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Management of the team of athletes in competition

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Abstract. Management does not contain mandatory, standardized recipes or templates, but involves analysis, discernment, and the application of skillful procedures, following a rigorous analysis, in relation to the existing reality. Competition is primarily a motivation to increase performance, a motivation fueled by the possibility of competitors winning. At the same time, for adequate management of the team of athletes in competitions, it is essential to optimize the relationship between the coach and the athlete, transparency being absolutely necessary. The coach must have clear behavioral expectations from the athlete and make them aware of them. The coach, in his role as manager, supports the athletes' motivation and strengthens relationships within the team of athletes to unite them around a common goal: performance. By optimizing the leadership style, the coach, as a manager of the sports team, must aim to maximize sports performance, this objective having a direct relationship proportional to the degree of satisfaction of the athletes during the training period and after achieving the desired results. The positive effects of competition, within the sports competition, will be achieved only through psychological training aimed at training athletes in the ability to realistically set aspirations and optimally manage success and failure. The negative effects of competition appear in a situation where the athlete sees it only as a way to demonstrate supremacy or contempt for the defeated opponent.
Keywords: management; coaching, sports training; periodization; military sports

1. Introduction.

Purpose - the essence of the mentality of the sports coach as a manager must be one according to which the athlete is capable, full of resources and potential. This mentality will strengthen the athlete's and coach's self-confidence, self-motivation, and professional development.

In the military field, through preparation and participation in sports-applied competitions, the following objectives can be achieved: valorization and evaluation of the preparation achieved through instruction and training, stimulating athletes to achieve the optimal adaptation necessary in the military training process, psychological preparation and facilitating integration into the military environment.

Methods - **s**tudy of specialized literature; use of management principles specific to sports training, within the preparation periods for sports-applicative competitions of military students; use of the

questionnaire in order to get to know the athletes and optimize the management applied in training; evaluation of the efficiency of applied management, within the military applicative competitions included in the activity plan.

Result - we applied a questionnaire survey to a number of 30 athletes in order to get to know the subjects from the point of view of their motivation in practicing naval pentathlon, and the results obtained provided me with some of the information necessary to streamline the management applied in the training of military athletes.

2. Materials and methods

There are numerous points of view in establishing management functions, but the following are considered essential for any type of organization, including sports: planning (forecasting), organization, coordination and training, control and evaluation, these being found in a different amplitude, content and form, at all hierarchical levels.

Training planning is the process of predicting the evolution and progress of results, obtained as a result of individual adaptation to training and competition demands. Planning will be carried out based on the athlete's physiological capabilities and performance behavior. Strategic planning will establish the team's mission, direction and objectives (what needs to be done, effectiveness aspect), and operational planning will develop the structure of daily decisions (how to do it, activity efficiency aspect).

Sports training planning is described by (Dragnea & Mate-Teodorescu, 2002) as "the activity of thoroughly and precisely elaborating training and performance objectives, as well as the means, methods and forms of organization appropriate to the proposed goals".

The main objective of the coach, through all these measures that planning involves, will be the development of sports performance, which can only be achieved through an efficiency of the coach's activity. The components of the annual training plan, in the author's opinion (Teodorescu, 2007) are: purpose - purpose - objectives; competition calendar; training structure; training management and control; material base, installations, equipment; training forms and places; medical control data; expected dynamics of development of performance capacity (sports form); assessment of training efficiency and research of correlations that appear in the training process.

The organization function will ensure the implementation of the developed plans, by establishing attributions, tasks and optimal use of resources. To fulfill this function, the questions must be answered: With whom?, With what?, What must they know?, What must they do?

Programming in sports training is “the activity of developing the objectives of the training process, the tasks of preparation and the forms of organization, taking into account the concrete conditions in which the activity is to be carried out” (Dragnea & Mate-Teodorescu, 2002).

The programs will have as a starting point models, established following an analysis of the level of competition to be participated in. Coordination consists of a set of processes through which the activity of all elements that are part of the management system is harmonized, in order to achieve the objectives with maximum efficiency. Scientific leadership, as a function of training management, requires the conscious intervention of the coach as a specialist for the analysis of options and the selection of solutions in the process of improving performance.

