

# SPORTS TEAM AND LEADERSHIP

Florentina POPESCU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Sports activity is eminently collective. Group activity efficiency depends on the quality of relationships among its members. Knowing the quality and quantity of the preferential relationships within the team is essential to the coach's work. Sports team leadership is performed by the coach or by the team captain.*

**Keywords:** *sports team, social group, group leadership.*

## 1. Introduction

Sports team is the main psychosocial reality of sports activity and its performance depends on its cohesion and expression capacity.

Sports team is a group made up of a restrained number of persons whose relationships are based on communication, cooperation, evaluation etc. and whose common aim determines them to get organized, by settling behavioral norms specific to the field.

Sports team must be understood as a system with a hierarchic internal organization involving the interaction among its component elements (athletes), regulation and self-regulation mechanisms the integrity of which depends on the preferential relational system, on the group dynamics and cohesion, but also on the leadership processes and on the leaders' typology.

The leadership style is extremely important to get performances that are multiply determined by different factors.

## 2. Paper content

Social psychology mainly studies the groups made up of a reduced number of persons or the small groups, initially called primary groups.

### *Typology of sports groups*

Sports groups are classified, according to J. B. Cratty (quoted by M. Epuran, I. Holdevici, F. Tonita, 2001), in:

- ✓ *co-action groups*, where each athlete performs without interacting with the other members, but having in view the success of the group he belongs to;
- ✓ *Interactional groups*, where the quality of relationships - usually multi-personal ones - among the team members greatly determine the group performance, beyond the individuals' technical mastery.

### *Main characteristics of sports groups:*

- a) *Small volume*, namely a restrained number of members, according to the sports specificity. This volume relatively limited to precise ciphers represents a prerequisite to recruit new members by releasing some others.

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Physical Education and Sports *Spiru Haret*, Braşov.

- b) *Primary character*, direct relationships, which indicate a free and non-mediated system. Team communication is a particular one and has a gestural-motor character with technical-tactical significances oriented towards the performance aim reaching.
- c) *Non-spontaneous*, purposely created for the need of performance - the athlete's reason to be.
- d) *Specific dynamics*. The organizational dynamics is accompanied by a functional dynamics related to cohesion, but this one can't last more than 2 or 3 years because of the change of generations.
- e) *Heterogeneous component* – a characteristic determined by the sports group members' variability of age, profession and even nationality.
- f) *Voluntary adhesion and moral binding*. The group members voluntarily adhere to activity, but they must respect the behavioral norms specific to the group.
- g) *The sports group members are or may be members of other groups*. Athletes may also belong to other groups having other aims (artistic, scientific, professional ones). If there aren't time, space and energy impediments, the activities can go on, they combining in a harmonious way.
- h) *Unlimited duration*. The sports group is made up for an undetermined length of time, even if its individuals will quit one day and others will replace them.

#### *Interpersonal relationships within the group*

Group activity efficiency depends on the quality of relationships among its members. Every group member has towards each one of the others accepting, indifference or rejecting attitudes. Their practical expression determines the group cohesion degree and its internal organization (M. Epuran, I. Holdevici, F. Tonita, 2001).

In sports activity, there are two kinds of preferential relationships: affective and operational.

*Affective preferential relationships* have a subjective character and express sympathy, rejecting or indifference among the team members.

*Operational preferential relationships* have a practical character and show with whom each one wants to cooperate in order to fulfill the group-specific aim.

*Sports group cohesion* is generated and built within the positive preferential relationships, it depending on a series of factors characteristic to the team:

- a) Team members' small *number* (reduced connections within a larger group).
- b) Members' *age* - that should be almost the same (differences are expressed through attitudes and aspirations).
- c) *Athletes' character* is important, together with their temperamental traits.
- d) *Team's structure* - if the members' professions, occupations and concerns are different, communication will be limited and no transfer to the affective field will occur.
- e) *Motivation* is the cohesion main factor, together with sports success.

From the sports team cohesion standpoint, we can distinguish many kinds of groups:

- A. *Homogenous groups*. Homogeneity results from the action coordination so that the aimed purpose is achieved and its subjective aspect consists in each other's understanding and sensitivity.
- B. "*Character*" groups are made up of athletes with different traits (tempers), who are in compensatory-type relationships.

C. *Gomphothere groups*, where cohesion has a ternary character (it is made up of three elements), depending at the same time on the group athletes' physical, psychical and physiological "matching". Sports group cohesion has its own dynamics, greatly determined by its characteristics - juniors, seniors, girls or boys, performance level etc.

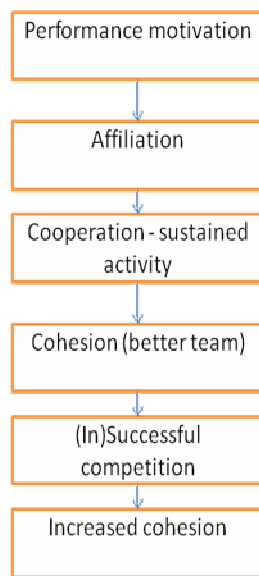


Fig. 1. *Group cohesion factors*  
(M. Epuran, I. Holdevici, F. Tonita, 2001)

*Sports team leadership* is performed by the coach (training preparation program, game leading from the out of bounds during the competitions etc.), but also by the team captain, a special leader who has a well-determined role.

From the psychological point of view, leadership is a multilateral act with different attributions, which finally leads to the team's goal achievement (the team being regarded as a social group).

The leadership's attributions are: provision, organization, command-coordination and control (M. Epuran, I. Holdevici, F. Tonita, 2001).

Researchers who approach the problems related to the way of leading social groups recommend many styles, among which:

- i) Leadership through objectives - it starts from the individual and group desiderata and goals to be reached within a given period, by using the previously established means.
- ii) Leadership through "human relationships" - it has in view the group dynamics and is achieved by considering that the individual gets integrated into the interpersonal relationship system relying on a certain motivation.

For performance activity, the leadership through objectives seems to be the most appropriate, because it is more efficient to the field as the energy is task-oriented and the interpersonal communication is quick.

Leadership efficiency depends both on the group structure and cohesion and on the coach's qualities, to which there are added - as facilitating or delaying - the activity organizational-material conditions. At the same time, the leadership activity efficiency depends on how the leadership style combines with a very important sports performance element: the programming degree.

Coaches and teachers should meditate on the attitudes that are the best facilitators in the athletes' leadership process (instruction -education-forming), by knowing that all depends on their preparation level, performance objectives and individuality.

In sports, the team captain has official rights and obligations specified in the different sports competition regulations. But beyond this, the team captain is a leader accepted and designated by the group to represent it. He could also be loved, but it is more important for him to be appreciated by his team colleagues for his real qualities, for his competence.

These qualities, doubled by the intellectual, affective and social maturity, are built throughout many years of practice.

### 3. Conclusion

A sports team needs cohesion, which provides the full communication among the teammates at any moment of their activity.

Group cohesion achievement is a social modeling process that requires the adjustment of individual purposes and tendencies and their insertion into an affective group atmosphere.

Coach's mastery must also be characterized by his capacity to stimulate the new comers' group integration, especially when they are juniors promoted to senior teams, and to keep the substitute and the promising players integrated and motivated.

The coach's efficiency depends on his system of qualities that can be considered complete as long as the he has firm philosophical and axiological orientations, knows the general trend in sports field and does his best to fulfill it.

Along his activity, the coach must be concerned with building group-specific behavioral patterns and with socially organizing their control, in order to pass as

quickly as possible from the team heteronomy to the team autonomy.

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