



BACKGROUNDER

Long-Term Athlete Development

Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a systemic approach being developed and adopted by Equestrian Canada to maximize a participant/athletes potential and involvement in our sport. The LTAD framework aims to define optimal training, competition and recovery program based on biological age rather than chronological age. It is athlete centered, coach driven and administration, sport science and sponsor supported.

By tailoring an athletes/participant's sports development program to suit basic principles of growth and maturation, especially during the 'critical' early years of their development, enables him / her to:

- Reach full potential (introduction to Olympic podium)
- Increase lifelong participation in Equestrian and other physical activities
- Improving health and well-being

This framework will set out recommended training sequences and skills developments for the participant from the Active Start stage (6 and under) to the Active for Life Stage (adult recreational). It will address the physical, mental, emotional and technical needs of the athlete as they pass through each stage of development.

Where has it come from?

As a result of the Canadian Sport Policy, in 2005, Canada began a major project to re-invigorate its national sport system. This new approach was undertaken in response to: concerns about Canada's lack of physical activity; growing obesity epidemic particularly among children; and about the perceived poor performance of Canadian teams internationally. Under the direction of Sport Canada, the Canadian Sports Centre - Vancouver and Pacific Sport were given the monumental task of transforming the Canadian sport system and took an innovative approach to this challenge. A five-person (now six-person) Expert Group was established to lead the transformation. The Expert Group's approach was:

- To create a new generic long-term athlete development (LTAD) model for able-bodied athletes.
- To create a supplement to the LTAD model that addressed the additional needs of athletes with intellectual or physical disability.
- To work with individual National Sport Organizations (NSOs) to adapt the generic model to meet sport specific needs
- The Canadian LTAD Model
- The core concept of the Canadian LTAD system and our Equestrian LTAD is that it recognizes that better athletic performance and a greater percentage of the population engaged in health promoting physical activity are both outcomes of a well-developed sport development system.

Within the LTAD system there are seven stages that athletes can pass through, and although they all pass through those stages, they do so at different ages depending on how advanced or delayed they are in their passage through adolescence. LTAD is: optimal training, competition and recovery programming with relation to biological development and maturation; equal opportunity for participation and competition; and athlete centred, coach driven and administration, sport science and sponsor supported.



The process to develop Equestrian Canada's LTAD model is extensive, inclusive and comprehensive. Knowledge is sought from experts across Canada and in depth discussions are taking place to analyze how our sport can adjust to integrate LTAD into all that we do.

Who else is using LTAD?

The Council of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport have endorsed and established the goal of the implementation of a Long Term Athlete Development program throughout the sport community in Canada. Sport Canada has been working with National Sport Organizations to develop sport-specific programs according to an overall framework established by an expert group of sport scientists.

To date, over 57 sports in Canada have started the process of designing and putting into place LTAD programs. There has been a sharing of best practices among resource personnel and National bodies and the overall program is gaining momentum.

Equestrian Canada is in the second wave of sports to start the LTAD process and is following closely the work of such groups as Volleyball Canada, Athletics Canada, Canada Basketball and Soccer to create the best opportunities for all children.

Various national sporting groups in the UK and Ireland are approximately 18 months ahead of their Canadian counterparts in the development of LTAD programs and we are using their experiences and best practices in process development to ensure we have the most comprehensive and effective system possible.

Where will Equestrian Canada's LTAD model come from?

Equestrian Canada commenced work on a LTAD model and framework for equestrian in 2005 when a Project Workgroup was appointed and work has progressed rapidly. There is an ongoing review of the work being completed by others since the appointment of the Project team.

We will be consulting with a wide range of coaches, sports scientists and experienced volunteers from across Canada to represent the views of the whole equestrian community. Their knowledge and expertise will be used as input to form the LTAD framework for equestrian sport in Canada. We will be assisted in this process by the LTAD Resource paper and research of the expert group, in particular Charles Cardinal (see www.ltad.ca for resource paper).

We will be conducting data collection and a review of available research to test the existing programs and to make recommendations on optimal systems and programs. We will be seeking the collaboration of the provincial equestrian organizations and local equestrian communities to make sure we have as comprehensive a system as possible.

In developing this model and framework, Equestrian Canada is currently in the process of reviewing our programs, in line with LTAD principles. Our competition program, coach education system, elite structure and development initiatives will all evolve to be consistent with the principles established within this underpinning model.



One of the principles to be adopted will be a continuous improvement regime where the system will be benchmarked against the most current developmental principles and upgraded regularly. It will be a living document that provides a planning framework to enable us to always deliver the most appropriate training.

Equestrian Canada LTAD resources

Equestrian Canada will develop a range of LTAD resources designed to help all coaches, teachers, players and parents understand the stages that each player goes through and also the training principles and activities at each stage.

Please visit www.ltad.ca for access to generic resources used in the LTAD process.