

Effective Sporting Organisations: A Practitioner's Perspective

James Ferguson

Ferguson Management, Canberra, Australia

Email: jferg1@inet.net.au

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Abstract

The success of national sporting systems depends on the effectiveness of its component parts. In Australia and many countries with similar sports systems these are the national and state/regional sporting organisations through which sport is developed and promoted domestically and athletes are groomed for international competition. This paper seeks to identify the factors essential for the effectiveness of those organisations. It takes as a model a major sports research paper released in 2015. Entitled *Successful Elite Sports Policies: An International Comparison of Elite Sport Policies in 15 Nations*, this paper identified policy factors leading to national sporting success in the international arena by the countries covered, based on placings over a number of Olympic Games. It is now known as the SPLISS study. Based on extensive research over the 15 nations examined, the study concluded there were nine essential pillars supported by 138 critical success factors leading to a nation's sporting success. Australia ranked highly in meeting these factors, aligned with its success in international sport in recent years. National sporting organisations vary greatly in terms of size, funding and popularity. There are nevertheless certain principles contributing to success applicable to all. Like the SPLISS model, nine central pillars that contribute to an effective national sports organisation are identified, being finance support; governance, management and culture; program operations; talent identification and development; athlete welfare; training facilities; coaching; competition; and sports sciences. Critical success factors are identified under each pillar.

Keywords

Funding, governance, high performance, coaching, development, welfare, competition, sports science.

1. Introduction

In recent years there has been welcome research into the characteristics of national sports systems in an effort to identify factors which have led to success in international sport. Studies over a number of years progressively produced the notion of "Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success", now known as SPLISS (De Bosscher, 2015). This approach identified nine essential factors, or pillars,

and, under them, 138 critical success factors contributing to the success of national systems in elite sport and assessed the extent to which the 15 nations studied met the criteria identified.

It did not consider the effectiveness of those domestic organisations that make up a national sports system. The success of a national system, however, requires that the components that make up that system must themselves be effective. In Australia, National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and their state and territory affiliated State Sporting Organisations (SSOs) are central to the sporting system. It is through them that sports are delivered to community participants and athletes and teams are prepared to represent their country in international competitions. This paper is to consider the elements that constitute the effectiveness of these organisations, taking the SPLISS approach as a useful framework. Given that many countries have sports systems similar to that in Australia, the study presented here will be applicable at least to some degree to the situation in those countries.

This paper is based on my personal experience of working with national and state sporting organisations during a period of over ten years as Executive Director of the Australian Sports Commission, prior to that as an adviser to the Federal Minister for Sport, and subsequently as a director/executive of two national and two state sporting organisations. The original draft paper was reviewed by a Reference Group composed of people with extensive experience of the Australian sports system, including academics, past or present executive officers and board members of sporting organisations, leading coaches, coach educators and scientists as well as a number of people involved in the management of Australian sport.

It is frequently contended that sporting organisations are not as effective as they should be. Judgements about their effectiveness are considered by national funding bodies in determining levels of funding provided to them. Effectiveness is therefore important not only from the point of view of them delivering services to their members or achieving success on the international stage, but also in terms of the levels of funding required to enable them to fulfill their objectives.

2. Background

The SPLISS study identified nine pillars or essential factors which it found fundamental to a nation's elite sporting success in international competition. These pillars were underpinned by 138 Critical Success Factors (CSF), outlining the actions required for successful outcomes in each of the separate pillars. Although it provided only a tentative theoretical assumption on sport policy factors that lead to international success, the study is now accepted as a basis on which nations can determine the factors that must be effectively address in order to be successful in international sport, recognising that it is impossible to create one single model for explaining sporting success because of the many extraneous factors involved (De Bosscher, 2010).

It was subsequently pointed out that there might be a tenth pillar which is also central to determining a nation's international sporting success, namely the national environment or culture within which a national sports system operates (Sotiriadou, 2013). There is no doubt that the political, social and economic environment of a country plays a significant role in determining the way sport is delivered in a particular country. These are unlikely to change rapidly and they will certainly not be changed as a result of national sports policies, which was the concentration of the SPLISS study.

There may well be less dramatic cultural or societal influences that influence elite sports performances. In the case of Sprint Canoe in Australia, Sotiriadou noted that the culture was very "Australian", described as being informal in nature and based on the beach culture of surf lifesaving, said to be symbolic of the Australian way of life.

This is true and it does have implications for the way the sport is conducted. But it must be doubted whether this is likely to significantly affect comparative national performances. An informal “Australian” approach might well suit some athletes and help them improve regardless of whether they are Australian or European while a more formal approach might likewise help others. It is contended, however, that there is nevertheless a way in which culture does affect performance and where a change in culture can lead to improvements. This is not related to national socio-economic or cultural factors but, more, to the culture of the individual organisation, that is the values, attitudes and goals that are shared by its members. A sport with a strong culture of excellence will invariably be more effective than one which does not have such a culture. This stems from the general management of the sport and is heavily influenced by the leadership of the board and the competency and manner of those delivering services to athletes, such as coaches and sport scientists. A sport that does not take success seriously, that is divided, indecisive or amateurish in its attitudes and does not inculcate a culture of excellence may adversely affect the performance of its athletes or fail to provide vital services to its members. In this case, the critical success factor might lie in the governance of the sport. In each set of circumstances, the cultural changes will probably be slow and occur over a long period of time and, ultimately, will come from the way the various different throughputs such as coaching, competition, sports science and other services are delivered. It is recognised that some may prefer a tenth pillar but, for this reason, this paper presents culture as a component of governance and management.

While SPLISS has identified nine pillars which are generally accepted as identifying the national policy factors which go towards international success, each national system is composed of a broad range of organisations which deliver sport and the effectiveness of which, individually, contribute to the international standing of the nation concerned. As the success of the whole clearly depends on the success of each of its components, the effectiveness of a national sports system will depend on how well each part of that system operates cooperatively together within the wider system.

The SPLISS study accepted the notion that, in each of the countries concerned, there was what it described as a National Governing Body (NGB) which provides resources and leadership to the sports sector. In Australia, that body is the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), established by but operating at arms-length from government. Although it can hardly be said to “govern” sport, it was established to provide a coherent national direction, and to promote and fund sport, which it has done in conjunction with NSOs and, through its identification as the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), to operate programs aimed at the delivery of elite sporting success.

Working in conjunction with the ASC, the NSOs conduct the operation of the sports system on a day-to-day basis. Affiliated with their international federations, they are recognised as the custodians of their sports within Australia. They operate at national, state and local level, breaking down into a broad-based system of community clubs which cater to the mass of participants. They are responsible for the promotion and development of the sport within the community, for identifying and progressing talent towards higher levels of competition, for the implementation of the rules and policies of the sport dictated by the international federation responsible for the sport, for the implementation of national rules and regulations for the safety of participants, and for the preparation of Australian representative teams competing in international competition. Most, with the exception of the larger professional sports, undertake these responsibilities with all or part of their funding provided by the ASC.

Other major stakeholders in the national system are the state and territory sporting organisations (SSOs). These are affiliated with their national organisations (and sometimes own them) and are responsible for regulating and promoting their sport within the states and territories according to the requirements of those jurisdictions.

Additionally, there is a number of large commercial organisations which operate the biggest sports in the nation, including the Australian Football League (AFL), the Australian Rugby League (ARL), Tennis Australia (TA) and Cricket Australia (CA). The Australian Rugby Union (ARU), Football Australia (FA) and Netball Australia (NA) are in the same category but of a slightly lower commercial standing. While these bodies are obliged to follow national and relevant state law, they operate generally on an individual and highly commercial basis.

All NSOs enter national teams which aspire to success in major international events, including world and regional championships and Commonwealth and Olympic Games. In addition, all run junior competitions, usually based on an age grading, through their state affiliates. These provide opportunities for athletes of all standards to compete, including the bulk of their members who participate for recreation and have no ambitions or expectation of progressing to the highest levels, but through which talented athletes are identified and developed for advancement. Providing broad-based opportunities for general participation and selecting and preparing teams for international competition, national organisations are the very bedrock of the national sports system.

There are also significant differences between the environments in which sporting organisations operate. Some are rich, some are poor in terms of resources, some have large participant bases and some smaller support. Some, such as Rowing and Sailing, are associated with communities with high levels of education and wealth. Others have their roots in blue-collar communities, and some within migrant or indigenous communities. Some are more attractive to television or other streaming devices than others and therefore have a better chance of raising revenue. The significance of these variations in resource bases and operating environments can influence the extent of participation or international success of a sport.

But, despite these differences in context and circumstance, it is contended here that there are a number of factors common to the way the majority of these organisations operate and by which their effectiveness can be assessed. The qualification, as with the SPLISS, is that no attempt to closely define the elements of effectiveness is likely to provide certainty. Unforeseen circumstance can always occur. The application of these critical success factors to an individual sporting organisation can, however, hopefully provide a useful guide with practical application for those involved in running national or state sporting organisations.

Although this paper accepts the validity of nine essential pillars, in their application to domestic bodies some minor amendment has been necessary. Under Pillar 2, SPLISS examines the governance, organisation and structure of elite sport, while in Pillar 3 it examines sports participation. This is logical in terms of an international system. In looking at national bodies, however, governance is relevant to the whole sport, given the close link between general sports participation and elite sport. Almost all successful elite athletes have emerged from a sport's broad participation base. For an NSO to be considered effective, both elements are important. In this study, the first two pillars relate to factors which apply with a high degree of commonality between all organisations. In terms of individual sporting organisations, the issue of governance is closely related to the effectiveness of management and contributes to the culture of the organisation. For this reason, Pillar 2 is not confined to elite success but to the operation of the whole sport, while Pillar 3 examines separately the specific program elements vital to an effective national body, recognising the importance of a broad participant base and the connections through to the elite level. In respect to Pillar 5, the SPLISS study concentrates on athletic career and post career support, while this study goes further to consider the whole issue of athlete welfare. Pillar 8 in the SPLISS study looks at international competition, while this study, consistent with the needs of individual sporting organisations, considers the importance of

competition at all levels. Under Pillar 9 the SPLISS takes account of a national approach to scientific research, while this study considers the importance of the day-to-day servicing of athlete needs and associated research within a national sporting organisation. The critical success factors under each pillar identified in this paper relate directly to NSOs and are derived from the discussion of the Australian NSO experience of the author and members of the Reference group.

All pillars are considered important and are not listed in any hierarchical order. Neither can they be viewed in isolation from each other. Each has an influence on the other elements identified. For this reason, there is some overlap in considering the various elements of the pillars. No attempt is made here to apply these criteria to the actual measurement of the effectiveness of individual organisations. The intention is limited to an attempt to identify what factors contribute to an effective national sporting organisation.

3. What is an effective sporting organisation?

Before looking at the pillars individually, it is necessary to be clear about how we define an effective NSO or SSO. And in doing so, we need criteria that will apply to very different sorts of organisations in terms of size, resources and international success. An effective national or state sporting organisation might, then, be defined as one which offers broad opportunities for fulfilling sports participation for all sectors of the community, that has a base of community participants which is growing or, at least, not declining, which is supported by an enthusiastic cadre of volunteers, and with a system which will allow those participants with talent to be identified and progress through to national selection, and where the national team is improving or, at least, maintaining its standing in international competition relevant to the sport. A definition of organisational excellence in sport could therefore be described as:

An organisation responsible for developing and regulating a sport within a specific jurisdiction that consistently achieves the highest level of accomplishment consistent with its broad objectives of achieving high levels of valued community participation and competitive success at the highest levels possible.

