



# Kicking Higher: Australian Taekwondo Athlete's High-performance Pathway

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## Abstract

**Purpose** This article seeks to examine the high-performance pathway of Australian Taekwondo and the potential influence that impacts recent growth in international Taekwondo events at the meso level.

**Method** Utilising qualitative document analysis, this study reveals Australian Taekwondo's policies, and systems, specifically high-performance pathway. Australian Taekwondo's evolution, policies, and systems. Our dataset comprises 21 official documents, encompassing annual reports and publications from Australian Taekwondo, Combat Australia, and the Australian Institute of Sport. Supplementary data were sourced from media outlets, video content from Australian Taekwondo (AT), literature, articles, and official website information from Australia Taekwondo, Combat Australia (Combat AUS), the Australian Institute of Sport, and World Taekwondo (WT).

**Result** Based on qualitative content analysis, this study presents three pivotal findings: First, the high-performance pathway of Australian Taekwondo is facilitated by two distinct organisations: AT and Combat AUS. Their collaboration aims for efficient and subdivided management of Taekwondo performance. The high-performance pathway for Australian Taekwondo is as follows: 1) Uncategorized, 2) Emerging, 3) Developing, 4) Podium Potential, 5) Podium Ready, and 6) Podium. An additional distinctive category, termed Associate, exists for athletes oscillating between the Podium Ready and Podium stages. Third, the formation of the National Performance Centre, which is athlete-centric and coach-led, along with the recruitment of a Korean coach signifies the high effort toward international growth of its performance.

**Conclusion** This study reveals that AT and Combat AUS frameworks offer a well-defined trajectory for Taekwondo athletes in Australia, steering their progression from beginners to elite practitioners. The findings contribute to the presentation of an overview of Australia's Taekwondo policy and system.

**Keywords** Sport Policy, Sport System, High-performance, Taekwondo, Australia

## I. Introduction

Taekwondo, which originated in Korea, is a martial art that employs a systematic grading structure to measure an individual's progress. This sport is intricately designed around five fundamental components: foundational techniques, predefined patterns (forms), principles

of self-defence, competitive sparring in a sportive context, and the practice of breaking objects (Toskovic, Blessing, & Williford, 2004). World Taekwondo (WT), formerly known as the World Taekwondo Federation, has approximately 11.59 million Poom and Dan members (Kukkiwon, 2023) across 212 national associations (WT, 2022).

Taekwondo stands out as one of the most well-regu-

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lated martial arts worldwide. The inclusion of Taekwondo in the Sydney 2000 Olympics has significantly contributed to its heightened popularity and recognition in Australia (Loy, McLachlan, & Booth, 2009). This Olympic recognition has not only elevated its status on the global stage but has also fostered greater interest and participation in the country (Akehurst, Southcott & Lambert, 2020).

Recently, there has been a noteworthy inclusion of Taekwondo in the Physical Education curricula across Australia (Akehurst et al. 2020). This integration underscores the sport's increasing significance and relevance in the country's educational landscape.

Concurrently, Australian Taekwondo (AT) demonstrates an ambitious vision, setting its sights on fostering and elevating Taekwondo's stature to elite standards, both domestically and on the global stage. In 2022, Australia made a strategic move by enlisting a Korean coach to helm the national Taekwondo team. Recently, Australia's subsequent performances in international Taekwondo events have exhibited a marked ascent in terms of achievements. For instance, in 2022, Australia earned a bronze medal at the 2022 Grand Prix (GP) in Paris, 1 silver and 3 bronze medals at the European Open 2022, and 1 silver and 1 bronze medal at the Korean Open 2022 (AT, 2022). Such tangible successes on the global stage bolster the assertion that Australia is emerging as a formidable force in the world of Taekwondo.

In light of the burgeoning success of Australian Taekwondo on the global stage, this article aims to examine the factors and strategies that have contributed to AT's success in the international arena, with a focus on the high-performance pathway, talent identification, and development. Specifically, our study focuses on the recent development of Australia's elite sports policies and programmes from 2017 to 2023. While the factors that predicate international sporting triumph are manifold, spanning the macro, meso, and micro levels, it is imperative to underscore the significance of the meso level (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003). As

emphasised by De Bosscher and De Knop (2003), the meso level plays a pivotal role in shaping the infrastructure and overarching systemic framework tailored to athlete development and support.

In alignment with this focus, this article poses key research questions: 1) How does Australia administer and oversee Taekwondo at both the club and high-performance tiers within the nation at meso level; and 2) How does AT cultivate its high-performance pathway?

