

How does my child get recognised and scouted by professional clubs whilst playing at Holland Park Hawks FC?

This is an interesting question for a young player to ask and not a simple one to answer because of the amount of working parts, processes and variants.

Australian Pathway

In the Australian System, the 'General' pathway for developing young players is initially through community football streams. Players play for their clubs and opportunities present themselves into more organised programs with qualified and experienced coaches like the SAP program around the age of 8/9.

Players in SAP are monitored by the club coaches and club's Technical Director, with reports made available to Football Queensland. Most states have a similar system in the SAP/NPL Player Development Pathways. In Queensland we have SAP State Carnivals which give players from regions like Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton etc an opportunity to compete and be compared to players from the south east corner.

Players do develop at different rates, so TDs are careful to identify this and not 'de-select' players too soon in case they kick-in or they develop physically later, enabling them to compete on a more equal base with their earlier developed counterparts.

Relative Age Effect (RAE)

There is a considerable push for coaches/technical directors to pay attention to players who may be overlooked due to 'Relative Age Effect – RAE.

If you look at the statistics of players in many of the Identified Player Programs such as SAP or NPL there is a considerable number of players in these squads who are born in the earliest part of the year (January/February/March). Comparing these players to players born in the latter part of the year (October/November/December) there is often a significant difference in physical growth/development. This difference in pre-pubescent children provides an advantage to players born in the early part of the year, with the fear that the weaker, later developer misses out as their development stage is going to occur later and this is why attention to RAE is so important to give all players an opportunity regardless of their size/strength at ages 11, 12, 13 and 14 (around age 15/16 is when players development tends to even out).





RELATIVE AGE EFFECT



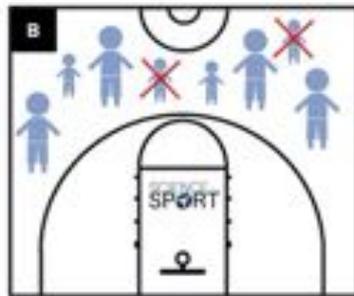
What is it?

The relative age effect (RAE) is a phenomenon in which children born in, or close to a critical age cut-off period may have an advantage in both athletic and academic endeavours.



Dropout

It is possible that due to the RAE those who are less mature drop out of sports as they are not as successful, motivated, or fulfilled by the experience in their younger years of competition.



Quartiles

To investigate and measure the relative age effect, birth date is distributed over four quarters. The exact months of these three month quartiles vary depending on the country. For example in England Q1 begins in September.



Maturity

The RAE becomes more evident during the timing of peak height velocity and peak weight velocity, where skeletal and biological adaptation allows the individual to reach maturity sooner.



RAE plateau

The RAE process generally evens out after the age of 17, and may even reverse as less developed athletes negotiate and interact with a variety of methods to handle a more physically developed opponent.



Key message

Talent development systems may be missing opportunities to nurture world-class athletes by 'releasing' them from their academies/systems during vital learning periods (e.g. ages 11-16).



Our summary

The relative age effect does exist and it is important for talent identifiers to consider the relative age effect when assessing youths as biological maturity can often be mistaken for superiority.

For the full article check out the Science for Sport website



<https://believeperform.com/the-relative-age-effect-in-sport/>

Clubs like the Holland Park Hawks FC tend to attract many kids who are RAE based, as they seek opportunities to play at the next highest level that they are capable of having missed out on selection elsewhere, and in some cases get displaced from their club where they may have been for a number of years, as a consequence of having a better performing player selected from a trials process.

We believe that giving these players a chance to develop their technical skills, learn how to use their body against bigger players, and their game awareness will hold them in good stead as they meet the earlier development of older players in their age group. This is this reason why Holland Park Hawks FC Teams often look on the smaller side compared to some other teams.

Talent ID

So playing within identified player programs get players 'looked at'. The likes of Brisbane Roar will request from club Technical Directors details of players that they might view as being future Roar Academy Players by age 12, through a formal trials process.

Trialling doesn't necessarily mean that a player has a chance of being selected. The higher the system is i.e.: The Roar Academy for example, rather than looking at hundreds of players in a trial environment, they prefer players being recommended by notable coaches (Technical Directors) to ensure they are looking at the best players, and not have to sift through players who are nowhere near the standard required. A TD will receive a request from the Roars Academy to identify players who they should be looking at. I need to then weigh up what players we have available at this standard to be considered.

