

PROGRESSING PLAYERS

Mike Barrell (evolve9)

DRAFT DOCUMENT ON PROGRESSING PLAYERS

The document provides a series of options/models for progressing players through the Red, Orange and Green stages.

PROGRESSION BY AGE/ANTHROPOMETRY

Players could be advanced either by chronological age or anthropometrical factors.

Chronological Age Progression

Moving players based on the chronological (time days/years) age.

Example

The LTA competitive structure now moves players in competition according to chronological age as follows:

Red – 8 years and below

Orange – 8-9 years

Green – 10 years

Yellow – 11 years and above

The LTA offers passports for a very small minority of players who are considered exceptional, who can move up at an earlier age. The LTA also has 10 and under ratings split into age categories. Players who reach Level 1 in Red a year early may be able to progress to Orange at age 8.

Advantages of Chronological Progression:

- Easy to administer and implement
- Clear to coaches, players and parents when a player should progress
- Can prevent players from moving too early

Disadvantages of Chronological Progression

- Does not naturally consider ability – players who are not ready to move up may find competition too difficult and players who are very good may not have a natural progression
- Does not consider individual anthropometrical factors
- Can result in players being held back later than necessary. The detriments to performance of this are not currently well understood, but may include short- or long-term hindrance to competitive performance

Anthropometrical Progression

Moving players based on anthropometrical factors. Basically, this could be based on height, or involve more advanced measurements (muscle development, limb size)

Advantage to Anthropometrical Progression

- Progressing by height alone is easy to implement
- Technical, and tactical, progression may be benefitted by increasing the chance of an optimal striking zone on groundstrokes (due to appropriate sized court and ball bounce height and velocity)
- Testing may be appropriate/useful for advancing elite players
- May lead to more realistic movement/footwork patterns (due to an appropriately scaled court)

Disadvantages

- Does not consider social factors (e.g. separating age group friends)
- Impractical to implement measures in excess of height
- Power/strength is more difficult to measure and does not strictly/directly fit under this model. If incorporated, it is still difficult to measure and would likely be too subjective and difficult to standardise
- Size and function can be at different levels
- Strike zones are not consistent relative to body size through Red, Orange and Green and function greatly influences capacity to play effectively on each court size

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COMPETENCY BASED PROGRESSION

Progressing players by their abilities, according to a set of competencies – can either be subjective, objective, or a mixture. Where competencies are used, they can be standardised across all stages or specifically tailored to each stage.

Subjective Competency Based Progression

Subjective progression is where a coach or other assessor determines when a player moves to the next stage. This can be with (competency-based) or without (general) reference to a set of competencies.

Advantages of Subjective Progression

- Allows the coach, who knows the individual player best, to decide when a player can fulfil the criteria and is ready to progress
- Provides reference points and guidance for coaches
- Considers function and skill more than Chronological or Anthropometrical methods

Disadvantages of Subjective Progression

- May not help the players and coaches who wish to progress too quickly
- Obviously being subjective, the criteria maybe interpreted or enforced differently from coach-to-coach – creating problems for moving players too early and having suitable competition standards
- May not consider social factors (e.g. separating age group friends)
- Does not consider anthropometrical factors

Objective Competency Based Progression

Objective progression is where players are moved between stages once they achieve certain scores on standardised tests or measures (for example: 'hit 60% of first serves over and in' is objective and measurable, 'hit first serve regularly in' would be subjective).

Advantages of Objective Progression

- Is an equal and clear guide to when players should progress

Disadvantages of Objective Progression

- Does not consider social factors (e.g. separating age group friends)
- If coaches use as formal tests, the tests in themselves could be demotivating towards participation
- Tests implemented may not accurately enough assess a player's readiness to move to the next stage (i.e. some critical performance factors (e.g. Tactical) may not be assessed appropriately by the tests)
- Does not consider anthropometrical factors
- Purely objective tests can result in players taking technical short cuts in order to pass with minimal technical conformity

MAIN QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

(1) Which progression is the best for practically progressing players within a nation?

- (a) Chronological Age
- (b) Anthropometrical Factors
- (c) Subjective Competency Criteria
- (d) Objective Competency Criteria
- (e) A mixture of all or parts of the above
- (f) Other methods?

(2) Should the ITF and nations promote?

- (a) A basic method of progression – minimum standards
- (b) An advanced method of progression – standards based upon performance pathway
- (c) Both – a range of standard with an basic and optimal level?

(3) Are there any factors not mentioned here or in 'Other Key Considerations' that need consideration?