Our research question seeks to thoroughly explore the high-performance pathway, particularly Talent Identification and Development (TID), of AT. The results presents significant insights into the high-performance pathway of Taekwondo, achieved through a comprehensive and systematic analysis.

This article begins with a literature review centred on a conceptual framework with a brief context of a sporting pathway in Australia. Subsequently, the AT context and employed methodology are introduced. The paper then presents the key findings, concluding with a discussion, implications, and an outline of its limitations.

## 1. Contextualising Sporting Pathway in Australia

Australia's longstanding sports tradition is integrally woven into its cultural fabric, with sports often seen as emblematic of its national identity (Ellmer & Rynne, 2019).

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) has crafted the Foundations, Talent, Elite, and Mastery (FTEM) framework, an initiative designed to encapsulate diverse sporting trajectories, as suggested by Gulbin, Croser, Morley, and Weissensteiner (2013) (see Figure 1). This FTEM framework serves as a pragmatic instrument, aiding a plethora of sporting stakeholders, including National Sporting Organisations (NSOs), their respective personnel, coaches, educators, and parents, among others, in meticulously reviewing, strategising, and bolstering athlete pathways (AIS, n.d.). At its core, the framework is categorised into four overarching phases of athlete development, namely (1) Foundation, (2) Talent, (3) Elite, and (4) Mastery. These broad phases are then intricately



Figure 1. The FTEM framework of the AIS (adapted from AIS, n.d.).

subdivided into 10 more granular micro phases, ensuring a comprehensive approach to athlete progression (AIS, n.d.).

More importantly, the FTEM framework is a flexible guide for athlete development rather than a strict TID model (e.g., no set age limits, allowing for diverse athlete pathways) (Gulbin et al., 2014). Precisely, the FTEM addresses the whole journey of an athlete, not just the TID aspect (Gulbin et al., 2014). To put it succinctly, only the T1 (Demonstration of Potential) and T2 (Talent Verification) stages of the FTEM are directly tied to the concept of TID, as highlighted by Gulbin et al. (2014). This FTEM framework of Australia reveals an overview of sporting pathway related to the high-performance pathway of AT.

## 2. Australian Taekwondo Context

While definitive records remain elusive, existing evidence suggests that Taekwondo was introduced to the Australian sports scene in the late 1960s (AJS Self Defence, n.d.). By the early 1970s, recognising the nascent stage of Taekwondo in Australia and the consequent need for expert guidance, Australia extended invitations to seasoned Taekwondo instructors from Korea (ATMF, 2010). In response, the Korea Sport & Olympic Committee (KSOC) deputed Cho Yong-Dae, a 5th Dan practitioner, from June 1970 to June 1972 (Maeil Business News, 1970). Subsequently, in 1971, an influx of Korean Taekwondo experts marked their arrival on Australian shores, spearheading the nationwide dissemination of the martial arts.

When the International Olympic Committee (IOC) included Taekwondo as an official sport at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Australia secured one gold and one silver medal in the Taekwondo events. This notable accomplishment on the Olympic stage bolstered the sport's prominence within the nation. As of 2023, there are 40,534 individuals in Australia who hold Poom and Dan certifications, according to Kukkiwon (2023). However, the total number of Taekwondo practitioners may be higher if one includes those without Poom and Dan distinctions.

To date, Taekwondo has captivated a substantial cohort of Australian youth, resonating both as an avenue for self-defence and as an exhilarating competitive endeavour (Akehurst et al., 2020). Post the Covid-19 pandemic, Australia has seen a resurgence in its performance on the international Taekwondo stage. Notably, at the 2022 GP held in Paris, Australia clinched its first GP medals since 2014 (AT, 2022).

In addition to this feat, AT athletes also demonstrated commendable prowess in other tournaments. At the European Open 2022, they bagged 1 silver and 3 bronze medals, while at the Korean Open 2022, they brought home 1 silver and 1 bronze medal. Such accomplishments further highlight the importance of a case study of Australia's high-performance pathways.

## 3. Classification of Factors Leading to Global Sport Success

De Bosscher and De Knop (2003) suggest influences from the macro, meso, and micro levels which de-