4. Analysis

The purpose of this research is aimed at identifying the essential factors involved in an effective sporting organisation. It is based on the nine pillars identified in the SPLISS exercise as applying to national sports systems, modified to apply to sporting organisations, which are the basic components of a national sports system. Extensive discussion was undertaken with a range of people with experience in the management of sporting organisations to test the hypotheses developed from the author's own experience as CEO of the Australian Sports Commission and a member of two boards and two executives of both national and state sporting organisations. The original paper then produced was reviewed by this group which included past and present executive officers or board members of sporting organisations, senior coaches and sports scientists representing experience in Australian football, basketball, boxing, cycling, football, gymnastics, rugby, rowing, triathlon, snow sports, swimming, and volleyball.

4.1. Pillar 1. Financial Support: There is sufficient funding for the effective national operation of the sport

The initial SPLISS research indicated that countries that invest more in elite sport create more opportunities for athletes to achieve success and stated that "in terms of

input-output analysis, the best predictor of output appears to be the absolute amount of funding allocated to elite sport” (De Bosscher, 2015). However, the findings also suggested that, over the previous decade, this relationship had become less pronounced and that, with more countries investing in elite sport, something more than money was required.

Money is, of course, essential to a national sports system. So, too, is it essential to individual national or state sports organisations, many of which depend on funds provided by their NGBs or other relevant governmental structures. Indeed, it is vital to any activity and it can be regarded as a universal truth that no organisation is ever satisfied with the level of its resources. The central principle of unlimited wants and limited means affects every Australian sports organisation. If it just came down to the money there would be no point in looking at other pillars. This means that the key to success is what is done with the money available. As the SPLISS examination recognised, with more countries putting in increasing money, something more is needed. That is the importance of the other pillars. They are largely, but not entirely, dependent upon the first.

The ability for Australian sporting organisations to raise funds differs considerably, with those most popular sports with major commercial operations in a better position than those smaller sports which rely heavily on government funding. It is here suggested, however, that there are some general principles against which NSOs can be assessed in terms of raising funding. One would expect an effective sporting organisation to be able to increase its revenue from all sources annually or, at least, maintain its level. Most NSOs depend heavily on the ASC for their funding, for some almost 100%. It is reasonable, however, to expect that they should be able to raise a reasonable level of resources from non-government sources. These may include sponsorships, although that is difficult for sports without high profile teams or athletes and a large support base. The basic way in which sports raise funds is through their membership or capitation fees. and it is reasonable to expect that capitation fees should be adequate for the general administration of the sport, taking account of the capacity of their communities to pay. Too often is the argument heard that capitation fees, which are in some sports quite modest, cannot be raised because of the inability of the community to pay; but the cost of one coffee a year for each participant can make a significant difference overall. Capitation fees can be indexed and should be reviewed at regular intervals. Many sports collect their capitation fees through local clubs and state organisations and it is reasonable that a share should be devoted to those bodies; as a principal, it is suggested that at least one-third should be directed to the national body. In order to keep track of its participant members and associated bodies such as affiliated clubs, it is essential for an NSO now to have an effective data-base. It is not difficult today to access such instruments. Apart from providing a base for capitation fees, they also provide important knowledge (on issues such as geographical distribution) to enhance the sport’s ability to plan effectively. The crucial issue is that they contain accurate data which puts a particular responsibility on those responsible for inputs.

There are also other sources of funding that a sporting organisation can reasonably consider, including fees for competition entry or for providing services to its members (e.g. for coach or officials accreditation courses). Each sport should have a regime for non-government revenue. They might also be expected to work with standing mechanisms, such as the Australian Sports Foundation.

The above has five Critical Success Factors:

- **CSF 1.1:** The organisation has a regime identifying all sources of revenue, including non-government income and which establishes set fees and charges, and is reviewed regularly.

- **CFS 1.2:** Total income from all sources increases annually or, at least, does not decrease.
- **CSF 1.3:** Capitation fees are set at a level to meet general administration costs, with at least one-third reserved for the national body, and the level of fees is reviewed regularly.
- **CSF 1.4:** An accurate data-base is maintained providing details of participant members.
- **CSF 1.5:** Established mechanisms to assist in revenue raising are regularly assessed

4.1.1. There is a planned approach to marketing

In the bigger commercial sports, sponsorship and marketing, including television exposure, are vital to their continued success. In Australia the football codes, Cricket and Tennis are in this category and are well funded. To a lesser extent, sports such as Rowing, Sailing, Cycling, Basketball and Swimming all have the capacity for commercial fund raising. These sports mostly have access to well-developed marketing expertise and concentrate on a planned approach to their commercial activities. Smaller sports are in a more difficult position, being at an immediate disadvantage if the sport does not relate well to television or other streaming applications. They cannot afford commercial marketing. They can benefit from having a board member.

A further, sixth, Critical Success Factor therefore is:

- **CFS 1.6:** The organisation has a detailed marketing plan to guide revenue raising, the sophistication of which depends on the level of commercialisation of the sport, and has, at least, access to marketing expertise.

4.1.2. There are identified methods of saving and preserving funds

There are, in addition, a number of factors which, while they may not increase revenue, will help to improve financial efficiency. Just as important as raising money, is saving it and/or allocating it to achieve maximum benefit. It is important in all sports that waste is avoided and efficiencies are maximised. There are opportunities for smaller sports to cooperate together to create economies of scale by sharing or combining in outsourcing some of their administrative costs, including accommodation, shared services, accounting, even staff. Sharing can go beyond just administrative functions, as is evident with the Australian Winter Sports Institute, which provides servicing at the elite level to the different winter sports, or the recently established Combat Sports Institute. Even if there are legitimate objections to the unitary model of sports, there can be considerable savings from amalgamating the servicing functions for separate disciplines within the one sport, such as Cycling, or in looking at national systems for certain activities such as athlete support, junior sport, insurance, travel, conducting meetings electronically, etc. Even without national unity across all the state bodies in the one sport, the essential unitary model, there can still be efficiencies from closer cooperation and some specialization.

The relevant Critical Success Factor is:

- **CFS 1.7:** The organisation regularly undertakes a review of its administrative procedures nationally to identify areas where cooperation within the sport, including its different disciplines, can lead to economies of scale and administrative savings.

4.1.3. Budgets reflect strategic priorities and are reviewed regularly

All these activities will be more effective with careful budgeting. There have been countless cases where sports organisations, and not always smaller ones, have got into trouble because they lost control of their budgeting processes. Budgets must be clear and the allocation of funding set according to strategic priorities. As circumstance change during the year, it is equally important to undertake regular budgetary reviews. The frequency might vary but a good rule of thumb is to review income and expenditure against the budget at least quarterly. The CEO, or person designated as responsible for finance, should do it more regularly and each time a decision is made a notional expenditure should be identified.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 1.8:** The organisation has clear budgets which identify planned expenditures across all activities and conducts regular reviews of income and expenditure against budget

4.2. Pillar 2: Governance, management and culture: There is effective corporate governance based on a commitment to excellence

As is obvious from the discussion under pillar 1, adequate funding is essential. It is what is done with the funding, however, which is really important and that ultimately depends on issues of culture and governance. Sporting organisations operate under different governance structures. This is acceptable given their great diversity. But, there are generally accepted principles that must be observed in the interests of effectiveness. The primary role of the board of an organisation, particularly a sports organisation, is the fostering of a concept of excellence in all parts of the organisation. It is the search for perfection that drives all sports endeavours. It is not a concept that is easily measured and perfection is, by definition, impossible to achieve. But, in a high performance environment, the fact is that near enough is not good enough. The board together with senior coaches and administrators, set the culture of the organisation. It may not be determined by socio-economic factors but this is one area where culture does affect performance. By showing a commitment to excellence in everything the organisation does, an effective board and good management will have a very significant influence on the effectiveness of the organisation. This is the primary role for the sport's leaders. It is the sentiment that drives an effective organization. But, excellence does not happen by itself. It comes from knowing where the organisation needs to go and what actions are needed to get it there. It is the essence of successful governance.

It is often said that sports organisations are businesses. This can lead to a misunderstanding of their operations. Even the large commercial sports which do operate more like businesses are not-for-profit organisations; they provide a service to their members and, to a degree, the general public but they do not do so in order to make profits to distribute to a group of shareholders whose prime interest is to increase the value of their investments. The smaller sports are even less like businesses. This, of course, does not mean that they should not operate in a business-like manner. To the extent possible, all organisations should attempt to provide as good a service as possible for the benefit of their members and, importantly, their customers on whom, in many cases, their future depends.

We have heard a great deal about corporate governance in sport in recent years. To some extent it has come to be seen almost as an end in itself, as though good governance will guarantee success. Of course, it will not. But it is nevertheless of vital importance and, without it, an organisation will have great difficulty in meeting its aspirations.

One of the problems in dealing with governance in Australian sporting organisations is that many board members of NSOs do not have a sound understanding of the

concept. There is a tendency in some organisations to pay lip-service to it, undertake or participate in a governance review as a box-ticking exercise, then put the results in the drawer and “get on with running our sport”. There is only limited understanding that governance is a practical and continuing activity that goes to the very heart of how the organisation operates. It is not an abstract science but a basis for effective operations. Many board members have little previous board or managerial experience and there is advantage in board members receiving some basic education, such as that provided through the Australian Institute of Company Directors or similar. At least NSOs should have codes of conduct and induction processes for new board members.

Governance is essentially about undertaking business effectively and in accordance with whatever laws or regulations under which the organisation must operate. It is the process of decision-making and the process whereby decisions are implemented, about how to do things to contribute to the success of the organisation. In 2015 the ASC produced *Mandatory Sports Governance Principles* which was revised in 2019. These were valuable documents but lacked an element of practicality in that they tended to assume a “one size fits all” approach which did not take sufficient account of the very significant differences in the way governance operates between a large, well-resourced commercial sport, with healthy resources and plenty of professional staff, and the smaller sports with limited resources, few or no staff and heavy dependence on volunteers. In 2020 it produced a further document entitled *Sports Governance Principles* which outlines certain principles of good governance but recognises some flexibility in the way they may be applied to individual sports depending on their particular characteristics.

This is a useful, well presented resource. The discussion here does not seek to cover every aspect of those Principles but, although consistent with them, concentrates on what are considered critical to the effectiveness of a sporting organisation. There is general agreement that, to be effective, management must be participatory, consensus driven, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, lawful, and driven purely by furthering the interests of the organisation. In the case of a sporting organisation this normally means providing a valued experience for its members and supporters. It is a concept that provides the basis for an organisation’s culture, an important element in successful management that is often overlooked.

All sporting organisations are established under governmental regulation. The *Mandatory Governance Principles* required that NSOs be established as companies limited by guarantee on the grounds that the Federal Corporations Act provided a robust platform for operations and covered areas not covered or not clear in associations incorporation acts. There are, however, significant differences in the way commercial corporations operate from the way not-for-profit NSOs operate, the most obvious being that companies are composed of shareholders who trade their shares for gain. Members of a sports organisation are in a different position; they cannot trade their memberships and, although the organisation might seek to make a profit, that profit goes back into the sport, not to the members. While it may be appropriate for larger sports to be governed by the Corporations Act, there seems to be no particular reason why this should apply to all NSOs, while SSOs will normally be established under state/territory incorporation acts. It is doubtful that the method of incorporation is likely to significantly affect the critical success of an organisation and, therefore, it is not covered in the Critical Success Factors here identified.

Although it might be difficult to measure, the first Critical Success Factor in how a sporting organisation is governed relates to its culture of a commitment to excellence:

- **CSF 2.1:** The board is committed to a culture of excellence throughout the organisation and board members are educated on the practices of good

governance.

