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Title: "The implications for coach education of parental influence on the development of elite tennis players."

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Alan Lynn is an elite swimming coach and academic-practitioner. He is a former Technical Director of Scottish Swimming and now UG Course Director in Sport Studies at Strathclyde University in Glasgow. He has written two highly successful books on swimming and a third is in production. His ongoing doctoral project is investigating the development of elite sports coaches in the UK.

Ian Cannon gained a 1st class Honours degree at Strathclyde University in 2006. He coaches National level junior tennis players and is currently a part-time Masters student at Strathclyde.

Title: "The implications for coach education of parental influence on the development of elite tennis players."

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The aim of this research was to investigate the influence of parents on the development of elite tennis players and how their role changes throughout the years in relation to Blooms (1985) early, middle and elite stages of talent development. The implications of the findings for coach education were also examined and appropriate recommendations made.

Many sources indicate that parents play a vital role from a child's early involvement in sport (Bloom *et al.*, 1985; Cote, 1999; Baker *et al.*, 2003). Despite previous research indicating the vital role of parents in the development process, little recent research has been conducted specifically within the sport of tennis.

This study was carried out qualitatively through the use of both questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were distributed to twenty-two (22) elite tennis players who have or have previously had a world ranking in singles or doubles, with seven (7) of these being returned. The interviews were conducted with two (2) parents of these elite tennis players.

The findings suggest that parents carry out an active role in the early years of their child's participation in the sport through their initial involvement and fulfilling responsibilities such as coach, feeder or hitter. The progress from this stage to the middle years sees parents begin a more facilitative role which includes such responsibilities as providing transport and financial support. The most significant parental act in this stage is the requirement of sacrifices to facilitate the child's need for quality coaching, competition and training facilities. Entering the elite stage sees a further change in the role of the parent to a more supportive one, characterised by 'managing' the process, thus allowing the continued participation and development of their child at the elite level. It should be noted

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that the key responsibilities associated with each parental role can also be fulfilled at other stages of the development process.

The implications for coach education can be summarized as:

- Enhanced understanding of the crucial parental role in the development of young tennis players.
- Improved knowledge of the developmental stages of young players.
- Recognition and acceptance of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model.

References

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3. Côté, J. (1999). The Influence of the Family in the Development of Talent in Sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, 13, 395-417