PRACTICAL ISSUES AND INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL OF SELECTION OF REPUBLICAN JUNIORS IN FOOTBALL

FIKKER FERENC[1], ALMOS ANDRAS[1]

ABSTRACT. *Practical Issues and Innovative Elements of the Model of Selection of Republican Juniors in Football.* The issues concerning the identification of sports talent are topics of interest for all those involved in the sports industry. This paper is intended to present an optimized model of selection for this age group. The selection was conducted over a period of 4 days, during which the group of Republican Juniors of Ardealul football team of Cluj-Napoca was made out of a total number of 248 players. The conclusions that can be derived are that the application of these selection principles will bring about an efficient method for compiling a competitive and homogeneous team in terms of specific sport value, with real opportunities to promote players in performance sports, more precisely in football.

Keywords: selection, biological age, stage of development, cognitive intelligence

REZUMAT. *Aspectele practice şi elementele inovatoare ale modelului de selecţie a juniorilor republicani în fotbal.* Problemele privind identificarea talentului sportiv reprezintă teme de interes pentru toate persoanele implicate în această ramură sportivă. În lucrarea de faţă ne-am propus să prezentăm un model de selecţie optimizat pentru această categorie de vârstă. Selecţia s-a desfăşurat pe o perioadă de 4 zile, pe parcursul căreia dintr-un efectiv de 248 de jucători s-a format grupa de juniori republicani a echipei de fotbal Ardealul Cluj-Napoca. Concluziile care se pot deduce sunt acelea că, aplicând aceste principi de selecţie, se va putea obţine o metodă eficientă pentru alcătuirea unei echipe competitive şi omogene din punctul de vedere al valorii sportive specifice, având şanse reale de promovare a jucătorilor în fotbalul de performanţă.

Cuvinte cheie: selecţie, vârstă biologică, etape de dezvoltare, inteligenţă cognitivă

Introduction

It is widely believed that it is useful to establish very early, when the subject reaches its technical maturity whether he has a promising future in terms of sports. For various reasons, this is important for the coach, for the

---

[1] Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, fikkerferenc@yahoo.com

various categories of the technical staff of the club, and for (other) clubs intending to invest in some young players, using their own infrastructure.

The control of evolution in time of the parameters involved is equally difficult because of insufficient correlation (objective evaluation), for formulating a prognosis on development. Such problems, though not insurmountable, are related to the fact that in football, unlike individual sports, players must have technical skills and coordination, as well as organic and muscle qualities and especially cognitive skills (individual and group tactics).

Another important aspect is that, to identify potential talent, it is necessary to consider not only the overall activity (efficiency), but also the intrinsic factors of performance. To get a better selection method and as objective as possible it is essential to consider the real biological age of the junior.

Objectives

This study is concerned with a group of junior football players. Its objective is to propose an optimized model of selection for this age category, based on the establishment of a number of objective criteria for identifying and evaluating talented football players.

Methods

This selection model was used in 2004 at Ardealul Football School of Cluj-Napoca for the composition of the group of juniors; these children were born in 1989-1990. It was a national selection during which there were tested a total of 248 players from different football clubs in the country. Upon selection, these players were 14-15 years old.

To have an efficient selection, it is important to establish where we want to get, that is to know very clearly the role of this selection and what we want to achieve from it. To get results and continuous improvement of a team, it is very important that players' individual value should be similar, that is there should be homogenization of sports value within the group. This is the only way in which group members can increase in value and so there will be a beneficial and constructive competitor.

It is also essential to establish in this stage the team structure, which will be configured as follows: squad will be comprised of 3 goal keepers, 4 central defenders, 4 midfielders, 4 players for the right band (which are both defenders , as well as midfielders on the right side), 4 players for left band (which are both defenders, as well as midfielders on the left side), 4 peaks.

This way the team will be made up of 23 players, so all positions will be covered in a balanced manner and to be able to organize training so that the progress could be optimized.

The selection was carried out during 4 days, during which players' biological age was tested, their specific skill, general quality driving qualities, speed, endurance, strength and cognitive intelligence.

On the first day, sports doctor has determined players' real biological age, and testing of this day focused on checking players' speed on two distances: 30 m and 50 m. To determine the players' explosive force have made the test spot jumping.

To check their particular skills, there have been organized games on small fields, the main goal being to allow us to see each player's individual technique, the choice of execution procedures, creativity and decision-making ability when running out of time and space. In addition to the issues listed above, we watched: field orientation, distance appreciation, anticipation of the rally, aggressiveness, combination and players' ability to commit to the team's success at the cost of any sacrifice.

On the second day we tested general resistance by applying Beep Test correlated category aged 14 -15 years while checking players' lung capacity.

On the third day, there were organized verification games on normal size fields, in which the focus was on individual and collective tactical knowledge accumulated by each player up to that moment, according to the position he has evolved.

Results

The data from tests and samples were pooled, there were applied the predetermined evaluation and scoring criteria, then the final team was made of the first 23 players who had the highest scores taking into account the positions on which they have evolved.

Discussion

Under the same activity conditions and at the same age, subjects with higher biological age, with several years of training and consolidated activity factors (anthropometric, physical, technical, tactical), have a less development potential as compared to subjects closer to the average age group or who show a delay in terms of certain characteristics.

This statement, logical in terms of definition, but often ignored, is based on the fact that people who get earlier to a certain biological age and to a higher level of technique are left with a lower improvement margin. Their evolution slows down in time, leading in some cases to a total compromise of performance.