4.2.1. The board represents the sport as a whole

Governance of an NSO or an SSO starts with the board, as the group appointed or elected to direct the organisation nationally or within its particular jurisdiction. The first principle deriving from the concepts of participation and inclusiveness is that the board should be elected from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible. The second principle is that board members must be competent. In many sports this raises an immediate difficulty because the group of stakeholders is often limited to those who are enthusiasts for the sport, different from many companies where a vast number of very different investors will hold shares in order to make a profit. Many national sports are owned or controlled by their state members and elect to their boards people who have been and sometimes still are, members or office holders of those state bodies. This is probably inevitable given the way most national sporting bodies in Australia are constituted, but it is an important principle that a board member's loyalty be directed 100% to the interests of the national organisation of which he or she is a board member. Most national organisations now, correctly, require that a board member not hold any office in a state body or, indeed, in any body that might conflict with the directions of the national organisation.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 2.2:** Board members are elected by as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and owe allegiance to the national body and no other. Members of the board are not at the same time board members of affiliated associations.

4.2.2. The board is competent and includes people with special defined expertise

Competent board members are essential for success. They drive the organisation. While it is still normally the case that most board members will be enthusiasts for their sport, the over-riding qualification for board membership is that they be competent. It is also highly desirable that directors bring a range of different skills to the board. There clearly needs to be managerial expertise, but there also needs to be knowledge of accounting practices, desirably of marketing or commercial operations, legal knowledge if possible, as well as people with sound knowledge of the requirements of both high performance and community sport. There must also be provision for female members in the interests of equity and to reflect the large numbers of females participating in Australian sport. It is unlikely that any sport will have enough people interested in board membership with expertise in all these areas and some services will need to be brought in, but the principle remains that the board should represent a wide range of relevant interests. It follows that constitutions should provide for a number of appointed positions.

One problem for many organisations is how to attract people of quality, particularly given the increasing legal obligations of stewardship. Ex-athletes can be useful board members, so long as they bring other needed competencies to the board. In order to achieve high quality board members with the desirable expertise it is now a widely recognised principle that boards should contain a number of independent members and, in many cases, this is a constitutionally mandated requirement. There might even also be a requirement for some members with certain defined fields of expertise. And, in order to identify such independent board members, it is highly desirable to have some sort of nominations committee, or at least some people not directly involved in the management of the sport, to identify potential board members, including independent directors. Appointing people because they are known or liked by other

members creates a board of clones, which leads to stultification. This also points to the need for an induction process and training for new members and provision for performance evaluation of the board.

Having elected a board with broad representation within the sport that is competent, dedicated to the national interest and contains a range of skills, it is important that these skills are put to use. Some sports organisations operate on what might be described as a limited portfolio system, where members take prime responsibility for or keep an eye on specific elements of the operation. There is nothing wrong with this, provided the board as a whole is involved in collective decision-making. It is important that issues are fully considered from different perspectives and that, as far as possible, decisions are made corporately and by consensus. A good board is one where votes are rarely required.

The Critical Success Factor is

- **CSF 2.3:** The board represents a wide range of interests relevant to the national operation of the sport and includes a number of nominated independent members. Issues relating to the sport are considered by all members acting corporately before decisions are made.

4.2.3. The board takes a close interest in the affairs of the international federation

Although it may be more important in some sports than in others, it is highly desirable that leaders in the sport nationally should seek to become involved in the activities of the international federation of which the sport is an affiliate. This helps promote the interests of the sport both internationally and in Australia and helps ensure that Australian national interests are considered in the international environment.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 2.4:** Leaders in the sport nationally are encouraged to become involved in the affairs of the sport's international federation.

4.2.4. There are clear roles for office bearers and board members are rotated

In order to ensure that the board has confidence in its chair, who presides over it, it is most important that the chair be appointed by the board members. In the desirable situation where that person is also president of the organisation, the two roles are combined and there is unlikely to be a conflict of interest or of power. Where there is a president elected by the membership separate from the chair there is always a potential for conflict. In such cases, the constitution of the sport should clearly define the role of the president, given that the role of the chair is always to facilitate discussion within the board and ensure that its decisions are sensible, practical and observed. Such definition might also provide for circumstances where conflict does arise and cannot be resolved. This would normally require a special general meeting of the organisation.

It is considered best practice for board members to be elected for limited periods, normally of three or four years, but with the possibility of re-election, and that retirement and reappointment be staggered so that an element of continuity is maintained. The ASC Governance Principles recommend that board membership be limited to a maximum of ten consecutive years. This is desirable in a larger sport but often difficult in a smaller organisation where the talent pool for board membership is often thin and where it will be necessary, in order to maintain people of competence, to keep some people on the board for longer periods.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CFS 2.5:** The chair is elected by the board members directly to preside over its operations and, where the organisation has a president who is not also the chair, the roles of that position are clearly defined in the constitution.
- **CSF 2.6:** Board members are elected for defined periods and rotated over a period of years.

4.2.5. There is regular contact between board and practitioners of the sport

A further element in relation to the operations of the board is the importance of ensuring there is regular contact between the board and senior athletes and coaches. A number of sports have introduced athlete commissions or groups through which athletes can exchange information, support each other or raise issues of concern. Athletes and coaches need to understand the broader issues facing the sport while board members must have a good understanding of and empathy with the people who are ultimately their most important assets. Athlete representatives, the Head Coach or Coaching Director and other senior coaches should be invited to meet formally with the board at least once each year. Beyond this, regular communication between the national body and its state members or affiliates is important in terms of maintaining a collaborative culture and promoting a strong national direction. Consultation with the states also allows contact with the sport's broader body of participants, who are often closer to the state organisations than they are to the national body. One cannot be too prescriptive about how this should take place; the CEO and chair or president normally assumes responsibility for contact with the states.

The relevant Critical Success Factor is:

- **CFS 2.7:** The sport establishes a mechanism for regular exchanges with athletes, coaches and state representatives and, in conjunction with state representatives, with the broader participant base.

4.2.6. There is a strategic planning process setting out clear national objectives, which is reviewed regularly

There have been millions of words and thousands of books and articles written about how to manage effectively, many by people who have never done it. In essence, management boils down to a very simple process; namely, how to get things done within the resources available. It follows that the first principle of management is to know what needs to be done; in other words, to have clear goals. The second is to identify what actions are needed to reach those goals; in other words, have a plan. The third is to be clear about the resources available to give effect to the plan; in other words, have a budget. Lastly, the whole purpose of the plan is to drive action. At the end of the planning process something has to happen to progress the organisation. And, to know that actions have had the desired result, there needs to be some way in which performance can be measured; in management speak, have Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This is the essence of the strategic planning process, the most essential driver of success. A strategic approach means more efficient use of resources and clarity in decision-making.

There is also a range of external policies under which boards must operate flowing from federal or state government legislation or the policies of bodies such as the ASC. These can be onerous and are often long-winded. They must, however, be understood and observed. Which means they must be given effect by being incorporated into the sport's operating manuals and promulgated throughout the organisation.

Goals must be realistic, perhaps best described as realisable with effort. If they are too easy the performance won't improve; if too difficult they will never be achieved

and participants will lose heart. And they must be relevant to the standing of the sport. It is unrealistic in some Australian sports to expect them to win Olympic gold medals; but they might well be successful at somewhat lower levels. A win in an Asian championship, to become a finalist or achieve a top eight finish in many international competitions will be a good result for many sports. Neither should a sport be condemned if it just misses out, as long as it is reasonably close. It is important to remember that, in order to win medals, you first have to get close to winning medals.

There is a widespread view that the primary goals or objectives of an NSO are to expand its membership and achieve success at an international level. An NSO may, of course, have a number of objectives, including objectives to improve the experience for women, to increase indigenous participation, to expand the geographical scope of the sport or, more likely at a state level, to improve facilities for the sport. It may be content to simply maintain its position. The key issue here is that the goals or objectives are clear, are enunciated clearly, are accepted by the membership and form the basis for the strategic plan.

Strategic plans must take a long-term perspective, over three or four years being generally accepted as a reasonable time frame. Most Olympic sports follow the four-year Olympic cycle. Effective sports spend a lot of time developing their strategic plans, which is understandable given that the plan drives the whole operation of the sport. There is great advantage in bringing state affiliates into the strategic planning process and encouraging them to link their own strategic plan to that of the national organisation. This will provide a united voice and a better coordinated system of delivery across the whole sport while leaving each affiliate to identify and progress local initiatives.

The overall strategic plan then needs to be broken down into annual operational plans. These are the practical things one needs to do on a day to day basis in order to achieve the strategic objectives. The annual budget needs to be set against this plan. And the plans need to be regularly reviewed by the board. Assuming there might be about six board meetings annually, tracking expenditure against the budget should ideally be reviewed at each meeting. The annual operational plan should be kept under constant review and formally reviewed at the midpoint of the financial year, as should progress against the overall budget set for the period of the plan. It goes without saying that plans should be comprehensive, covering all aspects of the sport's operations, from elite to community sport, including all the elements important in those spheres. In many respects the planning process is more important than the plan, because it is through that process that the sport is brought together, issues are thrashed out and national directions agreed, most important in driving national unity.

The ASC's *Mandatory Governance Principles* required a single national entity for all forms of the sport, from junior through to high performance and covering all disciplines. Currently, most sports in Australia are associations of their separate state and territory bodies with the national organisation affiliated with the relevant international federation. Even some of the big commercial sports are owned by their state members or state-based clubs. There have been moves to formalise what is often described as a unitary model where the sport consists of one single national body. Most state organisations, however, have so far been unwilling to give up their established ownership models and there seems to be no clear evidence that a unitary model alone is likely to influence success at the national level. What is essential, however, is that NSOs and their member bodies have clear national objectives through a single strategic planning process covering both elite and community sport and mechanisms to ensure that operational activities are integrated to achieve those objectives. This does not mean that each state must do things the way the national body dictates; there are realities that vary between jurisdictions and areas. But it does mean one driving national approach. The plans of state and territory bodies should be consistent with the

national direction, giving effect to the national approach but, if necessary, considering any special circumstances prevailing within the respective jurisdiction.

The following Critical Success Factors cover these issues:

- **CSF 2.8:** There is a comprehensive strategic planning process culminating in a nationally aligned strategic plan covering a three- or four-year period which identifies clear objectives across the whole sport and planned actions to achieve those objectives
- **CSF 2.9:** There is an annual operational plan which outlines the specific activities planned for the year toward achievement of the goals in the strategic plan, and the annual budget is set against this plan.
- **CSF 2.10:** Expenditure and revenue statements are examined by the board at least six times annually, operational plans are examined by the board at the beginning and midpoint of the financial year and performance against the strategic plan is examined by the board annually. Reviews of the strategic plan involve input from senior athletes and coaches.

4.2.7. Clear national policies are maintained and reviewed regularly

Clearly, it is important that the board maintains clear policies on operational issues and should endorse and keep under review policies on issues such as selection, athlete behaviour, operation of the high performance plan, prohibited substances, match-fixing, use of sports science, member protection, etc. A number of these policies are required by government. As important as it is that they are understood at board level, it is vital that they be promulgated widely through the sport and implemented through inclusion in daily practice, for instance through coaching courses and accreditations. Good governance requires that constitutions, regulations and policies of a national body should be regularly and expertly reviewed to ensure they are kept up to date, are consistent with one another and have a continuing relevance to the operations of the sport. Most importantly, they must be coherent and written in easily understandable language.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 2.11:** The board maintains and promulgates amongst its participants a set of policies on operational issues consistent with laws and regulations relevant to the sport and which are easy to access and understand.
- **CSE 2.12:** The board ensures that constitutions, regulations and policies relevant to the sport are regularly and expertly reviewed to ensure consistency and relevance.

