

THE ROLE OF PARENTS, COACHES, AND PEERS IN THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ATHLETES

Elena Soklevska Ilievski

European University - Faculty of Detectives and Criminology, North Macedonia, sokle83@outlook.com

Abstract: Parents, coaches and peers play an important role in children's sports careers. Parents are usually the "culprits" of children's initial sports involvement, especially of younger ages and represent a pillar by providing concrete and emotional support regarding their children's sports careers. From the first beginnings on the sports fields to the moment when top sports careers are achieved, the parents have a pronounced influence on the sports life of their children. When a child shows an interest in playing a sport, support from the family is necessary, primarily because of personal growth and development, acquisition of moral values and skills, discipline, personal appropriateness, learning principles, etc., which is important if the child continues to engage in professional sports or not. The impact can be easily seen when all the predictions are taken in such as the dedicated activity and investment in the subject, the emotional and financial support, and the overall concern for the career of their children. Here, of course, the influence and support of coaches and peers are not missing, especially in the period of adolescence, which according to numerous scientific studies is considered the most sensitive period of life, followed by the most changes, and in which the largest number of withdrawals from sports occur. Therefore, the way in which this support is perceived is of particular importance. If this support is perceived in a negative way, it has a negative impact from the environment that surrounds the child-athlete, it can result in stress, demotivation, conflicts between parents, coaches, and children, anxious behavior, exhaustion, and can cause giving up the sport in general. The presence of peers in the team environment will be seen as crucial for the benefits associated with sports participation. If in the environment around the child athlete, there are other children who share the same interests and goals, it can be an important source of support to stay engaged and motivated to do sports. Also, the role of the coach is crucial, both for proper growth and development and for a successful sports career. Children see a role model in their coach. If for some reason the child becomes disappointed with his coach, it is difficult to restore trust. On the other site, personal parental ambitions are also of particular importance. If the unfulfilled ambitions of the parents are placed before the ambitions of their children, and they try to achieve the unfulfilled through them, and at the same time they do not notice the impact this has on the children, a conflict arises in the young person: are they capable of fulfilling the parental ambitions? or pursue their goals.

Keywords: children's sports, parents, coaches, peers, ambitions, support

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the development of sports, in general, happens at a very high speed, hence the need for parents and coaches to act together and commit to the development and education of child athletes in the parts where necessary, if they want to produce a complete person and an athlete. In recent years, psychosocial research has shown a growing interest in the role of sport in the development not only of young athletes' physical abilities, but also of their life skills and human values. Indeed, a number of recent studies have shown that youth sport helps athletes to internalize the values of responsibility, honesty, conformity, and perseverance (F., Danioni, D., Barni, R., Rosnati 2017), (Camiré & Trudel, 2011). From here comes the need for the overall support of young athletes from the immediate environment that surrounds them: parents, teachers, and peers.

2. CONTENT

When a child shows interest in getting involved in a sport, the support of the family is necessary, primarily due to his personal growth and development, acquisition of moral values and skills, discipline, personal satisfaction, etc., and further whether the child will continue with professional sports or not. Support in adolescence is especially important, which according to previous scientific researches confirms that it is the period in which the largest number of withdrawals occur.

Each athlete has individual characteristics and is unique in a unique way and therefore should have an individual approach through which his strengths will be strengthened and negativity will be worked on. It is especially important for the young categories to include parents, family, teachers, peers, the environment that surrounds them in the training process, because it is primarily about building a person, and then an athlete. Here it is much more important to emphasize the building of a healthy person than the achieved result. Only then will they be ready to meet the high demands of professional sports.

