised international sporting environment.

The Vision (our ideal future state)

Inspiring the growth of golf in New Zealand.

The Mission (our daily purpose)

Supporting the development of players who aspire to win Majors and Medals.

Our Role (what we plan to do)

Lead a Talent Development Programme that supports the development of young New Zealanders to realise their potential as golfers and as people.

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Introduction

New Zealand Golf's Talent Development Programme is about developing more New Zealanders to realise their potential and who go on to win on the world stage.

"When we see New Zealanders competing and winning on the world stage it unites us as a nation, and inspires youngsters to get out and participate in sport"

Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman.

While High Performance, succeeding at the professional level of play, is the face of participation, it is Talent Development that bridges the gap from Community Sport to High Performance and lays the foundation for future success.

The Talent Development Programme has four key phases. It is these phases, and the many elements within each phase, that supports the talent identification, verification and development of New Zealand's most promising young golfers as they move along the performance pathway.

The Talent Development Programme phases sit within the 'Performance Stage' of New Zealand Golf's Participant Pathway. While the pathway (and therefore the plan) may look step by step, or linear in nature, rest assured it is not. Each player will enter and move along the pathway at their own pace and in their own way.

A player's progression is 'driven by the compass (their future direction) not by the clock'*, this is done by putting the long term developmental needs of the players first over their short-term performance outcomes.

We need to be driven by the compass (future vision), not the clock, by putting long-term needs of athlete first and foremost*

This progression also considers the developmental needs of the person as well as the golfer. The success of New Zealanders on the world stage is measured by both performance as well as character. We only have to look to the success of Lydia Ko, and the pride we share in both her golfing performances, as well as the way she conducts herself on and off the course. This reflects who we are as New Zealanders, it unites us and inspires us.

*Sport New Zealand Talent Plan 2016 - 2020

Programme Philosophy

What We Believe

Emerging talented golfers travel a pathway across numerous organisations, facilities and people. Therefore, the need for a collaborative and aligned approach across families/whanau, school, golf clubs, sport/health facilities, PGA coaches, specialist service providers, District Associations and New Zealand Golf is paramount.

To say what we believe in is to give an overview of the programme philosophy that guides us as we look to achieve the programme's identified success measures. The philosophy is best summarised as 'complete player development', where the player is placed at the centre, and their needs, not wants, are the focus of the programme and those people most closely supporting their development.

To expand on this further is best done by sharing who and what has guided us. As in the past, Istvan Bayli's model of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) provided the framework from which we have built golf's talent development pathway.

Golf Canada, through its Long Term Player Development Guide, has provided a great example of golf using Balyli's model. Golf Australia, and its current and past service provider network, has also shared the its learnings with us of nearly 30 years running State and National programmes.

More recently Sport NZ has completed its Talent Plan, to which we had input, align to and strongly believe in. In fact, so much so that we have included the following section to call out the Talent Plan's core beliefs, as well as some myths; and then go some way to explain what these statements mean to the NZG Talent Development Programme.

Sport NZ Core Beliefs:

Athletes needs come first
All decisions made about individual athlete development are informed by an understanding of their needs as an athlete and as a person, both in the short term and long term.

Working together for collective impact
All partners (including parents) put their own interests aside, align policies and practices and collaborate to work in the best interests of the athlete.

Effective pathways
Sports pathways are clear, underpinned by evidence, and identify the opportunities and the expectations of individual athletes at each stage of the pathway.

Continuous learning
Continuous learning and a growth mind set underpin success for the athlete, for the people who support the athlete and for the organisations that enable these people.

Quality Coaching
Quality coaching is crucial to long term athlete success, quality coaches understand the performance needs of the athlete and influence the people and the environment around the athlete.

What we believe

Golf's Talent Development Programme aims to be player focused, to meet the needs of the player and their stage of development (the compass guides, not the clock). In addition to traditional, technical and tactical training the physical, mental and emotional development of the player must be considered. This includes emphasis on ethics, fair play and character building.

NZG, Districts, golf clubs, schools and coaches work together, aligning programmes and philosophies and working together in the best interest of the player. Again, this means taking a long-term view to development, rather than seeing the next 'event' as the focus (short term).

Talent development pathways need to be clear and identify the desired outcomes of complete skill development at each stage of the pathway, including tournaments, coaching and national programmes.

