

OPINION OF COACHES AND ATHLETES CONCERNING THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COACHES

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Abstract

In the paper information is given about important parameters, expectations, concerning the role of the coach from point of view of coaches and athletes, based on evaluation of questionnaires. To the opinion of coaches from the investigated 10 different topics (physical abilities, mental abilities, transfer of the knowledge, ability to manage different age groups, ability of pedagogy, support the athletes, ready to help, motivation, outlook, behavior) the ability to transfer the knowledge, the ability of pedagogy and the knowledge (mental abilities) are the dominant parameters. To the opinion of athletes on the first place is similarly the ability to transfer the knowledge, however on the second place the mental abilities and on the third one the support the athletes.

Key-words: *abilities, pedagogy, role of the coach, support the athletes, transfer the knowledge*

INTRODUCTION

In my earlier paper (Szabo, 2012) I was going to answer the question: what is the meaning of sport coaching? In other words I wanted to find a reply to the question: what is the real role of the sport coach? I tried to pay attention to 10 different, but important and necessary parameters, characterizing and determining the activity and success/failure of the sport coaches. These were the following:

- physical abilities, technical skill
- knowledge (mental abilities), general and special one
- ability to transfer the knowledge
- ability to manage different age and gender groups
- ability of pedagogy
- to support the athletes, CCP (coach and competitor partnership)
- ready to help
- motivation
- outlook, appearance
- behavior

Is the role of the sport coach really very complex? Is it possible that just this complex character – more precisely the various expectations based on the complexity of the role of the coach – is the main reason behind the failure of some coaches? Is it a reality that some former world class competitors simply can not fulfill the complex requirements?

Yes. The role of the trainer, the sport coach is rather complex. I would say: very-very complex. Perhaps we may get closer to the truth - the real role of the coach – if we overview the complex structure of the coaching role. When we compare the tasks, activities, requirements and responsibilities of professional persons who are

concerned with teaching and education of young people, perhaps it is not an exaggeration to claim, that the sport coach should receive the highest recognition! It is because his/her activity and work requires one of the most complex, most complete, many sided personality. It is true, because sometimes the coach is a demonstrator, a lecturer, a psychologist, a nutritionist, a supporter, an adviser, a teacher or in other cases a leader, a referee, a decision-maker. The good coach is a versatile person, being able to work even in critical situations, as well.(Feher, 2006)(Jones et al., 2010) (Szabo, 2014).

However, believe me, I do not wish to overrate the coaching activity and rank it before other teaching-educating activities! Rather, I would like to emphasize the very intricate nature of this activity and to warn that people concerned with coaching are expected to meet very high requirements. It is a fact, that not every outstanding competitor becomes a successful coach. It is not surprising that not everybody can fulfill this high level, really complex requirements. No wonder that there are many sport coaches, a lot of trainers, however the amount of great coaches is rather limited.

Let me mention that in the previous issues of Sport Scientific and Practical Aspects Journal there were some articles, analyzing partly this problem. Information was given about the role of the coach as a leader (Huseinagic, Hodzic, 2009) and as a decision maker (Huseinagic, Hodzic, 2010). Other articles were dealing with questions of behavior of coaches (Huseinagic, Hodzic, 2009)(Jurko et al., 2013).

In this paper you find 2 tables, giving information about the opinion of athletes and coaches, concerning the importance of the

previously determined 10 parameters (expectations).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A lot of coaches, trainers, athletes, competitors were asked about the most important 3 parameters of the previously given 10 factors. The target was to mark the most significant factors, playing really dominant role in the evaluation and characterization of the work and activity of the coaches. So, they had to choose - based on the questionnaire - only 3 parameters from the 10 ones. Both the coaches and the athletes were mainly Hungarians, however some trainers and competitors represented other countries, as well. The questionnaires were given (and sent by e-mail) to the coaches and athletes in 2013, and for evaluation simple statistical method was used.

More than 200 coaches returned the questionnaires, representing the following sport

branches: athletics, basketball, boxing, football, gymnastics, handball, swimming, volleyball, water polo and weightlifting.

And more than 700 athletes sent back the questionnaires, representing the following sport branches: athletics, basketball, dancing, fencing, football, gymnastics, horse riding, judo, kayak-canoe, karate, orienteering, rowing, rugby, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, volleyball, water polo, weightlifting and wrestling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I am sure this analysis – evaluation of the questionnaires – is a useful and interesting one, showing some differences (concerning the expectations for the coaches) between the answers of athletes and coaches. Table 1 shows the opinion of the coaches.

