

# Understanding talent



*Providing high performance expertise  
to sport and athletes in Scotland*

# The notion of talent is confusing

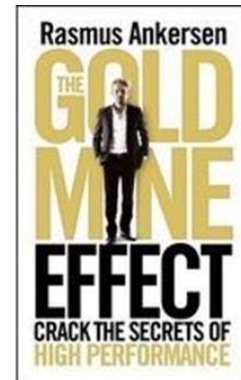
“As a teenager I was told I would never make it as a swimmer. It was because my sister was so amazingly talented, could swim and be so good at it. My stroke wasn't great and I was told that, as I wasn't a natural swimmer, I just wouldn't make it”

*Jo Jackson, Olympic Bronze medallist*



# Why a parents workshop?

“Parents are often a better predictor for how their children might grow their potential than the children are themselves. Behind most top performers you’ll find encouraging, stimulating and demanding parents”



# Talent makes sense if we understand...

1. Physical suitability
2. How advantages are gained or lost over time
3. How your beliefs shape your behaviour

# Physical suitability

Knowing the physical demands of your sport and working hard on strengths **and** weaknesses



# How advantages are gained or lost over time

Understanding the development process

Experts differ from non-experts in their ability to **self-regulate**.

- Set specific goals
- Have detailed plans in place
- Continually review and adapt the plan
- Self reflect
- Identify reasons for failure



“... If things go wrong I need to know why. If we are doing a 200 metre session at this time of year I need to know the reason”

*Jessica Ennis: Unbelievable 2012*

# Self-regulation and young athletes

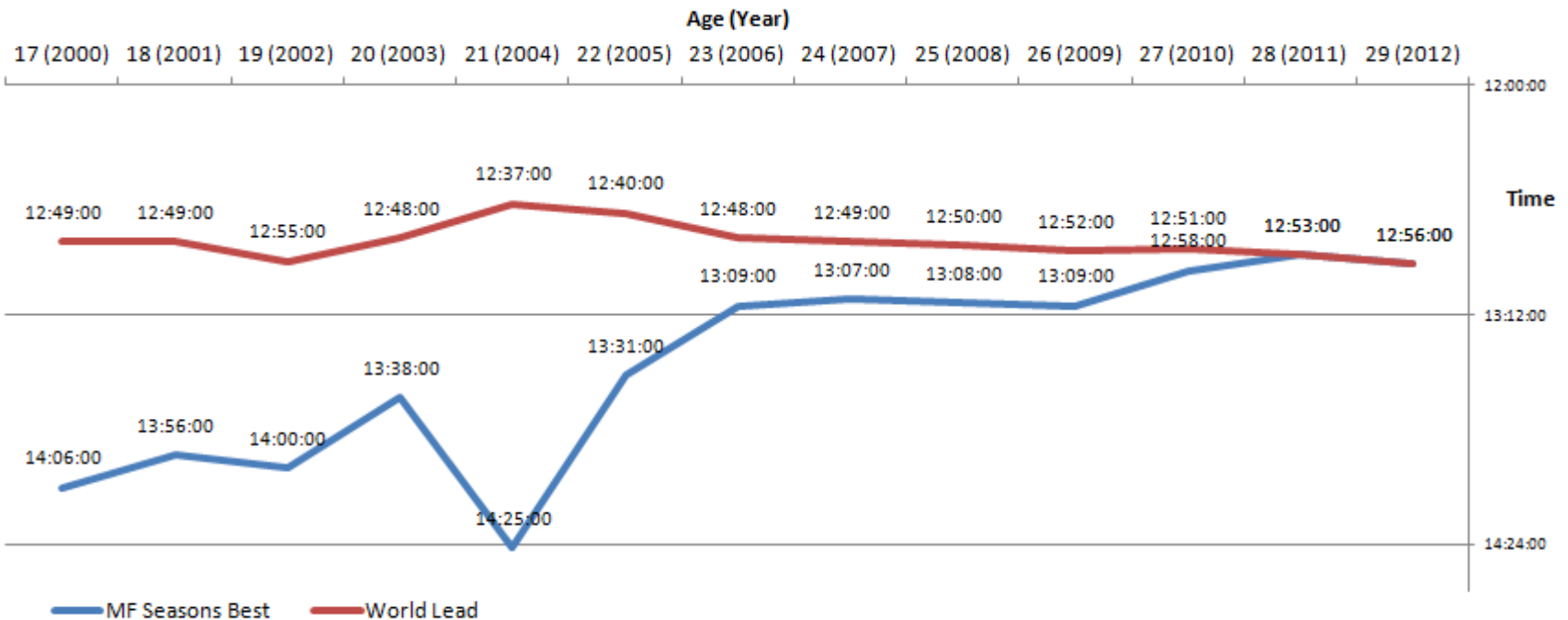
‘When Jamieson was 15 he had a meeting with his coach, who asked him: "Why are you in this sport, and what do you want to get from it?" Jamieson wrote down a list of goals. The top target was to win a medal at the 2012 Olympics. His coach asked him what time he thought it would take to do it. "I looked at the progression of Olympic results from Atlanta, Sydney and Athens," Jamieson says. "I calculated that it was going to take a swim of 2min 8sec to win a medal." He wrote it down on a piece of paper, which he kept by his bedside.’

