The new system of the talent development program in Hungarian soccer

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Summary

Study aim: due to a series of failures and the drastic reduction in the quality of Hungarian soccer, greater emphasis should be put on coaches’ professional development and talent development programs. The aim of this study was to present the newly established Hungarian Soccer Development Program that focuses on the development of youth talent.

Methods: document analysis and in-depth interviews were utilized during the research process. All Program leaders were interviewed in the Hungarian Soccer Development Program (N = 5). The interviews were preceded by thorough document analysis of the Program and the new strategies and plans of the Hungarian Football Federation. The authors systematically examined the Program and were able to prepare systematically for in-depth interviews whose focus was the specific areas that weren’t present in the document.

Results: the main aim of this Program is to give a mass base for the selection of soccer talent and to promote the development of Hungarian soccer in the long run. The measurement and evaluation systems chosen for the identification is a complex process: children go through several selection phases until they achieve the best in their age cohort. For the successful realization of this Program, there is a need for a change in attitude and also for the development of a mass base in Hungarian soccer. The number of players under the age of 18 years should reach a solid 200,000 players. Those who established the Program also introduced a control and assessment system to improve efficiency, which helps to keep the different programs and sessions of the Program at a high level. Coaches’ education and professional development is also in a focus: the Program’s content and methodology is specific for the age cohort and constantly changing for better practices.

Discussion and conclusions: the Program reinforced opinions that emphasized that selection is a long-term and systematic process in which regular tests and measurements are needed. Gifted young soccer players should not be selected simply for their physical outlook but rather on those conditions that are difficult to measure: the way they play the game, their skills, and their motivation for success. Talent selection and management should depend on their individual and team abilities and skills, technical skills, and assertiveness. Only those coaches with high-level understanding, competencies, and motivation can make changes in the sport.

Key words: Youth development – Soccer talent – Sport program – Implementation system

Introduction

According to the statistics of the Hungarian Football Federation (HFF), the average number of spectators was 2,800 at the first League matches in 2010; average attendance was 8,000 at national soccer matches. The number of registered male players was 85,000 in 2010. The 10-year Strategy Program of HFF (2011) stated that it would raise the average number of spectators in the first League matches to more than 10,000; national matches, 25,000; and it also plans to have more than 160,000 registered male players in the country. Furthermore, the sport authority would like the entire Hungarian Youth Soccer Development System, female soccer, and recreation soccer to be better managed and more progressive in the short-term.

The drastic decline of the general quality and standards in Hungarian soccer in the last few decades has made the leaders of national soccer organizations realize that any recovery would urgently call for emphasis on the improvement of programs that develop talent [23]. Professionals have also been talking about an urgent need for change in the management, attitude, and professional development of coaches and its significant consequences in the development of sport.
There have been several “attempts” in recent decades to remedy the substantial problems that characterize the development of young soccer players in the country (Bozsik Program: 2002–2004; Bozsik Program: 2006, Bozsik Program: 2011–present; Góliát McDonald’s FC: 1999–2004). However, these programs had very little effect on the level of talent development and success. They “died away” mostly due to insufficient use of resources or the system itself lacked adequate consideration for appropriate and methodically sound youth development [23]. These development programs demonstrated that financial support itself is not sufficient for soccer’s significant advancement and recovery. Conversely, a rather serious commitment, a positive collective attitude, and a holistic approach is needed from all parties involved to carry out such a substantial and progressive plan [22].

It is obvious that the quality and the continuous lack of accomplishments of Hungarian soccer have not been acceptable for the stakeholders and for the fans. It seems important to present the real, current state of soccer to better understand the need for a productive and success-oriented development program.

The selection process
The number of studies that focus on the selection, identification, development, and successful improvement of soccer talent has been increasing. More studies, however, are needed for better understanding and better practices [13]. One can see that professionals are supported by many empirical and theoretical research studies connected with talent management [19].

