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Analysis of specialist opinions about the problem of selection in the game of football for children 6-8 years of age

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Abstract

The general trend worldwide is a pronounced decrease in the age at which sport performance begins. An early debut in the performance sport requires an early specialization and hence special efforts of the athlete, not just physical (the body has the ability to regenerate), but also of a mental nature. In this study I wanted to obtain the experts opinions on the main aspects of selection for the age studied, namely: selection criteria, methods of encouragement, stimulation and improvement, the overall state of the selection phenomenon organized for children of small age. Sports training professionals appreciate that the future belongs to technicians and athletes able to create new patterns, superior to those present, favoring the creation of highly efficient motor structures in order to obtain success in sports.

Key words: selection, football, motor criteria, motivation, 6-8 years of age.

Rezumat

Tendința generală, pe plan mondial, este scăderea accentuată a vârstei la care se începe practicarea sportului de performanță. Un debut timpuriu în sportul de performanță presupune o specializare timpurie și implicit eforturi deosebite din partea sportivului, nu numai de natură fizică (organismul are capacitatea de a se regenera), ci și de natură psihică. Am urmărit în studiul de față obținerea opiniilor specialiștilor cu privire la principalele aspecte ale selecției la vârsta studiată și anume: criteriile de selecție, metode de încurajare, stimulare și îmbunătățire, stadiul general al fenomenului de selecție organizată la nivelul copiilor de vârstă școlară mică. Specialiștii din domeniul antrenamentului sportiv apreciază că viitorul va aparține tehnicienilor și sportivilor apți să creeze noi modele, superioare celor prezente, care favorizează crearea unor structuri motrice deosebit de eficiente pentru obținerea succesului sportiv.

Cuvinte cheie: selecție, fotbal, criterii motrice, motivare, 6-8 ani.

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Introduction

The football game progressed permanently and appreciably, because of its spread and of the large number of people who practise this truly "social phenomenon". This is very enlightening and in regard to children in our country, we see a special attraction for this sport, both in their free time, playing, as well as in an organized environment: school competitions or schools specializing in football trainings.

The selection process is an organized and repeated process for an early detection of inborn skills of the child, using a complex system of criteria (medical, biological, psycho-sociological and motor) for his further practice and specialization in a discipline or sporting event. (1)

The procedural nature of selection involves multiple actions with a fixed sequence: clear delineation of areas of activity and their components, followed by combining and integrating components of activity fields into scientific ways that lead to the achievement of action objectives.

The need to approach very seriously some objective criteria in the selection and sporting orientation, criteria widely recognized and checked, comes from the need to place the whole action of selection on some scientific grounds. (2)

Selection, orientation and training of children and adolescents able to practise a performance sport is not a momentary action but an evolutionary process in which operations are carried out continuously, even during the trainings. A momentary operation only reveals the availabilities of the investigated, materialized in his health, general motor behavior and his strong motivation to do sport, the rest evolving from here.

For the selection and orientation process to benefit from opportunities to succeed, it is necessary, on the one hand, for those who select to know what kind of skills are required by this sport, and on the other hand, for those who are selected to have those qualities to a highest level, knowing that some of them can be perfected by training, and others not so much.

The purpose

For this paper, which is trying to introduce some new ways of approaching educating new motor skills in

children selected in the game of football, we consider it is necessary for physical education teachers in schools and football coaches who train these groups of children ready to be selected, to participate actively and creatively, in order not to lose touch with the requirements of modern international football, as well as upgrading the teaching - learning process for each age group.

Knowledge of new aspects of the theory and practice of contemporary football requires a deepening of the general methodology of modern sports training, combined with an active and effective participation of physical education teachers and football coaches in conducting training.

Specifically, the evolution of this sport has a number of guidelines and trends that directly influence the development of the main motor qualities and also of moral-volitional qualities.

In this regard, whenever it comes to qualities related to stable heritable characteristics (longitudinal dimensions of the body, speed, general skills) the coaches requirements should be very high from the beginning; in situations that require qualities related to labile, perfectible hereditary characters (perimeters and body weight, strength and endurance), the initial requirement may be lower. Particular attention should be paid to mental qualities.