Players, coaches and providers within the programme are encouraged to have an open and 'Growth Mindset' *. It is with a growth mindset that players are more coachable, adaptable and have greater ability to improve and realise their golfing potential. In keeping with continuous learning and improvement, NZG will endeavour to stay up to date with national and international best practices in talent development for the benefit of all involved.

NZG recognises that as a player progresses along their development pathway the need for quality coaching grows. This includes the need for specialised support across the technical, tactical, physical and psychological performance pillars that meets their individual needs. While the national development programme operates through a decentralised model, it is crucial that the programme supports the player's primary coaching support teams as the main influencers of the players daily training environments.

*Carol Dweck – Mindset, the New Psychology of Success.

The Myths of Talent Development

Recently Sport New Zealand has made talent development a focus. In doing so they have also completed a research project in which they conducted interviews with athletes, coaches and administrators across the sporting sector. They also looked to international best practice in talent development to gauge what has and hasn't worked. This project has uncovered some interesting findings and realisations, one of which is best described by Mark Twain's quote, 'It's not what we don't know, but what we do know that just ain't so'.

This is just as true in the development of emerging talented golfers as it is across other sports. We must let go of some of the myths that have shrouded our sport, that we have perhaps believed to be true, but that the research is suggesting... "just ain't so".

Three of these myths are highlighted below;

Successful athletes focus on winning.

What Sport NZ says: In fact, it's just the opposite. Having a clear development (mastery) or performance focus is essential rather than being driven by the outcome or winning. How athletes approach every experience (positive or negative) is a learning experience and the development of habits, behaviours and the mindset to navigate those situations is what separates athletes from future champions.

We believe: Many young players may have the physical attributes to succeed in golf, but those that go on to succeed on the world stage have something extra. They put in place world class behaviours that become daily habits. They create success rules based on achieving mastery. These players are the ones who focus on effort, they take pride in how they apply themselves (planning, hard work, feedback, learning etc.) they aren't transfixed or swayed by the outcome itself. These players strive for mastery over the skills of the game. They realise that the trophies, cups and medals that come from winning are simply a bi-product of this mastery.

Childhood success leads to adult success.

What Sport NZ says: No two people are the same. Athletes present differently at various stages – progress is not linear. Every athlete will follow a different path in their development which takes time, with challenges and obstacles throughout. Challenges are necessary and inevitable, and motivation, dedication and resilience are essential to reach the top.

We believe: Developing and mastering all the skills required to succeed at the highest level requires a long-term focus (10-20 years) and a strong character. A player's development programme (training and competition) needs to be individualised and meet the player's needs – and it should be age and stage appropriate. Young athletes develop physically, mentally, emotionally and cognitively at different rates. The players who take a long-term focus on their development are the ones most likely to remain in the game and follow their dreams. We encourage the key people in a young golfer's life to support them with balance – to support them to develop more than their physical ability but also their social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual needs (known as physical literacy).

Early specialisation sets athletes up for future success.

What Sport NZ says: For the vast majority of athletes and sports, earlier is not better. When athletes narrow their focus onto one sport too early, they risk burn-out, over-use injuries and lessened motivation over time. When athletes have diverse sporting experiences they develop a broader range of transferable skills and greater creativity and decision making capabilities.

We believe: Young New Zealanders should play a number of sports so as to develop general athletic skills and develop their social relationships. We recognise emerging talent will reduce the number of sports they play as they focus more and more on their chosen sport but there is no rush to do so.

Outcomes and Success Measures

It is now widely accepted in the world of sports psychology that a 'Success equals Winning' approach to measuring the effort and performance of a player has a negative impact on their long-term development and success in sport and life. This mindset undermines performance, and it will never truly let a player access their potential, where they disconnect from the outcome and instead seek to express themselves fully from a place of 'Pure Courage'*.

It is only when a player shifts their success measures from being solely outcome-focused to being focused on the process of mastery that they can truly unleash their mind and therefore their potential at the highest level on the world stage.

It stands to reason that if we as a programme are asking players to re-think their success measures, to allow them to unleash and reach their potential, perhaps we should too.

Because if we don't then the danger remains that an arbitrary outcome measure, target or number is set without thought or plan for why, or the method of how it will be achieved. This process is then likely to cause dysfunctional organisational behaviour as those in the system attempt to reach, somewhat blindly, for the arbitrarily set measure, outcome or number.