In addition to this there are Football Queensland's Talent Support Programs (TSP). These have been put in place as a safety net and also to provide a training / trial opportunity for Queensland State Teams and those age groups where there isn't a National Championship. Currently there is only one boys state teams in Under 14 and 15, which aligns itself for FFA for the Under 17 National Youth Squad (Joeys). Qualification to the World Youth Cup for Under 17's is every two years, so qualifying starts at Under 15. The alignment of the National Championships means that FFA start identifying the better kids at 14 and track them through from the National Championships in their respective State systems.



TSP's Club TD's are asked to recommend players based on their performances and competency at being at State level. There are also TSP's run in regional areas (Basically Zone Representative Squads) these play against each other monthly in their respective hubs and train in the TSP once a week.

That's basically the "Structured Pathway", 'most' players generally make it into SAP, NPL, State, National and professional streams through this pathway. That said however, it's not the only way. Players develop at different rates, and times, or an opportunity presents itself.

Outside of the Pathway

The playing pathway is important for structure, but..... it is also what a player does away from the structured environment that is really important. It is said, "The harder you work, the luckier you get!" Work ethic when people are not watching is just as important than what you do when you know you are being watched.

Sometimes a lot of hard work is rewarded by being in the right place, at the right time and a little bit of luck on your side.

It has been noted that the young players today often lack resilience, dedication, focus, work ethic, initiative, desire and the ability to make decisions and back themselves. This is disappointing as these traits aren't unique to sport they are necessary in life, whether you hope to be a professional footballer or a doctor, lawyer or just about any professional career, so it is important that we as a club develop more than just a player.

The harsh reality is this, no matter how good you are, if you are following the pathway, spotted by accident or pushed to get there, approximately 0.012% of players actually get to fulfil their dream and ambitions of being a professional footballer.

That does not mean to say that players shouldn't follow their dream... far from it, but they do need to ensure they have a Plan B. There are no guarantees, even when following the player pathways, that a career in the game is at the end of the line.

Education is highly important, players should plot a career path. There is absolutely nothing wrong with playing at the highest level you are capable of and not being a professional player. Even if you do make it to the point where you're earning a living



from the game, it might be over by your early 30's or sooner due to injuries. It is extremely important to have something to fall back on.

Clubs such as ours are so much more than a part of the pathway for young aspiring players. We set standards and expectations, enable friendships and networks, provide a sense of ownership. The players who play here will be your club coaches, referees, managers, club administrators, sports trainers, physiotherapists, and Technical Director's in the future.

My child is bored, not being challenged, how can they get more coaching/be developed more quickly?

Clubs are increasingly aware of a desire to 'Fast Track' children into the system younger and younger, sometimes as young as 6 years of age.

We believe we have to be extremely careful about the loads and expectations on these, our youngest players. In many cases fast tracking results in burn out - too much 'structure' and not enough "free playing' opportunities. Players need to be able to have an opportunity to have fun, learn to play with others, gain confidence, gain skills, figure things out for themselves, improvise and be creative.

Overload at a young age is also a major concern. We are finding that more and more parents searching for the best for their child are paying for 1 on 1 coaching which tends to be highly repetitive, static and unrealistic to the player actions most kids perform in games where team play provides resistance, pressure and forces players to make decisions. These sessions are often held before or after school, sometimes on the same day as club training and these children are often playing/training in school football academies or playing school football. All of this can add up to severe overload on growing youngsters and can lead to the exacerbation of growth, foot and muscular issues. One of the most common we see in footballers is severs disease;
<https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/types-of-arthritis/severs-disease/>

We suggest - let the kids 'Learn to Love the Game' first in the early development years. Encourage them to emulate what good players do, watch video footage of their favourite players performing particular skills and try to copy them by practicing on their own in their spare time (unstructured training).



If a player spends just 10 minutes a day by themselves they will probably train more than they do in a community team. Get their mates together and play 'unstructured games' so that they can experiment without limitations of coaches. Allow them to set their own goals or ambitions.

Home Training / Individual Skill Development

There are so many resources available online they don't have to go too far to get some ideas on things worth practicing.

Concentrate on improvement on the 4 Core Skills;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB52z9GMbpk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tA1q8mOB-RQ>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXfc8bqNQ_4&t=26s

