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"Ready to Perform" A Guide to Effective Performance Monitoring

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Introduction

For many years performance monitoring, in terms of learning about performance demands as well as tracking training loads, has been limited to elite and professional level teams.

High costs associated with monitoring systems as well as the need for specialised staff to interpret the data on behalf of coaches meant that teams outside of the top tiers of sport looked on with envy.

If only they could access an affordable, high-quality system that offered comprehensive monitoring of their players/athletes whilst at the same time offering convenience and ease-of-use that allowed insights in a time-friendly fashion.

Read on to see how VX Sport (www.vxsport.com) & "Ready to Perform" make this possible.



Whilst well know teams such as New Zealand Rugby Union (2011 and 2015 World Champions) have been long-time VX Sport users, the VX roster includes many schools, colleges and universities as well as legions of amateur and semi-professional teams who exist outside of the most elite tiers.

For the past eight years VX Sport has been a trusted adviser to coaches and performance staff all around the world. The natural advantages of the VX Sport system, accuracy and reliability, are supported by an innovation agenda aimed at offering coaches the relevant insights in the most easy-to-action fashion.

With four levels in the VX Sport product range, VX Sport clients are afforded the security and peace-of-mind of knowing that VX Sport offers professional levels of accuracy and reliability across the whole range with no compromise on quality. In essence the VX Sport range provides a solution for every need and every budget range.



Why Monitor Training Loads and Performance metrics?

An often used phrase in the world of coaching and performance is "If you are not assessing then you are guessing".

Coaches around the world instinctively know that in order to tailor their training/preparation programs and to indeed legitimise their approach then they need some objective feedback. Only engaging in performance monitoring with reliable equipment will offer this. Further, players are now more in tune with technology and what it can offer - the demand is growing for objective, clear feedback about their performances as well as monitoring of training loads to ensure player welfare.

Engaging in monitoring ensures that coaches, performance staff and players are continually "kept in the loop" with regard to the loads experienced in training and preparation so that the data accrued can help prepare players optimally for performance, make incremental fitness and conditioning gains as well limiting the potential exposure to injury.

In the performance world, injuries can sideline players for months and even end promising careers; clearly effecting the player but also the team's chances of success also. Physical data from VX sensors capture your players performance and intensity levels thus allowing you to profile players and spot potential injury risk factors before they happen. Identifying these risk factors allows you to keep player on the field at all times. Managing the appropriate load placed on a players muscles and joints can prevent injuries and ultimately enhance performance.

As a coach knowing when and how much to push your players to reach new performance levels is vital. Experience can offer intuition in this respect but being able to legitimise this coaching intuition is massively important. The VX system is designed to create a cycle of growth and development. the systematic planning of physical training or periodisation involved progressive cycles of various workload aspects to reach top performance when it matters. VX Sport allows coaches to find the adequate training stimulus by simple monitoring of internal and external training levels to ensure players are meeting their prescribed performance targets.

Tim Campbell The University of Akron Director of Strength and Conditioning

The college soccer season is physically grueling and it is absolutely vital that we base our periodization plans on hard data, but doing this with other technologies can be so labor intensive.

The VX Sport system makes the daily management of all this data so simple and easy

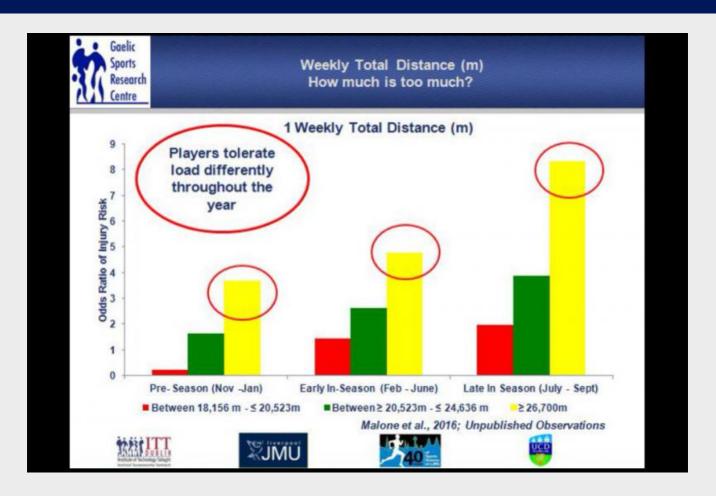


Planning is a key component of every coaches approach to preparations. VX Sport allows you to plan your upcoming training sessions to ensure your players are at their peak come game-day. The ability to measure and manage a player's physical and psychological load is clearly very important in this process. VX Sport offers the insight you need to build performance profiles and training plans. Further the ability to measure game-demands also allows you to introduce a level of specificity to your training program ensures players are ready for "worst-case scenario" when it matters most on the field of play; by setting and monitoring individual training loads players can train at optimal intensities to build towards peak performance.

