

Should you be thinking about your Athleticism?

Hi everyone.

Here is a question for you all.

Do you think there is one single physical factor that will make a person a better speed skater? I can only hope your answer was; NO, there isn't one single physical factor.

To improve in any sport, it requires the development of athleticism.

A definition of athleticism is; the components of physical qualities that are characteristics of athletes, such as strength, speed, and agility. In addition, athleticism may be looked upon as how a person then uses the physical skills / capabilities which they possess.

If you're doubtful that athleticism is for you, and that only hardcore skaters with the goal of World Championship and Olympic need it, then think again.

Developing, improving and maintaining athleticism is not only great for sport performance. Everyday activities rely on a level of athleticism (not to the same degree though). Slowing the rate of deterioration means a better quality of lifestyle and performance of daily activities.

So, what are the components of athleticism?

Components of Athleticism and Athletic Development

There are ten components of athleticism

- **Strength** – the capability to produce muscular force
- **Speed** – the ability to minimise the time cycle of a particular movement
- **Power** – the ability to exert a maximal force in as short a time as possible
- **Mental Resilience** – the ability to adapt and push beyond one's own comfort zone
- **Aerobic Capacity** – the maximal amount of physiological work that an individual can do as measured by oxygen consumption
- **Anaerobic Capacity** – the maximal work performed during maximum intensity, short-term physical effort
- **Balance & Coordination** – the ability to maintain equilibrium and move the body under control and efficiently
- **Agility** – the ability to move nimbly and quickly from one movement pattern to another
- **Stability** – the ability to prevent or control movement in a segment of the body, while generating movement in another segment
- **Mobility** – ability to move a joint through its full range of motion

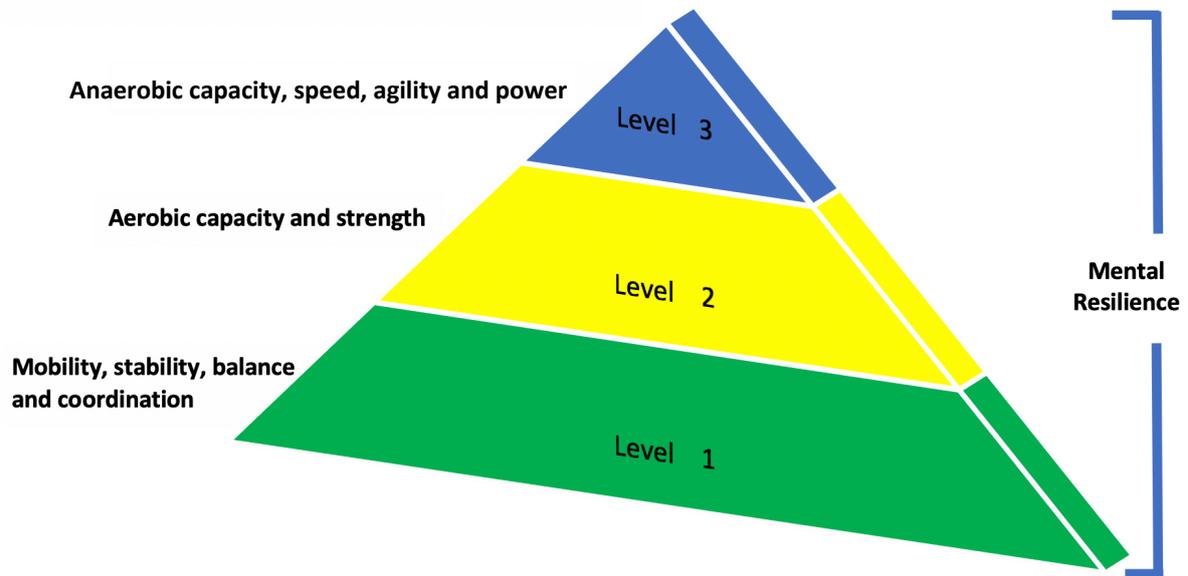
For the sake of definition, the components of athleticism are described separately. However, the components never truly operate independently. E.g. Something as relatively straight forward as a vertical jump requires, coordination, strength, mobility, stability, speed and power.

As the activities become more complex, the demand on the capability and capacity of involved components will be greater. The components that are not developed will lead to limitations.

Limitations, which are not addressed, will often hinder an athlete at the senior level of elite performance. This may result in a failure to develop certain skills, or skills being poorly performed when under the pressure of competition. Similarly, where an athlete has a weakness there is a higher likelihood of occurrence of injury.

It's clear that to improve performance, we need to improve the components of athleticism. Viewing the process in the same manner as constructing a building, we should begin at the bottom with a solid foundation. The wider and more solid the foundation, the bigger the structure can be.

Pyramid of Athletic Development



Level 1 Foundation. The development of mobility, stability, balance, and coordination should come first. These components underpin all the other components, providing a strong integrated framework for the more complex components to build upon.

Level 2 Functional strength and aerobic capacity. When the foundation is solid, then the components of strength and aerobic capacity can be added.

Level 3 Advanced athleticism. For high performance, this is the level everyone wants to be at. Power, speed, agility, and anaerobic capacity are the components that an athlete relies on the most, when in competition. But as you can see it is built upon the strong development of the other levels. Developing these components, without addressing the other components increases risk of injury and underperforming.

Mental resilience. Developing and incorporating mental resilience is important for all aspects of life including athletics and as such it needs to be incorporated into all levels of the pyramid.

Whatever your level of fitness or ability, take the time to train athleticism. You will see the benefits in both life and skating.

Richard Nizielski
National Coach