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**STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING
AT UNIVERSITY MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAMS**

Julien Leonard Fleancu (a)*

* Corresponding author

(a) University of Pitești, street Targu din Vale, Pitesti, Romania. leonef2002@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article aims to present strategies for achieving the psychological training performed on the basketball teams of the University of Pitesti participating in three university European championships. There are presented some psychological techniques that we managed to get out of difficult moments both at the University European Games in the Netherlands and those in Serbia and Croatia. These techniques have been successfully applied on both 5x5 teams as well as 3x3 streetball teams, constituting a starting point to demonstrate that the psychological training is permanent and it makes the difference very often with the other components of sports training between a winner and a defeated. We know that the psychological training allows athletes to perform successfully and achieve effective action and better results in contents and competitions. This is just we want to elucidate in this article namely presenting psychological techniques which were successful in obtaining the best performance in European university basketball competitions. Without an adequate psychological training at this competition level, the athletes would not be able to overcome difficult moments always occurred within competitions.

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1. Introduction

Concept with profound meanings, the psychological training has become one of the factors discussed, opened for improvement and enhancement in sports competition.

The concept of psychological training cannot be limited to the sphere of moral and volitional factors, as it engages equally to those intellectuals and attitudes, all of which represent manifestations of

the human psyche. In addition, we believe that the psychological training is not only a factor, but rather, a component of the entire process of education and training of the athlete to participate in the competition.

The sportsman's psychological training reveals the essential features of the concept that actually define it.

The psychological training determines, by means of training and educational activities, the increase of the athlete's psychological capacity to enable effective action development and obtain superior results in competitions.

This factor contributes to the formation of the sportsman personality, the capacity of self guidance, indispensable for the plenary capitalization of the sportsman's physical, technical and tactical knowledge base.

The sportsman's ability to withstand the high values of volume and intensity of training efforts is primarily a consequence of mental preparation, one which shapes the consciousness traits, strengthens them, disciplines his attitude and increases his motivation.

Adaptation to the competitions' stresses and trainings constitute, in a large extent, the effect of the psychological training, whose content and methodology have been improved continuously in this period.

2. The Purpose of this Article

The purpose is to present the strategies for achieving psychological training in the basketball team at the University of Pitesti, participating in numerous national championships and university European championships.

3. The Article's Hypothesis

We suppose that the application of modern psychological training strategies can lead to superior results in contests and competitions.

The psychological training requires a long, difficult, sometimes full of surprises process due to the complexity of the human psyche, and the implications of high performance sport at an emotionally level.

Only few coaches revealed the "secrets" of great champions training. The psychologists did not solve cases, but generalized to a certain point the particular facts, because it is well known that you cannot give "recipes" available to anyone, anytime. So what is to be done? How to orient and coaches to build psychological training?

In the men's basketball team of the University of Pitesti, the psychological training was done as follows:

a. we established a program of the sportsmen psychological training, just as rigorously pursued as with other training factors;

b. we engaged the basketball players and the social and family factors in achieving the psychological training program. The sportsman must know the goal that he must reach, by analogy with the other followed chapters of training;

c. we worked constantly for the organization and education of high collective sports ideals, with a life rich in competitive events, with tradition, with an ambience generating enthusiasm for such work, and for the institution and its significance in the fair-play spirit etc .;

d. we realized the “disability” method to boost the younger sportsmen training in the spirit of traditions and following the model of the best well-trained sportsmen;

e. we used “work to exhaustion” method, regardless the exercises’ structure, the objective and subjective difficulties;

The psychological training can and should be planned by analogy with other factors, for example based on rigorous facts, setting goals and concrete actions, individually and in terms of a permanent control.

Thus at the level of the university men’s basketball teams we realized psychological profiles of the sportsmen where we recorded psychological characteristics in relation to performance targets that we have set each year.

4. Strategies for Achieving the Psychological Training at the University Basketball Teams’ Level

Starting from the analysis of the correspondence or the lack of relationship between psychological qualities of the sportsman and the performance requirements preliminary to university basketball teams’ level, we have set the targets of the psychological training as follows:

1. we initially formulated the objectives generally for the entire team or for a smaller group of sportsmen, for example, training the psychological resistance in situations or equal fight with strong opponents, but very stoutly or the “team spirit” development. Secondary, the targets set for each member of the sports team are the following: “forming the attitudes of rejecting the unjust decisions of the referees” or “educating the spirit of cooperation,” etc .;

2. we staggered and dosed the psycho-educational actions and in accordance with the requirements of the basketball game planning. Some of them can be found even in the calendar chart, scoring column cycles of daily or weekly presence, as frequency or intensity (in gymnastics and in all individual sports). Other means are provided even in lesson plans, the annotations are individualized;

3. we realized the simple control programming, in each lesson, weekly cycle, and with a psychologist specializing in applying psycho-technical means.

We will observe and record the behavior characteristics of the sportsmen during every training lesson, being recorded the effects obtained by applying these means and methods (Nelson, & Thomas, 1997).

At the level of the university basketball teams, in terms of training for the national and European university championships, it is welcome the presence of a psychologist who can bring his contribution to the elaboration of the psychological profiles, outlining the objectives and means of achieving psychological training as well as testing the sportsmen and interpreting data.

Assisting the sportsmen permanently in training, participating in major competitions provided in the annual calendar, the psychologist was always there near me as a coach without thereby to diminish his authority and merits in achieving predetermined performance. (Methodology training. 2000).

The sports psychologist at the university basketball teams at the University of Pitesti is part of the multidisciplinary brigade which collects, systematizes and interprets the rich and varied information, taking into consideration the sportsman point of view, helping to guide the psychological training in order to fulfill the objectives of major competitions (Nelson, & Thomas, 1997).