4.2.8. There is widespread communication on strategic objectives, performance and policies.

At the same time, in any national organisation, particularly in a country like Australia, managerial cooperation between all parties across the sport is vital in order to ensure that operational activities at all levels are closely integrated with and aligned to the national strategic plan. There is also a need to keep all members up to date with the policies, including government policies, affecting the sport, as well as matters relating to issues such as selection, competition, coaching and coach development or other matters of general interest. Communication enhances cooperation and continuity.

The relevant Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 2.13:** The board and CEO of the NSO engage in regular contact with their counterparts in the SSOs to ensure full and timely exchanges of information relevant to operational issues and the national strategic plan.

4.2.9. Information relevant to the organisation is maintained

Given the breadth of issues for which a sporting organisation is now responsible, there is a real need for each NSO today to have an effective data-base to facilitate the collection of information relevant to the sport's operations. No sport can operate effectively without up-to-date information on its stakeholders, including those who contribute to its finances, its athletes (covering their geographical location, competition levels and support needs), coaches, support personnel and facilities, as well as the decisions and policies made by the board. All this essential information must be readily available to the CEO and board if planning is to be effective while a good data-base is essential to facilitate sound budgeting and financial accountability. It is, of course, vital that the information in the data base is full and accurate, which will require all those in the sport to buy into the process.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 2.14:** The sport maintains a centralised data-base which maintains up-to-date relevant information as an essential aid to management.

4.2.10. There is a definition of roles within the organisation

The normal corporate process is that the board appoints the CEO, who runs the organisation under its broad direction, makes operational decisions and appoints subsidiary staff and this should in theory be the normal process in most sporting organisations, certainly the larger ones. Certain senior appointments, including that of Head Coach or Coaching Director, might be made by the board or be signed off by it. Most sports, however, involve a relatively close group of people passionate about the sport and the relationships between board members and the CEO may be closer than would be the case in business. The old Mandatory Principles held that the board was the "mind" of the organisation and the CEO and staff were the "hands" and that there should be a clear separation between them. While there must be a clear distinction between the roles of the board and the CEO, this was unnecessarily restrictive and ignored the great value of a close interactive relationship between them. The essential principle is that the ultimate decision-making responsibility lies with the board while the CEO has a responsibility to service the board effectively through preparation of board papers, ensuring accurate minutes are taken and distributed and maintaining the flow of information into and out of the board.

Some board members have particular personal interests and tend to concentrate on or see the sport through those interests. This can lead to a lack of balance. The CEO will often have a better idea of what is going on broadly in the sport than some board members and has a responsibility to ensure there is a sufficient flow of information to the board on broad developments in or affecting the sport. Many mediocre boards have benefitted greatly from competent CEOs. Likewise, it is important that board members do not interfere with the CEO's management responsibility or seek independently to influence the CEO outside of the formal board process. This leads to chaos. Delegations from the board to the CEO and staff must be clear and unequivocal and reviewed annually. The performance of the CEO should be reviewed by the board (hopefully in a positive fashion) annually but otherwise they should be allowed to get on with their job without undue interference.

It is a principle that all sports, even small ones, have a CEO or designated management officer, even if, in some cases, it is only on a part time basis. In many smaller sports, however, there is more work than a CEO/manager or limited staff can manage. It is against the principles of good corporate management, but it is inevitable that some executive work will be performed by volunteers or by board members. This is frequently the case when there are policies to be prepared in an area where a board member may have particular expertise. Where this is unavoidable, it is advisable that

all volunteers, at least, come under the direction of the CEO while it is a useful discipline and helps to avoid confusion if, when undertaking such a task, the board member involved works with and through the CEO.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 2.15:** There is a distinction between the roles and responsibilities of board and management, with the board responsible for setting policy and providing leadership and the administration responsible for advising the board, giving effect to policy and managing the sport on a day to day basis.
- **CSF 2.16:** The board appoints the CEO who is responsible for subsidiary appointments although, in the case of senior coaches or high performance managers, board approval is required. Where board members or volunteers undertake management tasks they do so in close collaboration with the CEO.

4.2.11. The importance of the CEO is recognised

Clearly, the CEO plays a major role in the fortunes of the sport and having the right person in that role can prove to be critical to the success of the organisation, bearing in mind that it may be desirable to weight the qualities desirable in the CEO depending on what the sport might need at any particular time. Nevertheless, the appointment of the CEO is probably the most important decision a board will make. The role needs to be clearly defined and expressed in the role description, and it is important also to pay attention to the qualities required in a CEO. These might briefly be described as, obviously, intelligence, having advanced interpersonal skills, ability to develop stakeholder relationships, excellent managerial skills including knowledge of financial operations and strategic planning, and desirably IT skills. The CEO must, of course, be a person with energy and sensitivity. It is desirable, but not necessary, that a CEO possess a prior knowledge of the sport and its culture. The board is ultimately responsible for the appointment of the CEO, but the process of selection should be undertaken through an independent panel including persons from both within and outside the sport, making a recommendation to the board. Needless to say, there must be a succession plan for the CEO, even if relatively informal.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 2.17:** In selecting a CEO the board takes account of a range of identified qualities set out in the selection documentation and applicants are recommended by a panel including persons both from within and outside the sport. A succession plan for the CEO is in place.

4.3. PILLAR 3. Program operations: Elite, pre-elite and participation

As outlined above, an NSO may have a number of objectives. At a national level, however, there seems to be general agreement that the two primary responsibilities for an NSO are, first, to provide an environment in which the sport can grow in a planned way at the general participation level, so providing a valued experience for its participants and a pathway through which athletes with talent can be identified and progressed and, secondly, to prepare a national team or teams that will be successful in international competition relevant to its world standing. For an SSO it will, similarly, be to grow the sport within the state or territory and to promote talented athletes to achieve the best state/territory representatives feeding into national squads. Having got funding and governance in order, these primary program activities are what drives an NSO or SSO and on which their effectiveness ultimately depends. It may be, of course, that participation levels in a sport are declining. In order to arrest such a

situation, it is vital that the organisation conducts a thorough study to determine causes that can shape efforts at recovery.

4.3.1. There is a plan to maximise the international performance of the sport (elite program)

The high performance or elite program is that intended to develop the national squad or team to the highest standard possible. The level of ultimate achievement will depend largely on the international standing of the national team. Some sports are at the highest level of international performance. They will inevitably receive more support from the NGB. Others are unlikely to win medals at Olympic or world championship level, but may well realistically aspire to success at a somewhat lower level, such as regional championships or Commonwealth Games and such results should be celebrated. The objective for any Australian sport at the elite level is to improve or at least maintain its international standing, which it will do through the development and operation of its high performance program.

The first requirement in terms of aspiring to international success is to have a high performance plan agreed and owned by the whole organisation, the aim of which is to develop strategies and oversee actions towards achieving the high performance goals outlined in the organisation's strategic plan. The high performance plan is a more detailed elaboration of the high performance goals outlined in the strategic plan, in essence an operational plan which outlines the detailed steps to be taken to give effect to those goals. These might be to win Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth Games or other international medals, or simply to improve its ranking over a defined period. It is wise that these goals be established in a band, rather than be identified too specifically; if a goal is so specific, say, as to aim to come second in a major event but the result is a third placing, the sport will be said to have failed in its goal, although a third placing might be a meritorious outcome. The high performance plan should broadly cover the same period as the strategic plan, detailing the steps along the way or containing a number of identified subsidiary outcomes. It is aligned with the annual operational plans and must also be reviewed annually to ensure it is kept up to date and modified as circumstances might dictate.

Although the approach may vary from sport to sport, it is important, also, for the high performance program to have a clear linkage to other elements of the sport, particularly pre-elite and pathway programs, in order to ensure appropriate concentration on those pre-elite athletes who will be the sport's elite athletes in future, but also to facilitate their most efficient transition into the elite ranks.

The first Critical Success Factor in this pillar therefore is:

- **CSF 3.1:** The sport has a high performance plan, derived from the strategic plan and accepted nationally, to guide progress towards international success, which is reviewed annually. Development pathways are linked to the high performance plan.

Given the complexity of high performance planning, and the fact that not all board members will be fully aware of the requirements, many sports have established smaller high performance committees with the necessary expertise to oversee the plan. These normally bring together some board members with a particular interest or experience in high performance activity, possibly some outsiders with expertise, and those key personnel involved such as the senior coach and high performance manager and who can call in other experts as required. The terms of reference for this committee, including a definition of the athletes it covers, need to be spelled out. Obviously, such committees then need to report to the full board on a regular basis.

A second Critical Success Factor therefore is:

- **CFS 3.2:** A high performance committee oversees day to day progress in the implementation of the high performance plan and reports to the full board on a regular basis.

4.3.2. There is a clear definition of high performance roles and responsibilities

In order to ensure clarity and prevent misunderstandings and jurisdictional disputes, it is vital that everyone contributing to the high performance plan knows their role and what is expected of them. The arrangements will differ from sport to sport, but it is crucial that the plan should outline clearly the roles of each of the contributors to it and the process through which the sport plans for success. These will be identified in a number of following critical success factors. In terms of international success, there needs to be a person designated as head of the high performance team, including athletes and support personnel. The designation and role of this person varies considerably from sport to sport. In most of the smaller sports the position is designated Head Coach and the role includes coaching the national team and providing leadership to assistant coaches or even, sometimes, overseeing coach education. More frequently, today, especially in larger or individual (as opposed to team) sports, the role does not require direct coaching but, more usually, oversight of independent coaches working directly with individual athletes or teams. In this paper the term Coaching Director will be used for convenience. This individual is the most important member of the sport's high performance team, hired to achieve the objectives laid down for it. Whatever the designation, the role must be clearly defined, as must the roles of other members of the coaching staff, operational managers and others who are essential components in the process, including support staff such as those sports scientists in the disciplines vital for the sport. It is wise to spend some time on this. Experience shows that sports that build up a cadre of experts who work closely together are more likely to be successful. It needs to be clear where and how sports science services are to be accessed. Even if commercial, they must be of the highest quality and the service must be constant so that scientists develop personal relationships with their athletes; it is not good practice to chop and change in the hope of finding cheaper services. But the Coaching Director is ultimately responsible, reporting to the high performance committee.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 3.3:** The high performance plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of each major contributor to the enterprise, including Coaching Director, subsidiary coaches, high performance operations managers as well as principal support staff. Support staff are of the highest quality possible.
- **CSF 3.4:** The Coaching Director is responsible for implementing the plan, reporting to the high performance committee.

4.3.3. Coaching directors are allowed to concentrate on high performance activities

Far too often, coaches are subjected to frequently well-meaning but often misguided direction from board members or other enthusiasts for the sport. So, it is important that their roles be clarified and they are then allowed to get on and do their job, undistracted from too much administrative load or interference. The high performance committee should review the performance of the Coaching Director annually and, with that person, the performance of subsidiary coaches and report to the full board on the progress of the high performance plan. Although it is difficult in smaller sports, there is great advantage in appointing also a high performance operations manager

responsible for providing administrative support to the Coaching Director, so allowing them to concentrate on their primary task of preparing athletes. Obviously, there needs also to be back-up arrangements for the Coaching Director identified to cover unexpected developments; it is very disrupting if that essential person is for any reason unexpectedly unavailable and there is no succession plan in place. The plan to replace a Coaching Director should commence well in advance of the incumbent's departure date.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 3.5:** The Coaching Director is given responsibility and accountability to deliver the high performance objectives, not interfered with in pursuit of those objectives, is supported by the high performance manager and reports regularly to the high performance committee.
- **CSF 3.6:** Alternative arrangements are in place should the Coaching Director become unavailable and, as appropriate, succession plans to replace the Coaching Director at the end of the contract.