Instead, the following success measures allow us to take ownership of what we have within our control, those being the phases and elements of the talent development programme as outlined in this plan. These measures allow us to focus on the process of supporting the key people within golf's talent development system, whether that be the players themselves or the various people and organisations that play a role in their ongoing development.

These success measures have also been introduced or adapted based on the 2016 review of the Talent Development Programme to address the key findings.

*David Galbraith - Unleashing Greatness

What does success look like?

Increased reach of talent development programme

The 'reach' of the national programme must increase to better communicate the programme's approach to player development. As emerging talent is identified it is important the right information and service provision is available to allow them to flourish as they start their journey into the performance pathway.

NZG and each District have a player talent development partnership

To increase the district based players, and the district support networks understanding and engagement with the programme. This is required to improve the reach and better deliver the key programme messages to emerging junior talent. This broadening of the key messages will assist players moving up through the pathway to be ready to engage in an individualised performance programme either prior to or when they reach the national academy.

Increased frequency of contact and support to key programme members

To ensure the programme reaches its desired outcomes, greater influence and impact on the player's progression is required. This will come through increasing the contact time between the player, their support team as well as NZG providers and High Performance staff.

Improved understanding and engagement of players with their individual development and performance plans

For a player to reach their potential they will need to be fully engaged with their coaching team and development programme. They should understand where the gaps are in their skill set and will have a plan to bridge them. A player will be creating the daily habits that will allow them to reach their dream goal.

Players better prepared for high performance environments

More players playing outside of their relative comfort zone. For Phase One and Two of the programme this can mean playing 'up' at a district and national level or international junior level. For Phase Three and Four players this will mean more international competition at increasing levels of difficulty. This will provide 'real world' benchmarking of their progress, and provide coachable moments (as gaps are identified). Playing 'up' also has the potential to inspire them to reach for their dream goals.

Finally, 'Winning on the World Stage'

"Ah ha", you say.... "That's a performance based success measure", well yes, it is! Now, we did say at the beginning 'solely' outcome-focused, which does allow for performance measures, it's just they are not at the top of the list, other elements are, those that are managed by the system, and not as affected by outside factors.

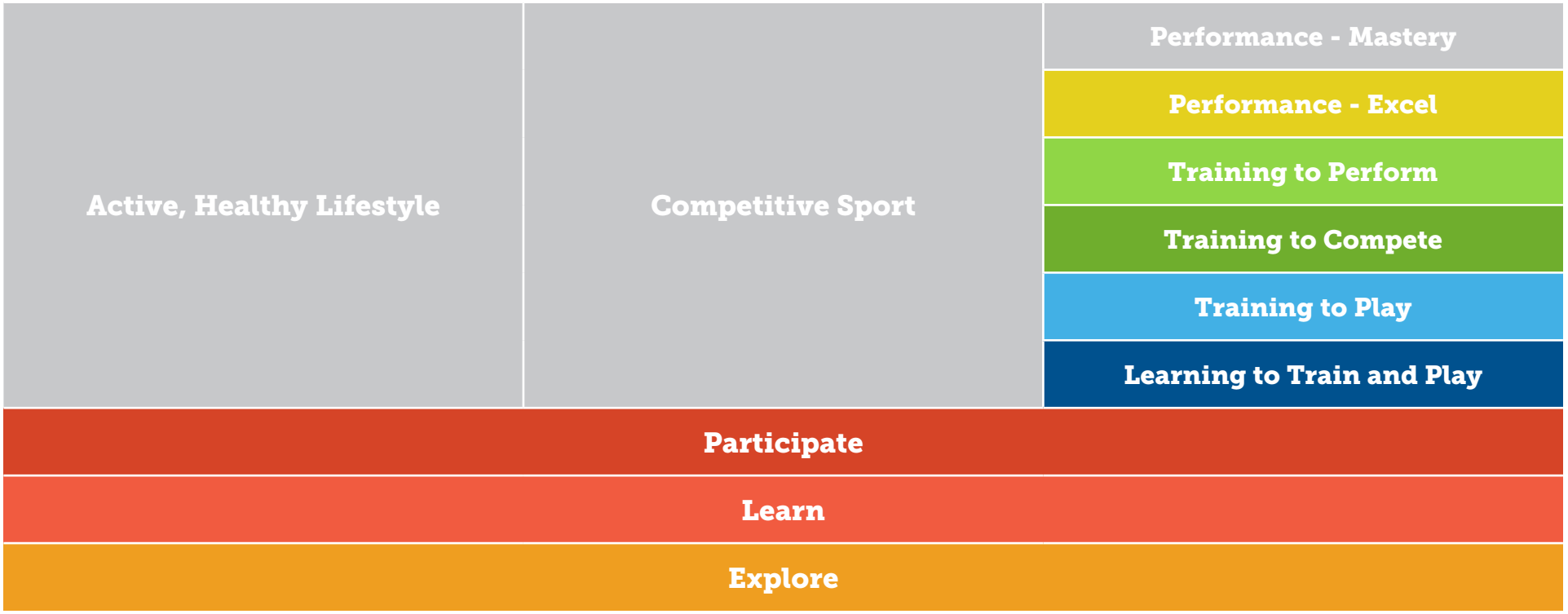
Performance measures are in place to ensure that the other system-wide measures are being implemented and are positively affecting player development. Performance success is simply a bi-product of good process, and indicates that players are in fact mastering the required skills across the performance pillars. The key here is these measures are put in context, other factors, ones out of the control of players, coaches or the programme can influence the outcome. To circle back to the beginning again, what we don't want is this measure creating dysfunctional behaviour within those driving the development system in an attempt to short circuit performance at the detriment of the very people who are at its heart, the player.