The proper use of the psychological load at university teams level. The psychological load should be adapted to the players possibilities so that they can control them (Tudor, 1999).

At university teams however, this charge should be moderate, avoiding very stressful exercises or a too stressful assessment of the results involves:

- a. simple exercises that executors can assimilate easily, taking into account that the university teams are made up of many players coming from more club teams as in the case of the University of Pitesti basketball team;
- b. exercises in which all the players participate assiduously (without a long wait);
- c. the general tasks (topics) that do not force players to make a special effort to focus on more stimuli, trying to adapt to the general particularities of players that we have available;
- d. short exercises, avoid players to lose focus, we must keep in mind that the National University Championships take place after finishing their university national championships and players are mentally exhausted;
- e. competitive exercises, carefully monitored by the coach in altering terms of success and failure;
- f. exercise with prizes.

At the university basketball teams, a 4 week training plan involves:

1. The first day, the coach introduces a new combination in attack, forcing players to make an important mental effort (medium-high as psychological loads);
2. on the second day, the same combination is repeated using free stress exercise (semi-active defense, medium-low psychological loads);
3. on the third day, the coach uses competitive exercises for this task (normal defense, assessing achievements, plus other exercises already well known and mastered, few will be stressful exercises (high-very high psychological load);
4. at the fourth training, the content repeats using unstressed (still low) exercises. In general, as with physical load, the psychological load should not be high in the days preceding the game.

The rest psychological periods must be made for the preparation of the National Championships completion that precedes finishing the National League championships and the players are very tired both physically and mentally.

Example: watching video of the game requires great psychological loads and should not be treated as an activity devoid of loads, never schedule immediately after the game, when players are exhausted.

Success or failure, disturbing factors for performance, are determined by the quantity and especially the quality efforts of players, both in training and in competitions involving the team. The psycho-diagnosis indicates the player's qualities who corresponds to the ideal model proposed to the team in which this activates.

Obtaining a valuable level of performance is done through psychological intervention for self-regulation and self-information and psychotherapeutic intervention.

A good mental rejuvenation capability (with genetic determination) due to alternating frequencies success - failure is the attribute of an ideal model of basketball (Niculescu, 2001).

By acquired means during training, and by the experience of competition, the valuable player manages to eliminate most stress factors that impede success endorsed by the team where he activates with appropriate results, to achieve the proposed performance goals.

A competition, in our case the University men's basketball National Championship means a range of issues / challenges that affect self-esteem as a result of trying to overcome them (Tudor, 1999).

The mental key part of basketball is based on how players face these challenges. An important aspect is the development of rituals such as checking equipment and getting the player in advance of all that is good and what the player needs.

Rituals are one of the best ways of preparing for the competition because they:

1. Give rhythm;
2. Increase familiarity with situations;
3. Determine conduct important aspects of training;
4. Build consistency in thinking;
5. Focuses the concentration;
6. Minimize distractions and negative thoughts;
7. Enhance the senses of self control and confidence, reduce uncertainty;
8. Enhance the feeling that the game is just like any other game, no matter its importance.

Gradually they become habits and rituals and once learned are very difficult to remove. There is no ideal ritual to be followed before the game.

Every player should list what he needs for the respective match and then develop a personal ritual before the game and finally he must follow it each time, before every game.

Problems arise before the game when the player feels "in flight" the pressure of the match, ex. player gives up (Niculescu, 2001).

It is a release, a way out of the situation and protection of self-reliance. The player is not motivated and this approach frees the stress load.

The player starts to complain about the surface, ball type, type of opponent, etc. In this case the coach needs to make the players understand that it is very clear to everyone that despite the apologies he does not try.

5. Conclusions

The concept of psychological training cannot be limited to the sphere of the moral and volitional factors, as it engages equally to those intellectuals and attitudes, all of which represent manifestations of the human psyche. In addition, we believe that the psychological training is not only a factor, but rather, a component of the entire process of education and training of the sportsman who participates in the competition.

To prepare the sportsman's psychological training reveals the essential features of the concept which actually define it.

A good psychological training must:

- a. develop a preliminary plan that keeps the player focused game ;
- b. develop the constant rituals to focus only on the game that comes;
- c. to stress concentration and relaxation ;
- d. to accustom the player to stand aside for 20 to 30 minutes before the game in a quiet place, try to prepare players to “play in the area” by putting the player to see how he wants to play and prepare players to develop the most sustained effort.

Specific issues that should be taken into account when preparing a pre-match ritual could include the following:

1. Awakening: Wake up slowly, going through a number of positive thoughts, and gently stretch each muscle group
2. smiles deliberately and develops feelings of energy, continue this procedure until you feel positive and lively.

Follows a ritual after following aspects:

- Travel arrangements, scheduling meetings and checking tickets. - Times for eating and drinking.
- Check equipment (checklist). - Reviewing game strategy and game plan (objectives tournament / match specific patterns, specific tactics, alternative game plans, etc.). - Relaxation and mental review (reviewing their technical performance, psychological, tactical and physical, also those of adversary states, distractions, keywords related to technical, the emotional or physical assessments on the surface, etc.) - Focusing on plan a half hour before the meeting. (The coach guide in sport psychology. 1999).

The psychological training conducted within the university basketball teams of the University of Pitesti, by means of training and educational actions led to the increasing the psychological capacity of basketball players manifested by deploying effective action and getting better results in competitions.

Thus we believe that the psychological training was a core factor of sports training work resulted in the titles of national champions in academics and classifications obtained in European competitions.

This factor contributed to the sportsman’s personality, his self-management and self-regulation capacity, indispensable to the sportsman’s physical, technical and tactical knowledge base.

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