

Athletes' career development

Coaching Generation Z athletes

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Generation Z characteristics



Definition & numbers

- Born after 1995-96
- $\pm 21\%$ younger than 20 yrs (in 2014)
- 902.000 0-10 yrs + 854.000 11-20 yrs (in 2014).

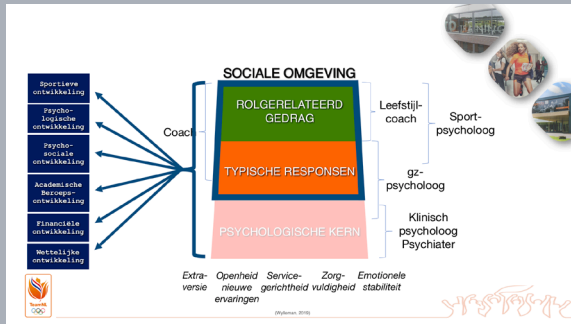
(Wylleman, 2019)

Characteristics

- Short attention spans
- Excellent technology skills
- Need structure and boundaries
- Lack strong interpersonal skills
- Best-educated generation
- Want to be involved in decision-making.

(Wylleman, 2019)

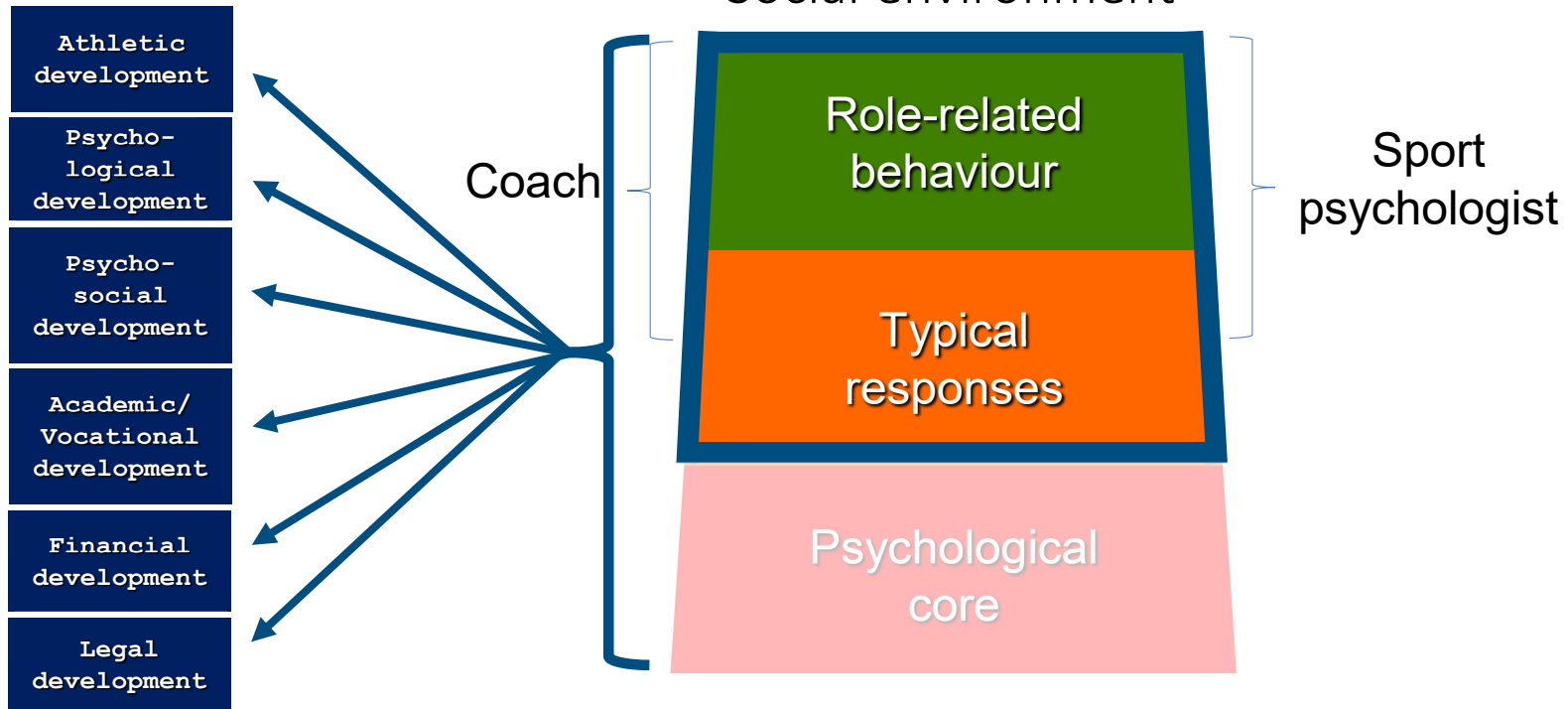
(Gould, 2019)



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& Coaching





(Wylleman, 2019)

Holistic perspective & characteristics



Gen Z



Short attention span • Easily distracted
Results-oriented • High expectations
Instant gratification/impatient
Extrinsically motivated and driven
Not as resilient • Struggle with adversity
Lack planning • Poor problem solving
More independent (travel, logistics)
Different style of play, need basics
More visual.

(Wylleman, 2019)

Gen Z

Athletic development	Initiation	Development	Mastery	Discontinuation
Psychological development	School-child	Puberty	Adolescence	Adult

Growing up more slowly
Take criticism/neg. feedback poorly
Increased anxiety & mood disorders.

