



OWEN VAN NIEKERK

GRADUATED TABLES FOR PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION IN TRACK AND FIELD



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MAKING THE MOST OF THE ATHLETE

Watty Piper's star in *The Little Engine That Could* had the right attitude, but he would not have achieved anything if he had not been an engine to start off with. The same holds true for any aspiring athlete who has dreams of winning gold in an international event someday.

In *Talent Identification and Tests for Athletes*, the second book from the pen of renowned coach Owen van Niekerc, he gives coaches and athletes the necessary tools not only to identify talent, but also to ensure that their talent is channeled in the right direction and developed to its full potential.

This book will provide you with the answers to two critical questions:

- **What are the essential criteria that should be met by any athlete wishing to participate in a specific track or field event?**
- **How does a specific athlete measure up to these criteria?**

In the first part of the book Van Niekerc does an in-depth analysis of every event and provides the trainer with a world-first checklist of criteria that should be met by any individual wishing to participate in a specific event.

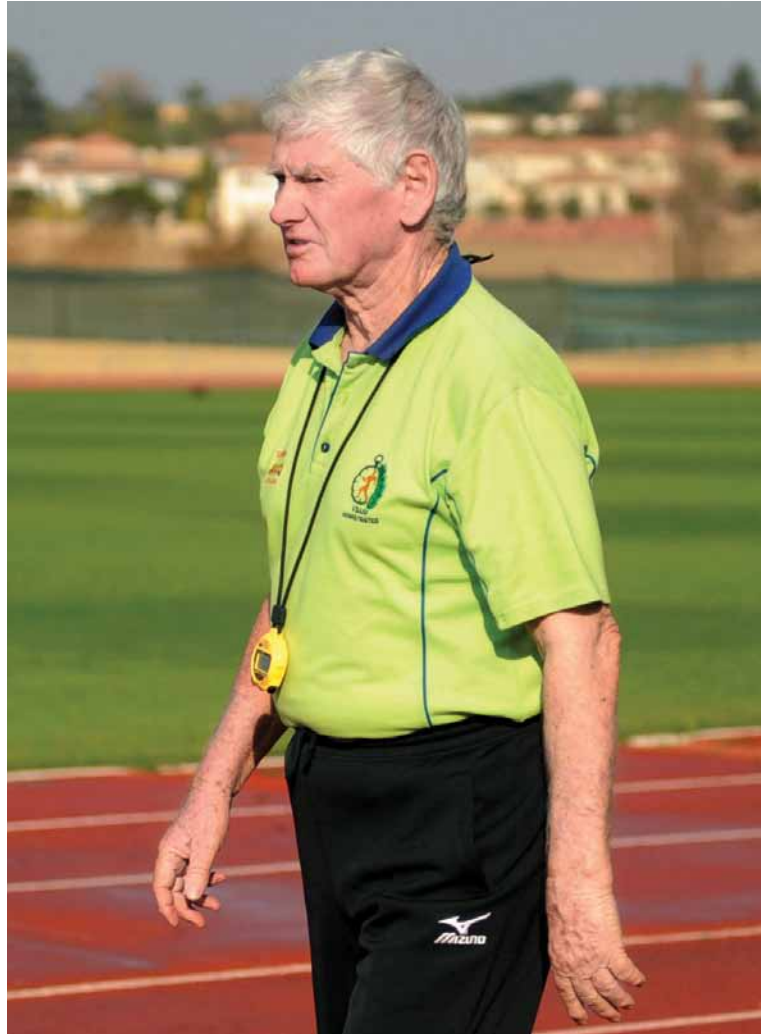
In the second part of the book he provides practical guidelines on how to assess an athlete's natural talents and physical attributes correctly. This step is obviously vital if you want to ensure that the athlete competes in an area best suited to his/her abilities.

"It often happens that children, teachers and parents do not know what event is best suited for a specific athlete. The result is that the child is steered in a specific direction when his/her natural talents and physical attributes dictate that he/she should be participating in something completely different," says Van Niekerc.