4.3.4. There are Centres of Excellence which support the high performance endeavours

Because of the technical complexity of sport at the highest level, which is constantly evolving, and in order to create a strong high performance culture, it is of great importance for sports which aspire to international success to develop centres of excellence which bring together the best athletes, the best coaches and the best scientific personnel all working closely together towards the same end and coordinated with athlete welfare. Depending on the sport, these centres of excellence might be composed of elite athletes constituting national senior squads, pre-elite athletes, who might constitute national junior squads, or a mixture of both. Some might be full-time programs while others might be camps-based. This was the model successfully implemented by the AIS for many years. While the AIS Canberra campus remains a suitable location for these centres, they can obviously be located at other sites, including state/territory institutes or academies of sport. The important factor is that they have the physical capacity to provide accommodation and all the services required through the one centre.

Obviously, they need a connection with the relevant NSO but they need to be managed professionally at arm's length, with their budgets protected and dedicated to the national high performance program in order to ensure they are not compromised by pressures not related to their ultimate purpose. This can be achieved through an agreement between the sport and the management of the relevant centre, under the auspices of the ASC. Such agreements will normally be overseen by the high performance committee, which will provide the link between the NSO and the centre of excellence.

Such a structure may not be appropriate for all small sports or for the larger commercial sports, although most of the latter run similar operations according to their individual requirements. Camps-based arrangements might serve some sports better than full-time programs. There are also significant benefits from combining similar small sports into the one centre, such has been the case with the Winter Sports Institute and the Combat Sports Institute. These can become the expert centres for a range of sports with common features that would find difficulty operating independently.

In a number of sports, such as Cycling, Football, Basketball and Volleyball, many of Australia's leading athletes are members of clubs or teams operating in competition overseas and which have no or only tenuous connection with the Australian NSO. Such sports will benefit greatly from operating pre-elite programs through centres of excellence in Australia. In these sports, an important issue for the Australian NSO is

to maintain contact with Australian athletes based overseas with the aim of securing their availability for selection in Australia teams for major international competitions and secure them for training before such competitions.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 3.7:** The sport has established access to independently managed and funded centres of excellence which provide a comprehensive program of services to athletes in national squads, governed by agreements between the sport and the centre.
- **CSF 3.8:** In cases where athletes are training and competing with clubs or organisations overseas not affiliated to the NSO, contact is maintained and agreements are in place to ensure they are eligible for selection in Australian teams when required.

4.3.5. There is recognition that athletes are the most valuable assets of the sport

Ultimately, the most valuable assets of any sport are the athletes. They are those for whom the sport exists and the ones on whom success ultimately depends. There are a number of critical success factors relevant directly to athletes, including welfare, which will be examined later. Here, we will consider those covered by the high performance plan.

It is absolutely critical that athletes know where they stand in relation to issues such as selection policies, training regimes, competition programs, international travel, and have ready access to information critical to their roles. Each sport needs a selection policy which will inform athletes on the criteria to be used in selection for teams and particularly national squads and national teams. This is covered in the discussion relating to CSF 2.11. They also need to know where and when they will train, either with state or local club establishments or with the national squad. This will vary considerably from sport to sport and from time to time. Some training will take place in a home environment. In such a case, athletes will need to know how to access services when training in that environment. They must know when they are expected to come together as a national squad and where such training will take place and what the accommodation and transport arrangements are. In the past this was usually to be the AIS but the circumstances now are more fluid. Wherever it is, the sport must ensure that bookings are made well in advance. There is great value in using the same venue over time so athletes can settle in as readily as possible and feel at home in a familiar environment, another advantage of an established centre. As mentioned, there is great value in having training facilities at least for national squads with ready access to sports science services. Likewise, athletes must know what their program is for the year, season or cycle for the sport, including when they are likely to be travelling overseas.

Of major importance is the international competition schedule. This is discussed in more detail under Pillar 8. The important point here is that everyone involved in the high performance plan must be clearly aware of the competition schedule. It drives the timing of the whole plan. After each major camp or competition there should be a report prepared by the Coaching Director. These should, as far as possible, be constructive and, while outlining any difficulties encountered, should concentrate on making proposals for improvement.

Relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 3.9:** The program of high performance activities is promulgated through the sport and includes details of selection policies, training programs (including centralised national squad training) and international competition schedules.

- **CSF 3.10:** After each major event a report is prepared and sent to the full board through the high performance committee.

4.3.6. The importance of emerging elite athletes is recognised (pre-elite programs)

Before going on to consider a sport's participation or development activities, it is worth taking a look at its pre-elite programs, those that take the best developing athletes and prepare them for full national participation. Experience in Australia demonstrates that athletes who are well prepared at pre-elite level for the rigors of international competition, who have the right skills, mental toughness and understanding of what it means to be an elite athlete, are more likely to be successful in the full international arena. Again, this was a particular benefit of the AIS where the best developing athletes received expert coaching, training regimes, dietary and scientific support in a controlled and protective environment.

Whatever form the sport decides to follow, it must be recognised that success does not start at the top but at the bottom. Pathways from development, through pre-elite to elite must be integrated, clearly defined and promulgated amongst young athletes identified for potential senior national selection, who must know what each step on the way entails. When those who are successful reach the pre-elite level they need to be specifically prepared to enter into the senior international ranks of their sport, to get to know what is involved in being an elite athlete and to have the skills to deal with that environment. They must learn mental toughness, motivation, good diet, injury prevention and recovery, and how to care for themselves. They must have access to the very best coaching available. This will not always be with the national Coaching Director or Head Coach. Coaches need to be selected for their particular skills; some can make their best contribution at development levels, which does not, or should not, in any way diminish their overall contribution to their sport. Pre-elite athletes must be given opportunities to work with and learn from athletes in the national squads. Above all, these pre-elite programs bring younger players into the culture of the sport and convince them that they are a special group. When they finally achieve senior national selection, they will already know all the senior players in their sport and will have worked closely with many of them, so enhancing the team environment. Although the requirements will vary from sport to sport, there is, again, enormous benefit in having these pre-elite squads established in an elite live-in environment where concerns about accommodation, meals and access to services are minimised.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 3.11:** There is a specific pre-elite program to prepare athletes with potential to transfer readily into senior national squads. These programs involve intensive training in a supportive environment and familiarise young athletes with the requirements of senior international representation.

4.3.7. Community participation grows and talented athletes are encouraged to move to higher levels of competition

While it is true that not every champion has started their athletic career as a child, the fact is that most sporting organisations encourage participation in children, who provide the base from where most future champions emerge. The adherents of all sports, being enthusiasts, want their sport to grow so that children can achieve fulfilling recreational activities which allow them to express themselves through human movement, improve their health, foster their social development with people of similar interests, and identify those who may go on to represent and be successful in that sport nationally and internationally.

To this end, a vibrant community sports network is vital to the success of sport in the nation. The first requirement is usually taken to be to have a growing number of participants in the sport. This is difficult in today's environment. Although the bases on which they make their calculations vary considerably, surveys of community sports participation indicate that around 40% of the population are not interested in participating in organised sport, and even these figures define sport very widely, so that, in some surveys, a person who goes to the beach occasionally is included in those recorded as participating in swimming; although they are certainly not members of any swimming organisation. There is evidence in recent years that the growth in popularity of women participating in the football codes is attracting women away from other female sports such as Netball. While it would be attractive to list as a critical success factor that the numbers of participants in a sport were increasing, the most that some can realistically aim for is to at least maintain their levels of participation over time.

Even in order to achieve this, sports must promote themselves and look for ways to make it as easy and attractive for participants to join them. The best way to do this is by having well established and effective local club networks which offer a range of competitions providing attractive opportunities for people of all ages. Some have attracted new participants through embracing "pay as you go" providers, although it is highly desirable to maintain links with local sports clubs. The experience of the successful Aussie Sport program which ran through the later 1980s and 90s demonstrates the importance of having successful junior programs which encourage participation and teach skills through having fun; being pushed into competition at too early an age has put many kids off organised sport. The importance of delivering programs through the school system cannot be over-emphasised. Again, this is not easy in today's environment but, even if the sport is not offered directly through the school, ways to link to the local school network, through presentations to schools or through developing clubs that might be linked to schools, is possible.

An important factor in this regard is for national sporting associations to work closely with their state and territory affiliates. A national approach is desirable so the sport is developing one strong national identity and nationally driven programs can be successful at local level, as AFL Auskick has shown. But, at the community level there are often significant differences in communities and therefore in the way programs can best be presented. The national body must recognise the need for different approaches in certain circumstances in order to achieve the same broadly agreed national outcomes. The developmental aspect of sport is a very important role for state and territory organisations. They are closest to the action and must work collaboratively with their state and territory governments and in accordance with the requirements of their local jurisdictions. The NSO should have details of all registered athletes and where they are located on its data-base, in order to help identify those with particular needs and allow research to build cases for support.

The relevant Critical Success Factors here are:

- **CFS 3.12:** There is a national approach to the delivery of community support in conjunction with state and territory affiliates, with delegated delivery to those associations to take account of their different requirements.
- **CSF 3.13:** Levels of community participation are at least maintained. Local clubs and organisations operating through state and territory affiliates offer opportunities for participation through a range of competitions for each age and level of competency and national membership details are maintained.
- **CSF 3.14:** There are well-developed introductory programs for younger children with an emphasis on skill learning and fun activities and promotion

through or in association with the school system according to local requirements.

4.3.8. Volunteers are valued and developed

In order to be successful in the pursuit of these factors, obviously the sport must have a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Most community sport takes place through local clubs run by volunteers. The more effective the club, the more effective the sport as a whole will be. Most sports organisations, even the larger professional bodies, rely on volunteers to undertake a range of essential functions. Volunteering, however, is becoming more complex because of the many regulatory or legal requirements that must be observed. It is a great advantage if volunteers understand the principles of management and receive some basic training in club management and how to run community sports activities. Successful organisations concentrate on providing material or instruction to their clubs on how to work with volunteers productively, even through such simple ideas as providing workshops to improve their competency and ensuring they are aware of their responsibilities in working with children and can obtain the appropriate clearances.

As in all aspects of sport, competent coaches and officials (referees, umpires etc.) are probably the most important element in success. At the junior level, many coaches and officials are parents who give up their time to support their own or other local children. This is inevitable and it encourages community participation. But, coaching or officiating is a specialised activity and the quality of the coach and official at community level can have a huge impact in terms of developing skills and setting talented children on the pathway to success at the senior level. Successful sports will ensure that they have basic training programs for volunteer community coaches and officials and encourage people to undertake them. It is then vital that all these volunteers are valued and receive recognition for their contributions. This is not particularly difficult or expensive as most volunteers are happy with quite basic recognition, and successful sports will undertake special occasions to celebrate their volunteers. That said, the best value a volunteer can get for their efforts is the satisfaction in knowing they are involved in a caring and competent organisation.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 3.15:** Opportunities are provided for volunteer coaches and officials to undertake training courses designed for community level sport.
- **CSF 3.16:** The value of the contribution of all volunteers is demonstrated and basic training to improve their competencies is provided.