The selection of soccer talent is a complex, long-term process [12, 16]. When the selection is made for specific sports, the factors that should be considered are those that are highly likely to forecast the consequent performance and success in youth development [1]. In such cases, the required profile of the given sport, the criteria, and the indicators of selection are to be defined [6]. The process and course of achievement needs to be carefully planned and controlled in the course of developing young athletes within each subsequent phase of training from the stages of screening to high achievement [15].

It is well known that young players will mature differently, which is to be considered and compensated for in the course of the selection stages [12]. It is worth putting emphasis on the identification of talent with the use of scientific means, meaning that the potentials offered by objective and scientific measurements should also be employed in the course of action [21]. It is important to perform various tests and measurements in the process of selection and talent management. Talented players maturing later would thus have the opportunity to become selected and to be successful in their sport career [9].

Most elite soccer players are born in the first quarter of the year, which supports the theory that trainers tend to prefer more mature and developed players in the course of the selection process [7, 10, 17]. Early maturation results in players who are more developed physically performing better in the various tests; thus, soccer players maturing early are selected at a larger percentage rate [14]. It is believed that young players should be selected on the basis of their skills, abilities, and potential, not based on their physical appearance. Therefore, the beliefs, understanding, and skills of the trainer/coach making the selection are of crucial importance.

Christensen (2009) found three groups of essential factors that have a major influence on the selection process: technical skills (visual experience), self-interested players, and autotelic players [4]. Based upon these findings, those players have advantages in the selection process that have more individual skills, and their movement with the ball looks more refined. Also, most coaches prefer the players that are more technical on the individual level.

Characteristics of soccer talent
The components of athletic talent tend to be similar in the various team sports. The constant change in circumstances and situations is a dominant feature; therefore, fast thinking, the way they comprehend or read the game, and appropriate decision-making are all very important [8]. In the selection of a soccer talent, there are a number of factors to consider, such as mental and psychological factors, physical characteristics, bodily endowments, motor skills, game comprehension, and skillfulness [2, 25].

It is known that age level influences some psychological aspects (e.g., motivation); the position occupied in the soccer field has no effect on these factors [20]. Brown described how in the early 1980s an Olympic Development Program (ODP) was set up in England for the coordination of selection and development [3]. The program has been supporting selection and talent development in 5 different age groups. In the process of selection, trainers tend to consider players’ technical skills, tactical characteristics, athletic capabilities, and psychological properties. For the most talented players, ODP offers the following opportunities: continuous, quality training; games with the most talented soccer players; high-standard competition; representation of the given province, region, or country; and quality professional work.

It seems that there is a gap between related theory and practice. One current trend is that in the case of professional soccer clubs, the selection of soccer talent is dominated by the personal considerations of player scouts and trainers [24]. According this finding, there are three intercorrelated systems that coaches and scouts tend to look during the process. One of them is TABS (Technique, Attitude, Balance, Speed), which focuses on ball skills,
attitude towards soccer, performance of balance related to different situations of the game, and speed with and without ball. Another system is SUPS (Speed, Understanding, Personality, Skill), which includes speed with and without ball, reading the game, the personality of the player, and the player’s technical ball handling skills. TIPS is a system (Talent, Intelligence, Personality, Speed) that characterizes a player’s talent factors, cognitive and personality aspects, and speed with and without the ball. These aspects are not to be neglected in the talent identification and selection process.

There are divergent opinions in association with the system of selection and talent development; theory and practice are not necessarily associated. Authors suggest that various studies in and of themselves are not suitable for determining talent [14]. There are a lot of factors that can help anticipate the characteristics of talented soccer players. One relevant model that supports this study [26] classifies skills and the underlying, influential factors into four main groups: physical activities, physiological factors, sociological factors, and psychological and cognitive factors personality (Figure 1).

**Objective**

The main aim of this study is to describe the new talent development system launched within the framework of Hungarian soccer: OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program. The objectives of this program do not fundamentally differ from those of its forerunners because the key goals are again the creation of a mass base, proper selection of talent, and their high-standard development with excellent coaches in the sport. This paper presents analyses of the selection system that is currently applied by Hungarian professionals to identify and select soccer talent, the expected outcomes, as well as the aspects and factors they consider to be the more suitable for anticipating and developing talent in soccer.