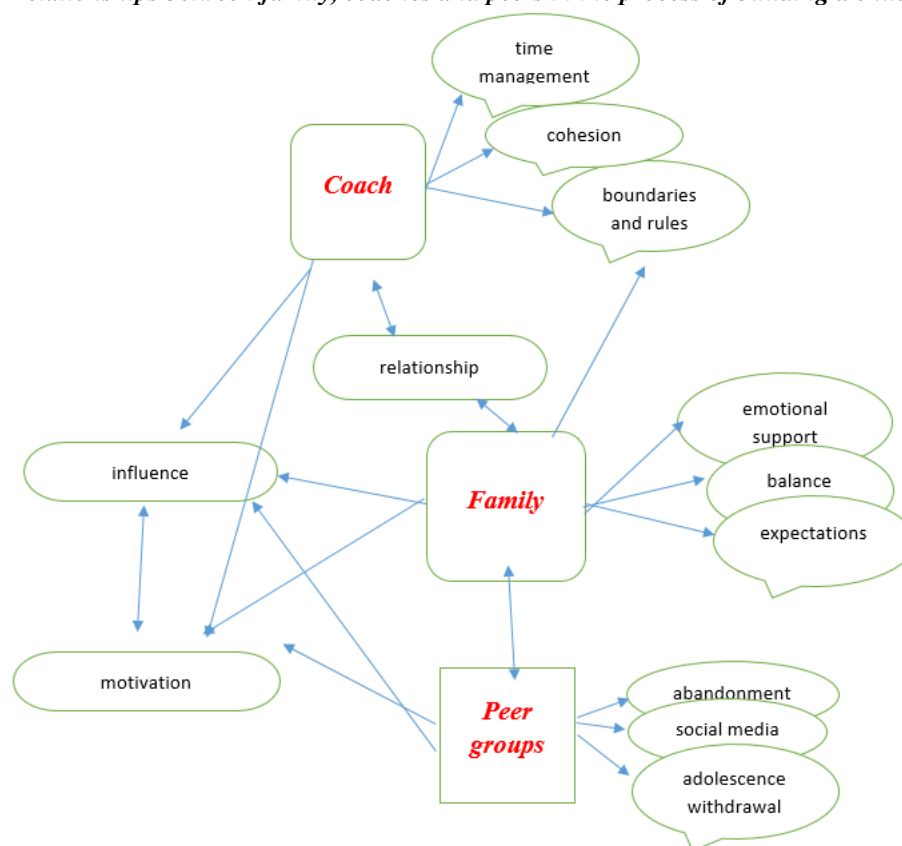
Parents, as I mentioned before, are the first motivators and have a key role in whether a child will be involved in a certain sport or not. Therefore, it cannot be denied the importance of the family and the influence on the decision for the child to play sports or not, especially at an early age. According to numerous scientific studies, the influence of the family is most important in early child development, when the child begins to be created as a person, when he acquires and experiences various emotional, social and educational influences. During this period, parents must have a positive attitude that will provide their children with constant support and consistency at all times as part of the overall process of sports development. This influence is readily seen when the parent's dedicated involvement and investment, both emotional and financial, put into the support they give to their children in sports is taken into account. Moreover, the parental support is crucial to the commitment and dedication of the young athletes. However, when this support is perceived in a negative way it can result in stress, conflicts between parents and children, burnout and may provoke dropout (M., Nunomura, M., Oliveira 2013). According to Romero (2002) there are different types of parents of child athletes. There are types of parents who are not interested in sports, and therefore in many cases the opposite can also happen: the wishes and interests of the parents are not in accordance with the wishes and interests of the children. The non-participation of parents in the sports life of their children leads to a decrease in interest precisely because of the lack of support and encouragement. Also, one of the reasons that can cause demotivation, frustrations and a negative attitude towards sports is the over-ambition of some parents. Sometimes, an over-ambitious approach leads to negative consequences as the end result of the overall process. Children are deciding not to play sports anymore because of the pressure that coexists with playing at a young age. Parents and adults within these programs take the competitiveness to another level and forget the real reason why adolescents want to play (T., Justine 2019). It is not a rule that if the parent was a successful athlete, the child must also follow in his footsteps. Not all relationships between parents, coaches and peers on the one hand and young athletes on the other, are effective. A balance between a supporting involvement without putting too much pressure is needed by the parents. To prevent burnout and dropout and to facilitate future practice, parents should be counseled (possibly by a sport educator) on how to positively support their children concerning their sport experience (A., Strandbu., K., Stefansen., I., Smette., M.R., Sandvik 2019).