"It is critical that a child should be assessed correctly and placed in the right event at the right age. To this end the book outlines simple means tests that can be conducted on any track with the use of only a stop watch and measuring tape."

Apart from initial assessment guidelines, the book also provides information which assists the trainer with performance evaluations. These easy-to-perform tests will clearly indicate the athlete's level of progress measured to the training process being followed and will also give an indication of the ultimate achievement that can be attained based on current performance levels.

The relevance of the information contained in this book makes it a must-read not only for those involved in the developmental process of athletes at school level, but also those involved in ensuring that world-class athletes achieve their full potential.



Owen van Niekerk

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen van Niekerk is a very versatile coach who has coached more than 600 South African Champions. He has coached SA and African Record holders in many events. Although he is well known as a sprint, hurdle and jump coach, he has also coached many athletes in the multi events, throws and long and middle distances. He has gained his vast knowledge and experience from being the Head Coach of the SA Defense Force for 30 years and Head Coach of the very strong Rand Afrikaans University team for 18 years. Although now on pension he still coaches at the University of Potchefstroom and runs his own club in Johannesburg. For 5 years he had done extensive research on the development of young athletes at a primary school in Johannesburg.

Owen previously received provincial colours for 10 different sports and national colours in Track and Field. He also held the SA and African Record for Triple Jump for 15 years and won SA Titles in the Decathlon. He was the national coach for Track and Field on various occasions, as well as the National coach of the first SA team to the Winter Games in Lillehammer.

Owen is an avid reader and collector of track and field books, which he religiously analyses in order to achieve the optimal training programmes for his athletes. He is passionate about the development of young athletes and he continuously strives to improve his training methods through dedicated research. He is against overtraining of athletes and strongly advocates rest and recovery as part of his programmes. He has done vast research into the development of pure speed, speed extension and explosive spring exercises. This has been coupled with research into white explosive muscle types and red fibre types in athletes.



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PART I - TESTING FOR TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS

I have designed these tests for the coach who wants to test his/her athletes, while doing practical coaching to see what the athletes' needs are and where he/she stands with the athletes' progress. Sometimes we just coach and do not know why the athletes are not progressing or improving.

These tests are guidelines and, when using them, the coach will find out what must be improved or where the athlete needs more coaching so that performance can be improved. These tests are practical and can be done on a day to day basis with hand timing and coaching.

If you look at the 100-metre test, for example, you will find times from the slowest to the fastest. The tests are divided into different sections that are needed to run a good 100 metres, and include all the energy systems that an athlete needs for this event.

EXAMPLE

- Flying 20 metres (for pure speed).
- Start 20 metres (for reaction and acceleration).
- 50 metre start, from ATP into CP.
- Last 20 metres for speed endurance (time lost).
- 10 second run.
- 15 second run.
- 120 and 150 metres.

Do each test and then circle the answer as follows:

Flying 20 metres = 2.16 = 11.8

Start 20 metres = 2.84 = 11.6

Start 50 metres = 6.45 = 11.9

Last 20 metres = 2.26 = 12.2

10 seconds = 82 metres = 12.3

15 seconds = 122 metres = 12.3

120 metres = 14.6 = 12.3

150 metres = 18.8 = 12.4

Total time = 96.8

Divided by 8 = 12.1 (number of tests)

Therefore she will run = 12.1

Work then, for example, on the 10 seconds, 15 seconds, 120 metres, or where the test results are not good. There are tests for the Sub Youth and Youth athletes for the events not normally run, like 70mH, 150H etc.

I have worked on and developed these tests during a lifetime of competing myself and during the more than 50 years of coaching experience. The reader must remember that these tests are just a guideline, but can be used to benefit, not only the coach but the athlete as well. This is a good and easy method because the athletes will soon see why the coach has changed their programme or improved a certain aspect of their training.