**Methods**

A qualitative research methodology has been applied in this study. It was selected because it uses an explorative investigation methodology and is designed to help understand the complexity of the issue. The qualitative method is helpful in understanding the schemes of thinking and opinions, as well as reaching a more accurate and detailed description of the given problem [27]. The qualitative approach examines phenomena by bringing the participants of the study into the focal point, such that the researchers enable the interviewees to express themselves at their own discretion [5].

Our interviews were preceded by the analysis of all the available documents relating to the Bozsik Program and the examination of the 10-year strategy of the Hungarian Football Federation (HFF). One form of data was

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**Fig. 1. Potential factors in the forecasting and determination of talents (Williams & Franks, 1998)**

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The new system of the talent development program in Hungarian soccer derived from documents prepared during the initialization of the new program. All the available notes, brochures, and papers were carefully analyzed in the first part of the research. In this way, authors thoroughly understood the frames and stages of the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program, and were able to prepare for the in-depth interviews.

In-depth interviews were made in order to understand the expected outcomes and process of Bozsik Program, as well as the strengths and the potential problems of the Program. A significant aspect to select the sample was to interview experts who had key roles in the design and initiation of the new Bozsik Program. Experts were selected from key professionals who lead the Program (N = 5): one HFF Hungarian Football Federation professional director, three HFF county directors, and one HFF program manager. During the interviews, participants were allowed to advance their opinions freely, i.e., they were not influenced in the expression of their thoughts. This study applied several in-depth interviews with all the five individuals. During the interviews, audio recordings were made and written notes were taken. Prior to the conversations, the participants were informed about the purpose of the interview, the confidential handling of their opinions, and their use exclusively for this study. Through constant checking for understanding authors aimed for more elaborate and detailed information from the goals, means, and assessment of the Program.

After a careful data collection process, analysis began with the documentation of gathered data and the organization of data into themes and concepts. The document analysis was a useful way to begin the analysis and helped the authors prepare for the interviews. The interview questions were established through document analysis and later further clarified according to the individual role in the Program. The main purpose of the interviews was to better understand the influences, explanations, and representations of aims and means. A summary note concluded every interview. All data were constantly compared and contrasted to best reduce, display, and arrive at proper conclusions.

Results

The development and selection system of talented young players in Hungarian soccer is a complex process implemented on various levels. The OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program was launched in June 2011 for the third time (first in 2002; second in 2004). On the basis of document analysis and in-depth interviews, it is evident that this program has been elaborated on in detail, thoroughly considered, and structured in a systemic manner. Moreover, it is implemented on four integrated levels (Figure 2).

One significant element of the system is the newly established education and development process for youth coaches. It is called UEFA Elite Youth A diploma. Only those coaches with this diploma can work at the national soccer academies. HFF leadership realized that a general program would do little good for the specialized coaches. In the new system, all 4 levels require exact content and methodology in the professional development system for the involved coaches. It has been a tremendous amount of work to overhaul the courses and make the programs more appropriate to the age-specific ranges as well as for the specific expectations. Both short-term and long-term courses are available for the coaches with different licenses. These programs and courses have a more rigorous entrance examination system and coursework.

Fig. 2. Scenes of the implementation of the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program (Bozsik Program, Road to the Front Ranks of Europe, Talent Contest and Engagement Program)
Scenes of the implementation of the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program

Level 1: Bozsik child soccer

Its objective is the correct registration and high involvement of children aged 5–12 years in the program in order to broaden the pool for the selection of children. One major goal is to systematically recruit gifted children and provide them with skills and enjoyment during these fundamental years. For that, objectives and measurable tests are needed. HFF relies on the operation of a centralized and standardized registration and record-keeping system to monitor the process of recruitment, i.e., the number of registered children.

