

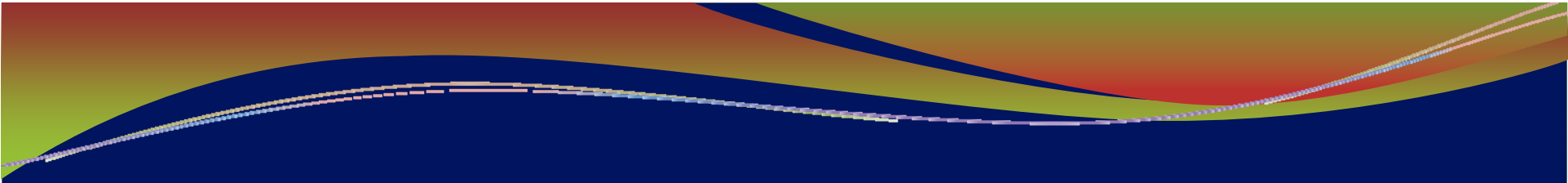
Working on a high performance environment

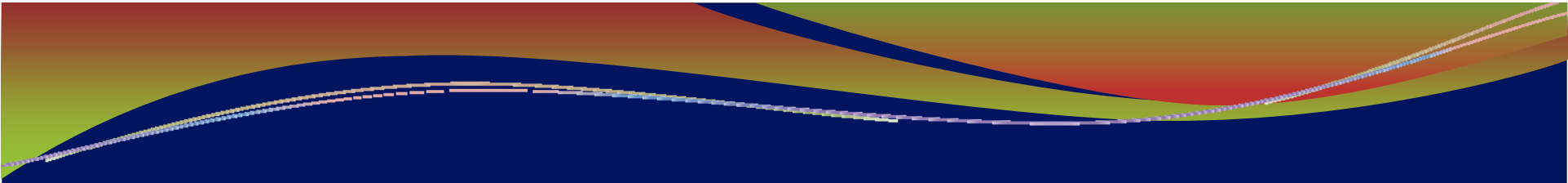
The global approach of the Flemish Swimming Federation
on high level swimming

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Content

- A short overview of the situation of Flemish (Belgian) swimming on the international scene until 2004
- The socio-political situation in Belgium (Flanders)
- Strategy to develop a performing policy on “high level swimming” → 7 layers
 1. Sport participation
 2. Organization and structure
 3. Talent identification and talent development
 4. Professionalization of coaches and setting up a qualitative educational program for coaches
 5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program
 6. Training facilities
 7. Finances // Budget
- Questions

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- During the Olympics of 1992 and 1996 Belgian performed well to excellent
 - In Atlanta Belgian swimmers swam five finals and won one gold medal on 100m breaststroke men (Fred Deburghgraeve). Until now the highest point in Belgian swimming
 - Sydney 2000: Belgian swimmers (5) got one semi- final
 - Athens 2004: No swimmer qualified for the OS
 - Target for Beijing 2008 : at least three swimmers to qualify for the swimming tournament
 - Target for London 2012: 10 - 12 swimmers of the Flemish Swimming Federation to qualify, 3 - 5 finals and hopefully medal chances



Belgium is a federal state with three regions and two communities with a lot of exclusive competences and powers: The French and the Flemish community have total autonomy to organize their policy on sports

Flanders has no tradition on backing and developing a global strategy for sports on the highest level (Coordination only began in 2002)

The performances of Flemish (Belgian) athletes are weak compared to those in other countries (based on BNP/head)

So to direct a program with any chance of success we had to find “some competent men, and women” with the potential and eagerness to realize it. Moreover we had to focus on a few talented swimmers and their entourage

Strategy

1. Sport participation (a)

- The Flemish Swimming Federation grew from 30.000 to 33.000 members in the last 4 years
- The membership in competitive swimming on the other hand is rather problematic: fall 10%

Overview

Evolution comp. participation	Sw	Diving	Synchro	WP	TOTAL
2004	5128	20	327	1326	8156
2005	5043	11	347	1331	8218
2006	4678	9	362	1358	7962
2007	4592	15	377	1366	7950
	-10%	-25%	+15%	+3%	-3%

