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The sports compass offers guidance to athletes on their pathways and crossroads

Statement of the Problem: New devices for sports talent developmental programs include applications for detection, orientation, identification and transfer.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A generic test battery the sports compass was presented to optimize the pathway from the detection of the better movers to the survival chances of the elite athletes in their development for sports successes. This implies a reliable and valid tool which is essential in talent research. Moreover, data management and normative and predictive analytics are considered to be crucial for a valid interpretation and to support decision-making of athletes, sports professionals and other stakeholders.

Findings: The different conducted studies related to the sports compass demonstrated that coordinated investments lead to better talent development programs. First, it was demonstrated that the costs for talent identification could be reduced. However one should always be very cautious not losing gifted children. Second, it was shown that it is possible to predict survival chances in elite sport based on the results of a talent identification test battery using linear as well as the more advanced non-linear statistical techniques (neural networks). Third, the studies investigating the chances to succeed are based on a generic approach for talent detection, standing in contrast to the well-known profiling methods for talent detection. Not only do these tests make it possible to discriminate between potential elite and sub elite athletes, they also allow orienting talents towards different sports. The translation from these valid applications resulted into practical tools and the automation of talent tests at different levels.

Conclusion & Significance: The use of the sports compass is an important step forward in closing the gap between science and practice in the area of talent development in sports.

Biography

Johan Pion is Professor of Talent Identification and Development in Sports at HAN University of Applied Sciences. He is also a Member of the academic staff at Ghent University in Belgium, where he has obtained his Doctorate for the research project entitled the Flemish sports compass from sports orientation to elite performance prediction. He has years of experience in education, research and services at three Flemish universities. He has also made his mark in the areas of national sports promotion and training for elite and other trainers. He had begun as a Professor at the HAN Institute of Sports and Exercise Studies in 2016. He leads the research conducted by the expertise team on the early identification and development of talent in sports.

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