The first years of life have an important role in the development of the motivation for playing football and further on in the development of physical, mental and intellectual qualities. When asked about the possibility of delaying recovery in cultivating physiological and functional qualities, domain experts answer that the possibility of full recovery decreases with the length of the delay. However, the selection of young footballers should take into account the stages of child development, and this must be different for every attribute necessary for great performance.(3)

Research performed by experts on psycho-motricity showed that its intensive development occurs between 6-10 years, and that between 10-16 years the process continues normally after systematic practice of football. The most favorable period to start speed development and detention exercises would be between 6-8 years. Strength and resistance must be developed between 9-11 years. Regarding exercises as games, it is

recommended that they start early, aiming at an overall development since they are 3-4 years old. (4)

Method

In developing this research we considered that consulting specialists (practitioners) is of great relevance in order to clarify issues related to the selection process. In addition to information taken from expert literature, in order to outline an objective and complete image about the real methods to carry on a selection in team games, we used a questionnaire for those who effectively participate in training athletes of children and juniors.

The questionnaire is made of 18 questions (1 with a closed answer and 17 with open answers), meant to provide important information in relation to: quality of the sporting selection for the age of 6-8, in schools and sports clubs and private schools in the west. We also sought to obtain the views of experts on key aspects of selection at the age studied, namely: selection criteria, methods to encourage, stimulate and improve, the overall state of the phenomenon of organized selection for children at a school age. The teachers and coaches who were kind enough to respond to the questionnaire were 100, all of them having been specialized in football and carrying their professional activities in schools, school clubs and private clubs in Arad, Timis and Bihor. I will present the graphical representation of the responses recorded from the 17 questions of the questionnaire above, question 18 not having a free choice answer but being strictly related to the name of the club where each respondent play.

Results

Q1. How do you appreciate the quality of selection for the game of football in Romania?

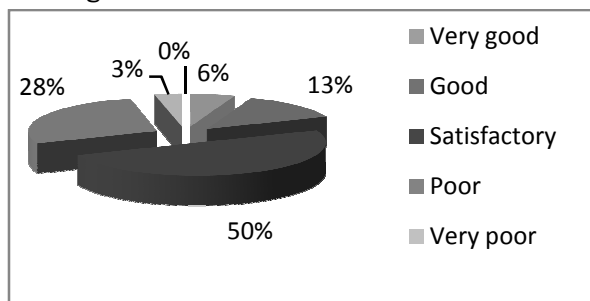


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q1

In terms of quality of selection in football game, the answers are quite different, so that 50% believe that it is only satisfactory, while only 18% agree that we have a football game selection good and very good.

Q2. What do you think is the best age for initial selection in the football game?

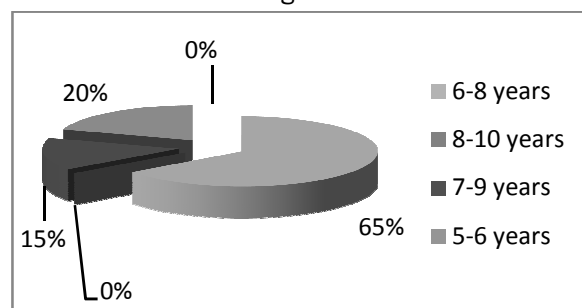


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q2

Regarding the question about the optimal age for initial selection in football, an overwhelming percentage of 65% believe that it is best achieved between 6-8, while 15% believe that between 7-9 years would be better and 20 % mention 8-10 years. No respondent believes that the initial selection in football game should involve children under the age of 5.

Q3. Which do you believe are the most effective selection criteria the experts should take into account?

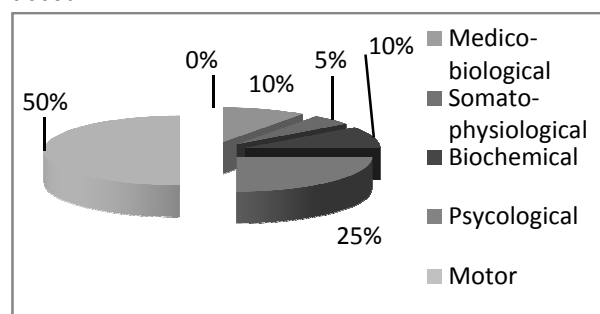


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q3

When asked about the effectiveness of criteria for initial selection in football a 50% mentions the motor ones followed by psychological ones nominated by 25% of respondents, medico-biological and biochemical ones by 10% and somato-physiological ones by 5%.