1. Sport participation (b)

- Adjustments to be made in the next 4 years
 - ★ A national structured and attractive competition program without any overload of boring and superfluous competitions
 - ★ A special commission (calendar commission) to supervise the whole process
 - ★ Start of this new approach: 2010
 - ★ The threshold to start with competitive swimming has to be as low as possible: competitions exclusively for the youngest age groups, maximum duration of a competition: 2 hours, only regional competitions, limited number of competitions per season for the youngest age groups. “*FUN*” has to be the keyword

2. Organization en structure

- A classic pyramidal structure with a large base is not possible (only 4400 competitive swimmers)
- We have to identify young talented swimmers as soon as possible
- We need a global profile of each pre-selected swimmer (motorial, technical, physiological, mental, ... weaknesses and strengths)

2. Structure

Competitive swimming
on a national level
and lower

Recreational swimming

Learning to swim

High level

WC- team
EC - team

Elite

Women
Man

EJC- Team
Boys > 16j
Girls > 14j

**selections
youth**

EYOF- team
Boys > 14j
Girls > 12j

talentidentification

Future team
Boys 11 -13j

Supportive structure

Trainingscenter VZF

Support, coaching en training for elite swimmers : professionals and students (if there study program is compatible with the training workload)
The existing elite-swimmer can maintain there own program.

Topsportschool

Extern

year 5 and 6

**only swimmers
who are in the
ECJ-selection**

**90% of the workload
(swimming and dry)
of the proposed year-
plan must be attained**

year 3 and 4

Girls have to make the EJC-selection
Boys have to show progression which leads probably to ECJ team

**90% of the workload
(swimming and dry)
of the proposed year-
plan must be attained**

year 1 and 2

to be allowed in the TSS the swimmer has to be member of the Future team

**70% of the workload
(swimming and dry)
of the proposed year-
plan must be attained**

3. Talent identification

The Future team (*boys 11 – 13y*) (*girls 10 – 12y*) (a)

- Target : we need to have a clear vision of the potentials of each individual swimmer
- Evaluation of :
 - motor-skills (technical capability)
 - morphology and physiology (dealing with training load)
 - mental skills: observation of attitude,
 - workshops with mental coaches ...
- After 3 years we have a global view of each swimmer's profile
- We emphasize a maximal interaction with and feedback to each personal coach

3. Talent identification

The Future team (*boys 11 – 13y*) (*girls 10 – 12y*) **(b)**

- **Selection criteria** ... based on the Rudolph- table?
Each Flemish region has a team (10-15 swimmers)
 - **Program** (seasonal): 10 regional training days
 - one technical session
 - one theoretical session (short ppt and video on swimming techniques)
 - and one normal swimming session
- 5 weekends: - 3 training sessions, video- analyses, one dry-land session, quiz and animation (...)
- Workshops for the personal coach and others
Topics: swimming techniques, nutrition, mental aspects, dry-land
 - Workshops for parents (2)

At the end: Evaluation of each swimmer by the coaches

3. Talent development

Model : “ De topsportschool” (c)

12 -13 years

Maximalisation
of morfological
belastbaarheid
(?) and
technical skills

6 - 8 workouts
swimming

2 dry-land
sessions

14- 15 years

Learning to train.

8 – 9 workouts
swimming

2- 3 dry-land
sessions

16 – 17 years

Transition to
top level

10 – 11 workouts
swimming

3 dry-land
sessions

3. Structure

Talent development (d)

- The training content of each year (swimming, dry-land, mental etc...) is fixed in an overall build-up training plan (6–8 years)
- Swimmers who train at home have to implement at least 85–90% of the model- program
- In the “talent development program” there are 2 teams:

Eyof : boys 15 – 16y, girls 13 – 14y (selection times)

ECJ : boys 17 – 18y, girls 15 – 16y (selection times)

3. Talent development (e)

- Programs
- EYOF

Swimming camps: October/ November: 1 week

Christmas holidays: 2 weeks

Eastern holidays: 2 weeks

Preparation of tournament: 2-3 weeks

Competitions : 1 or 2

Medical support, testing (lactate), advice on dry-land etc..