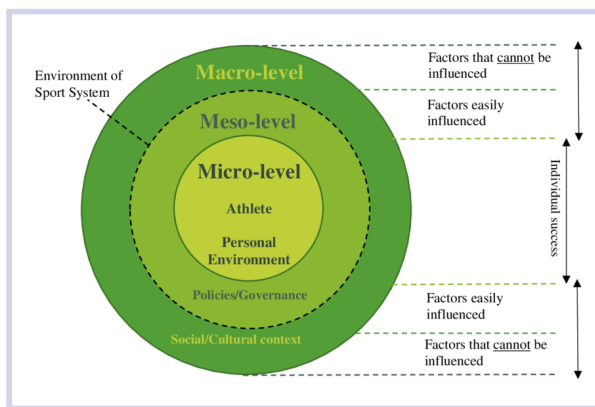


Figure 2. Model showing the relationship between factors determining individual and national success (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003)

termine international sporting success (see Figure 2). More specifically, at the macro level, one finds the broader social and cultural context that sets the stage for an athlete's journey (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003). Within the meso level, we encounter the impact of sports policies and political dynamics (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003). This level delves into the infrastructural and systemic conditions created by governments, sports organisations, and policies, which significantly affect an athlete's development and performance (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003). Finally, at the micro level, the focus narrows down to the individual athlete. Here, factors such as innate talent, physical condition, and genetic qualities come into play (De Bosscher & De Knop, 2003). As per De Bosscher et al. (2006), in situations where the meso-level conditions are identical, elite athletes stand a substantial chance of succeeding in a sport based on the quality of policy and investment choices made within the elite sports domain.

This study is centred on the meso level, which is characterised by the predominant influence of sports policies and political dynamics on the infrastructural and systemic conditions that impact athletes (De Bosscher et al., 2006). This realm critically determines the allocation of support and resources that can either enhance or hinder an athlete's potential to succeed. Given this perspective, a detailed examination of the high-performance pathway, specifically TID, of AT at the meso level can offer crucial insights.

#### 4. The Sport Policy Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS) Model

When exploring the meso-level dimension, the Sport Policy Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS) Model proves to be a valuable analytical tool (Sotiriadou et al., 2014; Truyens et al., 2014; Brouwers et al., 2015). This model serves as a useful framework for understanding the intricate dynamics of sports policy and its role in achieving success in international sports (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & Bottenburg, 2015). It provides a structured approach to examining the various factors and policies that contribute to an athlete or team's performance on the global stage.

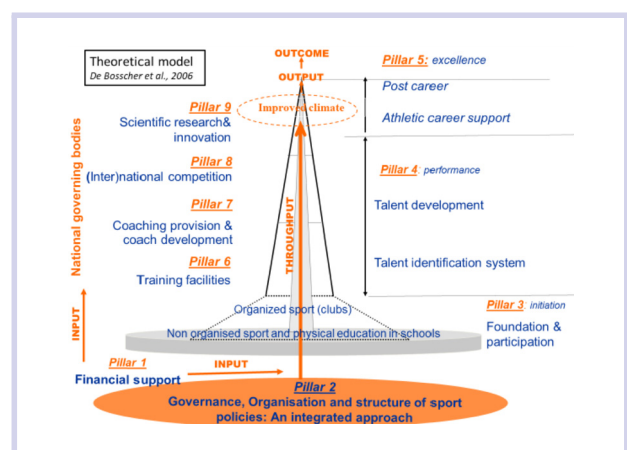


Figure 3. The SPLISS model (De Bosscher et al., 2015)

The first pillar pertains to financial support, which plays a crucial role in shaping policies for creating an optimal environment for elite sports. Pillar 2 emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to policy development. Moving on, Pillars 3 to 5 encompass the stages of elite athlete development, including foundation and participation (Pillar 3), talent identification and development systems (Pillar 4), and support for athletes during and after their careers (Pillar 5). The remaining four pillars—training facilities (Pillar 6), coaching provision and coach development (Pillar 7), (inter-)national competition (Pillar 8), and scientific research (Pillar 9)—are all deemed essential for enhancing the athletic performance of elite athletes.

This study specifically examines the Australian elite

Taekwondo policy and system based on the SPLISS model (De Bosscher et al., 2015).

## II. Methods

### 1. Data Collection & Analysis

This study utilised a qualitative methodology technique to gain a deeper understanding of AT. The primary objective of the document analysis was to contextualise and understand the landscape of high-performance athlete pathways and programmes in Australia (Bowen, 2009; Stake, 1995). We collected 21 documents encompassing policy reports, strategic business plans, and high-performance pathway frameworks from the AIS, AT, and Combat AUS that created were from 2017 to 2023.

To enhance the study's depth and breadth, additional online resources were examined. This included data from the AT, WT, and Combat AUS's official websites, along with relevant media reports, articles, videos, and supplementary grey literature published between 2017 and 2023.