The scientific management of training will have as its starting point the competitive calendar according to which the periodization of the training process will be carried out. The scientific aspect of training will be outlined by the quality of the teaching process supported by effective training methods, adequate means and up-to-date materials (Cojocaru, 2002). All of these will have as their main purpose the increase of performance availability at the planned level and also the achievement and preservation of the capacity to maximize the performance potential at the planned time.

Control involves carefully monitoring the way specific training activities are carried out and optimizing the instructional process by eliminating disruptive factors. Evaluation has the mission of establishing, through objective measurement methods and procedures, the performance behavior of athletes.

Evaluation is a “complex process of comparing the results of instructional-educational activity with planned objectives (quality assessment), with the resources used (efficiency assessment) or with previous results (progress assessment)” (Jinga et al., 1999). Evaluation is “the process that begins with

planning and describing the objectives and contents that will be controlled later" (Schaub & Zenke, 2001). It is wrong to consider evaluation as a stage that would follow learning in the training process. Evaluation is a continuous process, permanently interconnected with the teaching-learning process and having a strong formative role achieved through adequate feedback (Balmer et.al., 2015).

In the management of sports competitions, specialists analyze evaluation in the control-evaluation-guidance triad, this being considered a managerial function in which "control and evaluation must be accompanied by a sustained guidance activity" (Teodorescu & Ganera, 2013).

The efficiency of evaluation in sports training results from the following aspect obtaining information on the achievement of the objectives proposed in the training process; making a diagnosis of the progress of the evaluated subjects; correlating the subjects' actions with their possibilities in the training process; determining the causes that generated constant deviations and guiding the subjects towards an optimal means of affirmation; providing useful information to improve the instructional process, setting new aspirations; evaluating the instructional process to help the coach (teaching staff) in self-evaluation (Campbell & Lee, 1998).

Evaluation methods represent the way in which the coach/teacher offers subjects the opportunity to demonstrate the level of training achieved and the ability to capitalize on this training (Hoole & Martineau, 2014).

2.1. The role of the coach in sports management

The coach, in his role as manager, supports the motivation of athletes and strengthens relationships within the team of athletes to unite them around a common goal: performance.

To achieve this goal, coaching can be an effective tool, and to maximize performance, the coach as a manager must assume this role.

Coaching as a working tool used by the coach in management, must contain methods that help the athlete in "unlocking the potential...to maximize their own performance".

As a training manager, the coach must demonstrate that he trusts the athlete he trains and facilitate, by providing a conversation structure, the setting of goals. The effectiveness of the coach as a manager will always be based on the respect and trust of the person trained. In this regard, it is recommended that the coach as a manager empowers the athletes in finding solutions to new and unexpected problems that directly concern them.

The coach, as a training manager, must be open to constantly reflecting on his or her own effectiveness and performance through questions such as: "What works well?", "What could be better?", "How can I develop as a coach?" (Passmore, 2021).

Researchers argue that through the management strategies applied in the training process, the coach has an essential influence on the performance, motivation and well-being of athletes (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002). Numerous studies have investigated how the leadership behavior of coaches can affect athletes' satisfaction, performance, self-esteem and confidence (Chelladurai, 1990; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

In performance sports, the coach must possess skills such as understanding the physical, technical and tactical demands of the sport or events they coach, and be able to ensure an optimal balance between performance demands and care for the athletes (Dohsten et al., 2018).

The coach as a training manager is involved in the training process, aiming to create a pedagogical climate that meets the individual needs of athletes, transmits knowledge useful to the field of activity, and encourages the development of athletes from a professional (sports) and moral point of view. In this regard, the coach's care, experts argue, will be directed towards recognizing the individual needs of athletes and engaging in moral issues by creating opportunities for athletes to reflect on their behavior (Lindgreen & Barker, 2017).