3. Talent development (f)

ECJ

- Swimming camps:
 - October/ November: 3 weeks (altitude)
 - Christmas holidays : 2 weeks
 - Eastern holidays: 3 weeks (altitude)
 - Preparation of tournament: 3 weeks
- Competitions: 1 or 2
- Medical support, testing (lactate), advice on dry-land working on mental skills, advice on nutrition, etc ...

3. Elite swimming (g)

- The organization of the support for elite swimmers
 1. (Since 2005) Ad hoc support (financially) for swimmers with a qualitative global training program. (**professional coach, good training facilities, physiotherapist available, mental advice etc....**)
 2. (Since 2007) Centralized training program at the training center of the federation to facilitate the combination of studies and high performance training
 3. Some swimmers (finals EC) got State support, others (coming directly from high school) got some financial support from the federation to enable the combination studies/training

3. Elite swimming (h)

- Goal: getting as many swimmers as possible, with the potential to qualify for the London Olympics, centralized in the training center of the federation
- Supporting program:
 - 4 training camps and 3 to 4 competitions scheduled in preparation to the WC 2009
 - 3 to 4 preparatory international competitions
 - Individualization regarding competitions and training camps is possible
 - Maximal financial support for steering the whole training process

4. Professionalization of coaches and setting up a qualitative educational program for coaches (a)

- Evolution of the technical staff of the federation

2003: 1 technical director, also head coach

2004 : 1 technical director, 1 coach

.....

2008: 1 technical director, 1 head coach and 4 swim coaches,
1 physical trainer, 1 physiotherapist

An interdisciplinary team in support of the technical
staff and the swimmers

Qualified club coaches participate in certain projects
on a regular basis

4. Professionalization of coaches and setting up a qualitative educational program for coaches (b)

- A few “ fanatics” within the Flemish Swimming Federation have invested a lot in setting up a good educational program for coaches and swim teachers
- First, they put a lot of energy in establishing a didactical and applicable educational program for swimming teachers
- Secondly, they created good educational programs for swim coaches on club level
- Then, they tutored ambitious young professionals to become competent coaches....

By working together with experienced coaches, ... , attending clinics and international tournaments, taking responsibility in coaching young promising swimmers....

5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program (a)

- From the beginning we knew that input from different sciences, relevant for swimming, had to be integrated in the global program
- We started with IDT (Interdisciplinary team) in 2004
- First on a voluntary basis and sporadically. IDT was mostly an advisory unit for coaches
- Since 2007, IDT is funded by the Flemish Government and works on an intensive and regular basis

5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program (b)

The different fields involved



5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program (c)

- **Starting-point:**

An integrated approach for all issues:

- when individual problems of swimmers have to be solved, or when individualized support is preferable
- when strategic choices have to be made...
- when improvement in one field of the global program is needed, IDT investigates immediately what might be the repercussions on, and/or influences from other fields....

5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program (d)