“With our reach towards a mass of kids, we wish to increase the number of players under the age of 18 years at least to two hundred thousand.” B.J.

“... one of the key goals is the involvement of large masses, that is, children should play soccer in a larger number irrespective of their sex.” B.P.

The first level of the system, Bozsik Child Soccer, consists of two parts: Child Institutional Program and Child Club Program. Both these parts have important functions in the system.

The Institutional Program offers the opportunity for educational institutions (schools, kindergartens) to register for the program. The institutions commit to holding weekly activities, working on the fundamentals of soccer, and organizing soccer tournaments for involved young soccer players. HFF gives educational, financial, and organizational support to member institutions, physical education (PE) teachers, as well as the organization of district, county-based, and national soccer “festivals” that involve various institutions. HFF accurately defines the detailed scenarios and implementation of the soccer tournaments to be staged on various levels. With the institutional program, the organizers follow the objective to turn tournaments into events where the main emphasis falls on participation and the feeling of enjoyment and success. It is also a major goal to have less emphasis on competition and stress.

“The institutions are in charge of making children play, and not restricting them from doing sports, playing soccer; they should make these facilities available, and act as partners.” B.P.

“Primary schools have an essential and important part in the program. A crucial role is attributed to mass involvement and raising a preference for soccer, and therefore the work of PE teachers at schools is of outstanding significance.” N.K.

Level 2: Bozsik Evolution Program

It is an important objective of the program that talented players living even in the smallest and most remote settlements of the country should have the opportunity to show their skills to experts. For the improvement of our soccer, potential should be created to have more players who are reputed on the national level for the future. The evolution of the program is centered on the selection and engagement of talented players aged 10–14 years who make up an important pool for the under-age national teams, elite academies, and priority development centers for young soccer players.

The Bozsik Selection Program is implemented in the following, mutually integrated scenes: the district, sub-center, county, regional and national scenes, as well as the Youth Development Centre (Telki), each of which has a responsible professional leader appointed by HFF (Table 1). This setup allows the selected soccer players to be given trainings that fit their age and talent. Obviously, from the district to the national scene, the number of soccer players gradually shrinks in every age group. The children undergo a process of selection with a series of stages, and as a result the most talented children of this sport – 80 players and 8 goalkeepers – reach the national level: the Training Center of Telki. There is a need to highlight that the presentation of the Bozsik Program calls for the separate description of the individual scenes.

Districts

The aim of the establishment of districts is to register children aged 10–12 years who stand pre-eminent in the teams of the settlements participating in child soccer
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Table 1. Summary table of the implementation of the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program (Bozsik Program, Road to the Front Ranks of Europe, Talent Contest and Engagement Program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection scene</th>
<th>Implementation scene</th>
<th>Fields of selection</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>Bozsik Club and Institutional Program</td>
<td>game skills, quickness, aggressiveness, anticipative skills, technical skills subjective</td>
<td>U5-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Club trainer</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Bozsik Evolution Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>U5-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Club trainer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief district trainer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subcenter</td>
<td>Bozsik Evolution Program</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief district trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief subcenter trainer</td>
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<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Bozsik Evolution Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief subcenter trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>County directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Bozsik Evolution/Élite Program</td>
<td>psychological, biomechanical, physiological and soccer-specific examinations objective</td>
<td>U13-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>County directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFF federation trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFF professional director</td>
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<tr>
<td>National/Telki Training Center</td>
<td>Bozsik Élite Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFF federation trainers</td>
<td>Élite academies</td>
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<tr>
<td>County directors</td>
<td>Under-age national teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HFF professional director</td>
<td>Priority development centers for young soccer players</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Programs and festivals. Experts can then provide for all the necessary conditions in the district training centers towards the development of the selected talented players. After registering players – beyond the various tournaments and events – the high ability players of the districts participate in the trainings of the districts at six occasions a year. These activities are led by the chief district trainer in conformance to the relevant HFF guidelines.