Who....What.....How....When???

Whilst coaches now know that performance monitoring can add to both their skill-set and also their training programs I am often asked similar questions by coaches around the world

Who is in charge of monitoring? What exactly will we monitor? How do we go about the logistics of monitoring? How can we interpret the results? Do we monitor every session? Can I monitor both indoors and outdoors? What metrics are best to focus on? How can I learn more?



All very valid questions and concerns.

Many teams now have access to sport science support as a result of internships and/or CPD by their staff - however it has become more apparent in the recent past that an educational element is vital for coaches outside of the top tiers where support may or may not be available. Just as there is no point in owing a Ferrari of you cannot drive, then access to VX Sport is somewhat futile unless you have some direction in performance monitoring.



In collaboration with our partners in VX Sport, "Ready to Perform" has been developed to offer a continuous education aspect to performance monitoring for coaches and VX users of all levels. No longer do coaches have to self-educate - investing now in the VX Sport system can be complemented by the support of the "Ready to Perform" program which offers appropriate guidance in performance monitoring tailored towards the users aptitude and ability levels.

The needs of every coach, every group of VX users and every performance program differ - Ready to Perform is a bespoke education process designed towards the specific needs of VX clients so that they can get the very most from their VX system to platform their preparation programs and development of their players.



The 5i's Pathway - Asking Better Questions



Commonly when we speak about performance monitoring we talk about the information, the data, the insights and all the great pointers and answers we get from our VX Sport system. Ready to Perform however is an educational pathway designed by coaches for coaches - the prime driver of our initial interaction with VX users is not so much getting all the answers - rather Ready to Perform initially encourages coaches to ask better questions!

As coaches, when we formulate specific, performance related questions our opportunity to develop deeper insights to bring to life in our programs is greatly enhanced.

"The scientist is not a person who gives the right answers, he's one who asks the right questions." Claude Levi-Strauss

Our first interaction with VX Sport clients is to examine exactly what is important to them as coaches and to tease out exactly what their key performance issues are. Quite often coaches want to know information such as "how hard does player X work", "how far did Player Y run". These are very much base level questions perhaps encouraged by TV sport shows that highlight such cosmetic level detail. The Investigate stage though aims to pull back the curtain on performance so that we can prompt the most pertinent questions that will inform the initial use of the VX Sport system. The Investigate process is geared towards understanding what the coaches see as the burning performance related questions they may have that will help guide the initial monitoring process.

So what are these questions??

Having facilitated this process many times we know we are making progress when a level of detail begins to emerge in the coaches examination of performance and exactly what they feel the real issues are.

Coaches will inevitably arrive at a place where they position questions such as....

- Why do we always seem to start matches slowly??
- Why are we suffering injuries late in games?
- Why do we tend to concede goals late in the game?
- Why does our performance dip before half-time?
- We regularly concede goals early in the game...why is this?
- When the big games come the players look "leggy"...why might this be?
- It seems like it takes the older players longer to recover Should the older players be doing the same work as the younger guys?

The first "I" - Investigate

These level of questioning will invariably lead to better quality answers and, more importantly, insights that can brought into the training program so that the coach can now take steps to directly impact performance aimed with clear, objective feedback and evidence. From here they can then track the impact and/or progress made as a result of their interventions.

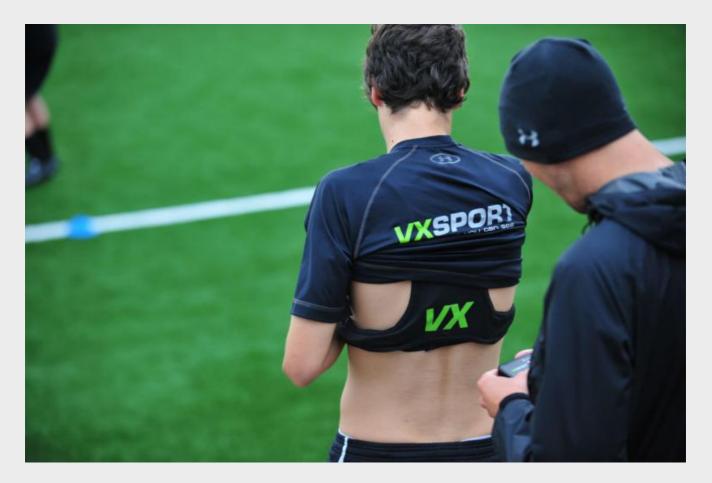
Achieving this level of questioning allows us to move forward.

At this stage we are concerned with capturing all the relevant data.