The study involved a meticulous process of data integration and analysis. Initially, data was systemically integrated from 21 distinct documents into a single comprehensive file. Subsequently, this data was incorporated into NVivo 12 software, enhancing the efficiency of the analysis by collating evidence and categorising it into pertinent contents, as suggested by Alhojailan and Ibrahim (2012). The analysis commenced with a thorough and critical examination of the data, undertaken repeatedly by the researchers. During this phase, we simultaneously contextualised the AT policy and system landscape. Furthermore, initial coding was developed employing a deductive approach based on the SPLISS model, which served as the primary analytical framework for the study, following the guidelines outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Concurrently, inductive coding methods were employed, allowing for

the emergence of codes directly from the raw data. In so doing, we identified several fundamental elements within the structure of AT. Among these, pillars two and seven emerged as particularly significant. We examined critical aspects such as the purpose of policies, the mechanisms of their implementation, and the impact they have on the sport. Finally, we aimed to ensure a holistic understanding of the findings by interpreting them.

Guba (1981) suggested that trustworthiness should be considered in qualitative research. Today, these criteria are used as the basis for improving the quality of qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002). For the trustworthiness of this study, co-authors meticulously assessed and provided feedback on the author's analysis and interpretations. This collaborative critique allowed for the honing of themes and arguments in alignment with our analytical framework. The process continued until reaching an agreement on the interpretation of the findings. Next section, we present the findings of this study.

## III. Results

### 1. Australian Taekwondo High-performance Pathway

The Combat AUS in conjunction with both AT and the AIS, has meticulously formulated a specialised matrix. This matrix distinctly delineates each of the six of categorisation levels pertinent to Taekwondo in the Australian context (Combat AUS, 2021). According to the AT (AT, 2022), this system classifies athletes into six distinct stages: (1) Uncategorised, (2) Emerging, where raw talents are initially identified; (3) Developing, signifying athletes who are refining their skills; (4) Podium Potential, pointing to those demonstrating capabilities to secure competitive accolades in the foreseeable future; (5) Podium ready, indicating athletes on the cusp of achieving top-tier results; and finally, (6) Podium, which represents those who are consistently performing at the



highest level.

Not only this, an exceptional category, termed ‘Associate’, exists for athletes oscillating between the ‘Podium ready’ and ‘Podium’ stages. The ‘Associate’ category is for those who are distinguished by their demonstrated potential or their capacity to provide significant value and contribution to the Domestic Taekwondo Event (DTE) (AT, 2022). Moving from the ‘Uncategorised’ to ‘Podium’ tiers, athletes are required to meet a set of performance indicators to bridge the gap and ascend to the next level (AT, 2022). As of 2023, within the high-performance framework, the distribution of individuals across various categories is Uncategorised ( $n=1$ ), Emerging ( $n=3$ ), Developing ( $n=8$ ), Podium Potential ( $n=1$ ), Associate ( $n=1$ ), with Podium Ready and Podium both at ( $n=0$ ) (Combat AUS, 2023).

The process of athlete categorisation is entrusted to the National Categorisation Panel (NCP). The NCP is composed of esteemed members from both the Combat Institute of Australia (CIA) High-performance programme and AT (AT, 2021). The NCP’s structure incorporates roles such as the Combat AUS National Performance Coach, the Combat AUS Performance Director, the AT National Performance Pathway Lead, the Combat AUS

Performance Pathways Manager, and a designated AT Coach (Combat AUS, 2020). Such a composition guarantees that the panel possesses the necessary expertise and understanding to make judicious and informed decisions regarding athlete categorisation.

‘Uncategorised’ which is the initial stage, encompasses athletes who are either new to the sport or yet to be formally recognised within a specific development tier. Positioned between the mid-uncategorised and emerging tiers, athletes are required to meet a set of performance indicators to bridge the gap and ascend to the next level, ‘Emerging’ (AT, 2022). The criteria include international recognition, consistent international performance, national acclaim, and holistic evaluation. More specifically, athletes being able to (1) achieve a Top-8 placement at the Cadet or Junior World Championships; (2) secure multiple Top-8 finishes at Junior or Senior Continental Open events (excluding Oceania); (3) be a medallist at State & National Championships; and (4) beyond mere achievements, an athlete’s physical prowess, technical abilities, and performance behaviours are assessed (AT, 2022).