There are two conceptual orientations in the literature regarding training management (Barker & Ruchi et al., 2016): "Sport as a commodity", which promotes the strategies of the coach as an authoritarian manager; "Sport as a community", where the coach's managerial strategies allow for actions that are negotiated together with the athletes.

In the case of sport viewed as a community, the coach will apply a strategy in which he will think beyond technical, physiological and biomechanical knowledge, focusing on practical wisdom (Standal & Hemmestad, 2011) and moral and ethical challenges, where each individual should be treated based on their own individual needs. Practical wisdom, in the authors' conception, constitutes "good actions",

which may be necessary to manage problematic situations for the good of the team, in other words the cultivation of a good or virtuous character (Hardman & Jones, 2011).

The coach's strategy will include, in this aspect, health care (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), athlete safety, and ensuring an optimal climate for achieving performance. The coach's efficiency as a manager consists of approaching leadership in a coaching style (Witmore, 2019). As a new leadership style, coaching has several characteristics that differentiate it from old strategies.

Thus, hierarchy gives way to partnership and collaboration, blame is replaced by lessons learned and honest assessments, self-motivation takes the place of external motivation, change is accepted by athletes and coach. In the leadership style of the coach who applies this strategy, the pressure of training and competition becomes challenging work, and the pressure of short-term tasks gives way to longer-term strategic thinking.

In the role of coach, the coach must improve certain skills for the efficiency of training-specific management. The following are described by coaching specialists as the coach's skills in this regard: creating the coach-athlete relationship; communication as a factor contributing to the formation of skills; communication as a factor influencing the development of skills; facilitating learning and results; clarifying responsibility.

Building a relationship is based on reciprocity, more precisely on active listening and giving respect (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). To gain perspective, it is important to have the ability to listen actively, and this requires concentration. Active listening involves building an emotional bond between the coach and the athlete, a relationship based on mutual trust (Humphrey & Sleeth, 2006). The coach's leadership style, based on strategies that cultivate the substitution of hierarchy and authority with learning and responsibility, will eliminate blockages in the evolution of athletes and will create an environment favorable to the development of relationships.

The mission of a sports manager is to lead in such a way that objectives are met and athletes develop, but time pressure and costs sometimes limit the fulfillment of this mission. Coaching is a process through which we can improve these shortcomings, promoting self-motivation and belief in potential (Passmore & Sinclair, 2020). The coach will effectively manage the talents of athletes and at the same time help them to have continuous development through the application of coaching.

2.2. The coach as a specialist of specific professional tasks

The coach's objective as a specialist in specific professional tasks is the optimal synchronization of training with the competition. In this regard, the coach must have knowledge in the field and methodological and didactic competence, consolidated by his own competitive experience, the latter providing added value to the coach in the activity of advising athletes throughout the competition.

The fundamental analysis of training efficiency can be achieved by phasing the progress recorded in training and competition into protocols and maintaining a permanent control of the relationship between the organization and processing of the load (Hohmann, 1992). In this regard, the coach has as a central task two categories of controls: "input" control, represented by the recording and recording of protocols by training categories and the preparation of documentation; "output" control, represented by the recording and analysis of the results obtained in the planned competitions.

2.3. The coach as a specialist in interpersonal relations

As a specialist in interpersonal relations, the coach must know his managerial tasks towards different reference groups: presidium, officials, support team, coaches of other teams, social environment of the athlete. Fulfilling these tasks provides premises for creating a favorable psychological climate. The knowledge and leadership, professional and psychological capacities of the coach but also the psychological qualities of the individuals within the team, are fundamental in the stability of the coach – athlete relationship (R. Brack, 1993).

The professional and social competence of the coach can include: persuasiveness and credibility. Through respectful behavior, the coach can encourage the athlete to actively engage in his own training process. Understanding and acceptance from the athlete facilitates the creation of new perspectives in learning, and the athlete acquires new skills and will thus be better prepared to assume responsibility and make decisions regarding his own training.

Competition represents, first of all, a motivation for increasing performance, a motivation fueled by

the possibility of competitors to win (Cornescu et al, 2004).

