

## DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PLAYERS: SOCIAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS - EXAMPLE OF BASKETBALL

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### SUMMARY

On numerous occasions, the great talents disappeared due to a lack of knowledge of certain socio-psychological and anthropological dimensions of sport. Many young players after the first game where they made a reputation, lost in the multitude of average players. All that players could make a team of a big potential. If the aforementioned principles were taken into account, if the *way the players approached the sport was more professional* and more socio-anthropological, many of these talents could become the standard players in the regular team of their club and also a regular players of a national team.

**Key Words:** sport, game, young players, education, development.

Creating a player is a difficult and longlasting process that, *systematically* speaking, may be presented with a cybernetic model of input (entry) into the training processes and output (exit), more concretely speaking, with the creation of players with productive orientation.

A young player takes from his surroundings, which includes culture, area, race, nation, stratum, class, family, and education. He is in great measure determined by his life conditions and other conditioning processes. There are three widely accepted conceptions, particular ones or in the combinations, that explain the conditions and situational influences involved in the development of young players.

Young players have to learn to respect individual differences within their group, to accept and to live together with their teammates that, in some cases, can belong to different social group, race, religion, ethnic group, country, or town. They have to respect the differences that appear while playing basketball because some of them play better than others, some acquire certain skills quicker than others, and some are playing longer than others. (Jose Maria Buceta, former Spanish Women's National Team Coach).

*Genetic determinism* proceeds from heredity and, basically speaking, it claims that many individual's manifestations are a matter of heredity and of the

things we inherited from our ancestors (temper, character, temperament).

*Psychological determinism* claims that the forms of behaviour of a young player are the result of what was done to us by our parents. The education and experience from childhood essentially predetermines the development of the person and his character structure. If a player is afraid of being a group leader, this is, among other staff, it is the result of the parents' education. A young player that feels very guilty when he makes a mistake, »remembers« the emotional scenario from the time when he was vulnerable, sensitive and dependant. He can be influenced by possible punishment when his emotions suffered, when he was rejected and underestimated, when he compared himself to others, when he didn't meet certain expectations.

*Ambiental determinism* basically says that the individual's (player's) development is under the influence of chiefs, coaches, opponents, economic situations, and state policy. One should not forget that many young sportsmen come from countries that pay a lot of attention to sports, but there are always those ones that come from countries that pay no attention to sports. Top achievements of individuals are the reflection of these various conditions but also of the self-confidence, of the hard work performed in order to help oneself efficiently.

Progress in the development of a young player is very important to the basketball coach. If he doesn't take it into account in his approach to the player, it is very probable that there will be *misinterpretations* regarding the capability of *realizing certain achievement* - especially among young players - and that could have further and serious consequences.

In the constant learning of the basketball technique, tactical variants of the court movement, the psychology of training and learning is also crucial. Many coaches, regarding young players *do not know the curved line of the achievements*, and they should be familiar with it from their experience. A young player relatively quickly reaches a certain level because he possesses *great skills*. If he stops suddenly, he doesn't go further. This is the sign that such a player reached the plateau, and relative *stagnation* occurs, or even a *fall* and because of that he starts to feel *insecure*.

There are numerous cases where great talents, frustrated with not knowing such learning principles, became insecure and blocked in their further sports development.

Many young basketball players get reputations after early matches, and then get lost in the multitude of average players.

One could make a few teams of great players' potential out of them. If one had thought timely at this approach, if *the way of approaching these players had been more expert in sports* and more socio-psychological, many of these talents would have become standard players in the permanent lineup of their club and perhaps of the national team, too.

For such a positive development, based on *optimal learning*, it is necessary to provide at least the minimum of *emotional relaxation* (not emotional devastation!) and more pleasant atmosphere at training sessions (»joyful training«), especially during the technical training. When learning fine coordination movements, like basketball techniques, spiritual relaxation is extremely important, and it is crucial that there is no convulsion. One should create an atmosphere of *joy* and *happiness*. When one gains and trains condition, everything is harder, more tiring, more aggressive. When one trains the tactics, then everything is more thought of, with a distance and one learns in a step-by-step fashion. Some coaches realized that the players' technique and work with the ball requires some sort of musicality, relaxation and joy. That's why they succeed.

If you want to train kids really well, you have to know something about their development (corporeal, cognitive and soul development).

Evolution phases of the child should be known well in order to *adjust* the training in the proper way.