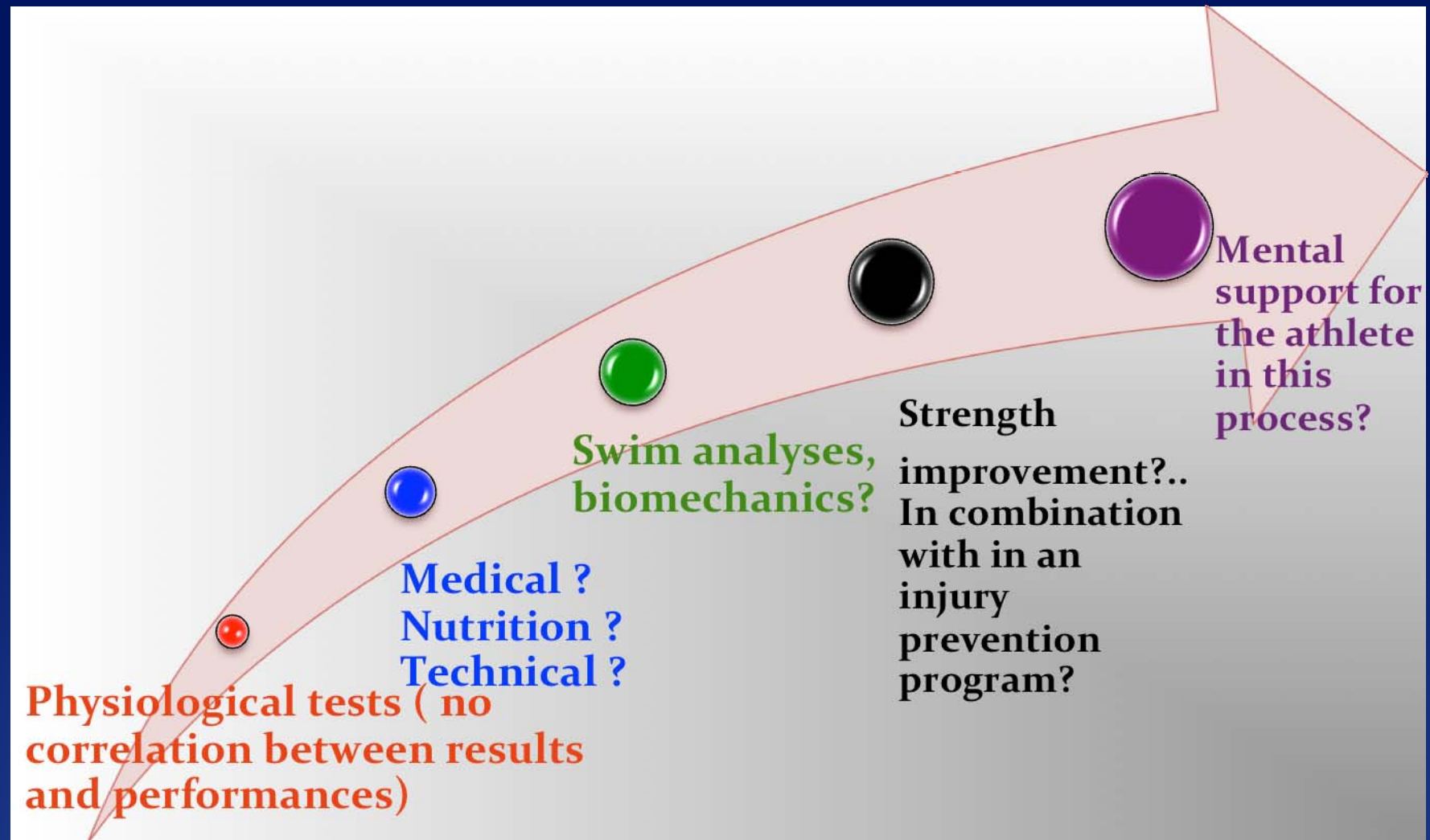
- **Methodology:**

Communication is the keyword, necessary for quick action

- Meetings with all IDT members on a regular basis.
(evaluation of each swimmer and of actions in progress)
- Coaches, swimmers and parents can easily contact any member of the team
- A communication platform is installed on internet for the members, the swimmers and their coaches, to further improve the communication ...

5. (Scientific) Interdisciplinary support for a high performance program (d)

Example....



6. Training facilities (a)

- Quite problematic in Belgium and Flanders
 - The city of Antwerp is very cooperative Currently we have systematically nearly good access to the 50m pool of the city (Wezenberg)
 - Other 50m pools on other locations are only sporadically available for training
 - During vacations and for the preparation of the major tournaments we are forced to look for training facilities abroad (very expensive)

6. Training facilities (b)

- The Flemish Swimming Federation desperately needs ONE good 50m training pool on a location where the combination of high level training and studies is possible
- Only a training site is required, cheap in maintenance, ... no expensive competition facilities
- The federation wants to invest, but needs co-funding of local and national authorities

7. Budget

- Since 2004, the budget for the “Top level” swimming in Flanders has been manifold with a factor of 5 – 6
- Due to better planning and structuring and, as a result, better performances, we got our extra-projects financed
- New supportive projects are in the pipeline and we have good chances to rake them in
- However, one primary issue remains: the federation should have its own training facilities to ensure the continuity of the development of our vision



Questions ?

**Thank You for your
attention !!**

Lode Grossen