The Participant Pathway

The Participant Pathway below is NZG's model that shows the stages a golfer can be active in, and move within. The pathway shows the stages of sports participation that most golfers will experience. It has multiple aims, such as to show the entry points to golf, what lifelong participation can look like, and how a golfer can move across to the performance pathway, where high performance can ultimately be achieved.

It is here, within the Performance Pathway, that talent identification, verification and development occurs and where the four phases of the NZG Talent Development Programme are delivered.

The Performance Pathway is shown on the right of the diagram, those crossing over into this stage have made a commitment to performance at some level.



See the next page for a more detailed look at the Performance Pathway Framework and how it maps alongside the Talent Development Programme, national and international competitive environments, and the performance pillars.

Performance Pathway Framework

Talent Development Programme	**PHASE 1:** District Led, NZG Supported, Talent Development	**PHASE 2:** Junior TID, Verification and Development	**PHASE 3:** National Academy Programme		**PHASE 4:** Rookie Professional Assistance	**High Performance** Individual Olympic Campaign Programme
			Tier Two	**Tier One**		
The Player & their Stage of Developement	**Learning to Train & Play** A player is developing their golf specific skill set while still focusing on general sports motor skills. Players learn to transfer these skills into appropriate competition.	**Training to Play** Training with a high intensity, year round golf specific individualised training and competition schedule. Player builds competition experience.	**Training to Compete** A player has a complete year-round training plan and is learning to transfer skills onto national and international competition stage	**Training to Perform** A player is close to or has fully established their performance skill set for optimal performance on the international stage.	**Performance - Excel** An elite player at amateur or professional level who has established high standard of skill transference into performance on the world stage.	**Performance - Mastery** An elite professional golfer maintaining fulfilling & healthy career on a major tour - winning or potential to win majors & medals
Desired Outcomes						
Complete & Intergrated Player Development — **Physical**	Introduction to body-swing link Physical screening for individualised programme addressing areas of weakness and focus on health and wellbeing.	Understand body-swing link & importance of posture. Engaged in individualised programme.	Engaged in individualised programme that addresses pre, tournament and post event needs (including nutrition & hydration strategies)	Plan in place using comprehensive support network (physio, biomechanics, S&C, nutritionist).	Detailed planning using comprehensive support network; optimization of requirements in prep, comp & recovery phases	Detailed planning centered around optimal physical state at Majors & Olympics.
Technical	Good basic skill competency & stable mechanics. Learn to challenge these skills under a variety of conditions when training.	Develop an efficient & non-injurious swing. Build on challenging skills under variety of conditions when training.	Stable swing mechanics under training and competitive pressure/fatigue. Golf equipment custom-fitted.	Able to perform with precision & consistency under pressure (excellence in ball control).	Continues to perform with precision & consistency under pressure and in key/targeted competition (excellence in ball control).	Almost completely self-regulated in technical maintenance.
Tactical	Knows generally how far hits each club and develops basic shot selection system. Introduction of yardage/note book into practice rounds and competitions.	Makes good on course decisions. Builds on shot selection system incorporating use of yardage/note book and tools.	Understands & uses tools to assist course strategy in all events. Establishes pre, post round & event routines.	Able to transfer practice performance to competition. Refines pre, post round & event routines.	Adaptable to almost all course types and conditions. Targets key tournaments.	Adaptable to all course types and conditions. Targets Majors & Olympics.
Mind	They understand how mind skills link to each aspect of their development.	Develop a basic pre-shot routine that may include breathing/relaxation and visualisation.	Players build & personalise robust preparation routines, emotional control techniques & embed pre shot routines into their performance routines.	Performance routines are unconscious with a deep ability to regulate emotions & make sound course management decisions under any pressure.	Becomes a master at regulating their emotions & exhibits powerful preparation & pre shot routines under any situation.	Able to play free flowing instinctual golf.
