

SELECTION IN TEAM SPORTS – ANALYSIS OF SPECIALIST OPINIONS

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Abstract: *This paper represents a study on the opinions of the specialist practitioners (coaches) regarding the selection process in team sports. A questionnaire was used and that was applied for 109 coaches in Romania. General aspects related to the selection as well as the relevance of some psychological criteria of sports selection were addressed. The general conclusion of this research was that a significant part of the respondents considered that the selection process in team sports is inappropriate, which requires a careful analysis of the possible causes.*

Key words: *Coaches, questionnaire, team sports.*

1. Introduction

The term selection refers to the choice made according to a certain criterion and with a purpose. From the analysis of the specialized literature referring to sports training, over time, many authors have conceptually delimited the selection process. There are many definitions, in a narrow sense it is considered as a scientific approach to "choice" or "sorting" performed on the basis of criteria that must meet specific requirements [3], [5], [12, 13].

Other authors have a broader approach

by identifying more content characteristics as follows: "... an organized and repeated process, early detection of the child's, junior's, inborn availability, with the help of a complex system of criteria (medical, biological, psychosociological and motor), for his subsequent practice and specialization in a sport discipline or test" [10, p. 43], or "the selection in sports is a complex system of identifying and sorting the superior individuals endowed in the sports field, based on certain principles, criteria and scientific methods with a motor, biomedical and psychological character, with which they can be

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highlighted, with an increased coefficient of probability, having the character of prognosis, real aptitudes, necessary to achieve superior performances "[10, p. 50].

In sports games, both the theory and the practice related to the field draw attention to the fact that the remarkable results in the current stage, cannot be obtained without attaching a special importance to the selection at the level of children and juniors and then at the intermediate levels leading to the high performance. The children targeted to form the preparation groups for handball, basketball, volleyball, football will be tested in order to highlight the specific characteristics and particularities specific to the sporting activity.

In order for the selection action to be as objective as possible, the specialists in the field [3, 4, 5], [7], [11], [14] recommend four categories of criteria, namely:

I. *Medical-biological criteria*. These refer on the one hand to the state of health indispensable for the provision of sports activities, and on the other hand, to the main indicators aimed at the somato-functional development of the human body. In accordance with the indications from the National Sports Medicine Centres regarding the level of health indices of the future sports, it is specified that:

- health status - is established following a rigorous clinical examination with the help of specific devices;

- the functional state will target the following components: neuromuscular, neuropsychological, endocrine-metabolic, cardiorespiratory, haematological, hepato-renal and respiratory.

II. *Somatic criteria*, which assess the level

of general physical development of children according to their gender and age, thus establishing the parameters that will favour the achievement of future performances in sports games. In this sense, the anthropometric and somatoscopic examination is performed with a double role, namely to detect the potential deficiencies of physical development on the one hand, as well as to compare the values obtained at the main parameters included in the somatic profile with the optimum values for handball, football, basketball, volleyball, etc. This category of criteria applies to all groups of children and juniors, and the measured scores will be recorded in the trainer's records.

III. *Motric criteria*. Through them are determined the volume and quality of basic and specific motor skills, as well as the level of development of motor qualities.

For example, when the primary selection takes place, children can generally fall into two categories. Some who have a certain motric experience, which have also practiced a sport (eg. gymnastics, mini basketball, and mini handball), before the specific selection of sports games and others who have not done an organized sports activity. In order for them to have a real chance of successfully passing through the system of effective tests, a two-month prior training is required.

The standardized test battery of the International Federation of Physical Education known as the "Standard Fitness Test" can be used to assess the level of training and general physical development. The evaluation is based on a linear scale (Hull's scale) for both boys and girls. The

opportunities revealed by this scale consist in the possibility of performing comparisons on several dimensions: individually, between groups, transversally, longitudinally [2].