Subcenters
Subcenters receive the players demonstrating outstanding performance in the districts; here, the talented players are engaged in the U13 age group, also in the form defined by HFF. They are based on strong individual skills, and the training sessions have a strong focus on the development of game skills.

Counties
On the county level, the main goal is the selection of the outstanding players from the subcenters; they are engaged in the U14 age group of the county-level soccer centers, under the leadership of centrally appointed professional managers. In this context, the best players have the opportunity to enter priority clubs for development, as well as the elite academies and the national selection programs.

Regions
The majority of players on the regional level are members of priority clubs for the development of young soccer players or soccer academies. The creators of the program want to see all the children admitted to the regional selection teams to have the opportunity to compete internationally, in the U14 age group. With the regular activities for the regional selection teams, the creators of Bozsik Program offer the opportunity for later maturing talent to join the process of elite training.

National area centers
The function of the national area centers is the selection of 80 players and 8 goalkeepers for the U13 and U14 age groups, who can go to the Youth Development Centre, Telki. In both age groups, the selected teams of two regions play against each other. A professional team appointed by the national professional director selects the most talented players to enter the Telki Selection Camp on the basis of pre-defined criteria.

Telki Selection Camp
From among the talented players, this camp chooses young soccer players from the U13 and U14 age groups who are suitable for international appearance. After a multilevel
selection process, teams “A” and “B” for the U14 age group are formed with 20 players and 2 goalkeepers each. The national area selection teams participate in the Selection Camp, where under the supervision of the professional director of HFF, the performances of these players are analyzed. The performance of high ability soccer players is monitored during training sessions, and they may also be required to perform biomechanical, psychological, physiological, and soccer-specific motor tests. As a result, by the end of the selection process it is indeed the best players of the age groups that are admitted to the group of talented players who are suitable for international appearance.

Level 3: Elite Program

In addition to the development of the skills of the selected soccer talent, the aim of the program is to have them first play as a team of the U14 age group in Nyíregyháza, in the Jonatán Cup International Soccer Tournament. The HFF trainers and the national professional director are in charge of implementing this segment of the program. According to the developers of Bozsik Program, in the case of selecting teams of various age groups it is important to prepare and enter talented soccer players in competitions under the same professional guidelines and expectations. For this reason, soccer academies and priority development centers for young players – where the most talented are trained – are required to act in cooperation with the professional leaders of HFF.

Level 4: Top soccer

One of the key objectives of the process is to turn the talented players selected for the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program into professional soccer players. It means that they should be transferred to the first-league (NB1) teams as soon as possible, and play for Hungary in the international scene as well.

Selection system

The talent selection is implemented on several different levels and stages. Until talented soccer players reach the selection team of a specific age group from the smallest settlement or club of the country, they undergo several rounds of selection. Looking at the selection procedure, one would see that the process of selection consists of two “large” stages. The first section, which lasts until the end of the evolution program, includes no research-based measurement or evaluation. Soccer experts holding various UEFA licenses evaluate and sort talented players primarily in view of the abilities, skillfulness, technique, aggressiveness, and anticipation seen in the course of matches in the U7, U9, U11, and U13 age groups. The second section is the elite program, in which experts apply research-based measuring tests at the Telki Selection Camp to quantify biomechanical, physiological, psychological, and soccer-specific characteristics. The high-standard scientific background largely supports the work of soccer coaches in the course of selection.

“... there has been a very serious professional debate for decades now as to what should be the basis of selection... In European soccer, there was a tendency mostly in the 1980s, when the orientation of selection was rather physical ... at that time, Hungary was following suit.” B.P.

“There is no specific measurement system in the first phase, but it is clearly the eye of the coach that decides... It has been proven that the game called soccer should be based on soccer skills, game skills and ball handling...” B.P.

“The measurement system has been applied only to the selected players regarded to be the most talented in the Training Center of Telki.” N.K.

“... in the Telki Selection Camp, the most talented players are subjected to thorough examinations ... the kids are involved in physiological, psychological and biomechanical tests... in addition to these tests, there is a factor that needs to be highlighted: intelligence.” B.J.