(Wylleman, 2019)

Gen Z

Athletic development	Initiation	Development	Mastery	Discontinuation
Psychological development	School-child	Puberty	Adolescence	Adult
Psycho-social development	Parents Siblings Peers	Peers Coach Parents	Partner - Young family Coach - Support staff Teammates - Students	Family (Coach) Peers

Care about what others think
Lack strong interpersonal skills
Passive/bad communicators
Want be involved in decision-making
Check if authority figures are correct
Open when strong relationship with coach.

(Wylleman, 2019)

Gen Z

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Psychosocial development	Parents Siblings Peers	Peers Coach Parents	Partner - Young family Coach - Support staff Teammates - Students	Family (Coach) Peers
Academic/vocational development	Primary education	Secondary education	(Semi-) prof. athlete Higher education (Semi-) prof. athlete	Post-athletic career

Excellent technology skills
Best-educated generation

(Wylleman, 2019)

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Academic/vocational development	Primary education	Secondary education	(Semi-) prof. athlete Higher education (Semi-) prof. athlete	Post-athletic career
Financial development	Family	Family NGB	NGB/NOC Sponsor	Family Employer

Restricted/lack financial skills.

(Wylleman, 2019)

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Financial development	Family	Family NGB	NGB/NOC Sponsor	Family Employer
Legal development	Minor		Adult (of age)	

Need structure and boundaries in a customized way

(Wylleman, 2019)

Coaching Gen Z athletes



Adopt attitude

- Have empathy and understand the perspective of Gen Z athletes.

(Wylleman, 2019)

(Gould, 2019)

Optimize communications

- Ask questions to open communication
- Set clear expectations on- and off-field
- Pair instruction with negative feedback.

(Wylleman, 2019)

(Gould, 2019)

Strengthen relationships

- Let them know your failure/struggle as coach to build relationship
- Be open and spend time for building relationships
- Be creative to get buy in
- Build independence by giving more ownership
- Reward system for tasks/skills with tangible rewards.

(Wylleman, 2019)

(Gould, 2019)

Develop skills

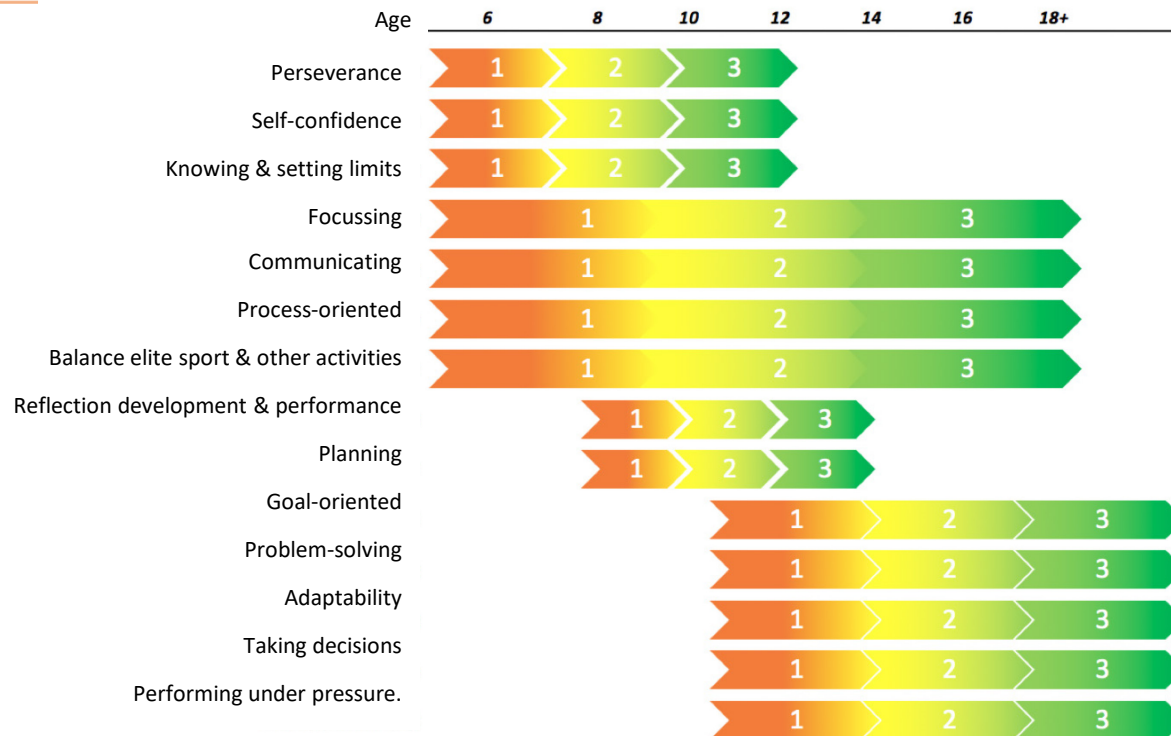
- Explain why adversity is important, helps athletes get to next level
- Build resiliency by creating adversity and coach them through it
- Prepare and have players discuss struggles in practice with group after
- Use technology.

(Wylleman, 2019)

(Gould, 2019)

Develop skills

Adaptability	Planning
Communication	Problem solving
Decisiveness	Process-focused
Focussing	Protecting one's boundaries
Maintaining optimal balance	Purposefulness
Performing under pressure	Self-confidence
Perseverance	Self-reflection development & performance



(Wylleman, 2019)

Reflections



- Every generation has different characteristics
- Every athlete has different characteristics
- Analyse characteristics and use athletes' strengths (debet approach)
- Focus on competency development in athletes
- Strength coaching determined by coach competencies rather than only athletes' characteristics.

(Wylleman, 2019)