Table 1. Opinion of coaches about the importance of the previously given 10 factors

expectation	distribution of votes in %
ability to transfer the knowledge	21.3
ability of pedagogy	20.9
knowledge (mental abilities)	15.1
motivation	12.9
support the athletes, CCP	11.1
ability to manage different age and gender groups	6.2
behavior	4.0
physical abilities	3.6
ready to help	3.1
outlook, appearance	1.8
summing up	100.0

People are different, coaches are different, different coaches can have rather different opinions. Some coaches decided to vote e.g. for motivation, ability of pedagogy and mental knowledge, as the most dominant parameters, others voted for behavior, physical abilities and ability to manage different age groups and different gender groups. Some had another opinion. But if the number of the replies is high enough, we can expect that the calculated distribution of the answers is a typical opinion of the coaches, characterizing the real, true evaluation of the dominance of the investigated factors and parameters. I do hope that the results of this analysis can be accepted as a rather objective parameter.

It is not a surprise that the highest % was in the case of the following parameter: ability to transfer the knowledge. It seems that from the 10 mentioned factors this should be taken as a determining, really dominant one. The silver

medal position is: ability of pedagogy, with only slightly smaller %. The third place is: knowledge (mental abilities).

Motivation and support the athletes got also considerable amounts of votes. The other factors (all the investigated factors) were also marked, however with decreasing probability, and the percentages were much less than in case of the first 3 factors. Of course it does not mean that the remaining 5 factors are negligible, not having any importance! No, it means only that the first 3 parameters characterize better the expectations, and these 3 factors are more significant to the real opinion of the asked coaches.

It seems necessary to mention that all the 10 factors got votes from the coaches, so I suppose, that the choice of these 10 parameters was a correct, for the coaches acceptable decision. Anyway, if the distribution of the factors would

be more or less homogeneous – no dominant factors – all parameters would get about 10 % value in the calculation of their distribution. Definitely if the % for the given factor is above the 10 % average, this can be taken as a more dominant factor and if it is below 10 %, it can be taken as a less dominant one. Of course the difference of the distribution values is definitely

significant between the 21.3 % of the first place and the 1.8 % of the 10th position. Based on the answers from the coaches there were 5 parameters above the average and 5 others below the mean value. So – in other words – from the 10 proposed factors 5 seemed to be dominant ones. Table 2 shows the opinion of the athletes.

Table 2. Opinion of athletes about the importance of the previously given 10 factors

expectation	distribution of votes in %
ability to transfer the knowledge	22.3
knowledge (mental abilities)	16.5
support the athletes, CCP	12.9
physical abilities	11.7
behavior	10.3
motivation	7.5
ability of pedagogy	7.0
ready to help	6.6
ability to manage different age and gender groups	4.0
outlook, appearance	1.2
summing up	100.0

The most important factor – similarly to the opinion of the coaches - was again the ability to transfer the knowledge, however the difference between the % of the gold medal and silver medal positions was much bigger, than in case of the answers of the coaches. The second position was for the knowledge (mental abilities) and the third one for support the athletes. The further, decreasing sequence of the other factors was rather different from the data in table 1, although the first place and the 10th place factors were the same in both cases. The biggest difference in ratio was in case of evaluation of the physical parameters. To the opinion of the athletes this is a dominant parameter (11.7%), but to the opinion of the coaches (3.6 %) it is not. Significant is the difference concerning the motivation (20.9 % and 7.0 %) and the behavior (10.3 % and 4.0%) as well.

You can ask is it natural, that there are differences? Yes, if we do the comparison between the opinion of coaches and athletes we can determine some differences. Why? You can see that the sport branches were not exactly the same for the athletes and the coaches. Furthermore the reason can be explained partly by the age-difference between coaches and athletes – tempora mutantur et nos mutantur in illis – and we should take into account also 2 other facts. Firstly, the number of asked athletes was 3 times more, than in case of coaches. Secondly, the relative distribution of the representatives in the different sport branches was also not the same in case of coaches and athletes.

Unfortunately the number of the asked people is not enough to carry out statistical evaluations for the different segments (age groups, gender groups, groups of different level of sport performance and sport branches), so I do not want to go into deeper analysis about the difference between the opinions of sport coaches and athletes. Anyway, to my mind the similarities are more dominant than the differences. And this is because - as a rule - the athlete, the player, the competitor today is the coach, the trainer tomorrow. And a clever, motivated, powerful and disciplined athlete can be later a good and successful coach. Probably and hopefully.

CONCLUSIONS

The role and the task of the sport coach is rather complex, coaches and athletes can have different opinions about the importance of various expectations, concerning the activity of the coaches. To the results of the evaluation of questionnaires – about the significance of 10 proposed parameters – there were some similarities and some differences between the opinion of the coaches and the competitors. To the opinion of the coaches the most dominant parameter is the ability to transfer the knowledge, on the second place the ability of pedagogy and on the third one the knowledge (mental abilities). To the opinion of athletes there is a coincidence on the first place – both groups think that the ability to transfer the knowledge is the most dominant parameter – however knowledge (mental abilities) is on the second place, and the support the athletes, the

coach-competitor partnerships is on the third one, based on the distribution of the votes.

Let me mention finally for characterization of the difference between the opinions of coaches and

athletes, that the physical abilities of the coaches belong to the opinion of athletes to dominant parameters (11.7 %), however to the opinion of coaches (3.6%) not.

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