Person	Focus is on the process of learning rather than the outcome and result. Players foster a growth mind set.	Understands weakness & strengths; develops ability to critical review performance; starts to reflect on goals & understand commitment required.	Has connected short, mid & long term plan through established daily habits of greatness. Increase responsibility of planning & budgeting.	Understands & exhibits pathway 1 behaviour on & off course; and trains in 'green box'.	Self regulates prep, planning & review. Develops rapport with media.	Gives back to the game. Has balance in life (can plan for life after retirement).
Tournament Pathway	Club; Inter-school; District Junior events; District events; District Junior Representative events; Regional and National Age Group events.	District events; District Senior Representative events; National Age Group events; National Open events including some Charles Tour events.	National and International Age Group events & Representation; National Open and Charles Tour events.	National events; Charles Tour events; International events and National Representation.	Charles Tour; International amateur and professional events; National representation; gain Professional Tour Card & playing status.	Recognised professional (see world golf rankings)
Coaching Support	PGA Coach; District service providers (may include physio, S&C & mind skills).	PGA coach; physiotherapist, sport psychologist, S&C coach; District & National service providers.	PGA coach; biomechanist, sport science & medicine, physio, S&C, sport psychologist; mentor; National & District service providers.	PGA coach; Biomechanist; sport science & medicine, physio, S&C, sport psychologist; mentor; National service providers.	PGA coach; Biomechanist; sport science & medicine, physio, S&C, sport psychologist; mentor; National service providers.	PGA coach; Biomechanist; sport science & medicine; physio; S&C, sport psychologist; Manager.

Talent Development Programme

Programme Phases

There are four phases to NZG's Talent Development Programme;

1. District led, New Zealand Golf supported, Talent Development
2. National Junior Talent Identification and Development
3. National Academy Programme
4. Rookie Professional Assistance

The following pages go into further detail regarding each of the four phases above.

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

A player is selected into the upper phases of the programme based on the belief and understanding they have the potential to improve, and reach for their dream goals. This potential may get them selected, but it will be the establishment of world class daily habits, the ongoing desire and work ethic to improve and evidence of that improvement that will see them re-selected further along the pathway.

It is possible for players to arrive into the Talent Development Programme at any phase; it is not a rigid 'stepping stone' based pathway. Supporting the improvement of a player's performance mastery, the ability to 'play the game', remains the primary focus throughout the programme phases.

1 Phase One

District led, New Zealand Golf supported, talent development

Enables us a greater understanding of the emerging players within the district programmes.

Our Role:

- Develop and maintain District relationships.
- Support District with creation and implementation of their own District Talent Development Plan and Programme.
- National service providers work alongside District service providers for aligned development.
- Performance data collected for players primary coaching team to assist with complete long term plans and for the National Player database.
- Introduction to concepts and messages on complete long term player development.

Learning to Train and Play

A player is developing golf specific skill set while still focusing on general sport motor skills.

Players learn to transfer these skills into appropriate competition.

Expected player skills and standards:

- A player is developing their golf specific skill set while still focusing on general sport motor skills.
- A player learns to train using deep deliberate high quality training sessions.
- A player learns to train challenging their golf skills under a variety of conditions.
- A player learns to focus on development and learning whether it be in training or competition as opposed to focusing solely on results and winning.
- A player learns and starts to foster a growth mindset.
- A player starts to learn their own strengths and weaknesses and the gap between their current game and their aspirations.
- A player learns the body-swing link and starts to understand the importance of general physical conditioning and health.
- A player displays good basic skill competency and stable swing mechanics.
- A player understands how mind skills link to each aspect of their development.
- A player develops their mind and tactical skills while competing at age and stage appropriate events.

