

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: REACHING THE NEXT LEVEL

BY JEANE LASSEN, ATHLETE SERVICES PROGRAM ASSISTANT / STRENGTH & CONDITIONING COACH, CANADIAN SPORT INSTITUTE

"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: decide what you want."

- Ben Stein

Many athletes have childhood memories of watching the Olympic Games and saying "I want to do that" or "that's going to be me on the podium one day!" So what gets a six year old dreamer from racing classmates on the playground, to racing for Team Canada? If you have already found a sport you love and are successful with, you are off to a great start because that's one of the biggest challenges in making your childhood dream come true.

ASK YOURSELF:

- How do I go from where I am now to where I want to be?
- Setting a goal to reach the Olympic and Paralympic podium can be overwhelming, how do I break it down to smaller goals beforehand?
- Do I know who to contact from my Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) or National Sport Organization (NSO) to find out what the criteria is for support and event selection?
- Do I know what the benchmarks and Gold Medal Standards are for my sport?

Based on these questions, you should determine what level you are currently at, and then determine the sport-specific criteria required to get where you want to go.

At the Canadian Sport Institute, we provide services to athletes on a tiered basis, pictured below:



Brent Hayden accepting his bronze medal at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Photo © COC.

SPORT CARD	ATHLETE LEVEL	SERVICE AREA	
Podium	Tier 1	National and Provincial Access	As identified by Own the Podium
Canadian Elite	Sport Canada (SR) Sport Canada (SR-1) Sport Canada (SR-2) Sport Canada (C-1) Sport Canada (D)	National and Provincial Access	As identified by your National Sport Organization
Canadian Development	National Team Athlete Level 1 Provincial Level 1A Provincial	Regional Access	As identified by your Provincial Sport Organization
Provincial Development	Level 2 Provincial Level 3 Centre	Regional Access	As identified by your Provincial Sport Organization

Let's use a fictional case study to examine the topic further...

SPORT SPECIFIC CASE STUDY: ROWING

A 21 year old Provincial Development level rower would like to move to the Canadian Elite level and become Sport Canada Carded. How do they get there?

IN THE SPORT OF ROWING, A PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT LEVEL ATHLETE IS AN ATHLETE WHO:

- has represented Canada at international developmental events
- does not receive Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program funding
- medalled at the National Rowing Championships in their age category
- meets the minimum RADAR score (350)

In our example, for this U23 athlete to reach the Canadian Elite level, they need to receive the entry level card for the Athlete Assistance Program by finishing in the top three at a U23 World Rowing Championship Olympic event or winning a gold medal in a non-Olympic event or have a RADAR score over 600 points.

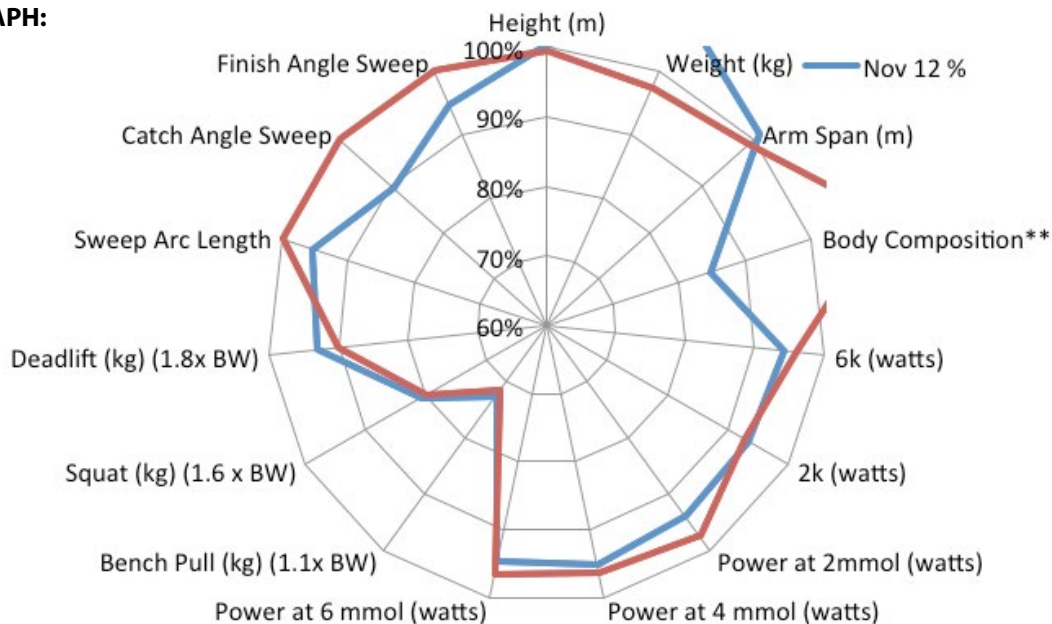
RADAR: ROWING ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT AND RANKING

