PHYSICAL AND MOTOR ABILITY, ANTHROPOMETRICAL AND GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS OF BOYS IN THE NORTHWEST PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA: A SPORT TALENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to analyse age group differences among and unique to 10 to 15 year old boys of different racial groups living in the North West Province (NWP) of South Africa. Boys (N=604) between 10 and 15 years participated in the study. They were a randomized group and a proportional representation of the four different racial groups living in the NWP. The tests included the Australian Talent Search protocol, consisting of 10 parameters (four anthropometrical, one physical and five motor abilities) and four additional physical fitness parameters (abdominal, grip- and upper body strength and flexibility). The analyses were based on cross sectional data and age group comparisons for anthropometric composition, physical and motor abilities of the boys. Analysis of Variance with an age and group effect revealed growth patterns similar to other studies, although unique growth characteristics were also found in the different racial groups, suggesting population variation. Age group differences and tendencies with regard to body dimensions and physical and motor abilities were indicated. In order to achieve a distinct profile of the current and future sporting potential of a boy in his rapid growing years, it is recommended that comparison to peers from a sport talent perspective will provide a more sensitive assessment when regional or national reference data, but also racial specific growth profiles, are used. The results of this study can serve as a reference base for future comparisons in order to ensure that the most talented children are identified for sport on the basis of their own growth profile.

Key words: Growth; Maturity; Boys; Talent; Physical; Motor.

INTRODUCTION

Every athlete’s ultimate goal is to excel in performance of the sport in which he/she has specialized (Reilly, 2001). To achieve this, many years of training and preparation are needed. It is indicated that it can take up to 10 years for an athlete to reach his/her full sporting potential (Woodman, 1985). Sport talent identification (TID) should therefore commence relatively early in an athlete’s life for the optimalisation of sporting talent. The fact that South Africa has not been a prominent force since the 1992 return to world sport suggests that much more should be done to identify and develop potentially talented sportsmen and –women.