The second "I" - Information

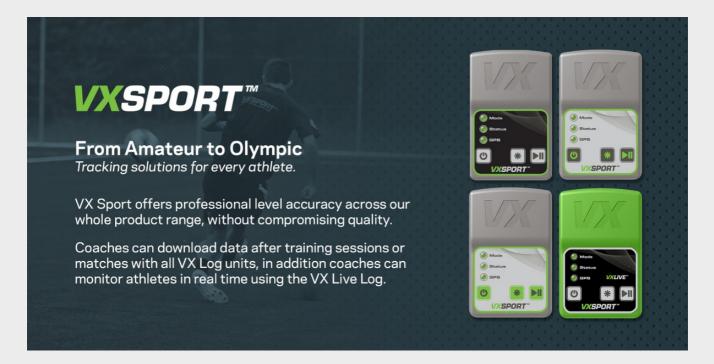
In respect of having access to all the key metrics VX Sport offers you everything you need to succeed. it is worth noting also that the logistics around performance monitoring are discussed here so that coaches are clear about the best processes and procedures towards collection of data. In the "Information" stage we introduce the fact that the VX system provides the perfect solution for monitoring success by combining a monitoring device to track physical data, a web based platform to record athlete wellness and powerful desktop software to crunch and present the numbers.



"Ready to Perform" - A 5-Step Guide to Effective Performance Monitoring

After the recording of data we then go through the download process to "trim and split" files into relevant game/session sections and moments. The processing of data takes place courtesy of both absolute and relative benchmarks that we advise on initially before you gather enough data to set individual profiles. Knowing how we want to split and position our data for analysis is key to our third "I".

Once we have positioned the appropriate questions relating to performance, loading and welfare and have gathered the appropriate data we are now in a position to interrogate that data - that is to probe answers from our data over one session or a number of sessions so as to unveil patterns and trends.



The Third "I" - Interrogation

VX Sport's easy-to-use software has been designed to enable coaches and trainers to get the data they need - quickly and conveniently. Millions of data points are calculated into key decision-making metrics ensuring guidance towards answers is available when you need them. Your monitoring data is available anywhere via VX Cloud; allowing coaches and players to keep track of their performance whenever and wherever is convenient for them. VX Cloud also offers full wellness and RPE tracking to ensure coaches get the full picture.

The Interrogation phase of "Ready to Perform" is a very important stage and one which we strive to ensure coaches have a full grasp of how they can classify and distribute their data pre-analysis. This preparation stage is vital in terms of ensuring time-efficient practices and processes as we move forward.

The Fourth "I" - Insights

Quite simply, the internet is awash with data, information and statistics. Confusion and contradiction reign. To be clear, Ready to Perform is not geared towards offering coaches more information - instead our notion is to prompt coaches towards unveiling key insights that will be the difference that makes the difference in their program in the short, medium and longterm.

"Information is a collection of data points that we can use to understand something about the thing being measured.....How do we know what actions to take? For that we need insights..... Insight is gained by analysing data and information to understand what is going on with the particular situation or phenomena. The insight can then be used to make better business decisions" (Jimmy Allen. Benedictine University)

The insights that we unveil are valuable nuggets of wisdom and understanding that illuminate the path forward - the road towards performance enhancement and/or lowering injury risk in our players. These prized pieces of intelligence offer greater understanding to coaches and serve to illuminate the path forward towards the last stage of the Ready to Perform process.



For coaches simple insights are hugely important - our time is precious so we need only the most relevant and actionable details.....turning information to insight will achieve this.

The Fifth "I" - Implement

Having all this new bright and shiny intelligence is worthless if it does not see light of day - true success in the monitoring process is the changes in approach and practices as a result of the new found prudence. The last stage of the Ready To Perform pathway works with coaches to use their experience and intuition to marry the new layers of comprehension with appropriate alterations to their coaching program and training interventions. Only in this way can change be effected - an experienced eye making responsible, manageable changes based on objective evidence that will ultimately result in a better outcome. We share success stories from around the world from coaches and teams who have made changes , great and small, which resulted in tangible differences to their program and performances in the short, medium and long term.

By now you will most likely recognise that the Ready to Perform process is cyclic.

".....we know that there are other issues that may be driving our process towards not being what we want. To address those we need to gather more data after we make our change, compile that data into new information, the analyse it to gain new insights until we can make the necessary decisions to drive our desired OUTCOMES" Jimmy Allen. Benedictine University



As coaches develop confidence and aptitude they will dive further into performance and programming to seek new answers to newer issues and questions that become apparent. Just as players become better with focused practice so too does the coaches aptitude grow with their exposure to player monitoring. With 250+ metrics VX Sport is well-positioned to offer a level of insight to satisfy the most challenging performance questions and to offer support into the future platformed by the strong innovation culture that has sustained VX Sport globally since 2008.

Want to Know More??

Becoming adept in the area of performance monitoring has become a key "tool" in the coaching "tool-box" over the past number of years. The "Ready to Perform" program will be tailored towards your needs and those of your players.

Contact us now...your performance will thank you