RADAR, established to identify, track and monitor athletes, is a battery of tests that provides a simple strength and weakness assessment of the specific fitness traits required by rowers. The rower and coach are able to immediately assess their progress as well as the effectiveness of their current training program. This data can be used to benchmark the athlete against traits that are believed to be Gold Medal standard at World Championships and Olympic Games.



Olympic silver medallists Dave Calder and Scott Frandsen.
Photo © Mike Murray.

RADAR GRAPH:



Several NSOs have generated similar methods for athletes to compare to Gold Medal Standards. Check with your NSO to see if this kind of tool is available. If not, it's a good idea to consider the key performance components in your sport and see how you measure up to the athletes on the podium. This is a great way to weigh strengths and weaknesses and break your goal down into tangible pieces.

SUMMARY

Q: What determines the athlete's current level?

A: Results at competitions and reaching sport specific benchmarks as determined by their PSO and NSO.

Q: What determines if an athlete will receive Sport Canada Carding?

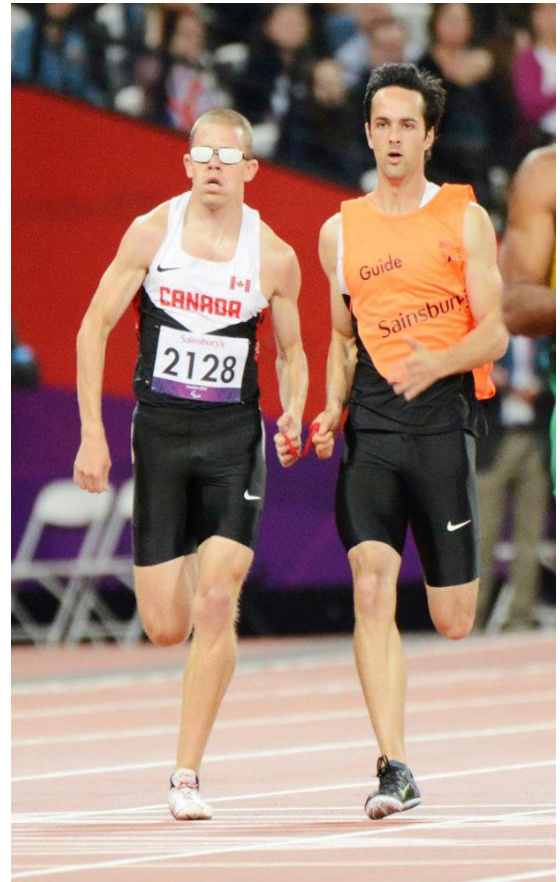
A: Results at competitions and reaching sport specific benchmarks as determined by their NSO and Sport Canada.

Check with your PSO or NSO to determine what competitions you need to compete at in order to meet the requirements to move up to the next level. Know the key performance benchmarks for your sport!

Conclusion: If you determine some of the key checkpoints along your way, the road to the Olympic or Paralympic podium will seem a lot shorter.

It's not the will to win that matters—everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters.

- Paul "Bear" Bryant



Canadian Paralympian Dustin Walsh and guide Dylan Williamson at the London 2012 Games. Photo © Matthew Murnaghan.