On the contrary, there is a typical *overburdening*. This is no pleasure to anyone, and children stop playing basketball already when teenagers because of it. At that time, other activities, perhaps adventures too, other sports become more important than playing basketball.

If one analyzes more thoroughly the development of body motoric, one could observe a precondition of the psychomotor development - movement development. First soft, cartilaginous tissue in the process of ossification becomes harder. At the same time, with neuromuscular maturation, this is the precondition for the child to learn to sit, stand, and walk. All these processes are mainly the processes of maturing that are related to nutrition that has to be adjusted to the age. One cannot almost influence these processes and it would be unwisely to force them with too early exercises. Anytime you force a child may cause development disorders and block the development processes that are supposed to happen.

Regarding the training condition in child's age, certain factors must be taken into account: *strength*, *speed*, *endurance*, *mobility*, and *skillfulness*.

1. *Strength* - It is *wise* to start strength training only *after* the beginning of puberty because as a child *naturally matures*, he depends on the growth of muscular mass. Before this period, strength training *will harm more* than be useful.
2. When talking about *speed*, the basic speed will mostly depend on the *individual predispositions* found with »fast« and slow-twitch muscle fibers.
3. Training of *endurance* in child's age was considered some time ago to be inefficient and not practical. Nowadays, there is much evidence of a child's achievements in endurance (For example: participation in 26-mile marathon races). Nevertheless, it is obvious that the attitudes of whether to train kids in endurance may be done (For example: could the extraordinary achievements of children of that age in endurance be explained with special predispositions and technical tactical instruction, related to the high level of motivation).

Research has shown that at least one thing is sure: a regular control of the pulse in a long period *cannot be used as an indicator of successful training of children in endurance* because its frequency in children that are growing is slowing down - slowing down, in that case, must not be interpreted, as it is ordinary with grown-ups, as an effect of all the training.

4. *Mobility* is very significant for basketball because it represents a basic precondition for acquiring

motoric skills in sports. It is clear that reduction will occur if one doesn't train for years.

5. *Skillfulness* is related to the neuromuscular activity that optimally regulates the processes of connection and automatization of sportsmotoric skills. Precisely, this *skillfulness* is the condition skill that can be trained most early because it perfectly suits the process of child's psychomotorical development, for which constant acquiring of new motoric skills is characteristic.

There's a special rule in the training of children: The focus of their teaching, particularly for some sport, in this case basketball, should be based on enhancing basic technical skills. In no other life period the approach to learning motorics is as easy as in the child's age.

Training with children should be planned in such a way to be more diverse, to comprise different technique skills and to make it possible for the child to become conscious of *general relations* (For example: the ability to shoot after running and coming to a stop, attempting to shoot while standing still and then jumping, as well as shooting right after receiving a pass are all familiar variants that can be trained).

Each mentioned action that is performed at the beginning rather unsuccessfully, with lots of tries and errors, becomes more perfect, more automatic with regular exercise.

By automatic, I meant that a degree of body control at which one *needn't concentrate* on is carried out as part of the movement performance. It practically occurs by itself, because it's »automatic«.

A great advantage of automatization is that an athlete can pay attention to other tasks. For example, one can concentrate on the opponent or teammate only when one doesn't have to watch the ball in dribbling and can pass it in the right moment and in the right direction. For the automatization of the court movement it is very important that the same movements are constantly repeated.

Neuromuscular activity will be optimal only with very frequent repetition of certain elements. Coaches should know that fine motoric can be improved only if the *body has had a complete rest and recovery period*.

For example, this would mean that it is not very wise to do conditioning training in the morning followed by an exercise technique in the afternoon.

Automatization may be interrupted if we become conscious of what we have learned.

It happens the same as it did to the story of the centipede. When asked by a turtle how it manages to coordinate all hundred legs, the centipede thought for a moment *about what it had never before had to think*

of and at the next moment it could not move its numerous legs forward in the right rhythm.

*Perception* is very significant in every sport. It is not by chance that: »what is the perception like, such will be the reception«. Perceptive truth differs from construed truth. In sports, it is necessary to learn perceptive logics and »tools« for *widening* and *changing* of perception. *Experience* acquired in the early days helps athletes to perceive. The experience makes *foretelling* possible. For example, it lets the experience make decisions according to few parameters and information.

Perceptive expectation may help sometimes to perceive quicker what we expect and in that way to react quickly and adequately. But there may be some confusion, most often when something we haven't hoped for appears (surprise factor in sports). That is the time to react to this unexpected stimulus longer than if we didn't expect anything at all.