Our entire existence in society is characterized in various forms by the desire to compete. From a sporting perspective, competition is the only social activity that offers the possibility of capitalizing on the accumulations made in an activity carried out continuously and systematically, an activity represented by training. In order to capitalize on the performance capacity, the existence of competition is necessary, and in order to achieve maximum performance in important competitions, the level of performance must be raised through training and intermediate competitions.

The ability to adapt to the competition level is embodied in the sports form, as a maximum state of mobilization of the body's resources (Teodorescu & Ganera, 2013).

The athlete's ability to act both according to a plan drawn up by the coach and intelligently and creatively in situations that require this, is obtained only through efficient management of training, which must not lack physical and mental overload, specific to competitive activity (Teodorescu, 2009).

Specialists in the field discuss two important factors in competition: competition and cooperation. Under certain conditions, both factors can have positive influences on sports performance. The positive effects of competition, in sports competition, can only be achieved through psychological training aimed at training athletes in the ability to realistically set aspirations and optimally manage success and failure. The negative effects of competition appear in a situation where the athlete sees it only as a way to demonstrate supremacy or contempt for the defeated opponent.

Cooperation implies the presence of the motivation of belonging, acceptance, security, group members pursuing a common goal and organizing their actions to overcome the opposing group (Epyran, 2013). The functioning of cooperative relationships at an optimal level implies: efficient communication, mutual respect, coordination of efforts, distribution of tasks within the group, considering contradictory interests a common problem that can be solved through joint and well-organized effort (Deutsch, 2006).

The spirit of emulation, combativity is frequently encountered in sports activity, making it possible for the athlete to be fully involved, without energy reserves, in achieving the objectives and achieving the proposed goal (Teodorescu & Ganera, 2013). Applicative sports competitions such as the military pentathlon and naval pentathlon, through the specifics of the tests, aim to evaluate the level of training of the military from the point of view of the specifics of combat actions characteristic of the military field.

The results obtained in international competitions offer us the opportunity to maintain or set new performance objectives, necessary in the training process.

The managerial strategy for participating in international competitions requires analyzing the aspects of the respective competition in three moments and developing strategic benchmarks adapted to the nature and level of the competition: pre-competitive strategic landmarks embodied in the analysis of previous results and awareness of success, setting realistic goals, positive thinking, adapting to new factors that can influence performance; competitive strategic landmarks embodied in the permanent capacity for adaptation, analysis and feedback, exchange of information; post-competitive strategic landmarks represented by awareness of success, evaluation and self-evaluation, development of new strategies.

The coach's duties during the competition (before, during and after the competition) will be leadership, counseling and optimization and are embodied in the following activities: optimizing preparation to achieve the athlete's maximum potential; developing strategic benchmarks to maximize performance; careful management of the athlete's psycho-motor potential for optimal adaptation to the specific competition conditions; stabilization and stimulation; effective application of lessons learned; analysis of the competition for evolutionary purposes.

The successful fulfillment of these duties by the coach and implicitly maximizing the athlete's performance require the coach to possess a multilateral theoretical training and to possess certain specific knowledge such as: individual particularities of the athlete; the athlete's reaction to a new environment, unforeseen situations; the concrete, momentary demands to which the athlete is subjected in competition; the athlete's motivation in certain moments, situations or situations.

The result of the coach's activities during the competition is directly dependent on his professional profile. In addition to the knowledge, he possesses and the ability to apply it in practice, the coach must positively influence the athlete through personal example, by transferring to the athlete a state of

mind optimal for achieving performance. The emotional state of the coach in contact with the athlete can have a major influence on him during the competition, and the coach's power of persuasion is strictly necessary (Mayer et al., 2000).

3. Results and discussions:

We applied a questionnaire survey to a number of 30 athletes in order to get to know the subjects from the point of view of their motivation in practicing naval pentathlon. The results obtained also provided me with the information necessary to streamline the management applied in the training of military athletes.