4.4. Pillar. 4. Talent identification and development: There is a national system for identifying and developing young talent

A crucial element in sporting success is the identification and development of young talent. This is the vital link between junior sport at the community level, through pre-elite and, eventually, to the highest elite levels. It is at the community level that most talented young athletes first develop or emerge and are then identified. The SPLISS process put considerable weight on this aspect of sport, stressing the benefits of a national approach driven by the NGB. A good national talent identification system from which individual sports can access quality advice is most beneficial. The SPLISS process also put great weight on scientific approaches to talent ID. Australia has been particularly successful in developing scientific tests through which individuals with no particular experience in a particular sport can be identified. This has been the case with rowing, cycling and weight-lifting, although it has also applied to a lesser extent in gymnastics and basketball or volleyball. It seems, however, to apply more readily

to those sports where special physical characteristics, such as weight, height, or aerobic capacity are critical and where such features can be measured and projected. It has applied less in team sports which might require a more nuanced set of physical and mental acuties.

Scientific approaches, however, cannot be relied upon to identify all talent. Different sports have developed different ways of identifying talent. Regardless of the benefits of a scientific approach, at the community and junior level it is vital for the sport to have in place a graduated competitive system through which more talented athletes can emerge with well-developed skills and pass on through the pathway to success at the senior level. Some have established talent spotting systems through which talented youngsters are identified and directed into special development streams. Others identify talent from progress through stratified teams and groups as talented athletes move into higher levels of competition. Some identify talent outside of their normal sports systems, such as Sprint Canoe, which recruits from surf paddling, or Diving which has recruited successfully from Gymnastics. Some sports are more popular with or possibly more suited to particular ethnic groups, some to particular types of physique. As no system is likely to discover all available talent it is not wise to put all the eggs in one basket. Young athletes, like all young people, develop at different rates and ages. Whatever systems are put in place they should ideally be flexible to pick up those who may be late developers or, for many reasons, have missed out on the more established identification methods.

In order to be successful on the national and international stage, however, it is clearly important that a sporting organisation needs to take talent identification seriously. Whatever road it takes, to be successful it must ensure a comprehensive and nationally consistent system for talent ID and pathways through which recognised talent is set on the road towards the sport's pre-elite program as the final step to elite competition. The system will vary from sport to sport and needs to be structured to take account of local or community differences. Where there are well developed scientific programs available through the NGB, sports organisations should take the initiative in seeking support. It must nevertheless be accepted that talent identification and development is a long-term process, a factor which needs to be recognised in any systematic approach.

The first relevant Critical Success Factor therefore is:

- **CSF 4.1:** There is a nationally consistent, well understood and diversified long term approach for identifying talented young athletes appropriate to the sport.

4.4.1. There is a nationally consistent method for developing talent

Once talent is identified, it must be fostered. To get the best out of them, talented young athletes must be put into training programs appropriate for their particular level of development. There is no point identifying talent and then doing nothing with it. Young talent must be supervised and mentored as they move through the development process. It can be beneficial if the talent identification system is supported by scientific research, including into the socio-psychological development of children and the development of a staged, individual and balanced approach to development. This will be difficult for most sports but there are now some key principles that have developed from research which is readily available. In any case, most sports need a stratified competition structure which will provide opportunities for those who wish to engage in the sport for social or recreational purposes as well as for those talented athletes who are identified and who aspire to higher levels and, eventually, the highest level. Most sports are structured in this way. What is important for emerging

talent, however, is that developing athletes are closely mentored to ensure that they getting the right level of competition for their differing needs as they develop. This process should be outlined in the talent ID system. The delivery will occur at local level but there are great advantages in it being nationally consistent, in which case all involved must understand their roles and responsibilities. State and regional associations of the sport should have designated development officers overseeing this process and eventually reporting to the national body.

As pointed out in the discussion of Pillar 3, all NSOs should have data-bases. One use of these should be to maintain a register of talented young athletes so their progress can be measured and relevant research can be undertaken so the system can be continually improved. Some sports have found great value in running regular specific development camps for identified talent or sending coaches around to particular areas to deliver development programs. Many of the larger sports have specific development officers to carry out this function. It is harder for a small sport but the principle applies nevertheless.

There have been, in Australian sport, great benefits in identifying talent outside the particular sport concerned and attracting athletes so identified to move from a sport where their talents may not take them to the top to one in which they may be more suited. Sprint Canoe fits into this category. Great care is needed. Attempts to attract players from the Victorian or other State football leagues to other sports were not successful, because, although not as highly paid as players in the AFL, they preferred what was still a high level of remuneration compared to that available to sports vying for their attention and without having to get up early on a winters morning to head out to the water or busting themselves on a cycling track. But some sports have been successful in running come and try days, using their high-profile athletes to attract participants or in advertising for people prepared to be scientifically tested for their innate abilities. This approach is more likely to be effective with younger athletes who are not yet set in their ways and is particularly suited to the school situation or groups associated with particular schools of groups of young people.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 4.2:** The national talent identification system outlines routes of progression or pathways through which young talent is developed and mentored, with responsibilities assigned to particular entities within the sport's national system.
- **CSF 4.3:** The talent identification system is communicated widely through the sport, particularly to state associations, local bodies and clubs.
- **CSF 4.4:** The system takes account of scientific evidence relating to physical and mental development and a register of talented young athletes is maintained through which progress is monitored and which is reviewed regularly.
- **CSF 4.5:** The sport's talent ID system provides for the identification of athletes from outside the sport's traditional participant base, through schools or from other sports, based on a scientific testing basis or through observation.

4.4.2. Talent, when identified, is provided with quality coaching and individual support

Whatever talent is identified, in order for it to be successfully developed, appropriate coaching is essential. This will be covered more fully under Pillar 7. What is important here is the recognition of quality coaching at the developmental level. Some coaches have particular skills at coaching at community level, some with developing athletes and some with the elite. Some elite coaches are not particularly successful at the developmental level. But, if a sport is to make the best of its talent identification and

development process it must recognise the need for quality coaching for young developing athletes and make provision to ensure it has qualified coaches at this level. This is another area where the national body needs to work closely with its state associations.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 4.6:** Quality coaches are provided appropriate to the level of developing athletes.

4.4.3. Support is provided for talented developing athletes

Young emerging athletes face many vicissitudes and distractions. For the younger ones, combining their sports commitments and study or, for some, being able to travel to training and competition is a problem which can sometimes overwhelm them. This will be considered in more detail in the next Pillar. It is sufficient here to recognise this as a particular problem for younger athletes where fitting in with school requirements is the most important factor. In developing policies for talent identification and development, sporting organisations, through their development officers, state associations or local clubs need to support the special needs of young emerging athletes. This will, again, be more difficult for the smaller than the larger sports. Much will have to be done on an ad hoc basis depending on the circumstances of individuals and much will inevitably be done informally. But even support by volunteers in getting young athletes to training or talking with their parents and schools on their special needs can be valuable.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 4.7:** In developing systems for talent identification and development, the support needs of younger athletes are considered and implemented in cooperation with affiliated bodies.

4.5. Pillar 5. Athlete welfare and support

Although there has long been a recognition of the need to support athletes and promote their welfare, there has been in recent years more emphasis on this important aspect of a sporting organisation's responsibilities. At the same time, the earlier emphasis on support in the areas of education and training has been widened to take account of the broader welfare of athletes. An NSO now needs a concentration on the physical and emotional wellbeing of athletes, including their educational and career needs, as they develop, move through the pathways, as a member of an elite group and then, importantly, as they transition out of the sport.

4.5.1. A nationally consistent program of support for athletes appropriate to their personal circumstances is in place

It has previously been recognised that athletes are a sporting organisations most valuable asset and that formal arrangements are needed to maintain contact with and nurture them. They are the primary reason sporting organisations exist. As is also recognised, almost all champion athletes start young and, to be successful, those with talent must be dedicated to their sports experience and need to spend long periods of time perfecting their skills and developing their capabilities. But an athletic career usually is not long lasting. This puts more pressure on many athletes, especially those not in professional sports, who not only have to support themselves through their sporting careers while earning very little or nothing, but must also prepare themselves for careers when their elite sporting days are over. The pressures facing many

talented young athletes is a major reason for them dropping out before they reach their full potential.

There is currently a national system of direct athlete support providing financial assistance to athletes designated at particular levels relating to their world or national rankings, or membership of national teams. This provides some help in meeting living costs and possibly some compensation for limited opportunities with education or employment. But it is not specifically related to those factors and it is limited to those athletes at the top of the spectrum. There is a need for wider support to enable athletes and, particularly, developing athletes to meet the challenges they face in pursuing their sporting aspirations.

Clearly, neither an NSO or an SSO can look after all athletes in their sport. There must be a graduated approach. At club level, the requirement is for club officials to ensure a safe environment for their members, that a duty of care is recognised, coaching is appropriate, young athletes are cared for and protected, and all associated with the club exhibit consideration to all others. State associations will concentrate on talented developing athletes or those aspiring to or selected in state teams, both junior and senior. The national body would be expected to take responsibility for the care and welfare of athletes in national semi-elite or elite squads.

At the sub-elite and elite level, the primary responsibility of an NSO, the main pressure faced by most athletes is in attaining a satisfactory educational standard or career training while having to devote much time to their sports activities, or with fitting in their sports commitments with their work commitments. Education and training are important for their future careers, but it is very difficult for most young athletes to balance their future career interests with their immediate sporting priorities. For younger athletes this usually relates to combining their athletic endeavours with school or university studies, while many experience pressures relating to family life, distance from training and competition venues, or from cultural issues. Many athletes do not reach their best until into their middle or late twenties and sometimes beyond. For these older athletes, problems can relate to university study or professional training, career pressures or other developments in their private lives.

The ASC had for many years an athlete career and education program (ACE) which provided advice to athletes regarding their educational or employment needs, while AIS scholarships provided education for school-age athletes. There is some centralised attempt to provide counselling to assist educational and professional development but, again, mostly at the top end. Responsibility for athlete welfare now necessarily falls largely to the sport and, at the higher levels, particularly to the NSO.

It is normally very difficult for an NSO to provide support to athletes beyond their athletic careers, which may end in natural retirement or prematurely through injury or other personal circumstance. The smaller sports cannot be expected to provide financial support but, in the absence of any other body with responsibility in this area, all NSOs can assist in preparing athletes for their post athletic lives by providing counselling and support in areas such as education, training and employment during their athletic careers and at least basic counselling for those transitioning out of sport.

In order to provide consistency in the support provided, there needs, again, to be a national approach across the sport with the levels of support from and the responsibilities of the various partners involved in the system made clear. As different athletes have different needs at different times of their lives, the system will of necessity be based on criteria which provide for these differences based on their individual requirements and ages and levels of ability, and taking account of any other sources of support that might be provided by other parties. Advice is available from the ASC, but most NSOs should at least be able to devise a framework for providing basic assistance to their developing and elite athletes in cooperation with their state/territory associations and provide for the tracking of recipients through their data-base.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CFS 5.1:** There is a national program providing general welfare, education and career support to at least pre-elite and elite athletes according to their individual needs, with details recorded on appropriate data-bases.
- **CFS 5.2:** That system makes clear the levels of support available from and the responsibilities of the various partners involved.

4.5.2. Support to designated athletes is monitored

All athletes on the elite pathway, as well as those in elite or sub-elite squads, need to be monitored to ensure they are not being exploited, are being educated positively about the difficulties and temptations facing them and are assisted towards achieving pleasurable and rewarding experiences through their sports careers. Because needs vary so greatly from athlete to athlete, it is desirable that each be treated individually. This will require a close and continuing relationship with each designated athlete. In order to maintain an effective control and ensure all eligible athletes are covered, there is advantage in meeting with each athlete on a regular basis.