The basis of sports training consists of differentiation of movements and their *coordination with visual perception*.

The perception development consists of *space and time experience*. These experiences depend on whether they are contentful or not. For example, time at the match passes quickly, while it may seem to us that the coach's lecture lasts too long, like eternity. Something similar could be said about the last minutes (seconds) of the basketball game that often seem infinite to the coach, players and spectators in a closely contested game.

The assessment of distance is crucial in further development of perception. During the development, the distance assessment becomes more realistic.

Pre-school children that handle the ball variously assess and perceive the distance; kids catch the ball when it rolls in front of their feet or when they step forward. Pre-school children at shorter distance manage much better to assess the speed of the ball and its trajectory.

With years, the experience increases and young players are capable to *exactly adjust in time* the way they have to cross with the ball trajectory.

It has been noted that, although these experiences are getting more automatized, they can, if the *factors of surroundings* change, lead to defeat. For example, it is crucial for the player to understand and recognize in a timely fashion whether the ball that flies toward him is »cut« or not. If it is very »cut« and if a player cannot catch it before it falls on the floor, the player must assess in advance what »extraordinary« direction a ball could get. For example, he has to apply according to this his own running direction and prepare

the change of direction by replacing his own balance (similar problems occur when the floor is slippery and when the ball starts to behave untypically, and the players more cautiously).

An individual organizes perception on his own and does it by *choosing* particular sense stimuli. On the basis of collected data already available by childhood, *structures are created* to which any other perception is added. Only those stimuli that we can integrate in the familiar sample, can be maintained and changed. With every additional, new experience the sample changes and widens, and becomes more individual and differentiated-under the hypothesis that in adults there are constantly new voluntary experiences, and naturally also such that are against our will. Thus, having finished the basketball match there are many versions of what was experienced. The fact that spectators belong to or are supporters of different clubs can *change the perception of the same match*.

*Motivating* young players represents mostly positive motivation that gives strength (instead of a »motive,« the word »incentive« is sometimes used). The significance of motivation in instruction of young players is huge. It is well-known that an individual, although he performs something well, may do it even better. The difference between a successful and less successful coach is in taking into account the motivation and knowledge about it. Motivating players must be individual or in smaller groups. In addition, the motivation must begin on time. However, enhanced motivation *does not help* some athletes-it often harms them. Excessive insisting may be counterproductive. Coaches sometimes with great enthusiasm stimulate the players using unusual forms (One athlete at the recent Olympic Games in Greece, for example, was motivated by listening to the epic fiddle poems). Coaches are making a mistake when they apply the same strategy of motivation to all the team members; many don't realize that they are making an error. There are players that should be prepared early. The coach should get them ready for the match that is going to be played, in seven days, for example.

On the other hand, some players become *too tense* if motivated for too long. The less preoccupied they are with their performance and tasks before the match, the less burdened they are at the start of the game.

Coaches can learn a lot about motivation. It is not enough to rely only on our feelings. If it were correct that enhanced motivation was a guarantee for success, why then do coaches speak to the players and tell them to pull themselves together, calm down, and relax. It is always necessary to take into account the

particularities of the sport and motoric forms (some motoric exercises are more complex than others).

Excessive motivation can be counterproductive in those sports whose characteristics are complex, clear, and entail *controlled coordination* - basketball is an example of this.

Apart from the motive, there are needs that can also be incentives of human behavior. The meaning of concepts »motive« and »need« are partially the same, and in ordinary, colloquial speech there is almost no difference. However, when meeting needs, state of shortage, that occurred in organism (hunger, thirst) or in the individual's mind-for example, the need for social recognition-is canceled. There are primary and secondary needs, primary and secondary motivation.

When the basketball player that has a primary motivation enters the game, he becomes active because he likes basketball. However, the secondary motivated player will not engage because of the emotional or material prize he expects. (Some coaches motivate their players by making it clear to them what kind of prize they can expect in the case of victory. Some do it in such a way by sticking money on the wall of the dressing room).

If there is no *communication*, motivation won't be possible. These are two areas that are very tightly connected. It's the matter of *what* to say, *when* to do it, and of course *who* is going to tell it.

When it comes to motivation, the damage that can be created because of the wrong approach mustn't be underestimated.