IV. *Psychological criteria* - with their help one can find the psychological particularities of the subjects by direct reference to the concrete requirements in the sphere of performance sports activities. It is thus desired, to detect the exceptional potentialities of the gifted athletes [2, 6, 8] corresponding to the specific characteristics of each sports game, preferably as a later stage of biological and motor selection. The identification of the weight and the mode of manifestation of the psychic processes of the athletes, is done using test batteries, questionnaires and specialized equipment, intervention carried out only by qualified persons in this field.

Although this general framework of sports selection is identified, however, many authors [1], [9], [15, 16] draw attention to the fact that the identification of sporting talents remains a still unresolved issue, starting from a lack of consensus in defining the sporting talent and reaching the dynamic and multidimensional nature of the talent that covers complex facets of this process.

The *purpose of this research* was to identify the opinions of the specialist practitioners in the field of sports science (sports games) regarding the concrete way of realizing the sports section in the sports clubs in Romania. *The research hypothesis* is that there are relevant differences between the theoretical and practical vision for the realization of the selection

process in team sports.

2. Materials and methods

The method used in this study was the Survey based on the questionnaire. The survey represents a quantitative method with which to obtain a series of information, based on the questionnaire as an investigative tool. The data are collected through standardized procedures, in this case regarding the opinions of specialists (teachers and coaches) who deal with the preparation of children and juniors for sports games (handball, basketball, volleyball, football).

In the elaboration of the applied questionnaire, the specific methodology was respected in order to identify aspects related to the quality of the selection in sports games in general, the criteria related to this action with emphasis on the psychological ones, such as and their implications for improving the process itself.

In all cases, the questionnaires applied were built according to the requirements formulated in the psycho-pedagogical specialty literature. Given the theoretical recommendations, the questionnaires contain a brief introduction, so that the respondents are informed about the purpose pursued through the initial research. It was given to the completion of a number of 109 specialists in sports games, the method of anonymous response was preferred, the only details related to the quality of those who responded concerned the seniority in work, specialization, age, educational grade and level of studies.

The questionnaire consists of 12 questions (1 question with a closed answer and 11 with a half answer), meant to provide important data regarding: the quality of the action of sports selection performed in the clubs in Romania, the importance of the psychological factor in this approach, the implementation of the functional prevalence criterion of cerebral hemispheres as an optimization alternative.

3. Results

The results of the research are synthetically illustrated in figures 1, 2, 3 and 4. From figure 1 it appears that most of the coaches interviewed (27.52%) have experience in coaching between 18-23 years, and then in an equal percentage of 18.35% for the intervals: 12-17 years, respectively 6-11 years old at work.