The motivation for choosing to practice naval pentathlon came in the largest percentage from the interest in performance (93.3%), many being attracted by the professionalism of the coach (90%). A high percentage of the subjects (76%) showed interest in the challenge of the tests and the chance of an affirmation within the team.

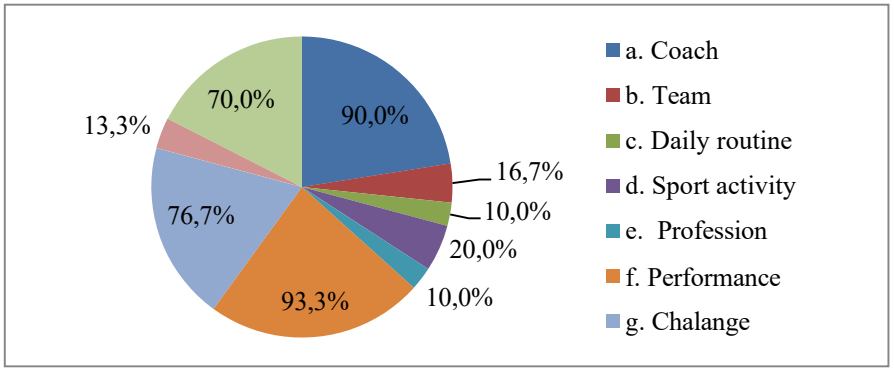


Figure 1. Motivation for choosing the naval pentathlon

The minimum motivating rewards for practicing pentathlon at a performance level are represented in the highest percentage by symbolic rewards (56.7%), followed by the personal satisfaction of achieving goals (30%), and a percentage of 13.3% of the subjects being interested in substantial material rewards.

The subjects' preferences regarding the way of conducting training were mostly (80%) oriented towards centralized training for a period that would last as long as necessary to achieve the objectives, with 13.3% expressing their desire to practice sports individually, under the guidance of a coach. These preferences also depend on the subjects' priorities, with many students prioritizing school results. The majority of subjects (80%) are willing to allocate time to weekly training, as long as necessary to achieve the objectives.

Regarding the time that subjects are willing to allocate daily to preparation, 90% of them are willing to allocate 60-120 minutes, and as a weekly frequency, 80% of subjects are willing to allocate as much time as necessary to achieve the established objectives. The expectations of the subjects from the coach mostly concern (96.7%) the desire for the coach to appreciate the performances achieved by the athletes, organization and communication (93.3%), efficiency in training (93.3%). There is also a percentage of 6.7% who would like more indulgence from the coach. Most subjects (76.7%) are willing to improve their skills in such a way as to eliminate the risk of injury and 23.3% claim that they will always take the necessary safety measures to avoid the risk of injury.

93% of the subjects believe that personal satisfaction comes from achieving planned performances, with the others being satisfied with the improvement in motor performance obtained as a result of training.

Individual self-evaluation, as an action of an impulse of the subjects to compare their own results (Pitariu, 1994) with the results at the international level (fig. 2), the majority (73.3%) consider that they are able to allocate the time and effort necessary to obtain optimal results in participating in an international competition, 20% want this and are willing to try, but have doubts about their performance capacity, and the fewest, a percentage of 6.7%, assess their capacities below the level of the necessary demands.

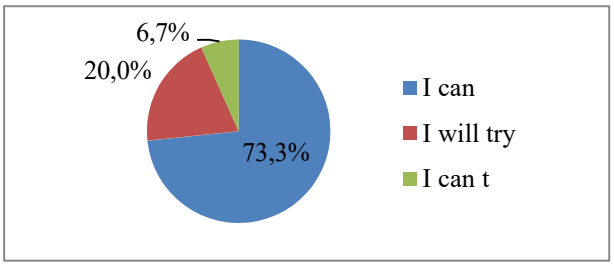


Figure 2. Self-assessment of potential for performance achievement

The individual ability to effectively organize time, so as to achieve very good results both in school and in sports, is self-assessed at a high level by 76.7% of the subjects, and the difference of 23.3%, considers that they should make sustained efforts to achieve good results on both levels, in this case there is a risk of stress factors appearing in the preparation process, which could negatively influence the subjects' performance.