Upon demonstrating success in the ‘Emerging’ stage, athletes progress to the ‘Developing’ tier, which con-

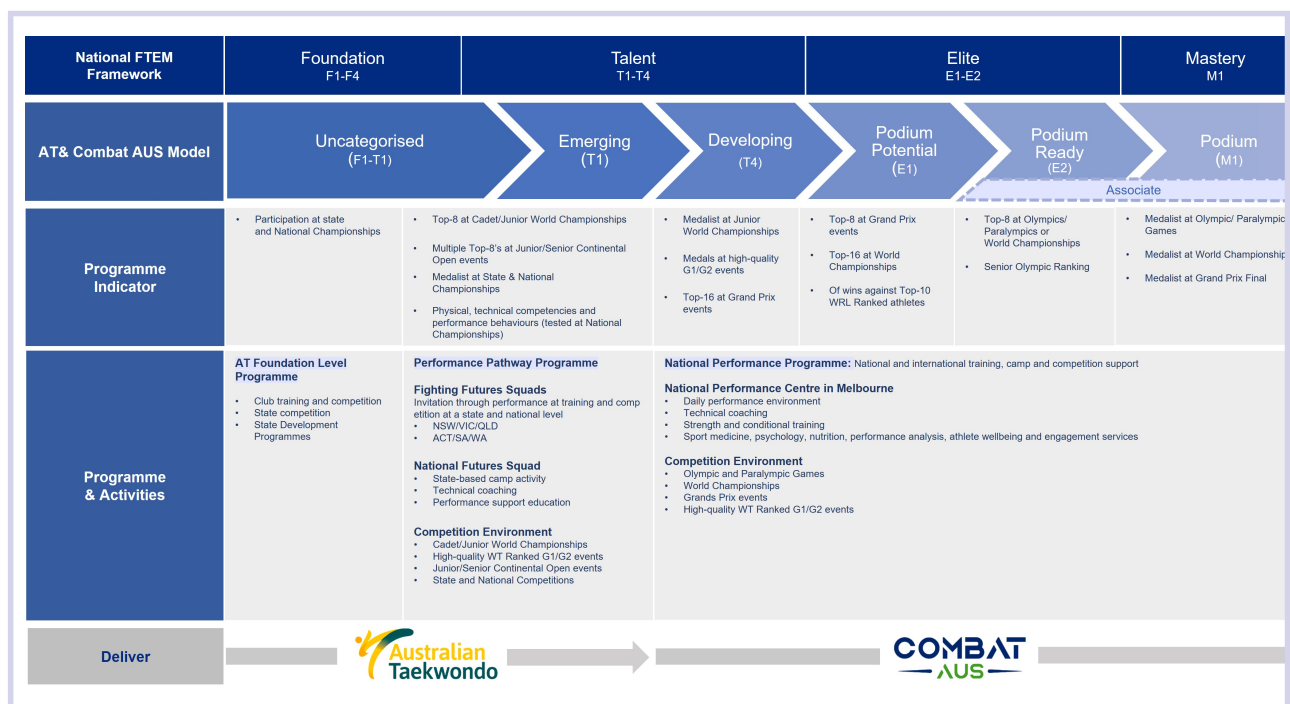


Figure 4. AT High-performance Progression Pathway (adapted from AT, 2021)

stitutes the third phase of the athlete's developmental pathway. In this crucial phase, there's a marked emphasis on attaining significant accolades on the global scene, including winning medals at the Junior World Championships, High-Quality G1/G2 Taekwondo Events, or the Top 16 at GP events (AT, n.d.). The 'Developing' stage demands not just participation but also exemplary performance at elite international events, indicating an athlete's readiness to transition to even higher echelons of the sport.

Transitioning to the 'Podium potential' stage represents an athlete's elevated status and increased expectations in the realm of international Taekwondo. The criteria for this stage underscore the significance of consistently remarkable performances at the highest tiers of competition. For instance, securing a position within the top eight at GP Events or attaining a top-16 rank at World Championships—coupled with participation in at least two matches—demonstrates significant achievement. Additionally, athletes included in this stage are those who have won against elite competitors ranked in the top 10 of the World Ranking List (AT, 2022). In the 12 months leading up to the categorisation, several key criteria are evaluated for each athlete. Firstly, there is an assessment of the athlete's dedication to the national training regimen, with particular emphasis on their attendance at all national camps they were invited to. Secondly, for those athletes who received financial assistance, such as subsidies for travel and accommodation, there is an expectation that they have fully participated in all international competitions and camps for which they were chosen (Combat AUS, 2020).

Subsequent stages in the process include 'Podium ready' followed by the culminating stage known as 'Podium'. Athletes classified under the 'Podium ready' category are those who have achieved a top-8 placement either at the Olympics, World Championships, or within the WT Senior Olympics Ranking. Meanwhile, the 'Podium' category is reserved for athletes who have secured medals at prestigious events such as the Olympics, World Championships, or the GP final.

## 2. Australian High-performance Programme & Activities

The AT and the Combat AUS have meticulously developed a range of high-performance programmes and activities tailored for AT athletes. These initiatives span the spectrum of athlete development, from those 'Uncategorised' to 'Podium' categorisation. Each stage of an athlete's progression is met with distinct, quality-assured programmes, and activities, ensuring optimal growth and advancement within the sport.