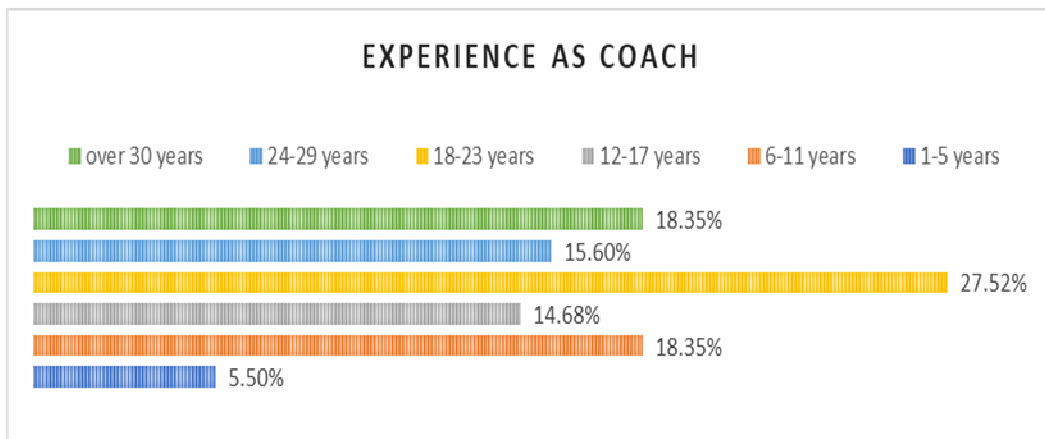


Fig. 1. *Experience as coach (years) in the sports activity*

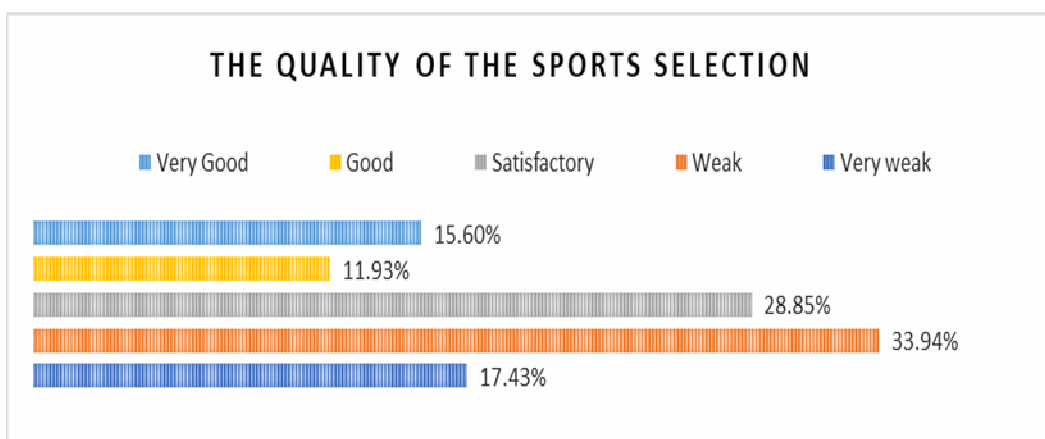


Fig. 2. *Respondents' opinion on the quality of team sports selection in Romania*

Regarding the quality of the sport selection in the team sports, most of the respondents (33.94%) consider that the level of this process is poor, then 28.85%

of the coaches indicate a satisfactory level, and 17.43% of them consider that they find the quality very poor selection action.

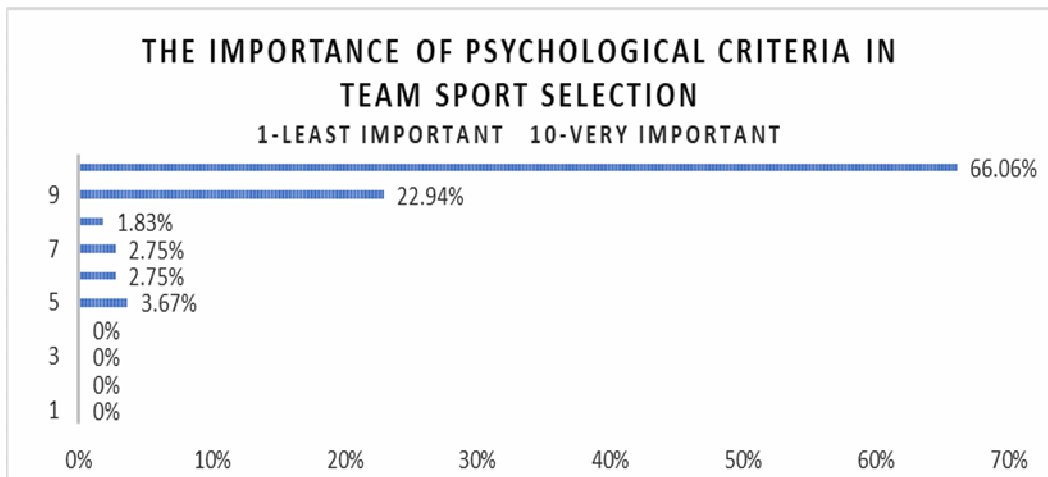


Fig.3. *Respondents' opinion about the importance of psychological criteria in team sports selection*

On a scale of importance from 1-10, 66.06% of the respondents consider the psychological criteria as very important in

the process of sports selection for team sports. All the catch answers indicate values in the range of 5 to 10 importance.

