



# **TORA LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL**

A Comprehensive Framework for Rugby Development

*2026-2030 Strategic Plan*

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# 1. VISION AND PHILOSOPHY



## 1.1 Our Vision

Clean sweep at PRCs (Provincial Rugby Championships) in 2030 across all age groups, establishing TORA as the premier rugby development region in Canada.

## 1.2 Core Philosophy

Skills are a barrier to tactics. It is not a skill until it becomes a habit—habits are automatic under fatigue and pressure. Our development model prioritizes:

- Long-term performance over short-term wins
- Athlete-centered development with biological maturation as the driver
- Integrated physical, technical, tactical, and mental growth
- Player welfare as a performance driver, not an obstacle
- System-wide alignment from grassroots to representative rugby

## 1.3 The TORA Context

Our development phase structures incorporate the reality that our athletes are developmentally behind compared to Home Nations models. This requires us to:

- Work backwards from our 2030 goal
- Create aligned communication and development through stage/age progressions
- Build a shared philosophy from school to club to regional to provincial levels

## 2. LTAD FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

### 2.1 Five-Stage Model

The TORA LTAD is built on a stage-based progression model where biological maturation, training age, and developmental readiness drive advancement rather than rigid age cut-offs.

Stage	Age Range	Primary Focus
<b>Fundamentals/Learn to Train</b>	11-13	Movement literacy, fun, agility, basic rugby skills
<b>Train to Train</b>	14-18	Foundational conditioning, contact development, positional exploration
<b>Train to Compete</b>	18-19	Set piece detail, performance habits, advanced rugby IQ
<b>Train to Win</b>	19+	Competition preparation, peak power, professional behaviors
<b>Active for Life</b>	All ages	Lifelong participation, coaching, refereeing, administration

## 3. DETAILED STAGE PROGRESSIONS

### 3.1 Age 11-13: Learn to Train (Late Mini Rugby & Grade 8)

**Focus:** Develop movement literacy + fun + agility + basic rugby skills



#### Technical Development

- Catch/pass both sides
- Ball familiarization & evasion
- Contact introduction (tackle safety, fall & roll)
- Basic game awareness (support lines, space recognition, depth of passing, flat on defense)

#### Physical Development

- Agility, balance, coordination (ABC's)
- Speed mechanics (acceleration & deceleration)
- Basic strength via bodyweight exercises
- Flexibility and mobility development

#### Tactical Development

- Simple principles: go forward, support, continuity
- Small-sided games focused on decision-making

## Psychological Development

- Confidence building through success experiences
- Enjoyment and social cohesion
- Introduction to 'watching rugby' to promote imitation of quality play

## Training Structure

**Sessions per week:** 3-4

**Session duration:** 45-60 minutes



## 3.2 Age 14-16: Train to Train (Junior Rugby)

**Focus:** Foundational conditioning + contact development + aerobic base

**Critical Note:** *This is the most densely influential stage of rugby development. Windows for speed, agility, and aerobic capacity are maximized.*

### Technical Development

- Tackle competency (dominant & passive technique)
- Ruck entry + cleanout shapes
- Catch/pass under pressure (two hands on ball)
- Introduction to set piece roles
- Ball positioning in contact
- Introduction to defensive structures (Post/Pillar - A/B defense)



### Physical Development

- Speed development
- Bodyweight strength → introduction to resistance training
- Aerobic base building
- Landing mechanics and change of direction
- Footwork and evasion techniques

### Tactical Development

- Increased exposure to tactical principles
- Rotational experience across multiple positions (avoid premature specialization)

### Psychological Development

- Coach injection of positivity - psychology of winning/losing
- Emotional regulation under pressure

### Daily Athletic Hygiene

Progress daily athletic hygiene habits. Provide individual skill library for athletes to work on away from practice. Team practice is for team environment training—what are athletes doing outside to make skills automatic under pressure?

### Training Structure

**Sessions per week:** 3+ (individual + team)

**Session duration:** 45-60 minutes

### 3.3 Age 17-18: Train to Train (Senior Rugby)

**Focus:** Breakdown skills + structured conditioning + positional exploration

#### Technical Development

- Confident in most tackle situations (ability to tackle alone without double-tackling)
- Ball carry variations
- Breakdown confidence in securing own ball and jackling on defense
- Kicking basics (passing kick, territorial, pendulum defense)
- Expanded positional skills
- Ability to practice at full pace (practice as you play)



#### Physical Development

- Progressive strength training
- Repeated sprint ability (RSA)
- Anaerobic conditioning
- Force & power development begins

#### Tactical Development

- Patterned attack/defense
- Simple phase plans
- Introduction to video analysis
- Focus on the 'why' not just the 'what'

#### Psychological Development

- Introduction to game analysis and decision-making review
- Positive language focus: 'What did you do well for positive outcomes?'