In order to ensure that the system operates effectively, there needs also to be a person or persons within an NSO and an SSO designated to take responsibility for athlete welfare. In professional sports athletes normally receive some levels of support apart from their player's remuneration through their clubs. In the larger sports at national level this role is increasingly being undertaken by designated athlete welfare managers. In the smaller NSOs it might be useful to nominate a board member to help in this process, which should be aimed, first, at assuring them their concerns are listened to, showing interest and providing appropriate advice, or help in securing advice. Even relatively brief contact will have positive outcomes from demonstrating that the sport cares, while quite simple support such as contacting education authorities or workplaces or just in organising transport to and from training can be of major benefit.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 5.3:** A designated person has responsibility to ensure athlete welfare and support is appropriate to each athlete and monitors them regularly.

4.6. Pillar 6. Training facilities: Athletes have access to quality training facilities

Adequate training facilities at the local level are an important element for sporting success. At the elite level training facilities must be of high quality commensurate with the level of athletes using them. Although the big professional sports will have sufficient power to be able to lobby effectively for quality facilities, this is an area in which most national and state sporting organisations have limited influence. It is, nevertheless, important for NSOs to monitor the state of facilities provided for their sport and to encourage their SSOs to keep a register of local facilities, identify areas where facilities are lacking or in need of repair or identify newly developed areas where facilities are needed. NSOs can assist SSOs in making application to appropriate authorities for new or upgraded facilities. Training facilities should obviously be planned according to population densities, to be near population centres and so avoid athletes having to travel long distances. Special consideration is necessary for country areas. The appropriateness of the facility needs to be borne in mind. There is sometimes a tendency to push for more elaborate facilities than are always necessary and, often, modest facilities will meet most needs. Modern data systems can facilitate the planning and bidding process. An NSO should desirably have a picture of the facilities available to the sport across the nation and work with state and regional bodies to lobby local authorities for improvement.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 6.1:** The sport maintains a data-base of facilities nationally and, through its SSOs, takes an interest in development needs at local level and provides support for applications for improvement or development of new facilities.

4.6.1. There is a national network of quality training facilities for athletes at or near elite standard

Clearly, senior developing, pre-elite and elite athletes need regular access to high quality facilities. In most sports it is the case that quality facilities are available in each state, although many sports must rely on facilities not specifically developed for that sport while, in some sports, access can be difficult. The best facilities and certainly those used by national squads have multiple playing surfaces available and ready access to meeting rooms, accommodation, sports science and medicine centres, recovery facilities and facilities for technical and video analysis. This was the value of the AIS which had all facilities available for pre-elite or national squads. It is an advantage in a centre of excellence. Some states have now developed good integrated facilities through their institutes and academies, while a number of universities now also provide excellent facilities.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 6.2:** Elite, pre-elite and senior developing athletes have ready access to high quality training facilities which have accommodation and meeting facilities and sports science and medicine services in close proximity.

4.7. Pillar 7: Coaching

The national coaching structures of sports vary considerably, often depending on their size or whether it is an individual or a team sport. As mentioned earlier, in many sports the person responsible for the entire high performance program as well as coaching the national team or squad is designated the Head Coach. In others, the head of coaching works with a subsidiary team of individual or squad coaches. The position is designated differently in different sports. Here, for convenience, the term Coaching Director will be used for the person with ultimate coaching responsibility.

4.7.1. There is a sufficient number of coaches at all levels

Of all the factors that contribute to sporting success, coaching must be near the top. Coaches must be valued and taken care of by their respective sporting organisations and this applies to coaches at all levels. At the elite level it is of course recognised as important that there should be a sufficient number of qualified coaches, not just for the national team and pre-elite athletes, but that coaches at the developmental level are also supported. These coaches at different levels will have different skills. Some are suited to coaching at the elite level, but good development coaches are as important for the long-term success of the sport and some coaches have particular skills at this level and must be recognised. It is essential that sports associations know what their coaching situation is. Each sport needs a data base of its coaching talent at all levels to ensure it is able to plan and allocate its coaching staff efficiently across the sport. It goes without saying that an effective sporting organisation needs to encourage new coaches into the sport. Many of these will be parents of young athletes or retired athletes. Retiring athletes should be encouraged to move into coaching. Not all ex-elite athletes make good coaches and not all good coaches have been elite athletes, but having been an athlete is a great start. The sport must make it easy for people with little or no coaching experience to take up the activity. Equally, it must make

an effort to recognise the value of coaches, foster their efforts for improvement and provide public recognition, such as through awards, at annual general meetings, through newsletters or the media.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 7.1:** There is a sufficient number of qualified elite coaches to cover the elite, pre-elite and senior development programs of the sport and a program to encourage suitable people to take up coaching.
- **CSF 7.2:** A data base of coaches at all levels is maintained.
- **CSF 7.3:** Coaches at all levels are recognised by the sport for their contribution and are provided with opportunities for improvement.

4.7.2. The relationship between coaches and athletes is monitored

Because the relationship between a coach and the athlete is of prime importance and because of the influence coaches can have over athletes, it is advisable for the sport to have some mechanism whereby the attitude of athletes to the coaching they receive can be monitored. This can be a fraught activity because it is human nature that if one is offered a chance to complain, many will take it unthinkingly and bad blood can easily be created. But athletes should feel they can have an input into their coaching. This is why the relationship between athletes and high performance managers or those responsible for athlete welfare is important. Many head coaches themselves see value in involving their athletes in the programs that matter to them. How this is handled will depend heavily on the nature, culture, history and strategic aims of the sport.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 7.4:** The relationship between coaches and athletes is monitored through regular contact with athletes and high performance managers.

4.7.3. Elite coaches operate in an international market

At the highest level, if the sport is to compete on the international stage it needs to attract the best coaching talent it can afford. In most sports these coaches will come from Australia, which has invested heavily in coach education and development. But, in seeking senior or elite coaches, the sport needs to consider the international market. Many of our sports have prospered from the contribution made by coaches recruited from overseas. Clearly, it is important that they are able to adapt to the Australian sports culture, although there have been a number of international coaches who have successfully brought a more professional culture to some sports with the result that performances overall have improved.

Leading coaches must be appropriately remunerated. This can cause difficulties because the market for top coaches varies considerably from sport to sport, while any coach at elite level will require a remuneration that recognises their standing within the wider community. In some sports it will be appropriate that the Coaching Director is remunerated at a higher level than the CEO. Coaches, like anyone else, who are well looked after are likely to provide a better service than those who are not.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 7.5:** There is recognition that, at the elite level, the coaching market is an international one and coaches are remunerated appropriately.

4.7.4. Coaches have formal contract arrangements and are allowed freedom of operation

All coaches working for NSOs and SSOs must work under formal, written contracts and relevant role descriptions, which identify their responsibilities within the sport,

including who they report to, what their relationship is to the high performance manager where there is one, and the CEO, as well as some broad performance indicators or goals. Coaching Directors will normally report to the CEO; subsidiary coaches to the Coaching Director. These relationships, however, differ from sport to sport and this paper does not claim any one arrangement is better than any other. The important thing is that the roles and reporting responsibilities are clear. But, whatever arrangement is in place, there must be a recognised method for contact between the Coaching Director and the board. This will usually be through the high performance committee and the CEO but there is value in formal regular meetings between the Coaching Director and the board, or at least the chairman. It must also be clear to all in the sport that the Coaching Director, once appointed because of their qualities and competence, must be allowed to get on with their job without constant interference from enthusiastic but often not as well qualified members of the sport, albeit performance should be reviewed against the duty statement annually.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 7.6:** Coaches are employed under formal, written contracts which outline their responsibilities. Once appointed, the Head Coach or Coaching Director is given freedom to undertake their responsibilities without undue interference, with established arrangements for reporting to and contact with the board.

4.7.5. Coach education and development are fostered

There is a need for a continuing pipeline of coaches. The need for quality coaching never diminishes. Older coaches retire or move to different areas; the young must always be fostered. Just as efforts must continually be made to attract coaches, so must continuing effort be made to develop them. Young coaches must be trained and given opportunities to develop. Issues relating to coaching change over time while all coaches benefit from continuing education and development and must be encouraged to undertake formal and informal ways to upgrade their skills. All sports need to take account of coach education and development in their strategic planning. An effective sporting organisation will have in place a nationally coordinated strategy for coach education and development from the lowest level of community coach to the highest level of elite coach, with an accreditation or certification system to confirm development levels and, particularly, to ensure that all coaches are trained in those essential regulatory or legal requirements such as dealing with children or understanding health requirements. A sound coach development strategy will include not only formal courses to upgrade skills or open minds to the latest developments, but also opportunities for coaches to meet and discuss coaching or personal issues with other coaches in their sports as well as in other sports. Leading coaches must be encouraged to pass on their knowledge to other coaches in the sport. Opportunities must be found for all coaches to attend refresher courses and undertake personal and professional development. Despite the technical differences between sports there are significant similarities in the art of coaching which transcend individual sports boundaries. This was one of the great advantages of the AIS where coaches from different sports could learn from one another, often through informal discussion.

There is a need also to take care of coaches who may be judged not to have met their goals. Few sports in Australia have, for whatever reason, the luxury of being able to simply dismiss a coach for other than clearly defined legal reasons. Coaches who do not meet their goals should not necessarily be regarded as having “failed” and moved on out of the sport. Many can still be usefully employed in different role perhaps where their skills or talents can still be used. They can play an important role in the education process or, for example, in mentoring younger developing coaches.

Sports scientists and medical personnel are essential parts of the high performance team and it is imperative that coaches are able to readily communicate and discuss issues with them in order to help improve the quality of their athletes. A coach does not have to be a scientist, but they must understand what sports science can do to assist in the development of their athletes. While they and their athletes will gain so, too, will scientists working directly with athletes be encouraged to concentrate on applying their science to the performance issues that matter.

Relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 7.7:** There is a nationally coordinated strategy for coach education and development.
- **CSF 7.8:** There are opportunities for leading coaches to pass on their knowledge to other coaches, as well as opportunities for coaches to discuss with and learn from other coaches in the sport and from coaches in other sports.
- **CSF 7.9:** Coaches are able and are encouraged to work closely with sports science and medical personnel.

4.8. Pillar 8. Competition: There is a nationally coordinated approach to domestic and international competition

In most sports the major international competition schedule is set by the international federation. Outside of the major competitions, such as world or regional championships, the sport will also develop its own competition schedule. This must take account of the aphorism “to beat the best you must compete with the best”. International competition should always be with the best competition available for the sport at its particular level of development. Smaller sports with less resources will have to tailor their competition schedules to suit their budget, but need always to try to compete with teams which will continually stretch them.

Regular quality competition is essential for quality performance, both domestically and internationally. The competition requirements start at an early age and competition needs to be graduated according to age and/or standard. There is a natural tendency to accept whatever structure has been in place over time but, while this may indeed be the best, it is wise for a sport to consider its approach to competition. Whatever approach is taken, the annual competition program should be carefully planned, first to ensure the competition is the best available, but also in order to integrate domestic competition effectively with the international calendar. In many sports athletes are selected for national squads through domestic competition and that competition must take place according to a schedule that will allow teams selected for international competition adequate time for recovery and preparation between the domestic and international events.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 8.1:** There is a nationally coordinated plan for all competition in the sport, both domestic and international, and the domestic competition is integrated into the international calendar.

4.8.1. Domestic competition is graduated to encourage young talented athletes

All athletes start off in domestic competition. The great bulk of participants take part in a sport because they are enthusiasts, or for social or health reasons. Most lack sufficient talent, time or interest to aspire to the highest levels of their sport, although most want to compete at a level that meets their desire for an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. They form the very backbone of any sport and contribute significantly to

the sport's financial well-being. They provide most of the capitation funds, help raise funds in the community, and provide the volunteers base without which the sport cannot operate. It is vital that the sport has a strong, broad, domestic competition structure that provides opportunities for people to participate at each age and developmental level. To ensure good quality events, particularly for mass participation sports, effective NSOs will establish collaborative relationships with professional event organisers who have expertise at a level not always found amongst volunteers.