Q4. How do you consider the interest of local authorities in the field (AJF) to stimulate the activity of selection at the age of 6-8?

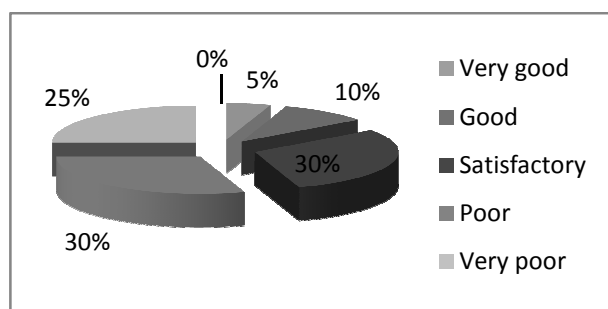


Figure 4. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q4

As far as the interest of local authorities towards the selection process in children aged 6-8 is concerned, the opinion of experts is that it is generally low and very low 55%, 30% consider it satisfactory, while only 15% think it is right (good and very good).

Q5. What ways of improving early selection in football do you recommend?

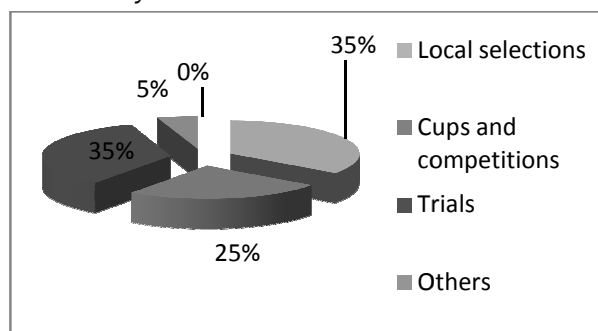


Figure 5. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q5

To this question the answers are equal, which shows that experts' opinions vary, that the categories listed are to take into account in order to improve the early selection process in the game of football. There is no favorite category, 35% of respondents were in favor of organizing regional selections and trials in schools and 25% favor cups and competitions.

Q6. Assess which of the following elements you consider important for the success of the selection process in children 6-8 years of age?

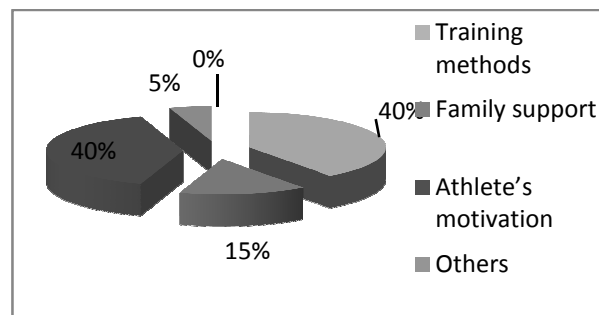


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q6

This question received from experts has equal answers (40%) for the two elements considered vital in achieving remarkable results in the beginning of the selection process and throughout it, namely training methods and athlete motivation. Family support is also important, especially in this age where the child has not yet undergone individualization, but 15% is quite far from the first category.

Q7. What ways to motivate athletes you think are the most useful to the children and juniors?

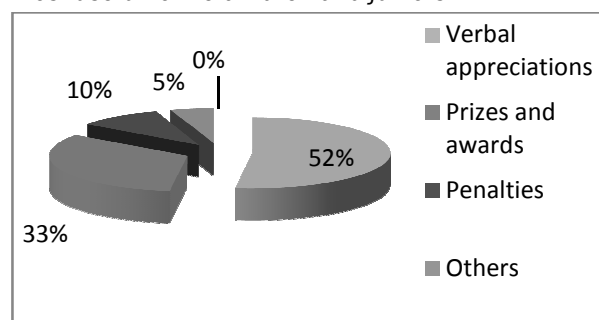


Figure 7. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q7

The largest number of responses to this question were in favor of verbal assessments (52%) followed by prizes and awards (33%) and penalties (10%). It is clear for the vast majority of experts in the sports field that at this age group rewards have the most impact, whether they are verbal (appreciation) or material (prizes and awards). It is to be avoided to use stimulation by repressive measures (penalties) due to the increased levels of emotionality of this age, which may have totally opposite effects to the desired one, namely a real de-motivation of the athlete.