2 Phase Two

National Junior Talent Identification, Verification and Development

Groups of emerging junior players will be brought together for continued support. These players will also show they possess the necessary behavioural traits to continue to improve.

Our Role:

- To support the player's district-led development programmes.
- Support players to have a coaching team that covers all performance areas.
- Work alongside the player's primary coaching team to support their individualised training programme.
- Provide the player with further information, resources and knowledge across all performance skill areas as appropriate to their stage of development.
- Performance monitoring to track a player's progression.
- Provide opportunities for players to represent New Zealand at age group squad or international team events.

Training to Play

A player moves towards a higher intensity, year-round, golf specific and individualised training and competition schedule.

A player builds competition experience.

Expected player skills, standards and behaviours:

- A player starts to build a support team around them that covers all performance areas (technical, tactical, physical, mind and person).
- A player understands their current game, strengths and weaknesses, and with the help of their support team, builds a plan to address any gaps.
- A player has goals and understands commitment required to achieve own aspiration.
- A player is moving towards a higher intensity, year-round individualised training schedule that has a long-term development focus.
- A player understands the body-swing link and is engaged with an individualised programme.
- A player builds on challenging skills under a variety of training conditions using deep deliberate practice routines.
- A player builds a shot selection system that incorporates the use of a yardage/course note book in all rounds of golf.
- A player starts to develop their own pre-shot routine that may include breathing / relaxation and visualisation.
- A player develops the ability to critically review performance.
- A player tests their skill development in appropriate competitions.

3 Phase Three

The National Academy Programme

A decentralised player development programme for those players deemed most likely to go on to represent New Zealand and succeed on the world stage. This programme phase splits players into two tiers: A Tier Two player who is deemed to have the potential to elevate their performance through engagement in their development programme. A Tier One player will have deeply engaged in their programme and is deemed to have the potential for success on the international stage.

Our Role:

- To support players who not only perform but display an ability to develop, or continue to develop, within a structured programme.
- Work closely with the players and their primary coaching team in addressing the gaps with an individualised and complete training plan.
- Support players to access (through funding support) their primary coaching team and specialist providers on a regular basis for continued focus on long term development. A players primary coaching team should include: golf coach, physiotherapist, strength and conditioning trainer and a mind skills coach. Specialist providers can include: nutritionist, sports doctor, golf bio-mechanist.
- Assist players to attend appropriate age/stage international events as either part of a NZG travelling squad, team or an international campaign.

Tier Two - Training to Compete

A player has a complete year-round training plan and is learning to transfer skills onto the national and international competition stage.

Expected player skills and standards:

- A player has a support team around them that covers all performance areas (technical, tactical, physical, mind and person).
- A player, with the support of their coaching team, has a complete year-round training plan that has a long-term development focus.
- A player develops and uses robust pre and post-tournament round and shot routines for all level of tournaments.
- A player understands the commitment required and connects goals and training plans with daily habits and behaviours.
- A player has equipment (golf clubs and balls) custom fitted as they strive to address all areas that impact performance.
- A player builds their competition schedule that includes a mixture of national and international age/stage based events.

Tier One - Training to Perform

A player is close to or has fully established their performance skill set for optimal performance on the international stage.

Expected player skills and standards:

- A player has a connected support team around them that covers all performance areas (technical, tactical, physical, mind and person).
- A player, with the support of their coaching team, is engaged with their complete year-round training plan that has a long-term development focus.
- A player's deep deliberate practice habits model the requirements of high level competition.
- A player refines robust pre and post-tournament, round and shot routines for all level of tournaments and under any pressure.
- Players are able to show an ability to regulate emotions and make solid on-course decisions when under pressure.
- A player is close to or has fully established their performance skill set for optimal performance.
- A player understands the commitment required which is reflected in their daily habits and behaviours on and off the golf course.
- A player is organised and displays behavioural skills that are required to organise and take responsibility for their own international campaigns. Skills include planning, financial management, media management and adaptability to different cultures and environments.
- While a player's focus is still on learning and refining their skills, a player should be striving for optimal performances at targeted key events.

4 Phase Four

Rookie Professional Assistance

This programme phase 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.