Because of the differences in age and level of the members of the sport's community, domestic competition must be graduated in such a manner to encourage young identified talent to progress in accordance with their abilities. In Australia most competition is graduated on the basis of age or, in some sports, weight, or a combination of both. While a sport needs to follow the policies of its international federation, it is desirable that there is some flexibility in whatever graduation is used to allow for the highly talented younger athlete who will appear from time to time. In particular, efforts must be made to provide challenging competition for athletes in pre-elite groups.

Many sports traditionally have local, inter-state and national championships and mostly these have provided valuable competition. But, local areas and states vary in size and those with bigger populations frequently dominate those with less. To overcome this, many sports have in recent years introduced national leagues which have often provided a higher level of competition. It is important, however, for NSOs to maintain relationships between these leagues and their club structures, which is where the league participants come from.

The Critical Success Factors is:

- **CSF 8.2:** There is a broad-based domestic competition catering for the bulk of participants while providing opportunities for young talent to progress commensurate with their abilities and providing flexibility to cater for talented athletes experiencing special circumstances.

4.8.2. The strongest international competition is utilised

To be successful internationally, athletes need constant exposure to the highest level of international competition. Most sporting organisations have an established regular international calendar into which the domestic calendar is integrated. The aim is to select the best athletes for Australian teams and to prepare them for their international exposure. The international calendar is usually set around major events such as Olympics, Commonwealth Games, world championships, and regional games or series. But, to be successful in those ultimate events, regular experience against quality competition outside of them is vital. To be successful, a sport must seek events, which may be bilateral or multi-lateral, with countries that can offer tough but appropriate competition and there is value in establishing close contact with a range of other countries to facilitate these opportunities. Likewise, pre-elite athletes, often competing as junior national representative teams, must have access to quality international opposition. This is how they prepare themselves for life at senior international level and the better their experience as juniors the better they will eventually be as members of senior Australian representative teams. At both levels, athletes must be well prepared, which entails planned pre-competition preparation in a high-quality training facility with ready access to all essential requirements.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 8.3:** There is a planned annual program of international competition for both elite and pre-elite athletes with pre-competition preparation, including events organised outside and within the calendar of the international federation.

4.8.3. Contact is maintained with athletes competing in overseas competitions

It is increasingly the case in some sports for athletes to join overseas organisations or teams in order to access the level of competition they need to remain at the top or to access professional opportunities not available in Australian sport. This is not necessarily a negative. In sports such as Volleyball, Basketball, Cycling or Football, an athlete's aspiration is to participate in the highest level of competition, which is overseas. It is, however, important to keep these athletes attached to their home system and to make provision to include them in national squads so they can continue to represent the national teams internationally and provide an example to younger athletes. This is a further reason why NSOs need to maintain close relationships with their international federations.

The Critical Success Factor is:

- **CSF 8.4:** Arrangements are in place to maintain contact with athletes living and competing in overseas competitions so those athletes are still available for selection in national teams.

4.8.4. Athletes are provided with help to attend important competitions

It is usually difficult for an NSO to provide any particular assistance for athletes attending domestic competition; there are usually too many involved and the costs prohibitive. At international level when representing Australia the costs of attendance should, as far as possible, be met by the NSO. This is normally the case but not all sports have the financial resources to meet all the costs involved, although many have provided subsidies to support their athletes or have introduced graduated scales of assistance based on the international standing of the athlete. All sports should, nevertheless, try to assist athletes selected to represent Australia and should build such assistance into their annual budgets.

The Critical Success Factor is

- **CSF 8.5:** Provision is made to meet or at least subsidise the costs of athletes representing Australia at international events.

4.9. Pillar 9. Sport science, medicine and research: Sports science, medical services and research are readily available

Ready access to quality sports sciences and medical services are essential to success at the elite level and much of the innovation and methods of operation done at that level devolves down to junior and community level, so increasing the value of experience of all participants. At the elite level, the application of sports-specific physiological testing and biomechanics, physiotherapy, recovery techniques, strength and conditioning, psychology and nutrition have all contributed strongly to enhancing performance, preventing or ameliorating injury or promoting recovery. Medicine, of course, is vital for the continued health and welfare of elite athletes who operate under a great deal of stress and are on a fine health border-line. Each of these disciplines has been developed into a speciality relating to sport. In Australia, these disciplines were promoted by the AIS and were one of the main reasons for Australia's improvement in international sport. Today they are almost taken for granted. Sports which rely on equipment, such as rowing, cycling and sailing, and some sports with Paralympic disciplines can benefit greatly from research into relevant applications.

Different sports tend to draw more heavily on certain scientific disciplines while some, like psychology and nutrition, apply to all athletes. Some athletes have

particular needs; even scientific disciplines have become specialised in dealing with the characteristics of different sports, as have individual sports scientists. The sports sciences cannot be seen in isolation; the disciplines rely on each other. To be successful, the sports sciences must be readily available to athletes and there is clearly great advantage in scientists and medical personnel working closely with coaches and coordinating the sports sciences around individual athletes in a holistic approach. This was a further advantage of the AIS where a group of the world's leading scientists worked together in the closest collaboration with coaches at the elite and pre-elite levels. There was, further, huge advantage in having sports science services operating in close vicinity to the training facilities used by athletes. The purchase of sports science services from commercial suppliers does not always provide the best service at the best cost. The close connection between coaches, facilities and science providers is an important element in any centre of excellence.

Basic sports sciences are necessary on an everyday basis and this applies equally to teams travelling internationally. Obviously, the full suite of services cannot be added to teams travelling overseas, but the sport should always make provision for the most important relevant sciences to be available for travelling elite teams, even if it is not possible to send dedicated scientists away on a regular basis. The bigger the event, the more important the provision of services will be. But, even for a small sport sending teams to lesser international competition, there is a need to make provision for sports science and medical support either through sending personnel with the team or arranging local servicing.

The relevant Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 9.1:** There is readily available to athletes and coaches a full suite of quality sports science disciplines and sports medicine services in the closest proximity to training facilities used by pre-elite, elite athletes and national teams.
- **CSF 9.2:** There is a coordinated approach to the application of the sports sciences and sports medicine in the closest relationship with coaches and athletes.
- **CSF 9.3:** Coaches understand sports science disciplines relevant to their sports and keep up to date with scientific developments. Coaching courses include components on sports science.
- **CSF 9.4:** Provision is made for ready access to basic sports sciences and medical services by teams travelling overseas.

4.9.1. Opportunities to access appropriate research are available

The other element important in the sports sciences is the provision of research. But it must always be kept in mind that the purpose of research is to improve performance. While there is certainly a place for academic research and much of its results will filter through to practitioners, most coaches want results that can lead to early improvement, leading to a premium on applied research. Much of this will come out of day to day contact between coaches and athletes or in response to requests from individual coaches aimed at solving an immediate problem. It, again, points to the need for close relationships between coaches and scientists working directly with athletes where they are training and for a specialisation by scientists with particular sports. It reinforces the desirability of well-run centres of excellence through which these integrated services can be provided. This is not to say that there is not a place for experimental or "blue sky" research of the type mostly conducted by universities and which can lead to long term innovations. Equally, a number of universities are now also working closely with coaches and athletes in providing more direct applied research. This is most welcome and it is important to strengthen these links, although

there are sometimes tensions between the NSOs and the universities with the former requiring intellectual property rights which limit the interests of the latter in distributing their findings. This requires further examination. It is important, however, for research findings to be promulgated through the sport, which is why NSOs need to foster close relationships between coaches and scientists, provide opportunities for discussion and promote the dissemination of ideas. In this regard, there is value in an NSO maintaining a data base on research being undertaken relevant to the sport and ensuring that, in its communications across the sport, it keeps its members aware of developments in this area and makes provision for meetings between its coaches and scientists working on research of interest.

The Critical Success Factors are:

- **CSF 9.5:** Research relevant to the sport has an emphasis on its ready application.
- **CSF 9.6:** Contacts are maintained with research bodies undertaking relevant research, a data base on research is maintained and opportunities to discuss and promulgate details on work being undertaken are provided.

5. Conclusion

National Sporting organisations, together with their state/territory affiliates and local clubs are the backbone of the Australian sports system. They have two primary objectives; to provide fulfilling experiences to their participant members through graduated local competitions through which talent is identified and fostered, and to develop sub-elite and, eventually, elite athletes who will perform with credit on the international stage. If these organisations operate effectively, the national sports system will be effective. In this study, an attempt has been made to outline those factors considered to be critical to the effectiveness of those national or state sporting organisation or, possibly, a large sporting club. As recognised, it is difficult to apply each factor across all sports equally because they are so different in terms of their size, methods of operation and resources. How these critical success factors can operate will also depend very much on the nature of the sporting organisation. They are not all equally relevant to all sports. It is nevertheless contended that some principles can be identified.

There are, perhaps, two general comments. The first is that these critical success factors cannot be looked at separately. They come as a whole. The sporting experience is a complex one where each part depends on others. Elite sport cannot be divorced from junior sport or junior sport from broad-based community sport. Athletes cannot be divorced from coaches or either from sports scientists and the sports scientists cannot operate independently from each other. Domestic competition cannot be divorced from international competition. Each part in this complex mix must work together to produce an effective organisation.

The second is that money is clearly important; sports rich in resources have no excuse, although they nevertheless occasionally fail. Smaller sports with modest resources, however, have an even greater need to operate at maximum efficiency if they are to be effective. This goes to the basics of sound governance. Having clear directions and realistic aspirations is the most important key guiding principle. But governance should not be a straight-jacket. Sports vary greatly and certain elements of governance arrangements will also vary somewhat from sport to sport. Nevertheless, there are certain principles that apply. The first is that success starts with the board, in setting clear directions and a positive culture which permeates the sport and providing the atmosphere in which all know what is expected of them and all strive for excellence in everything they do.

In terms of board composition, competence, independence and diversity are essential, as is the need to work closely with all the various stakeholders in the sport. Careful planning is central to the success of the board and thus the organisation as a whole. This entails clearly understood objectives. The strategic plan drives the sport and imposes a unified approach to all the many elements of success. There must be clear directions for the sport as a whole and these must be promulgated and shared through the sport, albeit state and local bodies need some flexibility to deal with the particular circumstances they may face. Budgets must be set against strategic directions and closely monitored.

The strategic plan must be broken down into operational detail that will guide the activities of the sport on an annual basis. The various roles within the organisation, involving board, administration, coaches and support staff must be clearly enunciated in role descriptions and reporting responsibilities. The various legal and regulatory systems in which the organisation operates must equally be well understood.

The national body provides national direction and leadership. Programs are developed at each level within the sport on a national basis. Pre-elite and elite programs will inevitably be more centralised. Participation programs will be decentralised but under the one national direction, albeit, delivery will recognise local differences. These programs must be connected through arrangements for talent identification at the development level and progression through recognised pathways, and their operations monitored regularly.

Training and competition facilities do not have to be elaborate but must be appropriate to their purpose. At the pre-elite and elite level training facilities should have ready access to gymnasiums and service providers. Coaches and officiators are vital for sporting success. Their development needs must be fostered both formally and informally, they should be appropriately remunerated and their important contribution recognised. The welfare needs of athletes are particularly important, with national bodies mostly responsible at pre-elite and elite level and through state/territory bodies at the talented developmental level.

The extensive experience of the Reference Group involved in this exercise, as expressed in this paper, would suggest that careful consideration of the directions outlined herein will contribute substantially to the effectiveness of Australian sporting organisations and therefore the continuing success of the Australian national sports system.

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