- Learning to break down games from individual role perspective
- Introduction to pathways for rugby within Canada

#### Daily Athletic Hygiene

Progress daily athletic hygiene habits. Provide individual skill library for athletes to work on away from practice. Team practice is for team environment training—what are athletes doing outside to make skills automatic under pressure?

#### Training Structure

**Sessions per week:** 3+ (individual + team)

**Session duration:** 60-90 minutes

### 3.4 Age 18-19: Train to Compete (U19 Rep/University)

**Focus:** Set piece detail + performance habits + advanced rugby IQ

#### Technical Development

- Full tackle toolbox
- Position-specific passing/kicking
- Advanced breakdown speed and mastery
- Set piece detail (lineout lifters, jumpers, scrummaging basics)

#### Physical Development

- Strength → Power transition
- Speed profiling
- Game-speed conditioning
- Individualized injury prevention program

#### Tactical Development

- Scenario training
- Strike moves and set plays
- Defensive systems
- Video analysis and unit-focused training



#### Psychological and Lifestyle Development

- High-performance habits: nutrition, recovery, sleep routine
- Mental skills: preparation, focus, post-game review
- Decision making/skill execution under fatigue

#### Training Structure

**Sessions per week:** 4+ (Individual + Team)

**Session duration:** 60-90 minutes

### 3.5 Age 19+: Train to Win (University/Club/Representative)

**Focus:** Competition preparation + high-performance behaviors + peak power development

#### Technical Development

- Position mastery
- High-speed skill execution under fatigue
- Pressure decision-making

#### Physical Development

- Peak power development
- Advanced conditioning blocks
- GPS load monitoring and management



#### Tactical Development

- Opponent analysis and scouting
- Leadership in unit meetings
- Execution under pressure
- Ability for positional self-analysis and team analysis
- Operating within a system

#### Lifestyle and Professional Development

- Act like a professional: recovery protocols
- Support for life decisions: university, pride, professional/semi-professional opportunities, provincial opportunities
- Positional specialization complete (skills, physical, technical, tactical)

#### Training Structure

**Sessions per week:** 7+ (individual + gym + team)

**Session duration:** 60-90 minutes

## 4. PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

Testing provides objective markers of development and helps identify areas requiring additional focus. Benchmarks should guide training, not define athlete worth.

Age Group	40m Sprint	T-Test	CMJ	Bronco
13-14	6.2-6.8s	<11.5s	20-28 cm	6:30-7:30
15-16	5.6-6.2s	<11.0s	28-35 cm	5:45-6:15
17-18	5.0-5.6s	—	35-45 cm	4:45-5:30
19+	sub-5.0s	—	45-55 cm	4:30-4:50

## 5. PATHWAY INTEGRATION

The TORA LTAD model operates across multiple delivery environments. Successful athlete development requires alignment and communication across all levels.

### 5.1 Pathway Structure



- **School Rugby** → First contact point for most athletes
- **Club Rugby** → Year-round development and competitive play
- **Regional (TORA)** → Elite development from U15-U19
- **Provincial** → Representative opportunities
- **National** → International pathway

### 5.2 School Rugby

**Role:** First line of contact for rugby in the Okanagan

**TORA Support:**

- Coaching clinics to upskill high school coaches
- Shared framework resources and age-appropriate training guides
- Get coaches onboard with our athlete development framework

### 5.3 Club Rugby

**Role:** Extended development environment beyond school season

**TORA Support:**

- Encourage high school athletes to engage with clubs as early as possible
- Promote coach growth and framework alignment

- Provide resources and continued education

## 5.4 Regional (TORA Framework)

**Role:** Central coordination of elite pathway from U15-U19

**Responsibilities:**

- Clear goals for age groups regarding skill, athletic, technical, and tactical development
- Player depth charts—get athletes in system early, track development, provide opportunities
- Maintain shared philosophy from regional to club to school to minis
- Create coach education materials and age-group cheat sheets