### 1) AT Foundational Level Programmes

The AT offers foundational level programmes specifically designed for athletes who are at the 'Uncategorised' stage. These programmes encompass activities such as club training and competitions at the club level (AT, 2021). Furthermore, athletes at this stage are given the opportunity to participate in state competitions. These state competitions and subsequent development programmes are offered by the respective state Taekwondo organisations, tailored based on the athlete's place of residence. This ensures a comprehensive and localised approach to nurturing their talent and potential.

### 2) Performance Pathway Programmes

Between the 'mid-Uncategorised' and 'Emerging' stages, there is a notable expansion in opportunities aimed at fostering individual talent through the provision of a structured performance pathway programme. This programme is intricately designed and comprises two main components: (1) the Fighting Futures Squads, and (2) the National Futures Squad (AT, 2021). Both elements of this pathway serve to provide athletes with the resources, training, and exposure necessary to transition seamlessly from one developmental stage to the next, ensuring their growth within the sport of Taekwondo.

#### (1) Fighting Futures Squads

The Fighting Futures Programme was established to

foster the advancement of distinctively pinpointed pre-elite athletes in 2021 (AT, 2021). This initiative bears a significant resemblance to the UK's 'Fighting Chance', a talent identification programme (see Lee, 2023). In support of this initiative, partnerships have been formed with educational institution, the Australian College of Physical Education (ACPE) and the University of Queensland (UQ) (AT, 2021). The Fighting Futures Squads is an exclusive programme, accessible only through invitation based on an athlete's exemplary Taekwondo performance in both training and competitions at both the state and national levels (AT, 2021). As of 2021, both New South Wales and Queensland are actively championing the development of 15 eminent athletes each, as part of this programme (AT, 2021).

### (2) National Futures Squads

The National Futures Squad represents a more advanced tier compared to the Fighting Futures Squad. As the next step in the developmental pathway, it offers a comprehensive array of support and opportunities to its members. These include state-based training camps, specialised technical coaching, and robust performance support education (AT, 2021). Such an approach ensures that athletes are given a well-rounded experience, equipping them with both the technical skills and the knowledge required to excel in the sport of Taekwondo.

Within this programme, athletes are presented with opportunities to compete in prestigious events, including the Cadet and Junior World Championships, high-calibre WT Ranked G1 or G2 events, Junior and Senior Continental Open events, as well as state and national competitions (AT, 2021). This structure ensures that the athletes are consistently exposed to competitive environments that challenge and enhance their skills and proficiency.

### 3) National Performance Programmes

The National Performance Centre (NPC) in Melbourne has emerged as a premier institution meticulously tail-

ored to cater to the requirements of Australia's elite Taekwondo athletes since 2018 (Palmer, 2018). Its cardinal aim is to bolster opportunities for these pre-eminent athletes, facilitating collaborative training in an environment singularly dedicated to performance enhancement (AT, n.d.). Originally christened the High-Performance Hub, it has been rebranded as the NPC for Taekwondo, symbolising its commitment to being a full-time, athlete-centric, and coach-driven performance milieu in 2021 (AT, 2021).

More importantly, in alignment with the evolution of the NPC and under the auspices of Combat AUS, strategic recruitment was made. A former Korean national coach, renowned for his profound expertise and vast experience in Taekwondo was appointed as the Australian national coach in early 2022 (Combat AUS 2022). Furthermore, Combat AUS has pledged sustained support, ensuring the continuity of the NPC's mission up to the Paris 2024 Olympics while the Small NSO Infrastructure Grant programme supported the NPC (AT, 2022). In 2022, AT received an \$81,907 AIS grant boost to help transform its training area into an integrated world-class facility (AT, 2022). The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) has formally acknowledged the NPC as an official Olympic Training Centre, further cementing its stature in the echelons of elite athletic training and preparation in the country. As of 2023, 23 Taekwondo athletes train at the NPC (Combat AUS, 2023).

The NPC does not merely concentrate on technical prowess. It provides a holistic suite of services that attend to the multifaceted needs of elite athletes. Notably, it covers areas like strength and conditioning (S&C), sports medicine, physiotherapy, and the essential facets of athlete wellbeing and engagement (AW&E) (AT, n.d.). Financially, the investment channelled towards the NPC can be bifurcated into two main domains (AT, n.d.). The first pertains to the rental of the high-grade facility which acts as the regular training milieu, equipped with the necessary training apparatus and mats. The second domain encompasses an extensive range of performance services, which include, but are not limited to,



physiotherapy, sports medicine, AW&E, and S&C (AT, n.d.).