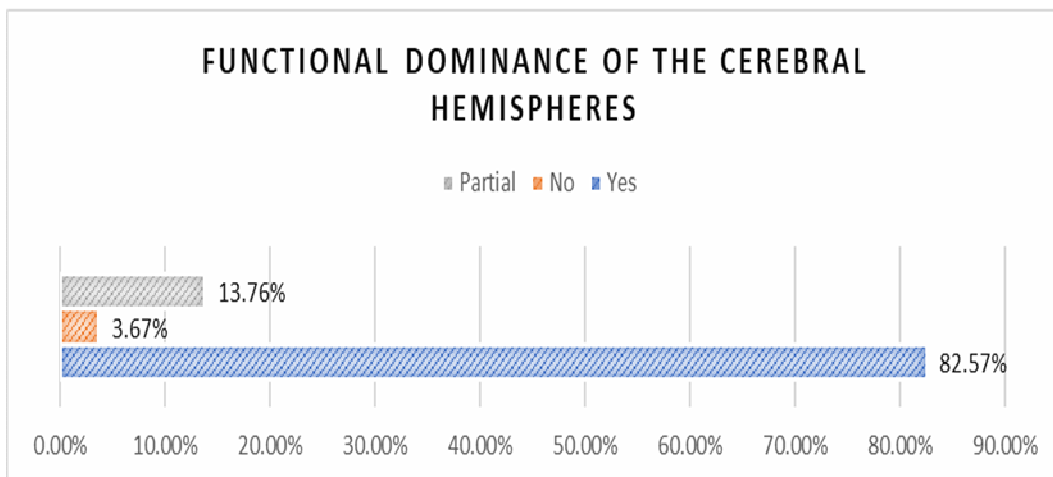


Fig.4. *Respondents' opinion about the importance of functional dominance of the cerebral hemispheres as a concrete psychological criterion in the selection*

From figure 4 it is pointed out that most of the coaches questioned (82.57%) are of the opinion that the functional dominance of the cerebral hemispheres can be a relevant criterion (in the category of the psychic ones) for the improvement of the selection in the collective sports. At the opposite pole, 3.67% of the respondents considered this criterion as inconclusive for the detection of subjects with sports potential.

4. Conclusions

The main aspect that emerged from this research was that a little more than half of the respondents considered that the process of sports selection that is carried out in Romania, for team sports, is inappropriate. A possible explanation of this result is due to the fact that the selection action (in the variants in which it is performed today) no longer responds to the current requirements for identification and subsequent training of future performers [17].

Moreover, from the current practice it has been observed that the psychological criteria do not have concrete practical applicability; most of the coaches do not focus on this category of criteria. There is also some difficulty in approaching the psychological sphere in a specialized, professional way, because there are no sports psychologists or psychologists within the sports clubs to help the coach in this direction. However, all coaches intuit that the optimization of the selection process can come from understanding and applying the psychological factor in both the

selection and the training. The answers obtained are edifying in this regard.

Coming back to the idea that more than half of the coaches questioned considers it inappropriate to carry out the selection process leads to the idea that the performance of the current performers is not that desired and one might understand that some poor performances would be due to poor sports selection. It is known that the achievement of remarkable sports performance depends on many factors. It is true that selection is a very important aspect. However, each coach has the freedom to make the selection in an appropriate manner, both at the initial level and during the following stages.

Although the present research did not aim to find solutions regarding the optimization of the selection in the team sports, the obtained results can be an opportunity to reflect on the rethinking of the real selection criteria, that is to say the practical way of carrying out this process in sports clubs. This aspect is really relevant given that the respondents are experienced coaches in team games, coaches' practitioners and former sportsmen who understand and know very well the sporting phenomenon in Romania, both with good aspects and with the existing shortcomings.

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