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# THE 10,000 HOUR RULE: A CLIMB OF EVEREST PROPORTIONS

BY RICHARD BUCCIARELLI

**In the past 10 years, leading social science researchers have concluded that one of the main things that distinguish experts in a given field (including academics, music, and sports) is the accumulation of 10,000 hours of dedicated practice.**

In the past 10 years, leading social science researchers have concluded that one of the main things that distinguish experts in a given field (including academics, music, and sports) is the accumulation of 10,000 hours of dedicated practice.

Typically – especially in sports such as soccer, which accords players a very short window of time in which to train before becoming a professional – these dedicated practice hours are accumulated in per-year increments of 1,000 hours, spanning 10 years, from the age of 8 (when most soccer players start practicing) to the age of 18 (when elite players will likely begin their professional careers).

A common challenge in Canadian soccer, however, is that most high level rep and/or academy teams train only three to four days per week, amounting to about six to eight hours per week. Even if this amount of practice occurred all year (which it doesn't) for a total of 52 weeks, the total number of practice hours accumulated per year would be only 300 to 400 in total – a far cry from the 1,000 per year required to become an "expert" by the age of 18.

Compounding the problem for a lot of youth athletes who may want to train more, is the amount of other after-school activities that place restrictions on free time – homework, tutoring, part-time jobs, volunteer work and social outings,

to name a few.

With the combination of rep/academy soccer (4-5 days per week), plus the aforementioned extra-curricular after-school activities taking up so much weekday evening and weekend time, how is it possible for young Canadian athletes aspiring to become professional soccer players to accumulate the required number of 1,000 hours per year of dedicated practice? One possible solution to this problem is to attend a private school for athletes.

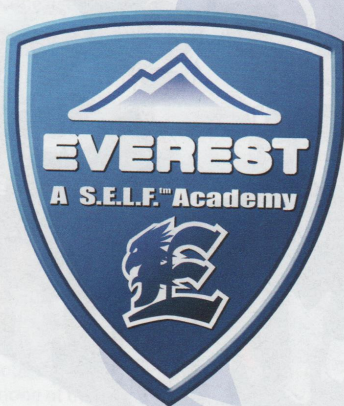
In terms of attaining the 1,000 hour per-year goal, a private school provides young Canadian soccer players with the unique opportunity to accumulate an extra 1-2 hours per day (5-10 hours per

week) of dedicated practice time, during weekday day-time or "school" hours. These dedicated practice hours do not interfere with youth soccer players' busy weekday evening and weekend soccer training schedules, thus allowing players to add 250-500 extra hours per year and effectively double their yearly dedicated practice hour totals.

Everest Academy, a private school for elite athletes located in Thornhill, Ontario, recently started a Soccer Program and hired me as the Program Director in the fall of 2012. I immediately became impressed with the school and its sports curriculum, which is focused around providing students with a rich educational experience, combined with a rigorous daily fitness and soccer skill development training.

The Everest Academy student-athlete development model is based on the "SELF" Acronym:

- "S" stands for "Skills" – this is the soccer-specific technical training component of the program;
- "E" stands for "Education", which includes a full curriculum for Grades 1 through to 12 (Lower Elementary, Middle School, and High School);
- "L" stands for "Leadership" – which is developed through unique programs geared towards learning about integrity, cooperation, community, and work ethic;



Most high level rep and/or academy teams train about 6-8 hours per week. Even if this amount practice occurred all year for a total of 52 weeks, the total number of practice hours accumulated per year would be only 300-400 in total – a far cry from the 1,000 per year required to become an “expert” by the age of 18.

- **finally, the “F”** stands for “Fitness” – which comprises seasonal fitness assessments and the development of personalized fitness training programs for all student athletes.

Students enrolled in the Soccer Program at Everest Academy participate in customized small-group (three to five athletes) technical training sessions, four days per week (the “Skills” component). Each training session is centred on the practice and acquisition of a specific technical ability, with players performing several hundred repetitions before applying the particular technique in more realistic game-like scenarios. The small-group sizes allow for optimal individual attention to be given to each athlete participating in the program.

Among the other unique features and benefits of the school is the role fitness training, as well as fitness and health education, play in each student’s academic curriculum (the “Fitness”

component). In addition to the daily soccer practices, students at Everest also participate in daily sport-specific strength and conditioning training, provided by Joe Costa (formerly owner of Mind to Muscle in Toronto).

As part of the regular curriculum, students are assessed and evaluated three times per year and provided with customized training to maximize their athletic development and fitness. Advanced sports science is applied in developing sophisticated systems for the best results, and athletes are also taught about proper nutrition, hydration, and healthy active living as part of the program. In keeping with this philosophy,



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all students at Everest receive daily healthy lunch and snacks, provided by a certified private chef.

Overall, the private school model presents a viable method through which, when combined with a rigorous weekday evening and weekend soccer training schedule, young aspiring soccer players can accumulate the required 1,000 hours of dedicated practice per year needed to reach 10,000 hours in total.

The Soccer Program at Everest Academy is just one of many options for young student-athletes, and this option is worth considering for any young soccer player looking for extra training to improve their game.



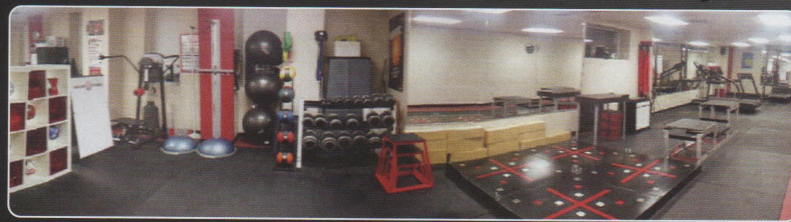
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