Control system

In comparison with the two “forerunners,” the program includes a new control and evaluation system, which guarantees the accomplishment of the established objectives. This control system is a closed scheme involving first-league players, former first-league trainers, former and current HFF federation trainers, and the coach or manager of the national team from time to time. Without any prior notice these professionals regularly visit soccer festivals and selection tournaments organized in various scenes. They then assess, evaluate, and report the standards of professional work.

Potential threats and problems

The presented selection system is a nation-wide program greatly influences the lives of a large number of people and also the future of the most popular sport discipline in the country. In attempting to achieve success in this program, a bank (OTP), a petrol company (MOL), and the Hungarian Football Federation are working together to provide all the necessary tangible and financial conditions. In order to operate the system efficiently and at high standards, the organizers have introduced an elaborate control system, which in itself can reduce the number of potential problems and threats. The interviewees have mentioned several factors that could hinder success. The following factors have been realized as potential problems:

1. Predominantly from the countryside, young talented players are late to enter the priority development centers for young players, soccer academies, i.e., in the hands of real professionals.
2. Genuine success would call for a change in the attitudes on the part of all the stakeholders of Hungarian soccer.

3. If the Program is not able to involve 200,000 registered players under the age of 18, no significant objectives are met.

4. Until the age of 14–15 years, the selected children are hard to move from their places of residence.

"The most serious problem may be the change of attitude at the clubs... it is important that clubs should act as partners in the... in the field of, say, the development of the teams of young soccer players, the supply of equipment, the creation of aesthetic environments and appropriate circumstances." N.K.

"In my opinion, one of the biggest problems is if we are not able to involve 200,000 registered players under the age of 18, and thus no serious objectives can be set... Here we have a common cause: to improve Hungarian soccer... It calls for everyone’s help... PE teachers, club presidents, trainers, the managers of soccer departments, the mayors of the individual settlements, i.e., all the people who are somehow, directly or indirectly, related to soccer." B.J.

"... what I can see as the biggest problem is that until the age of 14 or 15 skillful and selected children are hard to move from their places of living. Therefore, we can spot a skilled 12-year-old kid in a settlement somewhere in the countryside with no benefit; as if we are not able to transfer him to a serious club, his daily training will remain incomplete." B.P.

Discussion and conclusions

For the development of Hungarian soccer, it has been long necessary to put together a development model for talent management that make the system for the development of young players trackable and controllable. In recent decades soccer experts have experienced a gradual drop in the number of children playing soccer. For this reason, an important aspect of OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program is “recruitment” and mass involvement.

The leaders of Hungarian football have searched for the best possible means to renew soccer in Hungary. After thorough analyses of the most successful soccer systems in Europe, the Spanish scheme was used as sample for development. The development program described above is similar to the Spanish scheme in several aspects. Spanish soccer has always belonged to the front ranks in the world, and their success is be backed by a well-structured, high-standard system for the development and management of talented young players. When looking at the nationalities of players in the first and second league, we can see that a lot of teams consist solely of Spanish nationality players. Also, the ratio of foreign players is one of the smallest among the top European leagues. These facts suggest that the Spanish scheme for the development of young players is efficient, well-structured, and of high standards from all respects, meaning that it brings up quality players. A factor underlying this success is that there was a period when the Spanish national team was unable to make outstanding achievements. At that time, the Federation rebuilt the development of young players on a new foundation. The novel system relied on the identification, selection, and registration of talented players. As a result, in 1996–97 the U16 Spanish won the European Championship. The Spanish system for youth development is based on a selection strategy, an emphasis on club soccer, high-level professionalism, and the mental training of players.

At the present, there is broad-scaling collaboration for the development of soccer in Hungary, matched with an elaborated development plan: the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program. Through sufficient financial support and well-developed educational materials, HFF experts have framed and shaped the new program for the development of young players so that every Hungarian child could find an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and improve their skills. This is important, because small countries cannot afford natural selection; therefore, heightened emphasis should be laid on science in the identification of talent, selection, and implementation [23]. It is in the spotlight that the selection process should be centralized based upon a solid system of tasks, tests, clear expectations, and monitoring.