Many coaches cannot communicate because they don't know how to listen (they are not from a culture of listening). Self-consciousness in others may be developed only by a person that is self-conscious. A young player can be infected with enthusiasm only by an enthusiastic man (only a delighted man can delight). Aggression (we think of *aggression within rules*) can be transmitted only by an aggressive person. A coach has to experience himself exactly what he wants his staff to teach. There's the danger with this because one may think one knows everything the best and thus he doesn't have to listen but only speak. If the players say two or three sentences, the coach knows in advance what he should say. The players' speech becomes boring to him and the conversation often ends with an imperative phrase, »shorten the speech«. The coach may have the right, but he will not convince the players. A player, especially a young man, feels unaccepted; roots of acceptance and feeling are extremely important for a young player, and this is the very obligation of the coach. However, the coach wouldn't be able to do it unless he knows how to listen.

This is a great weakness of the coach, and of the professor in school as well; having always been right for years in the classroom, they treat their children at home in the same way—they always have to be right.

»The relation between a coach and young players may have a decisive influence on the opinion that a player has about himself and on his self-confidence. Thus the coach's behavior towards his players is extremely important. For example: A coach may have a negative influence if he insults his players (»Are you crazy?«); if he underestimates his players (»Why are you always making a fool of yourself?«); if he ridicules them in front of their teammates (»Kid, the basket is not on the other side of the street!«); if he scorns them without any explanation or without a possibility to correct themselves later (»You are never doing this right! You're making mistakes all the time.«); or if he uses the words that compare player's sports values with his human qualities (»You are not doing anything right, because you are just lazy!«).

- Coaches have a positive influence if they do not behave in this way and if they apply the following strategies:
- Clearly and precisely define the objectives that players have to achieve.
- Help players achieving the objectives and point out their good work.
- Select the practice sessions that are related to sports skills and to pay attention to them.
- Correct each player in a constructive way by showing him what he is doing wrong while making it possible for them to realize the error. Offer him the possibility to correct himself.« (Jose Maria Buceta, former Spanish Women's National Team Coach)

Young players that attracted early attention and publicity because of the skills now have to face high expectations from clubs. Unfortunately, too many are not able to live up to the expectations. This occurs because not enough time has been allowed for learning and maturing. Optimum levels of motivation are needed to help this player achieve his potential.

## CONCLUSION

Every player with whom a coach contacts provides from particular social surroundings within which there are specific communication structures. Children learn through specific characteristics of communication structures that prevail in their families.

Out of a young player a successful person should be created. Defeat plays an important role, as well. A

player that wants to become successful has to possess the following qualities: *direction, understanding, courage, scruples, respect, self-confidence and self-acceptance*. The picture and mechanism of defeat are related to *frustrations* (hopelessness, feeling unworthy), *aggression* (wrongly directed), *insecurity, loneliness* (lack of »unity with oneself«), *hesitation, resistance, and emptiness*.

*Self-consciousness* of a young player is built also with the culture of defeat. Culture of defeat or more narrowly said, sports defeat, is one of the darkest places of our sports consciousness. This is the place of conspiracies, vanity, and multitude of the guilty ones. Defeat is considered to be a natural disaster and no one gets ready for it. Metaphorically speaking »defeat is the victory that we are deprived of« (corruption, referee, mass interference, violation of rules, etc.). Rejecting to give legitimacy to the concept of defeat, leads us often to the situation to lie ourselves. Perhaps the whole culture of one nation is reflected in the culture of defeat, and our culture keeps sports at distance. Without culture of defeat one stays without culture of victory.

Coaches should teach a young player that defeat does not represent him as a person and that it is transitory. Defeat can be shown as a wonderful opportunity to learn something we couldn't learn under other circumstances. Losing means being a man, but we are all humans. It is important to find out whether we lost because of the reasons we could control, or because of the reasons we couldn't control.

»You should invest whole strength in what you want to achieve, but never when it is obvious that it will be useless«. Limited psychological energy must be directed not at the feeling of depression, but in constructive purposes.

»Defeat makes you miserable, rejected and helpless. On the other hand, you can take it as a challenge to the temptation of our own force and skill to manage in difficult circumstances, impetus to get to know yourself, to replace your priorities and to think of what to do further and how to go on in future. Defeat helps to precisely determine the direction of progress in your own life segment. No matter how unpleasant it is, nevertheless it helps you to understand better where you are and in which direction you want to go. If you get the message from defeat, then it was not worthless...every difficulty should be considered to be the challenge, test of strength, opportunity to develop. If you look in such a way at the happenings, then you are the winner in every situation.« (Terry Orlick, Sport Psychologist)

Life is constant adjustment. The more you adjust, the healthier you will be.

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