## 5.5 Provincial Level

**Role:** Representative selection and development

**TORA Goal:** Ensure athletes get opportunities and continue progression

## 5.6 National Level

**Role:** International pathway and talent identification

**TORA Goal:**

- Early talent identification
- Be the athlete's biggest supporter
- Put athletes in the best position to represent Canada

## 6. COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE



### 6.1 Core Coaching Principles

- **Operate within a framework, avoid rigid structure**
  - Show pictures (problems) and help athletes find success (solutions)
  - Encourage decision-making within team systems and individual roles
- **Use aligned language across all teams**
  - Consistent terminology from U15 through U19
  - Creates familiarity and accelerates learning
- **Focus on positive reinforcement**
  - Not: 'What you screwed up' or 'What you should have done'
  - Instead: 'What did you do well when we had a positive outcome?'
  - 'What was the process that led you to do something well?'

### 6.2 Determining What to Coach

#### Start from the end goal and work backwards:

- How do we want to play at the U18/19 level?
- What skills do we need to get there?
- What athletic development do we need to facilitate this?
- What technical/tactical knowledge do we need to facilitate our game plan?
- How do we incorporate these ideas to progress from U14 to U19?

## 7. IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES

### 7.1 Resource Development Priorities

- **Coach Education Materials**
  - Age-group specific cheat sheets for skills, technical/tactical focus
  - Sample session plans for each age group
  - Video library of key technical elements
- **Athlete Development Tools**
  - Individual skill library for home practice
  - Daily athletic hygiene guides
  - Pathway information documents
- **Tracking Systems**
  - Player depth charts
  - Development milestone tracking
  - Performance testing database

### 7.2 Barriers and Opportunities Analysis



developmental readiness)

#### **Conduct SWOT analysis of:**

- Regions (geographic spread, facility access)
- Coaching (volunteer availability, expertise levels, retention)
- Players (participation numbers, commitment levels,

### 7.3 Annual Review Cycle

#### **Quarterly:**

- Coach feedback sessions
- Pathway progression review

#### **Annually:**

- Performance benchmarking across age groups
- Framework effectiveness review
- Goal setting for following year
- Resource gap analysis

## 8. KEY ADVANTAGES OF THE TORA LTAD MODEL

### 8.1 Injury Reduction and Player Welfare

Progressive contact exposure, controlled load increments, and delayed maximal strength training significantly reduce:

- Growth plate injuries
- Lumbar stress fractures
- Chronic tendinopathies
- Recurrent concussions

### 8.2 Superior Athleticism at Senior Level

By prioritizing movement literacy and speed before heavy loading, players enter adulthood with:

- Better acceleration mechanics
- Greater mobility
- Enhanced power transfer
- Improved collision efficiency

### 8.3 Tactical Intelligence and Decision-Making

Early game-based learning and small-sided formats enhance:

- Spatial awareness
- Support running
- Scanning under pressure
- Defensive reading

*These 'game intelligence' qualities are far harder to teach in adulthood.*

### 8.4 Long-Term Participation and System Sustainability

Players who do not reach elite levels still transition smoothly into:

- Club rugby
- Coaching
- Refereeing
- Administration

This sustains the broader rugby ecosystem and protects the sport's cultural longevity.

### 8.5 Better Talent Identification

By delaying exclusionary selection decisions, LTAD keeps late developers engaged longer—dramatically expanding the long-term elite talent pool.



## 9. CONCLUSION

The TORA Long-Term Athlete Development model represents a comprehensive, athlete-centered approach to rugby development that balances performance ambition with participant welfare. By aligning physical preparation with biological maturation, embedding tactical learning within game-based environments, and nurturing psychological resilience alongside technical skill, we will produce athletes who are stronger, faster, smarter, healthier, and more durable.

Our 2030 vision of a clean sweep at PRCs is ambitious but achievable through:

- Systematic progression through clearly defined stages
- Aligned communication and shared philosophy across all pathways
- Patient, structured development that respects human growth
- Investment in coach education and resource development
- Commitment to athlete welfare as a performance driver

In an era where early specialization and overtraining continue to threaten youth sport globally, the TORA LTAD model stands as a powerful commitment that long-term success is built through patience, structure, and respect for human development. This is not just a development framework—it is our blueprint for creating the future of rugby in our region and establishing TORA as the premier rugby development system in Canada.

***Working backwards from 2030, we start today.***