Q8. Which of the following items do you think decisively influences athletes participation in programs organized by the club / school where you teach?

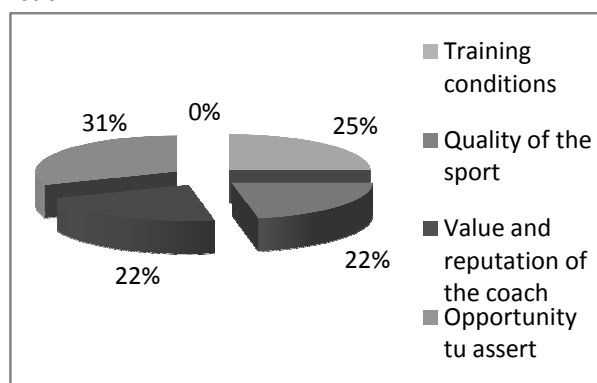


Figure 8. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q8

Also due to the age at which we relate during the investigation, it appears that the most appreciated as a criterion in choosing the club / school to practice a sport is the opportunity to assert (31%), followed by the others listed in proportions almost identical: the training conditions (25%), the quality of the sport and the value and reputation of the coach (22%). At this age all children are convinced that if they are part of a club or school with a reputation in professional sports, it certainly will get them at least in the national selections.

Q9. How long you have you worked in sports?

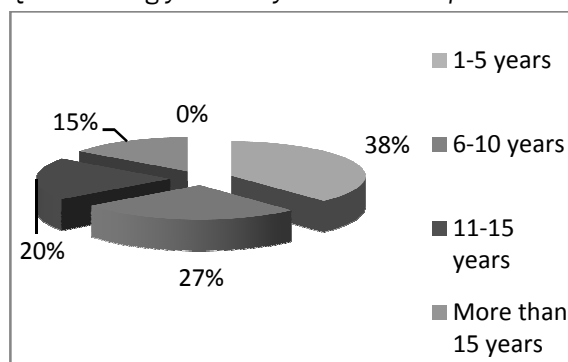


Figure 9. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q9

Most respondents (38%) have been working in the sports field for less than five years, while 27% do this activity for more than five years but less than 10 and 20% say they are within the category of 11-15

years of activity. Only 15% of the specialists have been working for more than 15 years in this field.

Q10. How old are you?

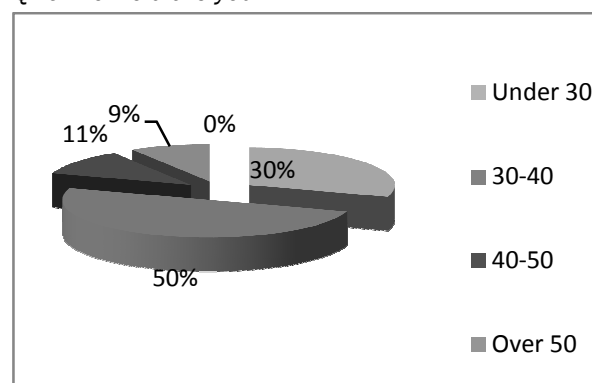


Figure 10. Graphical representation of the responses to question Q10

Half of the experts participating in the study (50%) fall in the age group of 30-40 years, 30% of them are under 30 years old, 11% are between 40-50 years and only 9% are over 50 years old. There is clearly a downward trend in the age of specialists working with children and juniors, a dynamic field, continuously changing which is why it is preferred by young people.

Conclusions

After studying data from the survey, considering the graphic representations of results obtained on the sample of 100 respondents, we can draw a number of conclusions regarding the specific of initial selection in football in children 6-8 years of age.

Most respondents believe that the selection process sports games in general and particularly for the football game is a pretty good process performed in clubs / schools in Romania. However, there are many things that can be improved here including:

- Increasing interest of local authorities (AJF) in promoting sports competitions organized at the lowest age;
- Organizing with their support many selections like trials in schools, inter-schools cups, local tournaments in order to bring as many school age children of 6-8 years of age to the attention of specialists,

- Family involvement in maintaining children's interest in sports activities and using every opportunity to motivate athletes: awards in competitions, positive comments, etc.
- Maintaining increased interest of coaches / teachers in the development of motor skills in children 6-8 years of age in order to obtain good results in the selection process and at all stages of training.

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