Moreover, AT's recent endeavours at the NPC, particularly in camp and overseas training, are noticeable. It orchestrated a two-week stay for Korean athletes and coaches, aiming to enhance the training environment during a crucial phase before upcoming competitions in 2022 (AT, 2022). Furthermore, the team from the NPC embarked on a journey to Korea, blending competition with training camp experiences. Their schedule encompassed a week at the revered Korean National Training Centre and another week collaborating with the professional Taekwondo club, Samsung S1 (AT, 2022). Both experiences presented invaluable opportunities for AT. The AT acknowledged the immense value of the tour, emphasising its significance of critical training and stimulation to the training environment in subsequent achievements (AT, 2022).

## IV. Discussion

This study focused on exploring the policy and system surrounding high-performance Taekwondo in Australia, spanning from 2017 to the present day. The findings highlight an increased interest in the international success of AT, particularly after the inception of Combat AUS. Additionally, the findings corroborate the applicability of the SPLISS model within the context of AT. We further discuss the intricate structure of the Australian high-performance pathway, replete with specific programmes and activities tailored for each developmental stage. To better contextualise and elucidate the nuances of this pathway, we align our findings with the SPLISS model, as proposed by De Bosscher et al. (2015). This juxtaposition facilitates a deeper understanding of the integrated mechanisms that drive athlete development and progression within the Australian context.

The findings presented a delineation of the delivery of high-performance pathways and programmes between two distinguished institutions: the AT and Combat

AUS (i.e., Pillar 2) (De Bosscher et al., 2015). Specifically, the AT oversees and delivers training from the initial 'Uncategorised' stage up to the 'Emerging' level. In contrast, Combat AUS takes charge from the 'Developing' stage, providing specialised support to athletes at this level. This distinct partitioning in responsibilities illustrates strategic endeavours by both organisations to optimise efficiency in TID systems within the domain of Taekwondo.

The framework established by AT and Combat AUS delineates a coherent pathway for Taekwondo athletes in Australia, transitioning them from beginners to experts. This structured methodology aids in identifying budding talents and ensures the judicious allocation of resources, as suggested by De Bosscher et al. (2015). Consequently, it offers a comprehensive structure that supports the enhancement of skills for Taekwondo (inter)national context.

Furthermore, the establishment and evolution of the NPC can be closely linked to the sixth pillar, which pertains to training facilities (De Bosscher et al., 2015). The recent transformation of the NPC into a full-time, athlete-centric, and coach-driven performance hub has been underscored by the remarkable performance of AT athletes on the international stage. This progression, evident since the commencement of training at the specialised training facility serves as a testament to the pivotal role that specialised facilities play in enhancing an athlete's prowess as suggested by De Bosscher et al. (2015). Such infrastructure not only provides athletes with the necessary physical amenities but also fosters a conducive environment where they can focus solely on training, benefiting from the continuous guidance of experienced coaches. As De Bosscher et al. (2015) argued, the quality and accessibility of training facilities are fundamental elements in the success equation for high-performance sports.

It is also imperative to highlight the strategic recruitment of a coach from Korea, who previously held the esteemed position of the Korean national coach (i.e., Pillar 7) (De Bosscher et al., 2015). De Bosscher et al.

(2015) highlight the importance of coaching provision for international sporting success. The AT recognised the immense reservoir of knowledge and experience that this coach brought, especially in the realm of Taekwondo (AT, 2022). This success in AT can be attributed to the recent recruitment of a Korean coach, coupled with the establishment of a full-time, residential national training centre in Melbourne. The findings of this article are in agreement with Lee's study (2023), which suggests that in sports, significant benefits can be derived from acquiring expertise from regions where the sport originated, or from areas with a longstanding tradition in the specific discipline. The rationale behind this strategy stems from the understanding that such experts, stemming from the sport's origin, are often embedded with deep-seated knowledge, cultural nuances, and unique training methodologies that have been honed over generations. This wealth of experience can offer a fresh perspective and introduce novel techniques, which can be instrumental in enhancing an athlete's performance.

Furthermore, the findings show that the integration of a Korean coach into the AT system has notably opened up broader avenues for collaborative training sessions with Korean teams, a nation renowned for excellence in the sport. This collaboration, fostered by the coach's existing relationships and credentials, may contribute to athletes directly engaging with some of the best practitioners in the world, benefiting from exposure to Korean athletes.

The positive aftermath of this strategic move is evident in the empirical data: Australia's subsequent growth in international Taekwondo events may not be merely coincidental. The enhanced performance can be attributed to the melding of the Korean coach's expertise with Australia's talent pool and the invaluable and cooperative training chances with elite Korean teams. The findings underscore the tangible improvements, thereby affirming the importance of seeking specialised expertise and links, especially from regions with a deep-seated legacy in the sport.

