

The role of S&C in the development of elite youth athletes in a National Centre of Excellence

Kevin Watson¹, Gareth Walton²,
John McEwan¹ and Mark
McKenna³.

Address for correspondence:
kevin.watson@glasgowlife.org.uk



¹ Glasgow School of Sport, Glasgow, UK; ² Elite Performance Support, Cardiff, UK; ³ University of the West of Scotland, Hamilton, UK

Abstract

Introduction: The Glasgow School of Sport (GSoS) at Bellahouston Academy was established in 1999 as a National Centre of Excellence, funded by the Scottish Executive and in partnership with Glasgow City Council Education Services and Glasgow Life. It is the first and only multi-sport sports school offering high performance coaching, including strength and conditioning (S&C) support services, integrated within the school curriculum/day. The GSoS supports around 130 pupils through six years of secondary education with the aim of developing the sporting stars of the future. The partnership with Education enables pupils to partake in a modified education curriculum at Bellahouston Academy. **Case study approach:** The GSoS has five sports specialisms; athletics, badminton, gymnastics, hockey and swimming. Pupils specialise in one sport and entry to the school is by selection only. The strength and conditioning (S&C) team provide 70 hours of S&C and specific, sport education support per week, both in-house and at sport specific venues across the city. The S&C programme of support is designed to provide sports pupils with the athletic foundation required to be successful in any sport. The S&C pathway provides sports pupils with a programme of support that develops a strong foundation that is developed and becomes more specialist and sport performance specific as they progress into their senior school years. The S&C team also manage the integration of other support services and the impact they have on the development and performance of elite youth athletes. The GSoS works closely with its partners including, SportScotland's Institute of Sport, NGB's and clubs to ensure an integrated approach to the development of the athletes across all the bodies that support them. **Conclusion:** The GSoS is unique in Scotland and indeed the UK as a non-fee paying National Centre of Excellence. The success of the school can be mapped by the Commonwealth and Olympic journey of athletes who attended the school. GSoS pupils have represented Scotland on over 200 occasions and won medals at National and International level, culminating in two silver medals at the Commonwealth Games and one Olympic Silver medal. The success of the S&C pathway has also been recognised nationally with three GSoS S&C staff winning national S&C awards in youth and development sport in the past 3 years.

Rationale and Introduction

The purpose of this poster is to provide information on the performance model used within a National Centre of Excellence and how S&C is integrated with sports specific training, the educational curriculum and a specific sport education curriculum.

The Glasgow School of Sport (GSoS) at Bellahouston Academy was established in 1999 as a National Centre of Excellence, funded by the Scottish Executive and in partnership with Glasgow City Council Education Services and Glasgow Life. It is the first and only multi-sport sports school offering high performance coaching, including S&C support services, integrated within the school curriculum/day. The GSoS supports around 130 pupils through six years of secondary education with the aim of developing the sporting stars of the future. The partnership with Glasgow City Council Education Services enables pupils to partake in a modified education curriculum at Bellahouston Academy. A range of support services are provided, of which S&C is delivered by full-time, permanent members of staff. The remainder of the support services are provided on a consultancy basis, of which the injury prevention and management programme is coordinated by the S&C team.

The school supports around 130 athletes at any given time across five sports; hockey, athletics, gymnastics, swimming and badminton. Pupils can apply to the school in one of the five sports at S1 (11-12 years old), S3 (14-15 years old), S5 (~16 years old) or S6 (~17 years old). The selection criteria for selection varies per sport but includes a sport specific assessment, a formal interview (assessing mind-set and academic potential), a movement competency assessment (S&C related) and a medical screening.

On successful acceptance to the GSoS, pupils will specialise in their chosen sport, with the S&C team providing the generic physical preparation aspects of performance that are required to be successful as an athlete in any sport.

The number of hours of sport per week within the academic curriculum increases as the pupils move from S1 (age 11-12 years old) to S6 (age 17-18 years old) as highlighted in figure 1.