In the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program, children go through a long selection procedure. This system of selection is a complex process implemented in several levels and in different scenes of the development program [11]. From an early young age, i.e., the U7 age group, children are given the opportunity to participate in game-like and game-based skill development trainings and ball exercises under the supervision of expert, with weekly frequency. This procedure supports the view emphasizing that selection in soccer is not a non-recurrent occasion, but a long-term and complex process [15].

The Bozsik Program embraces four scenes that are built upon each other in a pyramid shape, enabling talented children even from the smallest settlements of the country to demonstrate their skills, and who deserve admission to the selection teams of the given age. There is a “long way” to go from the local and school teams of young soccer players to the Training Center of Telki. Along the way, young players go through a series of selection stages, tests, different expectations, and goals.

In terms of quality, elite players differ from their less talented peers in the following skills and abilities: body composition, body shape, quickness, elevation, agility, motivation, anxiety, adaptation, and technique. The measuring and evaluation systems applied to selection have
been divided into two main phases. In the first phase, it is mainly the “trainer’s eye,” the subjective judgment of experts, that decides. By contrast, in the second phase the facilities offered by science are applied: psychological, physiological, biomechanical, and soccer-specific measurements are carried out. No uniform approach has been formulated around the selection procedure. There are authors who think that the “trainer’s eye,” i.e., subjective factors, should be the crucial aspect in selection [4, 24], while others stress the need to use various objective measurements in the process of selection [21]. Experts have indicated that on the basis of the results of objective tests, talented and less talented players can be distinguished from each other [18]. It would be important to minimize subjectivity in the process; the centralized tests and tasks could be the major means of identifying and developing talent.

Several authors have called the attention of professionals working in soccer to the fact that they should not select talent solely on the basis of players’ physical appearance (7, 12, 14]. The Bozsik Program has an emphasis not to select players only in view of their physical appearance, but instead their game skills, game comprehension, technical skills and abilities, and assertiveness. Both measurement systems used in selection are equally important [9]. In this way during the selection process, talented players are first spotted in the “mass.” Then, objective measurement facilities are useful towards the end of the process to find the best players among the talented ones.

The selection system defined and applied by the Sports Directorate of HFF, i.e., the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program, are fully in line with the results and recommendations set forth by related domestic and international research and programs. The soccer experts emphasized that it is primarily game skills, soccer technique, and game comprehension that can be the basis of selection, and thereafter the means provided by the scientific background can be used: anthropometrical, psychological, biomechanical, and other measurements. Therefore, in Hungary it can be observed that in the selection of soccer talent, professionals rely on empirical evidence that is difficult to measure. Another important aspect is that the selection of talented soccer players in Hungary is not performed after a non-recurring (cross-sectional) measurement, but is a long process wherein children undergo a system of multiple measurements and evaluations on several levels until they are potentially admitted to the selection teams of the respective ages. So, longitudinal tests and measures would be needed to see progression and the outcome of selection and talent management. Some of these tests are general; others are soccer-specific. A lot of these tests are employed in soccer, but there is no one unified system that can be observed and used as a statistical means for comparison.

Launched in June 2011, OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program might play a key role in the rise and emergence of Hungarian soccer. Thus, moving towards success and efficiency, the most talented players of the various age groups (80 players + 8 goalkeepers) are subjected to soccer-specific, physiological, biomechanical, and psychological measurements at the Training Center of Telki. On the whole, after our interviews and document analyses, we have been able to ascertain that the OTP-MOL-Bozsik Program is suitable for triggering effective improvement of soccer in the near future. In light of the opinions of the originators of the program, we trust that in this case we can succeed in creating a proper mass base for selection. After selection, the talented players can be developed in an efficient and high-standard manner. It is the hope of the leaders that within a short while we will be able to make weighty achievements in the international scene.

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