However, the study identified a lacuna in Pillar 5, per-

taining to post-career aspects of Taekwondo athletes. The lack of data in this area could be attributed to the relative novelty of Taekwondo as a competitive sport and the prevalence of active athletes in the field. This gap highlights a potential area for future research and policy development, focusing on the long-term career trajectories and support mechanisms for athletes transitioning out of active competition.

## V. Conclusion

This article examined the high-performance pathway of AT with the elite sport programmes in the pathway, based on some of the SPLISS model (De Bosscher et al., 2015). Our finding shows the framework established by AT and Combat AUS delineates a coherent pathway for Taekwondo athletes in Australia, transitioning them from beginners to experts.

This structured pathway aids in identifying budding talents and ensures the judicious allocation of resources. As a result, it provides a thorough framework that fosters the development of skills within both national and international Taekwondo contexts. For enhanced efficiency in delivering training and development programmes, there's a delineation in responsibility between two major organisations.

The programmes ranging from the 'Uncategorised' to 'Emerging' levels are administered by the AT. Conversely, those from the 'Developing' to 'Podium' stages are overseen by Combat AUS, an organisation specialising in martial arts. Moreover, the presence of high-quality training facilities coupled with expert coaching underscores their significance in the recent development of AT. This suggests that the combination of top-notch infrastructure and proficient coaching plays a pivotal role in fostering the growth and advancement of the sport.

While our research primarily adopts a descriptive approach rather than an exploratory one, it still offers a comprehensive overview of the Taekwondo landscape in Australia, specifically its high-performance pathway.

Furthermore, our study illuminates potential factors that may have contributed to the recent surge in the growth of AT. This foundational understanding sets the stage for further examination into specific drivers and mechanisms underlying the sport's development in the region.

In future research, we recommend conducting comprehensive interviews with key stakeholders in the Australian high-performance pathway and programmes. This includes coaches, athletes, and managers. By exploring their experiences and perceptions, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies of elite sport policies and systems in Australia. This deeper insight can potentially reveal areas of improvement, offer suggestions for best practices, and provide clarity on the effectiveness of existing policies.

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## 호주 엘리트 태권도 육성체계: 재능 발굴 및 개발 프로그램

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### Abstract

**목적** 호주 태권도가 국제무대에서 강력한 위상을 구축하며 지속적으로 발전하고 있는 동향을 감안할 때, 본 연구는 이러한 성장세의 기초를 이루는 호주의 엘리트 태권도 우수선수 육성 체계와 그것이 성장에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지 메소차원에서 분석하고자 한다.

**방법** 연구의 데이터 세트는 총 21개로 호주 태권도 협회, 컴벳 호주, 호주 스포츠 협회의 연간 보고서 및 간행물을 포함한다. 아울러 신뢰 있는 풍부한 데이터 확보를 위해 추가적으로 미디어, 비디오 콘텐츠, 기사 및 웹사이트에서 추출된 데이터와 함께 검토하였다.

**결과** 본 연구에서 도출된 결과는 크게 세 가지 주요한 통찰로 나뉜다. 첫째, 호주 태권도의 엘리트 육성 체계는 Austrian TKD와 Combat AUS 라는 두 특징적인 조직이 주도하고 있으며, 조직간 협력은 태권도의 경쟁력을 높이는 데 필수적인 역할을 한다. 둘째, 호주 태권도 선수를 위해 제시된 엘리트 육성경로는 1) 미분류, 2) 신흥, 3) 개발, 4) 시상대 유망, 5) 시상대 준비, 6) 시상대 단계로 구성되어있다. 특히, 주목해야하는 점은 5~ 6) 단계에서 우수 선수를 위해 Associate라는 차별화된 분류를 제시한다. 셋째, 호주 태권도의 국제적 성과를 향한 강한 의지와 열망은 국립 태권도 센터의 설립, 선수중심 코치 주도의 트레이닝 환경 구축, 한국에서의 전문 코치영입에서 찾아볼 수 있다.

**결론** 본 연구를 통해 AT와 Combat AUS의 전략적 프레임워크가 호주 태권도 선수의 성장과정에 있어 명확한 지침과 방향성을 제시하고 있음을 확인하였다. 이러한 연구 결과는 호주 태권도의 우수선수 육성 체계와 전략 그리고 정책 시스템을 이해하는 데에 중요한 기초자료로 활용될 수 있다.

**주제어** 스포츠 정책, 스포츠 시스템, 우수선수 육성체계, 태권도, 호주

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