The feeding conditions are positively assessed by 83.3%, the difference of 16.7% being dissatisfied with the quality of the food. The rest conditions are optimal for achieving performance for 90% of the subjects, the difference of 10% being dissatisfied with the accommodation conditions.

Practicing sports at a performance level can have influences for many athletes (Fig 3). Thus, 63.3% claim that their relationships within the peer group are positively influenced, being appreciated for their activity and results, 30% of the subjects do not feel any change, and 6.7% of the subjects claim that they have had problems within the group relationships due to the fact that their duties within the team must be taken over by other colleagues, and this often generates dissension.

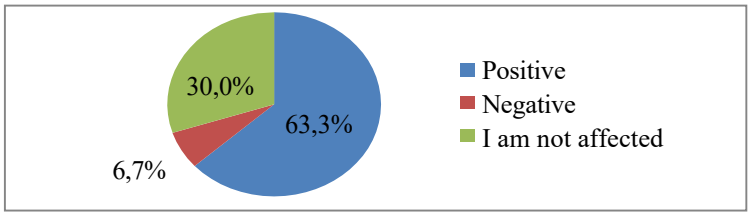


Figure 3. The influence of sports activity on group relationships

Another important aspect in managing the time allocated to sports training is the absences of athletes from courses and seminars for certain training periods and participation in competitions (fig. 4). These absences, which are recorded, can most often influence the way in which the subjects are evaluated and their relationships with their direct superiors. A percentage of 20% of them claim that they are evaluated subjectively or starting from lower grades due to absences from certain laboratories and seminars. However, we consider that this category includes those who cannot efficiently organize their time for maximum efficiency both in school and sports.

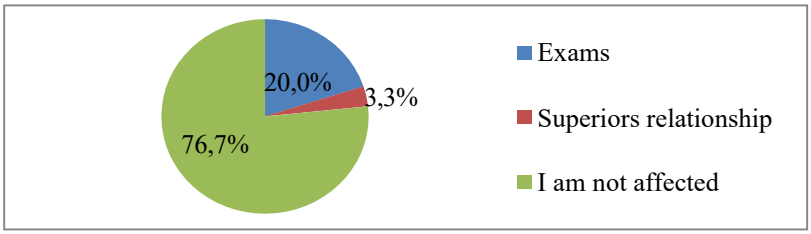


Figure 4. The influence of sports activity on relationships with teachers and direct superiors

4. Conclusions

Originality - the managerial strategy for participating in international competitions requires individual and original analyzing the specific aspects of the event and developing strategic guidelines tailored to its nature and level: pre-competition strategic guidelines - manifested in the analysis of past results, an awareness of success, the setting of realistic goals, positive thinking, and adaptation to new factors that may influence performance; in-competition strategic guidelines - embodied in the continuous capacity for adaptation, analysis, feedback, and information exchange; and post-competition strategic guidelines - represented by an awareness of success, evaluation and self-evaluation, and the development of new strategies.

Research limitations - making the training process more efficient requires, as an essential condition, the use of methods—applied on an individual basis—to foster athlete awareness, a sense of responsibility, and motivation. These methods, alongside the development of initiative, creativity, and communication skills, are crucial elements for optimizing the training process and maximizing athletic performance within this complex undertaking. The effectiveness of this proces influenced by the quality of the relationship between the coach and the athletes, the level of trust established within these relationships, and the coach's ability to guide the athlete toward an optimal awareness of tasks and goals while fostering a sense of personal responsibility in this regard.

Practical implications - the coach as a specialist will know when and how to act to achieve the expected results. He will know the needs of athletes in critical moments, the factors that could negatively influence performance, will be able to offer, indications and consultations specific to the sports activity and at the same time confidence and mental energy appropriate to the moment.

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- Conceptualization: O.C.
- Methodology: E-V.V. and E-V.C
- Investigation: H.C.
- Writing original draft: O.C.
- Writing review and editing: O.C.
- Supervision: O.C. and E-V.V.

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