Instead, players who are doing well enough in the relevant competitions, despite the fact that they are below the optimum threshold in terms of morphological and functional development, are more likely to improve through specific training and succeed in the future.

A further development of these factors will lead to the improvement of the level of performance, which is already satisfactory in comparison with other players, considered as good.

To organize the activities for growing up subjects, it is necessary to consider their specific physiological and psychological characteristics. These are essential not only to establish the program of technical activities, which must be effectively balanced in order to support juniors' psychological and mental evolution but also to establish reasonable criteria for evaluating and identifying talents in football.

The knowledge of various stages of development and their order, even if they differ from one individual to another during the growth process, help to avoid mistakes, such as punishing children who are smaller in terms of physical development. Like any biological being, from birth to adulthood, man goes through a transformation process characterized by morphological and quantitative variations. The time required for these changes is called period of development.

However, sometimes some of these changes may occur early or late. Therefore, the individual's biological age does not always correspond to its real age. To determine as precisely as possible the period (pre-puberty, puberty, post-puberty) where the player is upon selection one should consider a number of issues that will be discussed below.

At this age the most important and most conclusively aspect which can provide exact information is individual pilosity or hair growth.

There is a significant correlation between the degree of biological maturity and player's pilosity and the higher the number of issues listed below observed, the more advanced is its period of maturity:

1. pilosity in intimate area;
2. pilosity underarms and legs;
3. moustache;
4. pilosity on lower abdomen;
5. pilosity on back and the lumbar area.

From this information we can have a complete picture of the player's real evolution as compared with other children and we can forecast its further evolution and development in terms of football.

We would like to point out a few important observations that can help during selection time.

- It is important to check if the person has flat feet.
- At this age nipple pain signals the beginning of sexual hormone production.
- Long body extremities forecasts high growth.

- In terms of height, generally, boys resemble, from the hereditary point of view, more their mothers.

These small details are very important upon selection as a player who din not enter puberty yet cannot be measured and compared to a player who has already entered its puberty. Force is a decisive factor in football because it is a contact sport. The player who, upon selection, makes the difference only in terms of force does not have the same opportunities for promotion, because over the years, force ratio equals and that respective player may reach its maximum.

We must not forget that the purpose of selection is to recruit the children with the best chance of development for junior high football means the growth of future football players of high performance and not just getting immediate results.

In addition to assessing football potential, we find it very important to determine the exact cognitive capacity of the player upon selection. By omitting this issue, we can commit a serious mistake in selecting a player in terms of training for high performance.

The need to evaluate it in relation to sports performance lies in the fact that sport generally involves activation of decision strategies and solving problem situations and also involves activation for the purposes of self-regulation, self-control, for the purposes of overcoming competition specific anxious factors.

The ability of behavioural self-control and the ability to adapt the behaviour to task through cognitive intelligence is, in football, a very important factor to adapt behaviour and self-load. For these reasons, we consider it is necessary to apply an intelligence test upon selection to determine the level of intelligence of each player. Therefore, the last day of selection we used Standard Progressive Matrices Test (Standard Progressive Matrices) designed by J.C. Raven, which is a tool to study the level of cognitive ability.

Applying this test in the selection, we can have a clearer picture and more complex on the players that we want to train for high performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that using such a selection model we can be sure that the evaluation was objective and comprehensive, which should be a priority in the selection process. It is important that the selection made should identify those players who have real perspectives of promotion in the future. The results which this team achieved later, after applying an optimized sports training model, have confirmed that the selection was effective and successful.

In each of the three years when juniors, at the end of the championship, this team came in the first 2 places, thus obtaining the right to participate in the final tournament organized at the national level. Moreover, we would like to mention that 3 players have come to evolve in strong foreign championships, 8 players are members of the teams in the League I in Romania, and 3 of them have already played official games for the senior national team of Romania.

REFERENCES

Antohi, L., Antohi, N. (1998). *Fotbalul modern de la antrenament la joc*, Iaşi: Publishing House Fundaţiei Chemarea

Apolzan, D. (1996). *Fotbal 2010,* Bucureşti: Publishing House F.R.F.

Bacconi, A., Mazzali, S. (1999). *La preparazione fisica del calciatore*, Koala Libri, Reggio Emilia

Bârsan, M. (1980). *Fotbal. Tactica jocului. Metodica jocului scoală,* Bucuresti: IEFS

Ciolca, S.M. (2006). *Fotbal-Curs de aprofundare. Pregatire antrenori*, Bucuresti: Publishing House Fundatiei Romania de Mâine

Cojocaru, V. (2000). *Strategia pregatirii juniorilor pentru fotbalul de inalta performantă*, Bucuresti: Ed. Axis Mundi

Douge, B., Hastie, P. (1994)*. Eficacitatea coach-ului. în: Antrenoriat si competitie*, Bucuresti: C.C.P.S.

Giacomini, M. (2009). *Ghid tehnic pentru scolile de fotbal,* editia a III-a, traducere FRF

Martens, R. (1987). *Coaches guide to sport psyhology,* Human Kinetics Publisher, London

Rădulescu, M., Cojocaru, V. (coord.) (2003). *Ghidul antrenorului de fotbal – copii şi juniori,* Bucureşti: Publishing House Axis Mundi

Roman, Gh., Batali, F.C. (2007). *Antrenamentul sportiv. Teorie şi metodică,* Cluj-Napoca: Publishing House Napoca Star

Teodorescu, S. (2007). *Periodizarea si planificarea în sportul de performantă,* Bucuresti: Publishing House Morosan