

## The Cross Over Movement Blog

### Skill Deterioration

February 7th, 2007

Worked out with a couple players this weekend. I think the popular perception is a player improves during the season. This is a reason why teams run year-round programs now. The more games, the more improvement. However, over the years training players, I have noticed the opposite: players' skills deteriorate during the competitive season.

Now, often times the deterioration is not precipitous and sometimes it is so subtle not even the player notices. However, I see it. I see it in the way a player handles the ball between dribbles or the way the player moves from the dribble to the shot. I see it in the player's footwork as he receives a pass. Minor parts of the overall skill, yet aspects which contribute to a player's overall success.

In an article for the United States Olympic Committee, Dr. Tudor O. Bompa, the godfather of periodization, writes:

Influenced by professional sports, some coaches attempt to imitate their heavy competitive schedule, and as such accept the notion; the more games/competitions, the better my athletes will improve. **In reality the opposite is true: the more you compete the less time you have for training. As demonstrated by sports science, well designed training programs and not high number of competitions led to higher adaptation, and as a result, to higher performance improvement.**

To play/compete more means in reality to have a longer competitive phase, a situation which is possible only by reducing the duration of the preparatory phase, with all its negative repercussions: less time to acquire / perfect skills, reduced time to improve general conditioning (such as during the general preparatory phase), and shorter time to work on improving the sport-specific speed, power and endurance.

To combat the skill deterioration, coaches must spend more time on skill work during the competitive season or spend less time in the competitive season, meaning a true off-season and pre-season for players, not spring leagues, summer leagues and fall leagues which keep the players in perpetual competition. Otherwise, players' skill level peaks, which is why so many teenagers seek private trainers to overcome their plateau. It's not the coach's lack of knowledge or the player's lack of effort which leads to the stagnation; it's the lack of periodization in the athlete's training schedule.