*The Guardian, March 2013*



# Understanding progress in non-linear

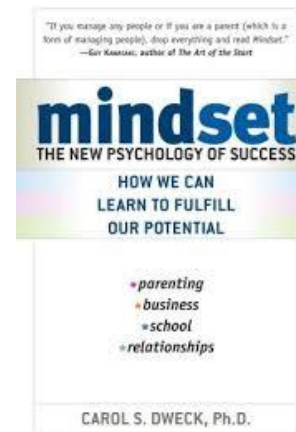
## Mo Farah 5000m progression





# Beliefs and how they shape behaviour

Based on the **mindset** work of psychologist Carol Dweck and others who have undertaken decades of research on achievement and success.



# Behaviours and learning

	<b>FIXED</b> behaviours	<b>GROWTH</b> behaviours
Believe..	...talent is something you are born with	...talent is a process of learning
Motivation....	...showing off your ability	...learning how to develop your ability
Effort focus	Expect things to come easily	Focus effort in <b>KEY</b> areas
Challenges	Avoid challenges you struggle with	Embrace challenges – you can't do it <b>YET</b>
Set backs	Setbacks confirm you are no good	Setbacks are part of the learning process
Negative feedback	Ignore useful negative feedback	Learn from criticism
Ownership	If things don't work out...it's not my fault!	Understand you need to drive things
As a result..	...can plateau early and under achieve	...maximise potential

## Key point

Your **beliefs** are crucial in shaping your behaviours and what you achieve.

Where do your **beliefs** come from?

# What does all this mean?

**Talent** is about committing to be good in future by.....

1. Knowing the demands of your sport and **developing** your physical strengths and weaknesses
2. Understanding the development **process**
3. Consistently displaying **growth** behaviours

# So... what can parents do to help?



# Help them understand the process

Understanding the development process			Beliefs and behaviours
<b>Ask</b> - what are the key areas you need to be good at to become world class in your sport?	<b>Ask</b> - how good are you now and how good do you need to be in future?	<b>Ask</b> - what are you working on to improve in each area?	<b>Help</b> them recognise their fixed and growth behaviours
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
<b>Help them understand what is most likely to hold them back</b>			

# Mindset tip sheet for parents

- Avoid statements that suggest ability is down to *'natural talent'*
- Ask about their experiences rather than the result
- Help them celebrate small successes – the **hard work** and **understanding** is paying off

# Response to challenges

- Ask what they are working on and why it's important
- Encourage them to keep working on areas they feel they are not so good at - “I can't do it **YET**”
- Praise them when they take on the tough challenge rather than the easy option



# Response to setbacks

- Pick your time **wisely** but speak to them about the learning and emotions that come from a setback.
- Talk to them about **their** expectations. Young athletes often focus on others and set unrealistic goals
- Make **your** expectations clear. They won't want to let you down – what would that look like to them?

# Response to negative feedback

- Help them look for the useful information when they receive feedback
- If feedback is limited after training or competition encourage them reflect on how it went
- Let the coach decide what to work on – your role is to support the ups and downs along the way

# Ownership

- Let them know you are happy to take them to training but you expect them to be ready in time
- Where appropriate, encourage them to ask questions and speak to their coach
- Ask about their long-term goals and their understanding of how to achieve them

# The take home message

Parents play a crucial role in **developing** athletes who....

Understand the  
development  
process



# What would you do?

- Following a competition where your child thought they would do really well but where “everything went wrong”
- If your child is physically bigger and has practiced more than others and is currently having amazing success
- If your child has a chance to train and compete with a ‘better’ squad but they would rather stay where they are
- If your child “can’t be bothered” to go to training tonight

# Questions

[www.sisport.com/talent](http://www.sisport.com/talent)