The previously mentioned is also followed up by the coach's role which is considered to be a highly complex process. Young athletes perceive the coach as an idol, as a role model, they are compared to him, imitate him, etc. Because of all this, his role in the lives of young athletes is very big. He should have the qualities and characteristics of a correct person, positive, empathetic person, motivator, enthusiast, innovator... Just one small mistake can lead to giving up and feeling betrayed by those they trust the most. The coach is a very significant person in the lives of athletes and their role is one of the key factors and it is in a direct correlation with the achieved success. Only a complete trainer can produce a complete athlete. Therefore, they should focus not only on the motor aspect, but also on all other aspects that have an impact on the development of both athletic performance and the overall development of the child's personality. There is a difference between an effective leader and a successful leader (Williams & Krane, 2015; Anshel, 2012; Murphy, 2005 and Cox, 2012). A coach's successful leadership changes an athlete's behavior as a function of the coach's effort and gets others to behave as the manager/coach intends them to behave. The task may be completed and the coach's needs may be satisfied, but the athletes needs are ignored (Cribben, 1981). Effective leadership in coaching occurs when athletes perform in accordance with the coach's intentions while finding their own needs satisfied. All these above mentioned things are an integral part of the life of the athletes as individuals and should not be neglected. Otherwise, establishing a positive climate within the athletes or team is impossible. Motivation as a key factor and emotional engagement will be lacking if the coach as a leader does not contribute to their encouragement. There is a lot of scientific research that highlights the relationship between athletes and coaches. The coach should know the individual characteristics of each of the athletes, where they come from, what they have gone through before, what are their opportunities (where they can act to improve), because if there is a lack of understanding of the aforementioned it can not be build a positive relationship between all stakeholders in the process.

The coach is the one who should recognize if there is a problem, the one who should approach solving the problem through a program involving all involved parties. There are many important variables that can be controlled and improved through a proper and well-thought-out approach. The coach's function primarily consists in motivating child athletes, distracting attention from destructive phenomena and destructive behavior, controlling anxiety and aggression, positive thoughts, helping to recover from injuries. Possessing high qualities of the coach, setting norms and values that all members will respect, understanding interpersonal relations will lead to the creation of a high-quality person who will achieve the desired goals. The coach as a leader should have an extremely high degree of authority. It should establish a positive relationship with parents and with other members of the institution involved in decision-making, and how those decisions would affect athletes. Primary creation of a person who, even after the

end of his sports career, will be ready to deal with all challenges and who will apply the acquired knowledge and habits in everyday life.

Picture 1. Relationships between family, coaches and peers in the process of building a child athlete



In the following text I will follow up on the aforementioned where the presence of peers in the team environment will be seen as crucial for the benefits associated with sports participation. The positive influence of teammates on each other gives them self-confidence, protects them from destructive behaviors, improves their discipline and moral characteristics. In other words, exposure to positive interactions with peers is associated with increased sports self-concept, leading to greater self-confidence. This relationship is further strengthened if the socializing with teammates continues off the field. However, unlike team sports where teammates give each other the support they need, in those athletes who practice individual sports, may need more support from family, coaches, sports psychologist, sports institution and all involved in the process of building a professional athlete. At some point in life they may give up because of the negative impact of friends who are not involved in any sport activity. A positive attitude of the athlete is needed to be able to cope with all the trials and sacrifices that lie ahead. According to research, this usually happens during adolescence when we have the most personality changes.

3. CONCLUSION

It is especially important for the young categories to include parents, family, teachers, the environment that surrounds them in the training process, because it is primarily about building a person, and then an athlete. Here it is much more important to emphasize the building of a healthy person than the achieved result. Only then will they be ready to meet the high demands of professional sports. Coaches can be some of the most influential people in an athlete's life and their influence can last long after their career ends (M., W., Austin 2017). Sport participation in youngsters results in psychosocial and health-related benefits, fostering youth development (M., Morano, L., Bortoli, M.C., Ruiz, C., Robazza 2020).

"We cannot expect coaches to be perfect. Coaches are human and fallible, but in accepting the role of coach, they accept the responsibility to develop excellence in those they teach" (Jan Boxill 2013). With the growing popularity of sports in general in the world, by investing more funds, by providing better technical conditions, it is extremely important that coaches follow every new trend and be properly prepared with their influence to contribute to the

achievement of goals. However, we cannot always and everywhere meet the same working conditions. In some countries, especially in developing countries, in small sports institutions, in rural areas, where there is a lack of management teams, it is the coach who has to be trained to answer all the tasks that are set for him. Cooperation with parents, teachers and in general the environment that surrounds the young athlete, as well as maintaining a balance between them will be a key factor for his success.

We can conclude that family, coach and peers play a very important role in the life of athletes. Possessing high qualities, setting norms and values that all members will respect, understanding interpersonal relationships, will lead to the creation of a high-quality team that will achieve the desired goals. The primary creation of a person who, after finishing his sports career, will be ready to deal with all challenges and who will apply the acquired knowledge and habits in everyday life.

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