Figure1: Number of hours of sport specific training per week within the academic curriculum

The sport specific training is further broken down into S&C training (see figure 2 for a summary of the average breakdown per sport) and an additional sport education curriculum that is written and delivered by the S&C team. The balance of sport specific training to S&C is negotiated annually by the Head Sport Specific Coach of the Head S&C Coach.

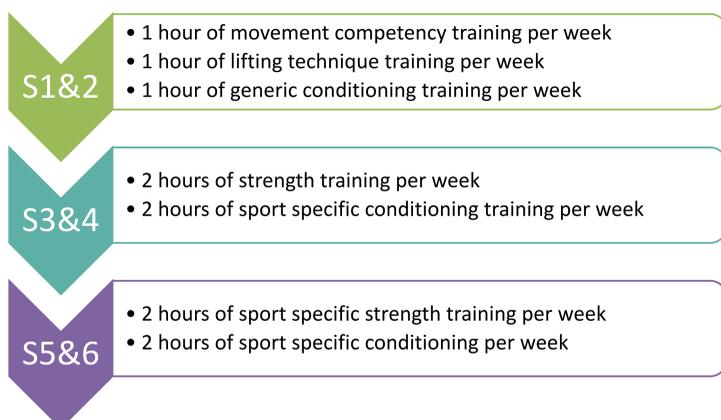


Figure2: Number of hours of S&C training per week within the academic curriculum

The S&C Performance Model

The S&C team at the GSoS deliver in excess of 70 hours of S&C support per week to around 130 athletes. The team comprises of two full time UKSCA accredited members of staff and will include 3 voluntary coaches, delivering 20 hours of support between them per week, in the near future.

The S&C performance model (figure 3) focuses on developing the athletic potential of elite youth athletes so they can be successful in any sport. Given the structure of the school and the fact pupils specialise in one sport from age 11, the S&C model ensures a rounded athletic development, increasing longevity in sport and preventing burnout and drop out from sport at an early age.

The S&C training is thus generic in nature over the initial 4 years of school, becoming more sport specific during the last two years when pupils enter the senior school. The aim is to develop the necessary S&C competencies to ensure a smooth transition into Institute of Sport S&C programmes on leaving school.

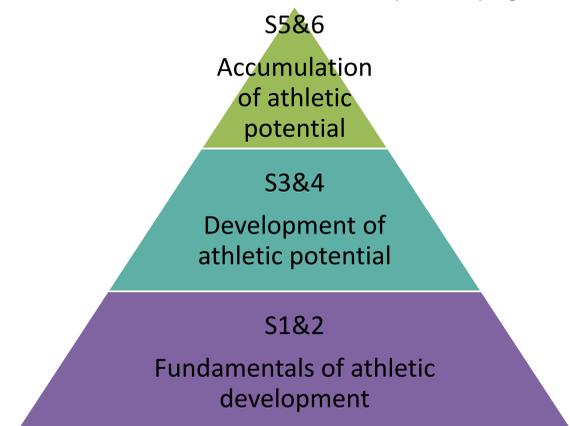


Figure 3: S&C performance model during six years at GSoS

The Sport Education Curriculum

In addition to the academic curriculum, GSoS pupils receive a specific sport education curriculum from S4-S6 (see figure 4). This curriculum adds specific sports related qualifications to the reduced academic qualifications GSoS pupils sit. This enables GSoS pupils to leave school with adequate UCAS points to access the majority of further and higher education qualifications.

Year group	Qualification title	SCQF level	SCQF points
S4	SCQF Level 4 Award in Sports Leadership	4	6
S5-6 (delivered over 2 years)	SCQF Level 6 Award in Higher Sports Leadership	6	18

Figure 4: Sport education qualification GSoS pupils take

Summary and Conclusion

The GSoS is unique in Scotland and indeed the UK as a non-fee paying National Centre of Excellence. The success of the school can be mapped by the Commonwealth and Olympic journey of athletes who attended the school. GSoS pupils have represented Scotland on over 200 occasions and won medals at National and International level, culminating in two silver medals at the Commonwealth Games and one Olympic Silver medal. The success of the S&C pathway has also been recognised nationally with three GSoS S&C staff winning national S&C awards in youth and development sport in the past 3 years.