Our Role:

- Support selected rookie professional players as they transition from the NZG Talent Development Programme to establishing themselves full time on a major golf tour.
- Support for players could include: sourcing and retaining sponsors, performance testing and monitoring, assistance with international event invites and programme funding.
- Maintaining strong relationship links to the player as they establish themselves overseas on major international tours aiming for entry and success at majors (including the Olympics).
- It is also expected that the support provided at this phase ensures that there is the continued support to bridge the gap between the National Academy Programme and establishing their professional career.

Performance - Excel

An elite player at amateur or professional level who has established high standards of skill transference into performance on the world stage.

A player's primary focus now moves from development to maintaining a fulfilling and healthy career in the game.

Expected player skills and standards:

- Players at this level will have the support team and the self-management skills for organising and planning their event schedule and training programme.
- A player is able to perform consistently under pressure due to detailed and robust preparation routines, systems and structures.
- A player is adaptable to almost all course types and conditions.
- A player is striving to play free flowing instinctual golf.
- The player knows clearly who they are as a person and golfer; they are consistent in their values and behaviours on and off the golf course and with the media.
- A player consistently transfers a high level of skill into international events striving for optimal performance.

Collaboration

The saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' is an old African proverb, but it still rings true today when we think about what it takes to 'raise a champion'.

In golf's case, it is our development system (including the numerous organisations), facilities and people that make up the 'village'. Players need their family/whanau, schools, golf clubs, sport/health facilities, PGA coach, specialist service providers, District Associations and New Zealand Golf to be collaborative and aligned in the way we all consider and approach their development path. For the vision to be achieved and the mission to be actioned, it will take everyone involved to work together to support the player who, of course, remains at the centre of this collaborative effort.

It would therefore be remiss to give any one organisation or person the kudos or credit for success. We must instead celebrate the whole system, that is all of the people who work tirelessly to administer and deliver junior programmes, club, district and national events, parents who drive their kids to golf or coaches who are working away at growing the skills of our emerging talent. As with all journeys there are those involved at the beginning, the middle and the end, with everyone just as critical to the success of a player as the other.

That being said, a special mention should be made of the home coaching teams of each and every player within golf's system. Depending on how far along their development pathway a player is will depend on just who is in this important group of primary support. The 'group' may begin as a club coach or parent, volunteering their time, right through to a qualified and experienced PGA performance coach supported by a sports psychologist, physiotherapist, strength and conditioning coach and even a nutritionist. As a player progresses, it is important the level of support grows to match their needs.

As highlighted by Sport New Zealand's Core Beliefs (page 7), quality coaching is important, they say (and we believe) it is crucial to a player's long term success. While the player is the central focus of such a team, a true performance coach sits at the centre of the coaching team itself. They are the coordinators of the player's development programme. They know the aspirations of the player, they know how good good is, and they understand the gap that needs to be bridged. They know this because they understand the game. They also know what they don't know and are therefore happy to work as part of a 'coaching team'.

The team each has their areas of expertise and they each have testing protocols in place to assess the current abilities of the player. Having this 'evidence' allows the team, led by the performance coach, to collectively create the appropriate long-term plans that support the player's development.

Because the initial player assessment phase included testing they can then re-test in time to monitor the effectiveness of the programme and how the player is progressing.

Not every coach is a performance coach and it is important that emerging talent understands the difference and is clear on what they want from their coach. There are coaches who specialise in teaching (or instructing) the technical skills of the game but may not provide a full coach-led service.

A teacher or instructor does have an important role to play in golfers acquiring technical skills, and perhaps even the tactical skills of golf, but they may not desire to sit at the centre of a coaching team, and they may not provide a player with a monitored development programme that addresses all of their developmental needs with a long-term focus. If this is the case, as a player progresses, their programme development and

management will need to be led by another provider, a parent, or in some instances, by the player themself.

For most young players, this could be a while away, but eventually their needs will require them to grow their team and address their skill development across the performances pillars.

Either way, whether it's an instructor or a performance coach leading a player's development, quality coaching remains critical to their success. Because of this we will continue to partner with the PGA of New Zealand, the leaders in coach education in New Zealand, to support the ongoing development of performance coaches.

As a final word on collaboration, it is easy to see our small golfing population as a potential area of weakness, but we can in fact use this connectedness, our two degrees of separation, to our advantage.
Through sharing our knowledge and experiences and working together we can all play our part in assisting the rise of the next generation of successful New Zealand golfing athletes.

"Inspiring the growth of golf in New Zealand."